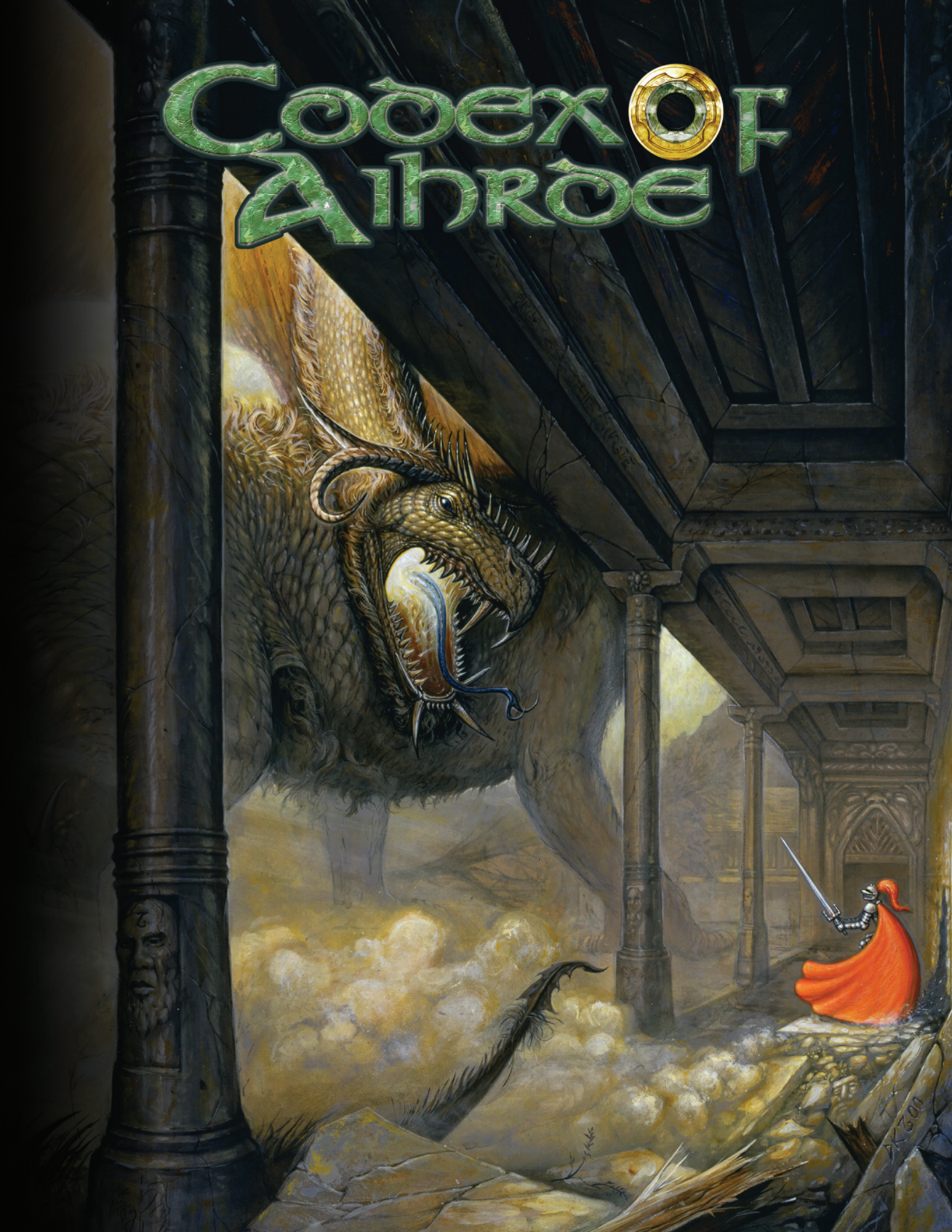
Codex of Aihrde

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The Anduath

THIS BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE DAYS BEFORE DAYS AND THE CREATION OF THE WORLD ~ THE DWARVEN SONGS & THE GOBLIN-DWARF WARS ~ THE COMING OF MAN ~ THE IMPERIAL WARS AND HOW THESE ENDED IN TRAGEDY ~ THAT AGE OF WINTER'S DARK ~ THE WINTER DARK WARS & THE RISE OF THE YOUNG KINGDOMS IN THE REALMS OF AENOCH AND ETHRUM, THOSE THAT ARE CALLED THE LANDS OF URSAL

First Oration - The Days Before Days

Of the beginning of days. The dragon upon the Void and the Maelstrom. Of the Val Eahrakun and their wars. When the All Father made the world upon the face of the Void and unfurled the Arc of Time. Of the gods in their youth and the creation of Aihrde, the world to be. This is accounted the First Rin upon the Arc of Time.

The River of Erde

In the beginning was the Void, and the Void stood empty of all form. With his first thought the All Father brought light to the Void. In this light he could see the empty space from its beginning to its end, and he saw that the Void was both enduring and timeless.

The All Father saw the Void as a place unrelenting, and he cast out upon it. A great wind rose about him and this was his second thought and he governed it. It stood like a vessel upon the Void, wide and open, and from it all his thoughts flowed as a river into the Void. But the river of his mind was not wholly ordered, and the thoughts flowed out from the beginning in many directions, in streams great and small. Some crossed over one the other, some gathered in deep pools, others wandered into the Void alone and without governance.

He perceived that the streams of his mind would fray and split on their journey through the Void, some going wither they would. It was ever the All Father's desire to fashion his thoughts into form and to order them as he would, for he knew that his thoughts would take on a life of their own and cause mishap to his design. And in this he was prescient, as is known. So, he took care and made of himself a Shadow to watch over the streams of his thought.

The Shadow of the All Father governed the streams and set them all on a course that bent in the same direction, for it was the Shadow's task to make certain that all the streams and rivers of his thought ended together in deep pools. In this we see the All Father's eternal strength; but it is also known that when the last of the rivers pool at the feet of the Shadow of the All Father, then the Shadow must consume time itself and thus bring the River of his Thought to completion. All know that those shall be the end of days, the Gonfod. Time and all things that are, or ever were, must end, and only the All Father knows what comes of the new beginning. But none know, save perhaps the All Father himself, when his creation will halt and the Gonfod come, or what might bring it.

Thus the Arc of Time, what the dwarves call 'The River of Erde' came to be, from its beginning in the Vesk, the Vessel of the All Father's thought, where resided the Ea-Iul, the First Wind, which flowed through the Void, to its ending in the Endless Pools. And Toth, the Shadow of Erde, was the first of the great order of beings known as the Val Eahrakun.

Substance upon the Void

Even before the creation of Toth, the All Father perceived a mote in the Void. He saw a creature who was not of himself and whose form he had not imagined. It was long and serpentine, with claws and massive snout and wings: the Dragon. He watched as it rent the Void with talon and fang seeking to unmake the emptiness, filling it with the madness of destruction. And the All Father knew then that he was not alone in the emptiness.

So the All Father learned that there was form in the emptiness. This thought proved a marvel to him, and he sought then to find meaning in form alone.

The All Father looked upon the Dragon and the havoc of her chaos, and he thought, too, that he should take form, one ordered to the tasks at hand. He created a shape for himself, with hands to grasp his tools and feet to stand upon. His hair was long and wild, and his beard full and flowing. His eyes bore a fierce light that reflected the lust of creation and illuminated the rivers of his thought. Thus he stood both beautiful and terrible.

He stood then and watched the Arc flow from him, time slipping away. He pondered the Shadow of himself and the Dragon in her infinite thrashings. At last, he ordered his realm and spoke his thoughts into form. His words became tools, and with his tools he fashioned a great forge and anvil upon the Void and a bench for his workings. The iron of his will became the substance of form upon which he beat the shape of things he dreamed and imagined. His words lit the darkness with the fire of creation like no other light before or since, and his words flew into the Void, hot, like embers of a flame. So the Alenerde-ut-Pilt, the Language of Creation, came to be.

With his words, he let fall substance from the well of his own being so that it took shape. Some shapes were governed by his design, others of their own will. The All Father labored long and created all manner of creatures both great and low. The lust of the task overtook him so that no sooner had he finished one than he began work upon another. As the Arc flowed, many creatures came to be and these are known as the order of the Val Eahrakun, those who the All Father created with his own being.

As is known, some of his creations were as the Void, empty of life or thought. But others stood aware of all around them, marveling at he who created them. Still others stood in envy, filled with hate and rage

for him. Yet others only sought to aid he who had created them, and they loved him. The majority of them were indifferent and wandered from his side to find their own paths.

Besides the Shadow Toth, the greatest of the All Father's creations were Corthain, Mordius, and Ornduhl. They were created of the same thought, though Corthain was the older. Corthain came of the All Father's love of creation and, thus, the greatest. Mordius came of his desires and possessed his strength. And Ornduhl came of his hidden thought and was thus driven by selfishness and nothing could contain him.

Like the rest, he set them aside as new tasks called him. When he did so Corthain held up his hand and bid him wait. Possessed of all that was good and kind, Corthain sought to dissuade his creator. "Erde! Why do you cast us off? For we are your children and wish to stay at your side."

So the All Father was named Erde, which is the root of all the words of the tongues that came after, and it means Father.

And Erde looked upon Corthain and in that instant Corthain glimpsed the Arc of Time; and Corthain saw many things from that moment to the Gonfod, when all must end. Though Corthain saw the Arc of Time, he did not see all that lay upon it, nor did he understand all of what he saw; for it was his fate only to know the road of things. Therefore, he left off his question and spoke no more.

But Ornduhl, his brother, had not seen the Arc and knew nothing of what came before or what would come after. Seeing only that his brother would see them cast off into the Void, he rose in wrath. Ornduhl reached into the Void and took up the burning embers of a red-hollow light that drifted there, the light sank into his grip, the weight hanging in the emptiness. Stretching its shape he drew it into a great beam, and with this beam he smote Erde upon the heel. But when the beam struck the All Father, the light of it shattered, lighting the Void in a red light. Ever after, that light shone in the eyes of Ornduhl and men perceived it as hate, and so it was.

Ornduhl had wounded Erde's heel, and that wound played forever in his mind, for in it he saw a mastery of things and an ordering of his own design. And this was as it was meant to be, for Erde created not for tyranny or vanity, but only from desire, and often his designs assumed directions he had not thought.

But the assault did not yield a moment's respite from Erde's work upon the forge of creation, and his labors continued. Ornduhl saw the hopelessness of his attack and he thought to bide his time and learn what he might. So he hurled the broken remnants of the light into the Void, though he kept some for himself and retreated into its dark emptiness. But there were others, lesser creatures lingering in the distance, that watched the battle unfold. And one of their number pursued the light into the Void and devoured it, and so became the Mirror of Ornduhl.

The forge of creation raged on within Erde, and he took no further heed of those around him as he continued to pull substance from his own being, shape form from his thoughts, and cast it into the Void.

OF DARKNESS

After the Arc of Time played out some measure of itself, Erde stopped his labors and thought to rest. Shutting his eyes he drifted in the empty like a man floating in the water of an infinite sea. But his mind raced, for even in sleep the All Father was ever the creator of things; and in his slumber he created the notion of dreams, and in his dreams he dreamed of things that his waking mind could not, or would not, imagine. Some were beautiful, others were not.

From his dreaming crept a darkness. Taking shape in the Void it knew no light, nor joy, but rather embodied the twisted madness of unsought moments, of all that is vile in thought, word, or deed. Its structure bore out the rudiments of the Arc of Time, and it knew only order, but it also captured the echo of Ornduhl's rage. The rage did bind with the order of things into a merciless evil. The shape blotted the Void and was cold and black and from the darkness came a harsh chill.

The All Father rose from his slumber, chilled by the touch of darkness, and he saw the blot and marveled at it. The Darkness came to him as a servant to a master and thought to please him, but he saw the evil of it and felt the cold. So, he pulled warmth from the fire of his soul and set the warmth all about him and with that he drove the darkness and the cold deeper into the Void.

The others feared the Darkness for this creation was unsought, and they could not fathom his reason. So they gathered in a great host, and assailed it, driving it so far into the Great Empty that it could not see the light of creation's forge. This was accounted the first war of the gods. Thus the Darkness lay hidden, buried in the undeep that is accounted the deepest regions of the spaceless Void, for many ages of man, until one summoned him and brought him to the world of dwarf and man.

OF THE MAELSTROM

And so uncounted lengths of the Arc of Time played out, pooling as it did in a great heap upon the edge of creation, and the All Father labored upon his forge, taking of himself and giving to an ever-growing host of creatures that began to people the Void. And then he saw that he labored without purpose and that his creations drifted in the lonely empty or stood to heel about him. He at last paused to see what next he might affect.

He looked far and wide and his gaze fell upon the Dragon where she hung in the emptiness, spinning upon herself, creating a maelstrom of chaos about her. He watched her split the fabric of the Void in her thrashings, and how those splits tore rifts, portals, and doors to other places beyond the Empty and this caused the Maelstrom. So Erde drifted to her. Spying her madness he envied it and the understanding of it grew upon him and he saw that she was filling the Void with her own madness: wild energies, and elements, forming around her. And this awoke a lust within him like never before, because as ever he loved creation. He settled upon her chaos and the word of her came to his mind, Inzaa.

And lo, Erde made the world from the Maelstrom. He named it in his voice and it became the crucible of his mind. He pounded substance from the Maelstrom and set great gulfs between the fire, earth, water, air, and energy of all kinds. And these he ordered as desired so that he could draw from them at need. Life clung to his hammer and tools and spilled into the manifold realms of his imagining, bringing life to where there had been none before. And these realms were called the Firmament by scholars in later ages.

Using the Language of Creation Erde drew substance from the Firmament, casting it into shape upon the Void. And so the world came into being. It was flat, and over its edges spilled the substance of his creation to mingle with the Maelstrom of Inzaa. and the substance of creation fell upon Inzaa and she marveled at it, for she knew nothing of Erde's presence above the Maelstrom.

Therefore, surrounding herself with the heat of fire, the rush of wind, the cold hard earth, and the liquid blanket of water, Inzaa began to form and mold. From these elements, and others whose nature passes all understanding, she configured her own world, and its pieces drifted

upward to lay upon the underside of the world of Erde's making, bound to it and a part of the whole. With it she caused the mountains to grow, the seas to pool, the skies to dash, and the warmth of the day to radiate.

Thus, there came to be two worlds in the Void, one astride the other, bound together.

Erde settled upon his world. The land was dark, with no light save the light of embers that floated in the Void, but these made a shadow of the world that drew creatures great and small. A great host of his earlier creations stole into the world. These were the Val Eahrakun. They wandered across the land, taking up refuge in caves and crevices, or riding the air, or vanishing into the depths of the water as their wants dictated. In all this many of the Val Eahrakun listened to the All Father as he spoke the Language of Creation and though none could master the language, they all learned pieces of it and the echo it carried in all they did in after ages, so that they too could mold the earth in ways beyond the design of the All Father.

Erde knew every shape and crevice of the world, but he could not see its beauty. He remembered, however, the tumult of the Dragon's breath and the light it cast upon all around her. Too, the echo of Ornduhl's rage came to him, made in the deeps of time when he smote Erde's heel with the first blade, and the light that shone from it, brief and terrible. These thoughts lingered in his mind. And even as he stood thus, with the Arc of Time flowing about him, the ground rumbled and exploded. In the great column of fire which rose above the land he saw the beauty of his creation: the rivers, the mountains, the skies. But the fire burned out and Erde grew dismayed, though not for long. The flames awoke in Erde a desire to see his creation in the light. So he set about the creation of the sun and moon.

OF THE SUN AND MOON

Erde pondered a great while upon the form the light should take and he wondered at the subtle beauty of the distant lights in the heavens, the embers of his first creation. And at last he pulled from his chest a rib and remade it. He tore it into countless thin threads and with the strands he wove a great curtain of shimmering silver, and this he unfolded throughout the heavens so that it hung as a great curtain, the light of which spilled across the land.

But to his amazement the curtain lived, for in his rush to create the light he had torn out a portion of his heart, bound to the rib he tore from his chest. It came loose and he wove it into the splinters of the curtain; it was from that part of him that knew love. And so he made life as he had in the Void of old. This creation he named the Maiden Ea-Raena, that is the "beauty of youth" in the Vulgate, who the dwarves called Dunareu, though in after days she was called Mailahm, the Maiden of Night. And she wandered the heavens for many years. She was one of the few gods he named, not the last, but ever his favorite.

Erde marveled in the light of Ea-Raena. After the Arc of Time played out some measure of itself, he thought the light too soft, as the world's darker places remained in shadow. He called to Ea-Raena and asked her to brighten the heavens, so she gathered many of her strands together and wove them into a form of her choosing, and she hung there in the heavens as a ball of silvery light. Though in truth she did not gather the entire curtain, for at times, the remnants of it would come into view in the far north or the deep south.

For a long age he basked in her tender embrace and found joy through all the world's many places. And those plants were called the Fael Mur, of which more is written later. But the light of the early moon did not assuage Erde's lust and in time he desired a greater light.

He cast himself upon the darkness and his lust exploded in a ball of fire. This flame bore the life of him, even as the silvery light of Ea-Raena had, and he marveled at his latest act: a great ball of flame with geysers of molten light, lancing the dark heavens. And both Ea-Raena and Erde held themselves in awe and wonder. So it was that Ea-Vette, which is "fire of youth" in the Vulgate, and who the dwarves called Haydareu, that in after days was called Mailuhm, the Maiden of Light, came to her life.

Ea-Vette's fierce beauty burnt in the heavens so brightly that Erde called on Ea-Raena to calm her; and Ea-Raena did, making her take a similar shape as her own, so that ever after the All Father called them sisters. And so they were known as the Sisters, which is the Moon and Sun in the Vulgate; and they, too, are of the order of the Val Eahrakun.

HOW THE SEASONS CAME TO BE

Erde marveled at the world of his making and the Arc of Time continued to flow. His face and arms turned red and he knew warmth. He watched as the Sisters played in the heavens and scorched the land with their light, the one silver blue, the other golden red. But all was chaos and the cool of the dark escaped him and he longed for it; and he longed too for the rays of the gentle light of Ea-Raena, which softened the shadows without destroying them. He missed the cool of the darkness. So, he sat himself upon a great mountain and pondered his own desires, seeking a solution to his hunger for the dark and the light.

Erde saw then the rivalry between the Sisters, and he laughed aloud. He gave them steeds and chariots, and gave them the heavens to race in, promising them that she who won would be given command of the heavens. So, the Sisters raced over the world, laughing and goading, but never catching one another. They passed through the heavens, beyond all the edges of the world, so that they circled it, bringing light to all the corners of the world, but for the deep places beneath the mountains.

The All Father marveled for the world of his creation changed with the racing of the Maidens.

Ea-Vette proved the faster for her power was hot within her and she tore through the heavens. She loved more to hang near the earth and at times the flame of her cart scorched the ground, leaving deep furrows in the earth. At other times the cart turned the waters to steam and great geysers rose into the air. All the while Ea-Raena took a higher road for she loved the lofty skies and to see the whole world unfolding beneath her. She moved more deliberately, with more caution and less speed. And her light was cool about her so that when she passed through the geyser of steam it turned again to water and fell to the earth far below.

Tis said that Erde stood in the midst of a mountain of fire, working the molten rock, when first the rain touched his face. The cool water of the Maiden's race fell upon him and he marveled at it. He stood thus for a great while, relishing the cool touch of the Maiden's flight and watching the madcap dash on high.

And so the sister's race ebbed, and flowed, and the skies filled with great winds that buffeted one the other, and thence with clouds born aloft by the wild flight of the chariot. At times one or the other vanished from the skies for long periods and it rained or snowed; at other times it waxed hot and the air became heavy and dry. Once in a great while, one of the Sisters gained on the other and the winds changed violently and weather suddenly. But after a great while their race became a journey, and an order came to the world.

In this way the seasons came to be.

OF THE DRAGON

During this long age Erde fashioned the world. He worked tirelessly in shaping the Maelstrom, and it grew beneath him. He pulled fire and earth, water, and air from the planes and molded it, building on the shape of the world as it was. All the while the Maidens raced and their journey became longer and the days and nights and seasons stretched. In time, the weight of the world bore down on the Maelstrom and pushed the great mass upon Inzaa's back.

Thus Inzaa discovered the world above her. She rose through the Maelstrom and pulled her great bulk upon the world to see the order in the chaos. She saw the Sisters on high and the myriad lights in the Void that pointed to the creations of Erde's youth, drifting toward the Maelstrom. She saw the plains, hills, mountains, valleys and dells. She saw water flowing in channels, great lakes and deep seas. The clouds fascinated her and the rain enthralled her. And she saw Erde last of all, presiding over all upon the great heights of Mount Eedlemere.

Inzaa made her form a shadow and slipped through the world unseen. So utterly dark was her visage that even Erde failed to notice her. She settled at the roots of the mountain and watched him as he fashioned things that were but are no more.

In time, Erde became aware of Inzaa, for no light of the Sister's passage could break the dark, and the impenetrable shadow worried at his mind as some flaw in his making. And Inzaa saw that he was aware of her and rose from the shadows and took her true form. She spoke to him then, upon the slopes of that mountain and her voice carried an echo of such great malice that it lingered in those lands ever after, even as it does to this day. The wise, if they know how, can capture that echo in song or spell and weave runic magic born of nightmare.

Erde had not forgotten that his creation rested upon the back of the Maelstrom and the dragon underneath lay always upon his mind. He spoke to her then of the Language of Creation, of the magic of their being; he spoke of its beginning and ending and how its use lay in all things. Inzaa listened to Erde, and at first she did not believe his words, thinking that he sought to deceive her, but at last she saw him for what he was and understood the truth of what he said. So she queried him, unraveling him with many questions and these he answered freely. In this way she sought to trick him into teaching her the language, to use it as it were and so she did. Erde was not fooled and knew her craft even as she did, but he taught her the language anyway for he saw in her his equal and was indebted to her for the Maelstrom.

Inzaa struggled with the language for long ages, trying to pull it from the mind of Erde, but the Language is the root of all things and only two have mastered it in the history of time. Inzaa's mind was of a different bent, and she could not master the Language of Creation wholly; she turned the words on themselves and spoke them without purpose and in this unmade all that she said.

So Erde set down the language for her, setting it into sheets of wind for her to breathe; and when at last she drew in the written words her breath turned the wind black. But the Dragon held them then, glyphs and runes to ponder over and to use whenever she would. Later, when Inzaa returned to the Maelstrom, the breath of Erde fell from her nostrils and pooled in a dark cloud. The cloud hung in the space between the worlds and this the dwarves called the Obsidian Book, for if one possessed the skill they could read the winds she had left behind and find the secrets of Erde and power eternal. The Obsidian Book is but one of two places the Language was set forth. The other, the tunnels of the Rings of Brass, had the script set upon them but only a few now remember where they lay, and the Mammoth Scrolls are but shades of these things.

OF THE VAL EAHRAKUN

As is known, many creatures of Erde's first making came to the world in its early days, even before the light of the Sisters shone down upon it. Some stole into the Maelstrom and the world, for their desire to dwell in the presence of Erde proved greater than their fear of the unknown; some of these were benign creatures made in the earliest beginnings of Erde's youth; others were unwholesome and filled with malice. Some were drawn by the force of the Maelstrom and the pull of the world and entered it unwillingly. Others possessed no fear of the Maelstrom, but followed in Erde's wake to join their own minds to his efforts, for they saw in themselves creatures greater than the Arc of Time.

Erde made all these creatures: those that came to the world willingly, those who were forced, and those that remained in the void. The dwarves named them the Val Eahrakun, the Eternals, and those great and small alike are considered a higher order of creatures. This order included many of the gods, the fey, tvungen (the demons), the tvungenos (devils), angels, the rune lords, and many other creatures besides. Some account the dwarves and all their kin as of the Val Eahrakun, but this is not so, they are part of the order of the Faulerde, The People of the All Father.

In the darkness Erde took little note of the lives of these creatures, as they were strangers to him, for he had forgotten them. He paid them no heed and let them roam as they would for they bothered him little.

Of the Val Eahrakun there are twelve named and are accounted the greatest: Corthain, Mordius, Ornduhl, Narrheit, Ealor, Tefnut, the Sisters Mailuhm and Mailahm, and Wenafar. Toth is the Shadow of the All Father, and though accounted as one of the Val Eahrakun he is different for he alone possesses all the knowledge of the All Father, as he was cast into shape before the Forge of Creation was made. To the Val Eahrakun were added the dragon-god Frafnog and Unklar the Horned God, who came to the world only after it was formed and had little role in its making.

Seven of the Val Eahrakun came to the world during the days before the Sisters rose in the heavens. Each labored over their own realm and had a hand in ordering the world.

Corthain, held to be the greatest, approached the world with great care and wherever he went the tumult of the world was calmed. He loved most of all the plains where the wind blew and the lines of the world followed a simple course. Ornduhl, Corthain's brother, came to the world to waste it through the weight of things, and he ground away many of the creations of his brethren. Narrheit reveled in the madness of creation and lived ever on the edge of Erde's labors, where the Maelstrom met the world, taking joy in befouling his father's work. Ealor took to the deep waters following the channels of oceans. Tefnut took joy only in the running water and sought ever to guide it. Wenafar took heed to all the order of the Val Eahrakun, from the greatest to the smallest, and watched out for them in the world's youthful chaos.

Of all the Val Eahrakun, Mordius played the greatest role in the making of the world for she came of his understanding of things, the way

Erde saw them and perceived the way events might unfold. She was his wisdom in the world, and in her mind she saw the barren earth and the life of which Erde dreamed. Mordius left her siblings and took up residence in the depths of the world, its mountains, hills, plains, valleys, and anywhere the soil was rich and deep. She took desire from herself and planted its purpose in the ground and waited for that purpose to blossom, though she knew not how to make it so. She took with her

three handmaidens to aid her in her endeavors. They were named Lythe, Tuatheal, and Ynul.

And all labored in the darkness of that first age of the world.

When the first lights of Mailahm fell upon the ground, Mordius' purpose blossomed and strange plants and grasses grew, spreading across the land, drinking the silvery light of the moon. And these are accounted the first living things that came to the world, and they are called the Fael Mur, of which more is written later. For an age, the world blossomed in the light of Mailahm and she rode the heavens and the grasses caught the curtained light of her first form and ever after reflected that light.

But it was Mailuhm's power that caused the world to explode in life, for her heat was so great and the warmth of her passage beyond all that any had expected. Her passage lifted the water on high so that the winds could carry it far and wide. The grass grew deep and green, spreading over the world in thick waves. Tall plants grew as well, springing from the soil to tangle in broad lands of bush. In sorrow, Mordius saw the end of all the Fael Mur for many of those plants could not withstand the heat of her sister, Mailuhm. Though she stole some away to hidden groves, so that only Mailahm graced them with her touch and in this she saved the world in after ages, during the long Winter Dark, though she planned it not.

So Mordius wandered the world for many seasons, and relished the wild of the Fael Mur, setting order to their life.

Mordius was not alone in shaping the world in the shadow of Erde, for Ornduhl, too, played a hand. Born of Erde's rage, Ornduhl sought to make all things his own. He saw the mind of Erde as if caught in a mirror, and all that the Father did, the son did differently. He found the beauty of things in their shadows and the shapes they formed in the darkness; in the black, the true form remained uncorrupted and raw. He reveled in the early world, before the coming of the moon and sun, for then all things were true. He set about working with the shadows, and he stretched and distorted them, pulling the essence from things to make them reflect his own desires.

When the moon came to the world Mordius wondered at it. She saw the true genius of Erde, for here was only enough light to make the shadows deeper and ever more beautiful. Ornduhl lusted after Mailahm and her curtain; ever he reached for her, but could not take hold, for she slipped through his fingers. And his lust became a fire within him.

When the sun came to the world, the craft of Ornduhl waned and faded in the light of her fire, and he raged against it. He gathered a host of shadows about him, and made to ambush Mailuhm, but Corthain came to him then and reasoned with him to lay off his foolish war. Ornduhl acted against him and they wrestled in the early light of the sun.

Thus began the second war of the gods, and the two brothers fought for a long age; in their wake, mountains fell, rivers ran dry, seas moved. Others came to join them and war spread, chaos overwhelming the world, until at last the noise of it captured the attention of Erde.

The All Father watched his spawn war upon one another, and soon discovered that while the Sisters were pieces of him, and bore his flesh and bone in their very being, these warring creatures were torn from his own essence, and shaped with little thought and thus they possessing desires entirely their own. He learned too that these creatures were far more powerful than at first he thought, for from them life came and he knew again that life begat life. He saw the crafting of Ornduhl in the shadows, all the green upon the world, the silver at night, and he marveled, for though Erde is the arbiter of the Arc of Time and has seen all things, even he forgets, in his lust to wander the Arc. But he worried that these creatures of his early thoughts might harm his world.

As the war raged, Erde rose into the heavens. Taking note that the world was flat and unbound, he turned his attention to its edges and called forth a great mist to bind the world on all sides. Beyond lay the Void and the creatures of that realm, the many beings of his early crafting. There were many scattered thoughts of the All Father, thoughts which took shape in the great unknown, without his desire. Some of these were greater than others, but none accounted more than Corthain, Mordius, Ornduhl and the Darkness of Erde's dreams. The mist he set as a wall to guard his creation against the Void and the tinkering of his youth. Creatures could not easily pass from the Void to the world, and those who tried were lost in the seething clouds, cursed, or blessed, to live out their days in abject loneliness. The Sisters found their way through, and this was as Erde intended, for they were of his own desire. At first Ea-Vette passed into the mist and night came to the world, but Ea-Raena hesitated and the light of the moon remained. But she followed her sister and the track she made in the mist. And this was as a hidden road, fraught with danger for any who might sell it. And the dwarves called it the Rirm ot Sul, that is the Path of the Sun, and later Anderoth's Track.

Thus day and night came to the world.

This mist has many names but is called the Karontung in the tongues of the dwarves, which means, the "Ever Flowing Beard." Men call it the Wall of the World.

The coming of the Wall ended the second war of the Val Earhakun and scattered many of them to the edges of creation. Ornduhl let off his brother's arm, releasing him from his grip. "I see the world has changed against us. A fence now stands between us and the realm of our creation. I would lay off this battle with you brother, and take once more to the shadows under the world." And Corthain rose and forgave his brother's rage and asked only that he calm himself and let the world unfold as it would, to which Ornduhl only smiled and called Corthain brother.

Corthain rose and passed through the Wall of the World, for he alone, made as he was of the All Father's purpose, was not fooled by its nature. He returned then to the Vesk, which is the beginning, the vessel from which the Arc of Time flows, that lies in the Great Empty, where stood the Ea-Iul, the First Wind.

The Ea-Iul stood as a thundering wind, these early thoughts of the All Father, and Corthain brought order to them. He cast his vision upon them, and he shaped them as a mighty vessel filled with deep grasses and an ever blowing wind. The sky above hung empty of color or design. From the vessel, one could gaze out into the Darkling Skies of the Void and see the Arc of Time, and in after ages, the Maelstrom and the Firmament and the world of Aihrde. Corthain stood upon the Vessel, in the grass and wind, and watched all unfold, keeping an eye to his father's purpose.

This he called the Fortress of Iul, which is the Fortress of Wind, and it served as his house for all the Rin of Aihrde, from its ordering, even onto the Gonfod, which is yet to be.

And Erde lingered in the world for many ages, and laughed and reveled at the racing of the Sisters. He marveled at the seasons and marveled even more when he saw the world take shapes of its own accord. Grasses grew, and strange plants as well, rising from the soil of the world.

There were other things, creatures which lived as memories of his original thoughts, and all that stole into the world before the Wall of the Worlds was made whole.

THE ORDERING

At last Erde returned to his labors. He harvested earth and water from the elemental planes, laying the foundations for many lands, and he filled the empty basins between them with wide and deep oceans. For many ages thereafter, he wandered the world, shaping it as he went. In this manner the great mountains, ridges, and hills came to be. Some places he passed over, leaving them flat and open. He carved ever more rivers into the firmament, so that what water remained on the land could flow freely.

And everywhere he went, Mordius followed and set purpose into the ground and the lands behind him blossomed in the grasses of her keeping. Erde took note of this and was pleased.

But the world, too, evolved of its own accord: the winds, driven by the Sisters, the rain, the movement of the earth as fire boiled beneath the surface driving gases and flames into the rock, pushed all things into new shapes. The All Father saw in this a structure, and he understood its order. Though the lands changed from his vision, still he was pleased, for even as he lay his tools to work he understood what must come to pass, for life begets life.

Ornduhl took council with Narrheit and both wondered at the ordering of the world, though in truth Narrheit cared nothing for it one way or the other, seeking only to alter what was made or to destroy it without purpose or design. But Ornduhl learned in his councils that the Arc of Time settled in the pools upon the edge of Creation and that it breached the Wall of Worlds. So Ornduhl followed the Arc to its ending and found there the Eternal Pools. He took note of it and never forgot.

The Arc of Time flowed on, its many streams winding into the pools of its ending upon the edge of Creation, moving ever toward the Gonfod. And so the ages passed. Erde grew lonely in his world. The Sisters paid him little heed in their race through the heavens, and the gods and other figments hid themselves for fear of being banished to the Void. So, he sat upon the highest peak in the world, what the dwarves and men call Mount Eedlemere, the "throne of the sky," and pondered this new dilemma. His beard and hair grew to great lengths, until he knew at last that he was older than he had been, and that his moods were less hasty. This knowledge gave him insight into the shaping of Life.

OF THE TREES

Long before the world was made, Erde dreamed of a burning heat upon his brow. In the dream, he moved beneath a cool shadow to escape the heat; the shade embraced him with a gentle touch and the air smelled of earth, and he was comforted. So it came to pass, after his many labors, as he sat upon Mount Eedlemere, that the sun beat down upon his brow and he felt the heat of it. The sky hung pale blue overhead, empty of clouds or comfort. The dream came to him then, unbidden, and Erde remembered the cool shade, the comfort, and the smell of the earth in the air. Mordius caught his eye, even as his mind wandered

into the manifold passages of his imaginings, and he saw her frolicking in the grass of her design. He strode down from the mountain and stood in the grass upon the plains. He saw, then, what she had wrought and was pleased, for he saw that the earth was broken with the many roots of Mordius' labor.

He took up his thought and from that high place he hurled it as a bolt of thunder through the sky; he spoke to it, casting the language upon it so that it took shape. It landed with great force into the folds of the snow capped mountains. It cut the land and flattened it so that a wide valley became its home. The force of the thought broke the frozen stuff of a glacier, so that a mighty torrent of water fell to the valley and broadened out into a river, clear and cold. There the thought of Erde took shape and form. It germinated, unfolding from the seed of his thought. He blew wisdom into it, and its mind unfolded as the shell of it fell away, and it sprouted; a great root crawled forth into the dirt, and a stem broke the surface of the world. And it grew and grew, rising from the valley floor, climbing ever higher, its roots spreading beneath the earth, cutting beneath the feet of the mountains, even through the world and into the Wall of Worlds and beyond. Its roots tapped the Maelstrom to drink of the Firmament. Its limbs grew likewise into the heavens, spreading ever further, as if to hold up the dome of the sky. Strong and unyielding, the tree grew, thick, covered in armor of bark. It was an ash, and it was the Father of All Trees.

As it broke the earth it called to Mordius, for all things that grew in the earth were known to her. She came to the tree and marveled at it, and she loved it and took the greater store of her wisdom and poured it as water upon the roots of the tree, so that the water pooled all about it spreading through the valley in lakes. Later they were called the Pools of Green. The tree drank of her and embodied all that she saw, knew, and understood of the world.

Fed thus, the tree sprouted green across its broad limbs, and the leaves soaked in the world's youthful sun in all its glory, drinking of the power of Erde as it lay in all things.

And Erde was pleased for he had not seen the leaves, which were Mordius' creation. She gave the greater part of herself to the tree and for that it is called the Mother of All Trees, as well as Father, so that men in later ages worshiped it as the Mother and Father, that is the Eahrtaut, the Great Tree, or what the All Fathers call the Vestotomrud, the Cup of Wisdom. It and all its offspring that came after, they were ever a part of her.

The valley blossomed about Eahrtaut, and the river flowed through it. The tree stood then in the Pools of Green and these pools lay upon the feet of the tree and it is told that when the pools should run dry, then indeed the days of the Gonfod are upon the world and the final Rin begin.

The chroniclers record, that in after ages, during the Winter Dark, when the Horned God came to see the tree, he thought to master it. He pulled upon the tree but its roots were too deep, and he cursed it, and that it was in grim mockery of Eahrtaut that the Horned God fashioned the fortress of Aufstrag, making its shape that of a horribly twisted oak.

Wenafar came to the tree and saw that it was heavy with Mordius' life and wisdom, and she was amazed. She opened her hands and unleashed a torrent of birds. Thus, the avian folk came to the world, and they occupied the high branches of the Eahrtaut and made nests there and sang and frolicked in its rejoice in it.

The year passed, and the season changed. The leaves of Mordius wilted and fell to the ground, exposing the power and the wisdom beneath. The gods marveled and waited to see what might unfold. Thus the seasons turned, and the tree renewed and grew taller and stronger. And at last after a long age, the tree grew heavy with seed, and the birds gathered them up and flew them wither they would, dropping them in the deep valleys of those mountains where the water flowed clean and fresh.

These seeds took root and grew, and in turn they dropped seeds until after the space of many years, the children of Erde's thought spread wide and far. These were the trees, and they were of the Val Eahrakun for they were of the All Father's thought. They became aware of the warm, clean air through their leaves, the warm sun energized them and their leaves spread to take in more, sating them on life giving light. Beneath them, their roots spread out like toes, pushing through the cool earth, thirsty for nutrients and absorbing water from the soil. And they marveled, for they could not see their lives behind them but knew that the world was alive around them. So the trees became sentient creatures, for Erde made them aware of the world around them.

They called themselves the Wil-Eloth, meaning "those who bind together," for they saw the world and themselves as no others had before or would in the future. Their long fingers extended from their mighty boles, one set growing into the earth, extending into the cool places. The other grew into the air, branching out in many directions. One set mirrors the other, even though they grow into two realms. The Wil-Eloth cannot live without one the other. They do not understand that one might lie above the other, and see no difference between their roots and their branches and the world is as two places held together by the bole.

But man and dwarf called them the Avurgen, for they were different than all other creatures with a mind and willful voice.

In time the trees spread until a great forest stood upon the slopes of the mountains, climbing into the high valleys and covering the hills. Their roots grew deep beneath the pale skies and the sun washed them and they grew ever taller. They moved as well, slowly, with roots pulling them along the ground, through earth broken by the deep grasses of Mordius' creation.

Erde walked beneath them then and sang to them and taught them the Language of Creation. They were as his mind in rest and as such readily imbibed the Language from him, learning it and coming to know the nature of creation; though in truth the magic of it escaped them, and the trees were never able to create as were men and gods. But the thought of it carried ever through their branches as they spoke to one another, and the wind carried it from one tree to another; and even today, if one is careful to listen, the echo of it remains in the wind that passes through a forest's highest reaches. Those skilled in the runic tongues may snatch the words and learn fragments of it, if their minds are strong.

The first trees lived as sentient creatures and moved across the land. They never hurried, but rather moved slowly, methodically, reveling in the world of Erde's making. Some settled in places and stayed there ever after, and in the space of many years, great forests of these Avurgen grew across the world. 'Tis said that Erde loved the Avurgen more than all of his creations. He walked amongst them, talking of the world in the early days of its making, of his dreams and designs, of what would come and of the Gonfod, that ending of all things; he talked of all these things, and he knew joy in their company.

The Avurgen lived long, being mirrors of the All Father, but in time they settled, the bark of flesh decayed, and they withered back into the earth from which they came. The seedlings they dropped proved less than the elders for the light of Erde was not upon them; and the seeds of their seeds lesser still with each passing generation. Some could not move, some could not speak, and others were simple trees, rooted to the ground. It is known that the line of the elder never died out for, from time to time, one is born that is a reflection of the power and majesty of the Avurgen at the dawn of the age of the world.

THE COMING OF THE TROLLS

Ineng was a Sentient, he stood as an equal amidst the first grove that grew at the feet of the fence that is the Marl Mountains. An oak of unbelievable size, he towered over his companions, and marveled at what he could see. In time he climbed to the top of a high ridge to see the wide world. Where the sun rose he saw a massive mountain chain that tumbled up into the sky in layer after layer of rocky ridges. Where the sun set he could see a vast sprawling plain of deep green grass. The grass went as far as he could see, and the earth there called to him, promising deeper soil and unspoiled water. Beyond the plains were slim slivers of shimmering light, scores of them, which he learned were lakes of life giving water.

Ineng drifted from his grove, wandering down the slopes, his rooted feet cutting up the earth and finding new passage. But a voice beckoned him back. He stopped and cast his awareness toward the voice, for it was deep and made him thirsty for something he could not grasp. It was the voice of Erde, and it promised him knowledge; so, Ineng stood and listened. He stood apart from the grove and absorbed all that Erde had to say. The Sisters, that is the sun and the moon, came and went countless times. The seasons rolled past, Ineng's leaves fell and returned time and time again, while Erde spoke and all those in the grove learned what he had to say. Ineng learned the Language of Creation, which is the language of all things, and he learned of the world, the Void, and all things besides. At last, Erde finished speaking and settled into the cool shade of the grove and enjoyed the company of the Avurgen for a long while.

As the seasons passed, Ineng watched Erde sleep. But in time he grew curious and wandered from the grove and down the slope so that eventually he found himself upon the plain, far from his fellows. The other Avurgen took notice after a while, and they called to him, but he did not answer them for in his mind's eye stood only the image of the water that he had seen before, and he was thirsty. So he uprooted himself and began his slow, ponderous movement across the world, traveling to the long, deep furrows of the lakes, which in after times were called the Channel Lakes. There he satiated himself with the cool waters for many years. He stood alone and grew to think of the land as his own and he watched over it. He turned the water in its course and he drew so much from the soil that it withered, and the grasses around him died. The water receded before him so that he had to follow it, and when he did so, he killed more of the grasses and behind him stretched a black path of death.

In time, other Avurgen came to him, and he swayed and moaned so that they knew he did not desire their company. Thinking no ill will, they wandered on, for the world was wide. But unbeknownst to Ineng, the Avurgen were growing in number, as the years passed, new breeds of the tree folk sprouted, and some took root and others wandered. Eventually, more Avurgen came to the lakes, and he could not dissuade them, until at last they came close and he sought to turn the soil barren beneath them. He sucked the nutrients out of it and made it like sand, keeping his neighbors from any food. Some of the trees died for his greed and many of them fled.

But some remained, angered at his claim to the lake country. They entered the waters and drank deep there, drying the land around him and stretching their shadows beyond their own form; they blocked the sun and Ineng's light. But Ineng refused to leave, suffering their attack. He grew tired and shabby, his bark peeled away, and he began to die. At last, overwhelmed with the need for sustenance he fled the lakes and moved into the western lands that were barren and hot.

He wandered for long years, and his roots grew shallow, his limbs shorter, and his leaves withered, only growing in small bunches. There, on the Plains of Achrothos he lived, steeped in the rage of his own hate. He set about remaking himself then, using the Language as taught by Erde, to shape his roots into legs, so that he could move faster; and he his limbs into arms. He mimicked the shape of Erde, though that one was faceless, so Ineng in these early days had no eyes or mouth. So came to be one the first of the greater trolls, and though he was not yet evil he was becoming so, driven by his greed and hunger. He was also driven by his envy and hate, for in the barren plains of Achrothos he was always hungry and thirsty and he could find no purchase. He was constantly weak, and he took to blaming his kindred for his plight, never thinking that it was his greed that set him on his course.

And ever has it been, thus, that the weak and evil find blame in others for their own words and deeds.

One day, Ineng gathered himself and strode across the plains, returning to the Channel Lakes. There, he saw a great forest of trees spread along the banks of the waters that were once his. A dark rage took him. With little thought, he picked up a boulder and hurled it, striking a tree in its bole. And the great timber groaned, cracked, and fell to earth. The other Avurgen marveled at this for they had never seen one of them slain in such a way. They turned on Ineng, reaching out with their roots through the ground, sucking the moisture from the earth and balling out the light. Ineng stood against them for many long years, but he could not overcome them, and he began to wither again for their shadows were deep, fashioned so by their knowledge of the Language of Creation.

Thus, Ineng fled again into the wilderness. The forest on the Channel Lakes groaned in triumph. But some few of them broke free of the grove, curious and hungry, filled with greed like Ineng, and they followed him into the wilderness. At first, he feared these Avurgen and fled, leaving them behind, but eventually he realized they too were filled with a lust for the world, much as was he. So they gathered together for a while, but eventually Ineng left them, longing to have his own country. But they learned from him, and they, too, shaped themselves as Ineng was shaped and wandered through the world.

Thus, the race of trolls came to be, and they were as lords over all that came after.

THE GARDEN AT DUSK

It had ever been Erde's joy to fashion things, great and small, so he turned once more to the labors of creation. Into the great forests and plains, rivers and seas, mountains and hills and swamps, he placed other living things: beasts, fish and birds. These were simple tasks, made with only slivers of his self. Few of them knew his mind, or even their own. These animals wandered the world, propagating and evolving, heedless of their creator's desires or intentions. The Avurgen seemed to enjoy their company, for few of these animals caused them harm, and never with malice.

For his part, the All Father watched in amazement when, after many years, certain of these creatures changed, seemingly of their own accord, becoming creatures altogether different from his original intent. They waxed and waned as the Arc of Time uncoiled. Ages went unheeded by any but the gods and the Avurgen. These ages were remembered as the Garden at Dusk, for the gods were free of strife, and the world toiled as it would, growing older and taking root in the endless pools of spent time.

Ornduhl, called the Red God, took heed in these days, and he worked the darkness beneath the world. He tunneled ever deeper in the bedrock of the world, at times coming through the underneath to the Wall of Worlds as set by Erde. In those days, he made caverns of wondrous size and beauty. He guided water from above and filled deep pools and flooded chasms so that the world beneath was filled with the music of flowing water. But the music held an echo of desire in it, a longing for power and mastery. And the waters were dark and cool and dangerous. These were the catacombs of his desire, but called by the dwarves in later years the Krual Ti Ne Onske, the Tombs Without Hope.

Ornduhl, the Red God, suffered all his realm to dwell in darkness. Not the black that came with Unklar in the ages yet to come, but a darkness through which one saw the world as a maze of doubt and confusion. His intent was not beauty, but altogether evil. There, he snared many creatures, and they never returned, or in time their minds twisted to a reflection of his own; he then cast them out of his caves, and they wandered the land, bringing with them doubt and confusion. They were the first signs of the evil that he would inflict upon the world for many ages to come.

Ornduhl did not only fashion the dark of caverns, but it was he that set the stones on fire; he created gems and jewels, rubies, sapphires, diamonds, and black opals; gold, too, and silver and platinum, and in these he set an echo of his voice, so that almost all those creatures who came after could not look upon his without lusting for it. Only the most pure could cast the Red God from their minds and curb their lust for the riches he created. Ornduhl set these stones in the earth, hidden away in deep pockets or veins, where only he or his shadows might find them, for in his youth he took joy in their presence.

The Red God breathed his essence into the untamed waters and wild fires of the Maelstrom. He cast images of his own mind into the chaos and stirred the madness to dreams of wild abandon. Thus many creatures of chaos came into existence, and these Ornduhl set on their own course, and they carried no memory of him, nor thought of word or deed did they do in his favor ever after, unless it was by happenstance or the cause of some device he laid at their door. And from them came both great harm and timely aid to the peoples of Aihrde in future ages.

Erde looked upon the world he created and saw the beauty of it all, the rivers and oceans, the deep forests of trees, the rising mountains and ridges, the valleys and dales. He saw the wonder of colors that the Maiden of Light left as she spun around the world. He loved the cool of the dark when the Maiden of Night rode across the heavens, and he could see into the Void where the memories of his thoughts shone like points of distant light.

So the world stood at creation, and Erde was pleased; and so it was the garden of dusk as the Days before Days unfolded.

OF THE DRAGONS

The Arc of Time continued to uncoil, and the weight of it pooled and gathered at the feet of the Shadow of the All Father. In that time Erde grew restless with his world. Turning his thoughts elsewhere, he wondered what next he could create. He thought then upon the Dragon

Inzaa and the beauty of her form, of the reckless danger caught within her; and his thoughts travelled into the Maelstrom as an ode, and she heard it. In time, she rose from the realm beneath the world and came to him for she too remembered him and all that he had wrought. They bargained then upon the edge of creation and Erde taught her the knowledge of the trees and their waking, and she promised him dragons in turn.

When this bargain was struck, Mordius grew wroth with Erde, for she feared the Dragon more than ought else. She called upon him to break off his bargain and yield no knowledge of the trees, whose roots came even to her doorstep. But the All Father denied her and laughed, for his joy was in creation and always making the world anew.

Mordius was in the power of her youth, unspent and fearless to the point of recklessness. In this she mirrored her brother Ornduhl, untamed and filled with passion. She rose in a tempest about Erde and thundered upon the world, cast out to the trees, bidding them to dig deep into the earth, and to take no heed of rock or stone. The plants of the world did as she bade them, and they dug into the dirt, their roots pushing into any crevice, great or small, driving ever deeper. They broke rock and stone, and they changed the earth in ways none could have predicted. It came to pass that the fauna clung to all things and in time wore it down, whether sandy soil or mountain stone.

Erde took no notice, and he drew forth many trees and set them in the maw of the dragon, and she bore them away to her own domains and set them the task of spreading through her world. Where she had been lay a clutch of eggs, set in woven stone upon a range of mountains whose height she crushed with her weight. And it was a place of wonder, for Inzaa tore a hole in the skin of the world and opened a rift into the Maelstrom; and the Maelstrom ravaged her flesh so that she bled into it. Where her blood and the chaos mingled a deep abiding pool remained, the Nest of Dragons.

How many eggs Inzaa left none now can say, but Erde took the eggs, laid warm earth upon them, and sat over them singing the Language of Creation, his voice like a blanket upon their leathery shells. When at last they hatched, he was amazed. Their serpentine forms slid forth and into the world. Some flew, others crawled, and still others slipped into the rocks and vanished. They were of many colors and shapes; some were long and thin, others wide and heavy. They had wings and a keen intelligence Erde had not expected.

In this way dragons came to be. They carried the intelligence of Inzaa and the wisdom of Erde, and in the breath of Erde's song they learned of the Language of Creation, in parts or in whole. In those days, they were numerous and powerful beyond imagining. They soared upon the heights, commanding the wind, or they plunged to the deepest of the seas, breathing water. They fought terrific duels in the clouds, upon the land and beneath the seas, for nothing save lust of battle. Had there been any but the gods to see them, they would have stood in awe at the ferocity of their battles with fang and talon, fire, ash, acid, and lightning, and in the dragon storms of wind, rain and ice, as well as other things beyond all knowing.

Of them all, the first to hatch was more striking than all the others, and in the breath of Erde's song he, alone, learned the Language of Creation in all its manifold parts. A golden red, with long, narrow body and wings of fire, the dragon lay in the nest of his mother's making long after all the others fled. He devoured the shells of the eggs about him and thus came to know all the dragons and the secrets of their yoke. After he settled upon the ruin of the nest, bathing in the bloody waters of his mother's chaos, he set his gaze upon the All Father.

Erde returned the dragon's stare for a long age, but the dragon never flinched, casting back Erde's vision with unblinking eyes. In time, Erde left the nest, and the wyrm thought himself victorious over the All Father. Few could ever make such a claim, and the dragon took his name then: Frafnog, which means "the unblinking." Though he took other names besides, known only to him and no other, Frafnog was that which he bore in all the ages of the world. Not even Erde could see into his mind for it was the will of Inzaa that some things were denied his wisdom.

Upon Erde's departure, Frafnog moved from the nest and into the world, for he sought to know all he could and understand the order of things. He found the deep places of the world denied to him, but the wide open world indifferent. He stole upon Mordius in a grove of trees and spoke with her at great length, seeking secrets by which he could hold sway over the world, just as, according to his fancy, he held sway over the All Father. Mordius could not look into the dragon's mind, and therefore mistrusted him. Because of this, she made the world aware of Frafnog, so that ever after the forests and plants of Aihrde would not hide the dragon kind.

Frafnog rose then to the skies and passed through the Wall of Worlds, for he had found the secret way by carefully watching the journey of the Sisters. He found Corthain in his dwelling beyond the edge of the world, in the Fortress of Iul. Corthain welcomed the dragon to his realm, and there passed such a discourse that Frafnog learned more than ever he hoped he might. He saw then that he had not bested Erde in his beginning rather that Erde had merely grown bored and restless with him and moved on. He learned that Corthain's might was untested and unspent, and that while others spun themselves into the fabric of the world, Corthain stood upon the grass, in the ever blowing wind, aloof above all, untainted from the moment of his own creation. 5he dragon grew uneasy, and a fear gnawed at him as he talked with Corthain, and in that moment he came to fear Corthain, for he saw the iron of law and the guiding hand of justice, and in that the death of his freedom.

The blowing wind bothered the dragon ever after, for it was freedom that the dragon loved most of all. He was free of the fetters of creation, free of the doom of those bound to others. His power was raw, uncorrupt and his alone to dispense as he saw fit.

Frafnog left Corthain and wandered the world once more. In time, he ruled over all dragons, at least as much as dragons can ever be ruled. For dragons have the power of their own freedom, and bend to another's will only reluctantly and with great pain. Frafnog used the secret of their yokes to grant them names, and these names carried from one generation to the next for all time and in this theZ heard the echo of the nest of their birth.

The Nest of Dragons is reputed a place of great wonder to the wyrms, for here all their ancestors came to be. At its heart stands a pool of clear, red water from which runs a fountain that tumbles down the flanks of the mountain. In the fountain's water lies eternal life for any and all who bathe in it. This Nest the drakes have always sought, for its location was lost to all but the very oldest of the beasts, and even those ancient creatures cannot find it for the world has utterly changed. As is known, Frafnog, the greatest of dragons, hid the Nest in confusion and doubt, so that ever after those who sought the nest lost their way, and it is not known if any have ever found it again.

But the introduction of dragons into the world was never peaceful, for they brought with them a carelessness of action that summoned the wrath of the gods. First Mordius warred with them and then Ornduhl,

and in the last Corthain came down from the Fortress of Iul and gathered about him a host of fey, and fell upon them.

It was in those days that Corthain fashioned for himself a winged steed, with long legs and a noble snout, a white coat, and a yellow mane. He fashioned armor for his mount and himself and took up weapons of his own design. And seeing the great number of dragons and the damage they wrought, Corthain set to the forge and fashioned the Ahramus, the Rune Maidens. These maidens were the mirror of his eye, in that they possessed a singular purpose. He armed them with weapons of steel and armor and gave them steeds, fashioned after his own. The Rune Maidens departed from the Fortress of Iul and rode the winds of the Great Empty; following their grim master, they broke through the Wall of Worlds and came to Aihrde, and there Corthain unleashed them upon the world.

Battles raged all across the heavens as the gods and their minions hunted the dragons. Much of creation was lost or changed, and many of the Val Eahrakun perished.

Ornduhl had the worst of all these duels when the dragon Ineltex, cobalt blue, long, and sinewy, opened a rift in a cave he cherished. He took her by the snout and pulled her beneath the curtain of dark confusion and a great fear descended upon her, for no dragon as of yet had seen the darkness of death. And she bit him on the face and tore out his eye so that he fell back into his own madness. Ineltex then rose on high and took to the heavens where she swallowed the eye. It burned her like a jewel of fire, tearing a hole in her guts, and she vomited it forth, spitting it into the wide world. Where it landed none could say, but Ornduhl was blinded in that eye ever after, and man and dwarf have long sought the eye; for it is said to possess wondrous power.

In their youth, the dragons drove the gods back, but never for long. Mordius ruled the world where ever things grew and the Avurgen were her comrades. They felt a kinship with her that they shared with no other, for it was from her beginnings that they first took root. And Ornduhl commanded the dark passages of the world, and no drake ever overcame the subtleties of his mind, which were the passages of his caverns. And few could stand against the decrees of Corthain, whose wrath was terrible to behold and whose voice fell from Iul like a javelin that no armor could withstand. His voice found the flaw of all things, but one. So in time the dragons learned humility, and the gods had the better of them.

Frafnog stood apart from all these struggles and sought only to master the Language, but in this he was foiled. His voice could not intone the necessary nuance, so that in the end, though he knew the Language, he could not use it. He found in his travels a range of mountains that overlooked the sea from where he could see the sun or moon cast back upon the amber waves, and he took up residence there. He made himself a great lair, dug from the earth and filled with the riches of his many adventures and from the supplicants who came to pay him homage. Even now, nestled in the heart of the Kolkrab Mountains, he is one of only a handful, of all the world, who remember the Days before Days.

When at last the dragons settled into the world and were spread far and wide, Aihrde knew peace and all things grew in abundance for days without number. But the All Father grew restless once more and sought to add to his perfection.

Second Oration - Of the Beginning of Days

Wherein the All Father grants life to the dwarves, the men, and giants. The rise of the Red God and the fortifying of time and his contests. Of the coming of the merfolk and the love of gods. This is accounted the Second Rin upon the Arc of Time.

Of the Faulerde

The rhythm of ages settled across the wide world and Erde watched the bountiful harvest of the Arc of Time. Wide plains of grass carpeted much of the world, washing hills, dales, and highland prairies in tides of green and fenced by towering, snow capped mountains. Flowers bloomed in the fields, and forests abounded on the banks of tumultuous rivers and broad lakes. Rivers flowed, lakes pooled, and oceans moved to and fro. Beasts, fair and foul, walked and crawled, swam and ran, flew and edged across the tracks of the world. Dragons hunted far and wide, driving the ecstasy of Inzaa before them. The gods settled into their rhythms, guiding the world and setting their thoughts upon it.

Erde looked upon all these things and was pleased, but was not entirely content, for the world seemed incomplete and hollow. The trees spoke softly and the gods labored on their own designs. The seasons unfolded, bringing rain or snow, or hot or cold. And it seemed to Erde that the world stood still and his labors incomplete. So he thought then to make a race of creatures to fill the silence of the world, if not with noise, but with Creation. In the end he returned to his labors, shaping the greatest and most fell of his creations. For after the dwarves, the world would never be the same.

Erde labored long and hard upon his forges, pounding upon the substance of creation. At first, he could not shape his vision, and he became angry and his anger fired the forge. He used his tools and lit the embers of desire with the Language and tried to force the shape he saw. But this did not work as he intended. He shook the stuff in his hands, shaping it into molds, but the molds, once set became hard and would not change. He bellowed at the iron and stone that served him, for it was unyielding. He raged against it, and his voice rent the heavens, drawing lightening and thunder down upon the world, the echoes of which remained ever after in places far and away, returning at times in raging storms. In this way, lightening came and it spoiled the gentle rains; from that day to this, as often as not, the echoes of the All Father's rage carried through the heavens, unleashed in thunder-clad bolts and winds that turned to deadly storms.

The All Father fashioned many forms upon the forge. Some were tall and thick, but they did not capture the image he bore in mind and he set them aside. Others were shorter than the first, but these were made too frail. All these he pushed aside, though he bore them no ill will.

In the last he took up his great hammer and smashed it into the molds and the hammer itself shattered. A blinding light exploded across the world, followed by a concussion that rolled over hill and dale. The shards of the hammer flew high, burning white as they fell back to earth, bursting into flame as they passed back through the clouds. They fell to the earth in a rain of fire the likes of which the world had never seen, nor shall ever see again. Thus, the Iergild metal came to Aihrde and it lay in the earth, buried where it fell in those long ago days; and the dwarves lusted for it like gold, for it came from the All Father, whom the dwarves had named, and was powerful beyond understanding.

Before even the iron fell to earth, Erde howled in rage, and he took the substance and shaped it with his own hands, bending it to his insurmountable will, twisting it into the shape and form he desired. At last, tired and spent, Erde brought the dwarves into being and breathed the breath of life into them, passing some of his essence into the dwarven folk. And the first of them opened their eyes and saw him and the world beyond.

Erde wondered at his creation. They were odd to him, not filled with the beauty of the world, but rather its strength and his anger. He looked upon them for a great while, and they returned his gaze without fear, but with a love that only stone can know, a love that is hardened in the furnace of creation, as iron or other metals, and one that roots deep in the earth.

The first of the dwarves to speak called upon him, naming him then in the speech of his people, Al-Erde, which is "Father of All Things," or "Creator," or in its simpler form "All Father." His words were as stone and reflected the iron will that Erde set into the dwarves. "Al-Erde, we see that you stand over the world and that yours is the spring from which all things come. What would you have of us? Set the price, so that we might pay the debt." This dwarf was Hlothver, and he was named the greatest of all the fathers of dwarves.

Though others quailed at the speech, the All Father heard it and knew that it carried no threat or hint of malice. Rather, the weight of stone was in it, and even as a stone sees the world, so do the dwarves. All things are passing by, held to the ravages of wind and rain, but the stone stands to the last, hard. Erde did not answer Hlothver but returned to the forge of creation.

But the dwarves took heed of Erde's silence, and saw the answer in his actions. It came to them then, in those early days of their lives, that the debt must be paid in kind, that the All Father created for the joy of creation and so must the dwarves. Ever after they labored in the making of things, in fashioning homes and tools, in shaping rocks, carving mines, building towers, and later walls of wood and stone. Each dwarf came into the world with the debt of life upon his soul, and it was his or hers to repay the All Father by leaving something behind, great or small. So the desire of the forge became the fire of their lives. They also took from the All Father that actions speak where words must fail, and always they set aside pointless deliberation once their minds were made.

When the breath of the All Father came to the dwarves and gave them life, some design, passed over them and carried down the great forge of his desire and settled in pools upon the discarded creations of his earlier efforts, and brought life to them. These creatures stood alone and apart from the All Father, though they heard and saw the dwarves on high. But they had been set aside and were, in the first of theirs lives, lost. In this, they garnered the love of many of the gods, for the gods were set aside by the All Father in the dawn of the Days before Days, and they felt a kinship with these the All Father cast off. And they sought ever after to guide them, teach them how the world might unfold for them, and where its riches and treasures lie.

In this way, the giants came to be, and they followed whatever path they would and the men split into many tribes and moved hither and anon across the world.

For the most part, the dwarves shunned the guidance of the gods, though in later they had dealings with them. They treated with Corthain, for in him they saw the purpose and will of the All Father. Mordius, they came to love in their own fashion, for she spent herself in the act of creation, and they marveled at the grasses, manifold plants, and trees whose making she had a hand in. Other gods they paid little heed to. In their early explorations, they spent a great deal of time with Ornduhl, for in him they learned of dark places and how to see where there was no light; they loved the cool under the earth and the caves, for there they were closest to the Maelstrom and Creation. Under the earth was his domain, and he treated with the dwarves in those early days, though he never spoke to them of his secrets; not the catacombs, nor of the gems, nor gold, nor ought else that he valued. But of all Val Eahrakun that came before them, they loved none as the All Father.

The Arc of Time spun on as the All Father took measure of the dwarves. When at last he was done, he saw in them the knowledge of the debt owed, and he decided that he loved them greatest of all, and so scattered them across the plains and mountains to see what they would do and how they might pay their debt.

The dwarves were different from all Erde's other creations, for they did not know his mind and they sought to shape the world for themselves. The dwarves traveled everywhere: into the forests, across the seas, and atop mountains and hills. They did not propagate quickly like the trees, but slowly like the dragons. And they built things. They could not master the Language of Creation, but they used pieces of it in their labors. And indeed they were the last, but for a few, who ever used the Language.

Unlike any of his other creations, the dwarves surprised the All Father in their desire to fashion things from the world. This bemused him for a great while, and he watched them build homes from wood and stone. He watched as they entered the cavernous worlds beneath the mountains to make halls, and marveled when they fashioned boats to cross the open waters, an idea that never occurred to the All Father. He saw them as different from all his other makings, for he saw in them desires not his own, wonders that he had not placed within them.

The dwarves became plentiful, and in those days occupied the whole of the world but for the skies. They crossed the mountains and hills, forded rivers and streams, came to know the plains, the river lands, swamps and tundras and all else besides. They built homes of sod and wood and learned the fashioning of tools. This age lasted a great while as the dwarves came to know the world.

It came to pass that the All Father came to the dwarves, seeking to guide them and help them master the forge. In those days the largest host of dwarves dwelt in camps along the rim of the western mountains. They lived wild and free, in small groups, or large, as befit them. Some were only beginning to wander into the east and north and south, plying the world's corners with their journeys. These missed the wisdom of the All Father, for even those who heard his voice in the distance, chose not to return, seeking, rather, their own paths.

The All Father set to teach the dwarves the Language of Creation. For a great while he attempted, but he failed, for the minds of the dwarves were like tablets, and though they could remember them, the subtle power the words was lost on them.

STONE FIELDS

The Arc of Time weighed heavy upon the dwarves, so that they marked the length of their lives in years; they were the first to do so. Unless harm befell them, the greater part of the dwarves lived four or five centuries, though the strong willed lived much longer than that. When their bodies played out and died, the breath of life broke free of the body and the flesh returned to stone. The breath of life, freed from its physical form, wandered listless in the world, without house or home. Eventually the spirits of the departed drifted upon the Arc of Time and followed it through the Maelstrom where the Arc pooled at the edge of all. Here, the breath of life lingered in the dark pools of spent creation, neither living, nor utterly unmade. The Maelstrom threatened to devour them, so that they would be utterly lost.

Seeing this, the All Father was not pleased, so he took the homeless souls and rose above the Maelstrom and looked out into the Great Empty. There, he cast a thought upon the Void and made a place for the breath to dwell; a land of mist where matter assumed the form of the breath's desire. There, he set the breath, the souls, to dwell, until the Gonfod should come.

The breath of life of the dwarven dead dwelt in the space the All Father created, and made of it a field of their own liking. In time, more dwarves died and they, too, rose and took the path laid out for the noble dead to the plane of mist, there to mingle with their fallen kinsmen, to build their own dreaming. Soon the plane was peopled with the souls of departed dwarves and they made of it a world of stone, with high mountains, green fields, and blue skies. They built pillars of stone to honor their memories and to help them remember what and who they had been. And these pillars dotted the landscape. Thus these fields earned their name, the Stone Fields, and there the dead came to dwell.

The All Father bid Toth, who dwelt upon the Arc of Time from its beginning to its end, to marshal all the breath of life together and to guide them to the Stone Fields. And so, Toth became the keeper of the dead, and this task fell to him as he knew that it would, for in him lay all the wisdom of the All Father, gained during his creation in the long ago Days before Days. He did not gather only the souls of the dwarves, but man and giant too, and in later years all the others who departed. Of the Val Eahrakun, he found those who might aid him in his task, and of them all, appointed Heth as a guide for the dead.

It was Heth, who later gathered the crows and ravens of Wenafar's making, and gave them the power to speak with the living and the dead so that he might pass judgment. For this reason those birds came to be loved and feared.

But Toth could see that some of the dead were not deserving of the Stone Fields, and these he abandoned and left them to walk upon the Arc of Time where they might enter the Empty Pools and spend their days until the Gonfod in lonely dejection. Others became lost for their evil deeds, to wander the Rimfelt and were consumed in the Gegelmesh and other lingered.

THE GEGELMESH

It is known that the Arc of Time served as a road for all things that left the living world. Drifting beyond the All Father's creations, the listless dead, those not deemed fit for the Stone Fields, followed the Arc until its end. They were those who misspent their lives in evil thoughts or deeds. There they gathered, riding upon, or being devoured by, the Eternal Pools where time began and where the Arc of it played out, gathering at the bottom of Creation in an impenetrable darkness.

But Ornduhl knew of the Eternal Pools and long coveted their cloaking shadows. He saw the listless dead of dwarf, man, and giant gathering there, beyond all hope or aid. Here was the mote in the eye of Erde,

and here Ornduhl set to building his house. He hollowed out a great cavity in the Void, and divided it into five pools. He harnessed some small portion of the river of the Arc of time and bent it so that it flowed away from the Eternal Pools and gathered in the hollow places he dug. He bewitched the Arc itself, so that many who were weak and evil drifted from it and followed his own path, the Rimfelt, to his end. He gathered the dead who drifted toward him and bound them to him as slaves to serve him in the Five Pools.

During all these machinations he discovered other creatures who lingered in the Eternal Pools, fearful of the world, or the wrath of the All Father. These were named creatures, the aru, succubus, vulcreed, cull, and the seere and others besides. Some he bound to him, though others would not have it so, but he brought them all to the Five Pools.

In that time, Ornduhl ordered the making of his house far from the eyes of all others.

To do so, he gathered the listless dead and forced them to labor upon a castle. He dug a deep chasm that opened a rift to the Maelstrom, so that any who fell through plummeted into that cauldron and were forever destroyed. He set a bridge across the chasm and built a great barbican upon the far side. In the barbican, he set a portcullis made of the iron of his will. There he constructed a great wall that extended the length of the chasm for distances beyond the understanding of time, and only the bridge and barbican breached them. Beyond the barbican lay a courtyard, and beyond that the many storied buildings, keeps and walls of his castle, that he named the Homeless House. No gate guarded the House itself, for Ornduhl was always vain and did not believe any could pass his iron will. The Homeless House, as vast as it was, proved only a small moment in the vast inky blackness of the Eternal Pools.

About this time, Toth took note that the Arc of Time was bewitched and that he knew not where one of the streams went. He moved to gather it back into the fold, for his task was to govern time and all that rode the Arc. But this brought him into conflict with of Ornduhl the Red God, and Ornduhl chaffed under the eye of the Shadow.

Ornduhl immersed himself in his hallowed cavity and wrapped himself in time. Thus armed, he came to Toth to converse with his tormentor. "I would my constructs be my own, without the eyes of the Shadow of my father upon them."

"It is not mine to decide what I see and know, for I am the Shadow of all things that are of the All Father. And all things are of the All Father. I am that Shadow until the Gonfod, the end of days."

"The Gonfod is only a rumor. He would not unmake all that he loved."

"The All Father has given of himself to make all things. With every act of creation he is made lesser than he was before, though far greater than all we have or can ever have. But all that he gives, passes down the Arc of Time to gather here in the Endless Pools. When the last of the All Father passes the Arc to gather into the pools, the river of his thought shall end, and all that is, shall end with it. These are the Gonfod, the end of days."

Ornduhl looked upon Toth, and time played out around him, seeping into the Endless Pools. "It shall not be so. For I shall not permit it. I have seen Erde's weakness, for it is I, and I alone, who dared to challenge him in the beginning. And in his wound I saw the power of our own direction."

"You may not stop the Gonfod, for it is as the All Father designed it."

"No. I, too, am of the All Father's making and I alone was given the will to survive without his sufferance. I have made my own pool, and this I shall govern until I am unmade by him."

"A shroud of confusion lays upon your house and the waters of time that flow around it. But you have no claim upon even that time, for it too, though hidden from my gaze, is the river of his thought."

"You are mistaken, Toth. For you do not know the mind of the All Father. You are but a shadow of what is to come and what might have been. And shadows are but poor mirrors of their masters. I am the hidden thought of Erde. In me lies his true desire, and the end of times is not what he seeks or has ever sought. I am the dam to the river of time. I shall stop its flow and the end of days will not come to pass. The Gonfod is a dream."

And Toth grew doubtful, for he was the mirror of the All Father, and knew that in all things the All Father created lay his thought. And in Ornduhl lay Erde's hidden desires. And of all things the All Father knew, Toth also knew, but for two, and one was the mind of Ornduhl.

Toth then foretold that Corthain and many others would attempt to stop Ornduhl in his bid to maintain the world. And that Corthain would unleash the Fortress of Iul, the Vesk, that lies at the beginning, and sail the Arc of Time to confront his brother. There, the brothers would wage war against one another at the end of time.

Ornduhl saw that it was true, and he took council with himself. For his part, Toth failed to control the strand of the Arc governed by the Red God, and he saw it as the fate set by the All Father.

And Ornduhl was able to finish the Homeless House in quiet.

The House served Ornduhl as a fortress for many ages; there he built his armaments, crafted sorcery, made beasts of wild abandon, guided his servants, tortured his enemies, and devoured any that he snared upon the Arc, forcing them to serve his will. He began to build an army, gathering all those of foul disposition and evil intent about him, arming them or cloaking them in sorcery. And it is known that the Homeless House became a bastion, ever filling with an army of great size, meant for the days of the Gonfod when time should end.

Thus it was that one branch of the Arc of Time ended in a nightmare, the Gegelmesh.

Ornduhl poisoned the Gegelmesh with his greed, and the poison spread until the pool became a place of wretched madness. The Homeless House served as a center for the madness that men later called the Wretched Plains, a madness that attracted creatures both bent and foul. Around Ornduhl, the plains became a mad house, where thoughts took shape and the listless dead wandered in a state of confusion, if not suffering. What had been an afterlife of quiet dark and mindless waiting became for the cursed, a torment, for many souls found themselves bound to the will of the Red God.

EALOR AND THE GATES

Even as Ornduhl harvested darkness in the caves of the world, Corthain settled in the Fortress of Iul and Mordius built gardens of wondrous beauty, Ealor settled into the deep waters. When first he entered the world, he wandered far and wide, always in a watchful quiet. But at last he came to a cliff that overlooked a deep ocean. He looked into the waters and was amazed. They stood still and lifeless, but they were deep and full of promise. None had as yet dared the water, for the All Father himself labored in the dark upon the land and all those who

followed him were near to him. But Ealor was ever his own, with little care or concern for the machinations of others, and with a booming laugh he leapt from the cliff into the water. Thus, the first waves came to the world's oceans, and they tore all across the deep waters, creating a tumult that washed away islands and battered the coasts of the world.

Ealor swam through all the deeps and he took a form that propelled him at terrific speeds. He cut channels in the bedrock, and made rivers in the oceans. He explored all the dark places under the water. In places, he tore the firmament and let the fire of the elemental planes spill into the oceans and watched as the fire and water battled one the other.

Ealor laughed all the while, and when he did so, his mirth shook the waters and caused titanic waves that rolled to and fro across the world. He reveled in the water and made the oceans his own. He built his home there, channeling the water of the Oddine to make a house with walls and roof. It was massive, sprawling for leagues and leagues under the sea, and in the dark and murky depths it became a maze for any foolish enough to assail it. His hall bore no name until the time of the dwarves, and they called it Green Halls. It was known as a place where no ship could trespass, that it was not lost to the tumultuous waters.

Others saw Ealor's work and came to the water too, and they slipped under them and swam the deeps. But he was always the first and the greatest of those to command the waters.

It came to pass that Ealor stood upon a large outcropping of rock, laughing as a wave battered the land to pieces. But as he watched a great light sprung up across the water and stretched for as far as his eye could see. He was mesmerized and watched it for a great while. In time he realized that the light was a reflection of the heavens and he looked up to see Ea-Raena, who brought light to the world in a broad curtain. He loved her then, for in her he saw a wondrous beauty and a joy that made all things cast gentle shadows. He dove into the waters and swam far out to sea and called her to him with a horn he fashioned of stone.

Ea-Raena heard the horn and saw Ealor in the water below and she in turn was captivated. For the waters, calmed by the mind of Ealor, cast back a reflection of her light. And she saw herself for the first time, not as she saw herself, but as the All Father saw her. Cast in the mold of Mordius, she was a woman born, shapely with long silvered hair. She descended to the sea upon winds of her own making and gently reached out to touch her reflection in the waters. But Ealor had the better of her and laughing, reached a hand through the water and pulled her into the deep quiet. He pulled her down, drowning the light of the moon, but for her part, she cared not, and laughed at his mischief and swam with him.

He brought her to his Green Halls beneath the water and for her amusement created all manner of creatures. Thus, the fish, whales, and other beasts came to be. He made the merfolk in imitation of Ea-Raena and himself, and she placed the light of knowledge, given her by the All Father, in them; so, they peopled the sea for many ages.

In time Erde called to Ea-Raena, for he needed more light and her shape changed as is told elsewhere. And Erde charged her to watch over her sister and make sure the light fell upon the earth. And Ea-Raena did this for Erde. Ealor watched her race in the heavens and was much amused, and he saw her sister and was delighted. His mirth grew even greater when he saw storms brewing upon the surface of the water, caused by their madcap racing. He laughed and shook the waters so that the oceans mirrored the storms of the air.

But once in awhile he called to Ea-Raena with his horn of stone, seeking her to join him in Deep Halls. And she came to him, for she loved him and loved the sea as well, and the world stood in darkness and the moon a shadow in the sky.

OF THE MERFOLK

As is written, Ea-Raena descended into the seas to consort with Ealor, Lord of the Green Halls. And for her amusement he cast the merfolk into a shape that mimicked his and hers, and that Ea-Raena placed the light of knowledge in them. He made them whole, with hands and feet, legs and arms. But from their bodies sprouted a range of gossamer fins that they wore like clothing. The women bore a resemblance to Ea-Raena, and they were beautiful in the extreme. The men of that species were cast as was Ealor, strong and mirthful. And the race itself was mischievous and laughed over much, so that in later ages men grew to fear them for their haunting voices carried through the water and into the air.

But the light of Ea-Raena was always in the merfolk, though greater in the women than the men, and they bore it as a lamp before them and it lit the way through the dark hazards of the ocean deeps. So it came to pass that the mermaids swam in waters deeper than all others, bearing with them a glowing lamp. This they could extinguish at will, or use it to light the way. Sailors who spied the mermaids feared them, for the lights moving under the water had a ghostly look, and at first they did not know what they were. In later ages when knowledge spread, they knew to never trust the merfolk, the women most of all, for they lured men into the depths where they drowned.

The merfolk are not accounted in the peoples of the world, for they are wild and deathless. They do not dwell in kingdoms, nor lust for power or knowledge, but dwell only in the hope of sport. They range in waters cold and warm, living in the open seas, hunting fish, whales, and other creatures of the sea. They do not break the surface of the water often, though they can if they so desire.

As is told in other tales, Anderoth the Sailor perished at sea, and when the fire of his life left him, Ealor, grieved at Anderoth's death. It happened that at that time Narrheit lay in the Green Halls and Ealor sought his advice and asked what might come of the sailor. Ever one to dispense evil, Narrheit told Ealor that Anderoth would travel the Arc of Time and be devoured by the Gegelmesh of Ornduhl. He persuaded Ealor that he could rein in the Arc of Time and save Anderoth from his doom. And Ealor took heed at his brother's words and opened the world beneath the seas. There, he strove with the will of the All Father for the soul of Anderoth.

Narrheit took advantage of Ealor's absence and swam out amongst the merfolk. He frolicked with them, and they welcomed his carefree spirit, for he laughed and loved with them. But of all the Val Eahrakun, Narrheit is the most unwholesome, for there is no part of him that is good, nor kind, unless by accident or neglect. He placed in the merfolk a darkness, so that ever after they knew fear. Some he corrupted with a twisted spawn, so evil creatures, foul and broken, were born to them. Ealor's folk shunned and drove these abominations into the deeper seas where they thrived and multiplied. They called themselves the Saogan, the "unwanted," and they made war upon the merfolk ever after.

When at last Ealor learned the truth of the Arc of Time, he made to secure Anderoth in other ways. When he returned to the Green Halls he found his people fearful and Narrheit making greater mischief. Ealor laughed at Narrheit's joke and made to run him off, but Narrheit lingered, enjoying his adventures under the sea.

"Brother, you must pay for meddling with my folk and lingering in my waters. Make a creature that all will marvel at and that peoples the deep waters. Make it yours, and we will hunt it ever after so that my people may have their vengeance upon you."

"Aye, that I might do, for I have had a mind to mimic you all, in your creations. But let me ponder this in the deep and quiet places of the sea and make good at what I can."

"Go then, but do not take over long, for the world is changing above, and you do not want to be forgotten."

So Narrheit repaired to the deep oceans and there dwelt for a long while. The merfolk came and taunted him with their lamps of knowledge, tormenting him for the fear of wisdom he gave them. Narrheit turned this way and that and tried to drive them off, but they were too fast and possessed of too few limbs.

And it passed that he found a puala beast laired in the deeps, with a long tail of a body, but a head sprouting eight tentacles. The beast was a marvel to Narrheit, and it gave him an idea. He made the octopus, squid, and the kracken and unleashed these creatures into the sea. Aggressive and huge and possessed of a cunning only Narrheit could give them, they ranged far and wide, feeding on all the creatures of Ealor's design. He then made the crabs and other creatures that walked upon the ocean floors. These feasted on all that settled upon the ocean's bottoms. The merfolk took to hunting them, especially the giant squid, for they were fast and very aggressive.

Ealor laughed at all this and said the debt was paid, though he found no beauty in Narrheit's creatures. He saw, but did not care, that some were gifted with intelligence. These were very large, and they settled into the deep places of the seas, devouring knowledge, growing ever more powerful. They were called the Dark Children of Narrheit. The merfolk saw them and hunted them whenever they could, rooting them out of their deep holes. In time some of these creatures grew too great for the merfolk to challenge, and these remained at the bottom of the sea. As with any of the creations of Narrheit, they had no purpose or thought other than their own, and he cared not what role, if any, they played in the unfolding of Aihrde.

So the merfolk found the oceans a dangerous place, but this mattered little to them, for they loved the hunt and it seemed to them that Narrheit had only made them even more sport.

THE CHARMS OF INZAA

It is known that the All Father gave the breath of life to the giants at the same time that he gave it to the dwarves. Some of these were greater, others less, but all wandered in time across the world. Of them all, the most knowledgeable were the Bult. The Bult dwelt in high places and reveled in creation, for their minds were deep, and their understanding of things was greater than that of all of their kindred. They built themselves a kingdom in the clouds, and it was called the kingdom of Bult, though it was short lived.

Inzaa saw this, even through the Maelstrom, and she coveted the Bult as slaves. In time she stole through the Maelstrom and came to the world of the All Father, hungry for knowledge. She came upon the Bult, and wove a spell of charming about them, bidding them come to Inzae. "I shall give over to you the whole of the world of Inzae to fashion in your own image." And this appealed to them, for they understood that all they did was in the shadow of the All Father, and they did not understand who or what Inzaa was. But Inzaa's shadow is tangible, and her mind is bent on destruction and slavery. Hers is a calculated mindlessness that devours all things. Her words dissembled the truth and beguiled the people of the Bult so that they took up their tools in gladness and followed her to the world beyond the world. She bound them to her then and forbid they ever return to the world of the All Father. The Bult became one with the world of Inzae and even as it was doomed, so were they, and they were lost.

The greater part of the Bult followed Inzaa, but some few remained in Aihrde, fleeing into the wilderness of the world and these became creatures fell and powerful, and they became a people apart from their kin, though they never forgot she that destroyed them. Those Bult who followed Inzaa fell from the memories of the world and no word of them came again to Aihrde until the dwarven Smiths of Norgorad Kam uncovered the tunnels between the worlds and fashioned the Rings of Brass. Only then was the knowledge of their servitude revealed, and it was learned that they were slaves of Inzaa and treated as thralls so that their power broke, and she consumed them, body and soul. These giants took up the name Trottigen, meaning "the forgotten".

Third Oration - Songs of the Dwarves

herein the dwarves order their world to repay the Debt of Life. Of the coming of the goblins and the worth of men. The fall of Mordius and the Red Cloak and the rising might of the Red God. Of the long wars and the lamentations. This is accounted the Third Rin upon the Arc of Time.

RUNE LORE

As is told, after the dwarves came to the world the All Father sat and pondered a long while. Many wandered away from Erde in those days, but the greater part of the dwarves remained in his shadow. At last he sought to teach them the Language of Creation, for he saw in them the iron of his own will, and he thought that they might master it and add to his own creation. They listened and learned what they could.

The early fathers of the dwarves could speak the Language of Creation. Though, in practical application it failed them. Its subtleties escaped the hard minded dwarves, and their craft suffered for it. The dwarven All Fathers, priests of their realm, managed the language better, but even they failed to master it. Their creations required the hammer to shape and the mind to mold. In the fashioning of items of metal and stone, and carving great halls of wondrous beauty from the bones of the earth, they excelled, surpassing all others that came before or after. The Language proved greater than that, however, for its power comes from the everlasting Void and the depths of the All Father's mind. It is subtle and brutal, fair and foul. It flows without restraint, but is bound in iron; it is a rope with no end. The dwarves, ever masterful, sought to control the world through which they trod, but the seen and the unseen, and the nuances of the Language, escaped them. They might create, but their creations fell short of the maker's desires.

The greatest of the dwarven smiths took their knowledge, that which they understood, and marked it down in the Mammoth Scrolls, the holy writings of the early dwarves. They cast the scrolls in thin sheets of brass and etched all the history of the world: its making, those that moved across it, the runes, and the language of creation as they understood it. The Scrolls were rolled up and placed in stone cases and set in the high halls of Gorthoraug atop Mount Austrien.

The ever practical dwarves understood their limitations, and, using the Mammoth Scrolls, recast the Language in those long ago days. They set to crafting the words of the Language into physical constructs, making tools of its power. This power they captured in a complicated and vast set of written characters, the dwarven runes. The runes contained power, often one power layered upon another. The dwarves crafted these runes into items and objects of their own desire. Thus, the runes came to be; glyphs with the power of the All Father's words bound within them.

The dwarves learned that few substances could contain the written marks: stones would break, wood fall to ruin, bones to dust. Brass, they discovered, kept the runes intact, as would parchment made of dragon wings, and the flesh of dwarf, man, or giant. So they turned to this new craft, placing the runes upon sheets of brass, dragon parchment, or their own bodies to carry them out into the world where their power might better serve the dwarves in war and peace. With these runes, they made many wonders. They built halls of deep glory, treasures of renown, worked jewels into crowns, and other wonders unsung by man or elf. The runes of dwarven manufacture were later grouped into schools by the wizard Nulak Kiz Din; The Four Pillars, the Arcs of Time, Paths of Umbra, Gray Mist, etc.

For the most part, the runes fell into darkness. Lost in time. But in ages to come, word of them came to the scholars of kings and the wizards of men. These individuals searched for the secrets of rune lore, questing for their power, and the wealth they promised. Many tried and many died, but some few won out and in the end unraveled the sorcery behind the runes. Only a few of the runes had found their way into the light; many more lay buried, waiting to be unearthed by those stalwart enough to crawl into the hidden recesses of the world.

Though the dwarves learned the Language from the All Father, they taught themselves the secrets of metalworking and became greater smiths than ever Erde imagined. His voice had carried the promise of things to come, and revealed the nature of things that had been, and the dwarves used this knowledge in all that they did and quickly mastered stone and metal. These they shaped and wrought into tools with which they could build homes and roads between them. Here rose the ancestors of Angrod the Mighty, from whom descended Dolgan King of Grundliche-Hohle, and Helgostohl the Iron Shaper, who proved skillful in all that they set their minds to. All dwarves took the All Father's teachings to heart, and explored the world of the forge. They were ever the masters of creation because of these gifts from the All Father, and with it they thought to pay the debt of life.

The dwarves took what Erde taught and used it in their own manner. They shaped objects from the elements. Where the All Father had used only the substance of the Void, the dwarves used all things. They used every type of metal, stone, sand, water, air. They tunneled for these resources, and by doing so they first unearthed the treasures of the earth. These were Ornduhl's creation, the gold and gems in the veins of the world. With these, they shaped wondrous things: broaches, staves, rings, necklaces, and more. This, however, the All Father did not intend, and he left the dwarves to their own devices, watching in bemusement as they rethought and remade his creations.

In time, the All Father tired of the dwarves and turned his mind to other endeavors. He ascended to the heavens and their dwelt in solitude, watching the mad races of the Sisters as their heaven-bound chariots thundered across the skies. In time, Erde passed from the histories of the world of dwarf and dragon, and turned to the shaping of things in the Maelstrom and the ordering of his thoughts and the planes of existence.

So in time, the dwarves waxed powerful beneath the sun, and they named their world Erde. They named kings to rule over their people and holy men, All Fathers, to guide them. They had in them a great lust for the making of beautiful things, and it is said that it was a reflection of the lust of the All Father, for ever in his shaping of the world, did he seek beauty.

FIRST HOME

The dwarves dwelt in the mountains of the east that they called the Arnhul. The Arnhul were tall, stark mountains with snow-capped peaks and deep roots. Trees crawled up their flanks and grasses grew aplenty in meadows high and low. To the south, the Arnhul's rocky

slopes tumbled down to the shores of the Shallow Sea. To the north and east lay a deep forest that the dwarves at first feared. To the west lay the broad, still waters of the Sea of Erun. To the west and north of Erun lay the dry steppes, the Dulcet. The lands all about were inhospitable. Only a narrow stretch of mountains allowed egress from the Arnhul, so they lived and dwelt in those mountains for many long years.

The dwarves called themselves "the Folk." With an ever-increasing population, the Folk spread throughout the Arnhul, building towns and villages. They discovered that they enjoyed the underground, where they were protected from predators, and the dragons that hunted them, most of all. There, they were housed against the elements; rain and snow affecting them little or not at all. So the dwarves tunneled beneath the hills and mountains, making halls of stone.

They crafted all manner of things, great and small, yet they were still new to their craft and spent many years perfecting it. Few artifacts remain from these early days, and those that do are prized, not for their perfect shape, but rather because they are relics from a time when the dwarven race was young.

The Arnhul saw the first of the dwarven Kingdoms; Gorthurag, "First Home". They cut it from the stone of Mount Austrien, that is in the Vulgate, "God's Forge." Here, their greatest Kings ruled, springing from the line of Argrind, called Darkeye. The pains of his labors upon the forge brought the dwarves into a new age, an age which heralded the perfection of their craft. From his hand sprang the Axe of the All Father, shaped from Iergild metal. It was then, and still remains, the most holy of items in all the dwarven hordes.

Argrind ruled Gorthurag for many years, and the dwarves grew great and powerful. They began tracking their days by the movements of the sun and moon. They learned many crafts: leather working, carpentry, and the smelting and shaping of brass, copper and iron. They built halls beneath the mountains and roads between them. When Agrind returned to stone, his people, filled with the wonder of his memory, began migrating further from the spires of Mount Austrien.

As is told, the dwarves labored with the All Father, learning what he would teach of the Language of Creation, casting it into form and shape. They built above and below ground and slowly pushed out from the Arnhul Mountains, following the footsteps of those earlier dwarves who had left the seat of the All Father and never learned of the Language. At first they came to the shores of the Sea of Erun and wondered at it. They built small craft to ply those gentle waters. On land, they pushed up the long channel of mountains that ran north and so came to the Crusp Mountains. From there they spread far and wide into the northern lands, even as their kin moved south across the sea, or the Dry Steppes, and on into the west. Dwarves sailed upon the Edge of Forever, and saw the mist in the west that marked the Wall of Worlds. They avoided the mist for it was believed to be a curtain of death.

These days are called the Great Migrations in the Mammoth Scrolls. The kingdom of Grausumhart, Grimjaw in the Vulgate, was founded beneath the Crusp Mountains. In the space of a few centuries this great kingdom rivaled Gorthurag in all but its history. In time, her line, under the Uthkin Kings, would challeng that of Argrind for rule over the Folk. In the Cradle of the World some settled in the Brass Halls, Norgorad Kam, and others to the north in those same lands at Roheisen Hohle. The fifth of the great realms of the dwarves, Nogrick, spread beneath mountains far to the north. All of these realms, in time, spawned other kingdoms, but only one ever matched the greatness of the first five: Alanti.

Upon the Sea of Erun the dwarves there took up the art of ship building , and soon mastered the art of sailing the waters of the world, whether river, lake, or sea. The first dwarves loved the water, for in it they saw a hint of the All Father's challenges. Upon their great ships they plied the oceans, exploring the whole of the world and settling in distant lands, and Anderoth was the greatest. Yet only the eldest of the dwarves remember this love of water, for after the great Goblin-Dwarf Wars, when so many of the folk drowned, the passage over water became anathema for the dwarves. To this day, they hesitate even to cross broad streams. But in those days, they possessed no fear, and battled the seas with vigor. The outposts they founded became dwarven kingdoms in later days, and Alanti became the most wondrous of all dwarven realms before its loss beneath the oceans of Aihrde.

The Mammoth Scrolls relate that the dwarves could fashion ships that could master not only the water, but the sky as well. They recount tales of great boats, with mast and sail, plying the heavens in quests for the unknown. Some evidence supports these legends, for in the plains beyond the Rhodope Mountains, elders speak of such a craft which pirated the caravans of Aufstrag during the Age of the Winter Dark.

OF ANDEROTH & THE SEA

Anderoth was a dwarf of surpassing strength and wisdom. Early in life he settled upon the shores of the Sea of Erun, and spent his days constructing boats. Here, he plied the waters of the shallow sea, exploring its beaches, islands, and coves. But he grew restless, and after hearing of an even greater water to the south, he traveled to where the Dulzdine Ocean battered the rocky cliffs of the Arnhul Mountains. Immediately taken with the lust to cross the waters, he constructed a boat and cast off, only to have it battered by wave and current and, eventually, smashed into the rocks. But he built another ship and another, until such time as his boat could withstand the power of Ealor's mirth and bring him to the deep waters far off the coast.

He plied the waters for a great while, sailing west, then turning with the wind, Anderoth sailed far to the north, past the lands that men after called Ethlium. He skirted the mists of the Wall of Worlds, and even tried passing through them. There, he saw the Void, but too, he saw the Rirm ot Sul, the track of the sun and moon. After many seasons at sea, he returned to his people. He gathered a crew of like-minded adventurers and set off again to cross the wide oceans and see the world at large. So began the many adventures of Anderoth.

Of all the stories told of Anderoth, the greatest was his mastery of the Rirm ot Sul, for he passed into the Wall of Worlds and was not lost, but followed the moon even around the world so that he came to the oceans upon the other side of Aihrde. There, he found the lands of Dur. His brother, Ikem, died when the ship foundered off a coast of the eastern lands, and Anderoth gave the name to that peninsula, Ikem's Horn. He found the lands of Koth and crossed over the edge of Deep Halls where his ship was battered and again broken. After effecting repairs in the islands of what later housed the lands of Alanti. he crossed over through the Amber Sea and then sailed back home again. It was in the lands of Alanti that he mastered the lodestone, after which he bore one with him always.

For five years Anderoth and his crew sailed the wide world, and when they returned, he was heralded as a wondrous hero. Many followed in his wake, though they would not travel the Rirm ot Sul, but rather set off into the east, exploring all the world's hidden places.

These journeys brought the attention of Ealor, Lord of the Deep, who watched with amusement as the tiny crafts scuttled to and fro across

his wide realm. Many ships foundered and many dwarves drowned. Other expeditions were taken by storms and their ships were sent to the Deep Quiet. All this Ealor watched. But Anderoth, the first of his kind, drew Ealor's attention the most and he marveled at the determination and strength of the sailor, so that he challenged him with ever greater storms, and ever more powerful beasts.

Anderoth took all these adventures in stride. In time, he learned from where many of his travails originated and decided to challenge Ealor directly, and the two contested the waters, Ealor and Anderoth. The sailor bore his lodestone as a weapon in these contests, and it aided him in all that he did. But never did Ealor unleash his full strength, for such Anderoth could not match, and it would mean his doom. The sailor grew ever skillful, and he learned the moods of Ealor, and these are the moods of the seas. His mastery pitted him against the greatest storms and deepest waves, and he plied the deeps and challenged Ealor for many years.

At last, age overtook Anderoth, and his body could not withstand Ealor's challenges. Ealor, being of the higher order of the Val Eahrukun, was deathless and being separated from all of his own kin, did not see, nor fully understand the mortality of the Folk. There came a time where Ealor spied Anderoth aboard his ship, and the joy of his mirth tore the sea asunder and sent huge waves across Anderoth's bow. The dwarf lord's ship rolled to the side, and he gripped the wheel, struggling in the storm's rage and pitting his skill and craft against the sea. But his arms grew weary before ever Ealor realized it, and the dwarf was thrown into the mast and lost sight of the world. He slid over the side, falling into the water's madness to vanish into the Deep Quiet, and as his breath left him, he dropped his lodestone

The stone sank fast, leaving its master behind. It eventually struck the ocean floor near to where Ealor stood and the god looked up to see his friend sinking to those depths where few creatures dared go. He saw, then, that his friend was dead and had left the world of Aihrde. He marveled at death and wondered what it meant.

As Ealor pondered this, his brother Narrheit came to him seeking aid in some wild endeavor of his, and Ealor questioned him about death and what it meant. And Narrheit told him of it, but he twisted the words and spoke only of Ornduhl and the Wretched Plains for he loved to jest with Ealor, for that god always laughed. He spoke of the listless dead and how they traveled the Arc of Time and came to the Gegelmesh and there suffered the nightmare of eternity as a slave to Ornduhl.

For his part Ealor bore no ill will toward Ornduhl, nor had the two ever quarreled, but he knew that Ornduhl loved the dark, and it grieved him to think that Anderoth and all the sailors of the world should suffer at his hand. The more he thought upon it, the more it grieved him. Turning to Narrheit he sought his council and Narrheit saw an opportunity to bedevil Ornduhl and Toth, to plague the Arc of Time and hinder the workings of Corthain and the All Father all at once. He told his brother of the Arc of Time and bid him rip the world asunder and pull the Arc into the deep oceans, so that he, Lord of the Seas, might govern who must pass to the lands of the dead.

Ealor laughed for this struck him as a good idea. He fashioned a great three pointed spear and thrust it into the belly of the world, spearing the Arc of Time. He pulled upon it, though it would not budge. He laughed all the more and pulled ever harder, and Narrhiet laughed as well. Bidding his brother to hold the Arc, Narrheit swam into the deep places of the world to hinder many of the creatures of Ealor's manufacture. He gathered his Children and warred upon the mermen and wreaked havoc where he might.

Ealor struggled with the Arc of Time until at last he realized that it was the river of the All Father's thought and could not be moved. But he could see the Arc and govern its passage, for he had torn the world asunder at the bottom of the ocean. Before long Ealor spied the flame of Anderoth passing down the Arc of Time to the Pools of Eternity, there to be judged worthy or unworthy of the Stone Fields. And Ealor caught him up as a fish in a net and took the flame of him to the Green Halls. Anderoth knew the Lord of the Seas and joined him in death, but begged Ealor to look for his fellow sailors so that they too could join him in the Green Halls. And Ealor took pity on the captain and his kind. He saw all the lost sailors who had passed into the Eternal Pools or beyond and he could not bear it.

Ealor set to fashioning a ship for Anderoth. He built it of the bones of whales that lie at the ocean's deeps, and rigged it with ropes of eel bones, made to bite the tails of one the other. The sail he wove of dead men's shirts.

Ealor gave Anderoth the ship to command. However this ship, unlike any the dwarf had sailed in life, plied the ocean's depths and could surface only rarely. And Ealor set it the task to gather the fallen sailors even before they gathered upon the Arc of Time and bring them to the Green Halls to join the dead beneath the sea. He tasked mermaids to travel with Anderoth and light the way with the lamps of knowledge given to them by Ea-Raena. Thus Anderoth became a captain in death and the admiral of Ealor's fleet.

Anderoth harvests the souls of sailors as they sink into the deeps, but those he misses come to rest upon the bottom of the sea and are there devoured by the Children of Narrheit, who are ever hungry.

Ealor saw the breach in the ocean's depths and watched the Arc of Time, and he saw that creatures were coming and going through it, some of Ornduhl's design; this concerned him. To close it, he built three gates, one upon each of the openings his trident tore in the world, and locked them with riddles of sorcery. These gates marked the road that is the Arc of Time so that when one passed them they knew they were close to the Eternal Pools and the Wretched Plains. In later ages, men came to the gates and gained access to the Arc of Time through sorcery or might.

It is told by the wise that when the All Father's thought should run its course and the Gonfod begin, that Ealor and Anderoth shall lead his fleet to the Three Gates and open them, adding his strength to Corthain's as they wage war against Ornduhl for the command of Time. The Children of Narrheit will rise and contest them for mastery of the gates, Ealor will wrestle with the greatest of them ,and Anderoth's fleet battle them; all of this will occur in the Gonfod.

OF THE THIRD WAR OF THE GODS

It came to pass that the Red God learned of the Three Gates that breached the Arc of Time, and rose in all his might, leading a host of creatures as gathered in the Homeless House. They rose from the Gegelmesh and assailed Ealor's Gates, tearing them asunder. All the madness of Ornduhl's evil spilled into the ocean floors. He augmented his host with creatures of fire, who had long dwelt in the depths of the oceans, where they had settled in the long ago days of Ealor's youth, when he opened a rift in the Maelstrom. They rose through the oceans in great columns of flame, to land upon the earth, burning all they saw so that columns of ash settled upon the waters, far and wide. Thus, the oceans were polluted for a time.

Ealor strode out from the Green Halls with a lust for battle and called all his folk to him. The merfolk joined him, as did many of the less-

er Val Eahrakun who had since settled in the seas. They contested the oceans with the Red God so that the oceans were churned into a frothing madness. Into this battle, rose the Children of Narrheit, who distracted the merfolk and much of the rest of Ealor's allies. And Ealor fought Ornduhl alone without the aid of his folk, though for this he cared little and laughed all the while.

The Ember Sword, forged upon the heel of the All Father, clashed with the trident and they struggled: Ornduhl, filled with rage and hate, and Ealor, with mirth, laughing all the while at the sport of it. In the end, Ealor was bested and forced to return to the Green Halls and Ornduhl rose from the deep to assail the world.

Ornduhl cast a dark shadow upon the sun and blotted out her light, and unleashed his demons of fire. These spread across the world, wreaking havoc wherever they went. Mordius saw this destruction and, outfitting herself in armor and arming herself with a great bow, took to the hunt. Though she ended many of his vassals, she proved no match for the Red God, and Ornduhl drove her from the field as well.

Ornduhl was triumphant and rose into the heavens to lord over Aihrde. He began to rain fire upon the world of the All Father so that all was nightmare, and the survivors fled. Much of the world was burned and scorched in the rage of the Red God.

Corthain saw the destruction and was displeased. He armed himself for battle and, riding upon his winged steed, met Ornduhl in the heavens, demanding that he yield, "Brother! I know you of old, and I know your thought and deeds to come. Yield to me, and return to the Endless Pools and the darkness you crave."

But Ornduhl only smiled, for he had made designs unknown to Corthain, and even as the Lord of Justice spoke, the Red God opened the gates to the Maelstrom, summoning the elements. Then, a wondrous noise shook the heavens and a great all- encompassing, battering weight thundered upon the world, raining blows upon Corthain's shield. The god was driven from the heavens and into the earth where the lords of fire and the demons of ash and flame fell upon him in great tumult.

Wenafar came to Corthain's aid then, armored in earth and water. After a great struggle, Wenafar scattered the assailants. About her, rode a host of the fey, and they joined Corthain and all contended with the armies of the Red God. But in the end, they too proved too weak and disorganized to best Ornduhl, though they did, for a time, drive him to the skies again. But he overwhelmed them, driving the fey first from the field and destroying the earthen armor of Wenafar. Corthain, alone, stood against him, wielding a long spear and shield, but Ornduhl, taking up the Ember Sword, pounded Corthain time and again. The sound of the blows carried far and wide until at last Corthain knew that the rage of Ornduhl was unstoppable and he gave the field to him.

All this, while the world shuttered and the sun stood darkened. Dwarves, giants, and men strove to fight their fear of the dark and madness within it. The minions of the Red God hounded the peoples of Aihrde in all the wild places. It rained fire across much of Aihrde, and whole regions were left burnt and ruined.

Thus Ornduhl left the world, returning to his Homeless House to laud his victory over all that was, content in Aihrde's suffering, and the chastisement of all his brethren and foes. For a long while the world was his to command, and his minions moved about with impunity, lording over all the scattered ruin of the world.

In time, the gods returned to the world and made to repair it, and Ealor closed the Three Gates and repaired them. Alone of all the gods, Corthain brooded in the Fortress of Iul. After a long age of the world, the Red God's triumph passed into memory and dwarves, giants, and men conjured it only as a nightmare. Only the dragons continued to suffer at Ornduhl's hands, for he hated that brood as no other, and he rose from time to time from the Wretched Plains, hunting them where they lay and cruelly killing them, eating their flesh and decorating his halls with their bones and skins.

OF MEN

As is told, when the All Father set to forging the dwarves, he made some that were not to his original design, for some were larger than he imagined. These he set to the side and gave them no further thought. When, in the end, he breathed the breath of life into the dwarves, it rolled down across the forge and gave life to giants and men.

When the first men awoke, they were confused and uncertain of their place in the world. Made strong like the dwarves, but willful, they set off from All Father to explore the world. They wholly missed the teachings of the All Father, so that what they learned they taught themselves, or learned from the Val Eahrakun. In this, they proved the most industrious and adept of all the All Father's creations.

Mankind settled at first around the Sea of Erun. In time they divided into thirteen tribes, six greater: the tribes of Aenoch, Ethrum, Rykaard, Naida, Inklu, Aathuk and seven lesser: those being the Nehian, Madriu, Engale, Zuala, Katha, Oanthuil, and the Ustracan. Rumors reached them of lands more bountiful to the north, east, and south, and many set out in great waves to find these lands. Some remained behind and lived amongst the dwarves as they set out from the mountains and colonized the shores of the Sea of Erun, that they called First Sea.

The greater part of the Aenochians left the shores of the sea first and crossed the dry steppes of the Dulcet with great loss and hardship. They came, at last, to the Great Northern Forest, welcoming its cool shades and plentiful water. They drifted further north, until at last they came to the northern seas, and there they discovered the Vale of Mordius. She walked among them, amazed, for she had not been a party to the All Father's crafting, and had, as yet, heard only rumor of what grew in the south. But she loved them, and took them under her wing. She taught them how to work in wood, how to fish, and how to hunt. From her, they learned to husband the animals, grow crops, and fashion tools. In the far north they built halls to house their people.

In time, they were joined by the Ethrum, the second of the tribes of men, and these, too, learned of Mordius and devoured all the knowledge she fed them.

The other tribes, hearing of their kin, began to spread out from the Sea of Erun into all the distant places of the world. Mordius guided many of them and sought to aid them when she could. The tribes eventually spread far and wide.

Being industrious, men lived in far more climes than the dwarves; almost as many as the giants. They were hearty and versatile, adapting to their new homes wherever they lay. Though they all spoke the language of their fathers, the Vulgate, they developed their own languages, and took to worshiping all the gods as they encountered them, great and small; for they were distant from the All Father, and forgotten by him. Of all the creatures of Aihrde, they became the most enamored of the gods when they were young.

OF THE MAKING OF THE FURTHNOPT

During the early ages of man and dwarf, the gods continued their wars. Riding upon great columns of ash and fire, Ornduhl rose from the earth to meet Corthain, who descended from the clouds in storms of rain and lightning. The two smote one another with sword and spear, hammer and shield, with such force that the sky fell to the earth in burning clouds of acidic madness.

On occasion, the other gods joined, but to no avail. Mordius had given of herself to the Great Tree and her Grove. Toth remained in the Endless Pools, and the sun and moon had no mind for warring upon the world. Wenafar turned to other pursuits and Narrheit joined one side or the other as his whim dictated. Tefnut had as yet not joined in the battles.

At times Corthain had the upper hand. At others, the Red God prevailed, for both were brothers and still in the power of their youth. But the Red God's minions roamed the world, where they corrupted all they encountered, or turned things to ill. They spoiled many labors of the gods, so that in the end the Val Eharakun grew weary of their torments.

It was Tefnut, the mistress of the world's flowing waters, that rose to join the battle first. Ornduhl, despoiling her greatest river, provoked her wrath, and she rose, cloaking herself in an armor of water. She drowned the ash of the Red God, bringing it all to earth. And Corthain joined her, lifting high a mountain of stone and dropping it upon the Red God. Ealor, seeing great sport in the tormenting of his brother, split the earth so that the remnants of the Red God flowed into the oceans and sank to the bottom of the sea. Ornduhl had no time to think, for his foes were relentless. He fled to the far reaches of the world to gather himself again, but Wenafar, seeing him, let fly a host of arrows and fell upon him in a rage, driving him into the heavens.

And there Corthain speared Ornduhl, and drove him to ground, and he fled the world, making for the the Rimfelt. Following that road, he left Aihrde and returned to the Gegelmesh. But the gods pursued him even to the Homeless House.

In those places under the world, they learned the true power of the Red God, for they became entangled in the shadows and mazes of that great fortress and never could come to grips with their brother. Many of their minions were consumed and lost in that place, for the hosts of Ornduhl were large and filled with a hatred unseen in the wider world. They called it then the Shadow Realm, or the Wretched Plains, for such evil and darkness they had never before encountered.

The Val Eharakun lay siege to the Homeless House. In countless contests and battles, they sought to force an end to the struggle, but their foe managed to evade them. At last they lay off the siege, for the lord of the lair proved too elusive, and they left him in peace, battered and hounded, but free. Thus, his dominion over Aihrde was ended.

In the aftermath, the Red God grew fearful, for during the Siege of the Homeless House, the armies of his foes came ever closer and had they persisted, they would have eventually rooted out all his secrets. So he thought to himself that he needed to secure the gates and bind the five pools of the Gegelmesh from future attack.

Ornduhl set his thoughts toward guarding his realm, and he fashioned from his own malice a beast of such hideous demeanor that few living could look upon her. He set her to guard the way to the Gegelmesh and the Shadow Realms, her sole purpose to keep all living creatures from entering. So Huadun came to be. She was the greatest of his servants, born in the maw of his spite, shaped from his disdain for life, and cast in the mold of the unquenched fires of his madness.

Huadun guarded the Wretched Plains and the Homeless House beyond, by splitting herself into five heads, placing one before each of the Five Pools. Through them she devoured all that came to the Shadow Realms. In time, she grew great, bloated, and unmoving. She rested her heads upon the arc of time where it met the pools and each of her heads became a cavern, wherein the dead entered and were devoured by passing into the dragon before they reached the Wretched Plains.

These are the Futhnopt, the Five Caves. Huadun's jaws closed the Gegelmesh to the living; for any who sought entry through the Arc of Time must do so through very powerful magics, such as only mighty wizards possess. Either that, or convince Huadun to let them enter through flattery or trickery.

She broods there in misery and hatred, ever longing to see the light of the sun. It is said she will rise as a great five headed dragon, breaking the gates of Ealor in violence and bringing the oceans to boil. Their steam will cover all the land and blind those who dwell there. Huadun will rise to vomit up the damned upon the sun and blot out its light forever. In the darkness that follows, the Red Duke will return and visit his vengeance upon the world. So it says in the Tales of the Gonfod.

NARRHEIT AND THE FROST GIANTS

When the All Father left the Forge of God, he left behind him men and giants. These wandered the wide world in bands large and small, without home or guidance. It was one such giant, Aurgelmir by name, whom Narrheit found in the woodlands of the north. Large and cruel, the giant terrorized any creature he found upon the road. He boasted that he was one of the first of the All Father's creations to accept the breath of life, and as such held a place above all other peoples.

Narrheit followed Aurglemir upon his journeys. Realizing that the giant grew ever crueler the more aggravated he became, the Lord of Chaos took the form of a hummingbird and followed him closely, buzzing in his ear. The giant slapped at the bird, but never struck it, for the god was too fast. The giant ran from the bird but could not get away. He dove into water to escape, but when he came up, the bird remained. Narrheit hounded the giant until madness took him. This compounded his natural evil so that he launched a reign of terror like none the woodlands had never known.

After some time Narrheit grew bored of the giant and bid his mistress, Imbrisius, to take up the challenge. Seeing the giant, she devised a clever plan and promised Narrheit she would do his bidding. Instead of honoring her promise, she bedded the giant and bore him many sons. She gave to her progeny the gift of immortality and set them upon the world. They were every bit as cruel as their father and as wicked as their mother, but they were cold of heart and could not stand the warmth of the sun.

Imbrisius gave her ice-hearted children a home beyond the northern wind, that lies in the tall realms at the top of the world where the Maelstrom is closest to Aihrde. There, her giants gathered in their halls of wood and stone and made weapons for war and brewed potions from storms. Imbrisius taught them to master the winds and bring storms down upon the worlds of man and dwarf. Her children proved cruel and heartless, reveling in the pain of others. Without cause or warning they would fall upon people in a blinding storm, and those who survived were hunted for sport. The giants took to using sleds drawn by bear, elk, and other creatures strong enough to pull them.

These were the frost giants, Imbrius's brood, and they bring the winter's blizzards and snow storms.

OF ARGRIND AND THE RED GOD

As is told, Ornduhl mined all the deep places of the world and set there precious metals and gems of his own design. These he buried in the rock so that none might find them, for they were his most precious creations. But more, he imbued the precious metals with his own desires, casting enchantments upon them, so that any who handled them ran the risk of being cursed with the desire to posses it ever after. These precious gems, gold and silver veins, and other metals lay hidden from all for many ages.

In time, the dwarves delved deep, even to the roots of Mount Austrien, and unearthed a vein of platinum. The metal was new to them, and they marveled at it. It was malleable, taking shape easily, and they fashioned all manner of things from it. They hungered for it, taken by the curse of Ornduhl, and they began to quest for it everywhere they went. The other kingdoms became aware of platinum, and they too sought the precious ore. Soon, the dwarves found silver, gold, and gems as well, and they kept these discoveries to themselves.

During the long reign of Argrind, the wealth of First Home grew by leaps and bounds, and it was that wealth that drew Narrheit, Lord of Chaos. He came then to the halls of the king to see what might unfold. Argrind was young in those days, and entertained Narrheit during his visit.

"How and from where do you come? For we have seen no creatures like you before. In truth, you seem to be as the men who dwell upon the shores of the Sea of Erun, but your hair is wild and your face fell."

"Oh, Lord of the Underdeep and King of Halls, I am Narrheit, a thought of the All Father's from the beginning of time. It was ever my task to apprise the All Father's children of the dangers of the world and to aid them where I can."

Argrind mistrusted the creature before him and said as much, to which Narrheit replied, "It matters not to me oh Lord, for I shall live from the beginning to the end, and nothing may hinder me. I shall take my leave of you and let you guard your gold as you will."

At this Argrind grew suspicious, for he sensed a hidden threat. "Guard our gold against who? You?"

Narrheit's laughter carried far and wide through the hall, and it carried a fear that all creatures have of decay and age. "Of me, oh Lord of Halls? No. I have no designs upon such things, but my brother does. Ornduhl, the Red Bull, God of the Shadows, for his hand fashioned those items you claim, and he claims them for his own."

"I have not heard of this God of Shadow, nor do I see any laying claim to our gold."

"Then enjoy it while you may."

"I'll have no mendicant's words spoken here. Be off with you, Narrheit! For I see your intent is greater than your words, and your words alone are mischief."

Narrheit bowed low and turned to leave, but at this the host of dwarves clamored to hear his piece. "Let him speak!" carried through the hall. And Argrind acquiesced, against his better judgment.

Narrheit told the tale of Ornduhl's rebellion against the All Father and the forging of the Ember Sword. He revealed that the Red God was, even now, building a fortress at the world's end and binding the dead to serve him. And the dwarves grew fearful, not for the loss of life, but the threat to their halls and the wealth they had accumulated. Missing from Narrheit's speech was any mention of Corthain, or his design to keep a watchful eye upon the world of the All Father, or Mordius or any of the other Val Eahrakun.

The dwarves then clamored to know what Narrheit knew of this threat, and Narrheit knew he had seeded their minds with doubt.

Argrind held up his hand until there was silence in the halls. "There is much you tell us, but I sense there is more that you do not. I bid you, again, to leave our hall and our kingdom and never return, for I do not trust you and sense in you a willfulness not held by any other creature, great or small."

Narrheit bowed into smoke and was gone, leaving only the echo of his voice as haunt to the dwarves.

The dwarves were amazed and wrathful at Argrind, shouting that he had spoken wrongly and abused the visitor, driving him from the chambers when they could have gleaned more information from him. Argrind dismissed them all except for the greatest smiths, and he took council with them and them alone. For many weeks they spoke and planned and then set to constructing a massive store of weapons and armor.

For years they labored, using all their craft to perfect weapons to defend their halls and mansions and armor to house their bodies. They forged plate and chain, shield and helm, and decorated their armor with rings and inlaid brass. Axes and hammers were their favored weapons, but

they forged swords and spears, and daggers for their arsenals. Argrind himself found a large piece of Iergild metal, that ore that once comprised the All Father's hammer, and this he fashioned into an axe of wonder and beauty. The Axe of the All Father became the heirloom of his House for many centuries, and the greatest of all the labors of the dwarves.

All this while, they mined and dug up the precious ores of Ornduhl. At long last, the Red God learned of the theft of his gold. Even as he set his servants to labor ever harder on fashioning the walls and chasm of his Homeless House, he rose to seek redress from the dwarves.

But Narrheit found him on the road and called to him. "Brother, where do you go in such wrath?"

"Thieves have made off with my treasure, and I'll have it returned."

"The dwarves are not thieves my brother, but the All Father's chosen people. Be wary, for in them is a power you cannot contend with. They possess the iron of the All Father that is in all things he loves."

Doubt came over Ornduhl at that moment and he wondered at the power of the dwarves and what secret the All Father may have given them. "None may stay my hand, Narrheit; none alive, none dead."

Ornduhl came to the Halls of the King and Argrind Darkeye, then young and full of power, faced the scar-faced god and heard his words. Ornduhl wove a spell around his language, using his tongue to bemuse and fool Argrind, for it came to him that these folk were numerous, powerful, and young. And he desired them, for with their power he could exact his vengeance upon the gods. Argrind, however, was full of the power of the All Father and had thoughts only for him, and nothing walked or crawled upon the earth that he feared. The king laughed the Red God off, and forbade the god the right to remain in his halls.

In rage, Ornduhl, turned upon the king. "You have stolen that which is most precious to me. You must offer payment or suffer my vengeance."

"I'll suffer nothing by your hand, not torment nor death, but enjoy it as a fair wage for this wealth that you claim was yours."

The Red God rose in his wrath and the room fell to shadows and darkness. "Fool!" And Ornduhl drew forth the Sword of Embers and moved to strike the king dead. Now, however, the council of Narrheit came to fruition, as the Chaos Lord knew it must. Argrind drew forth the Axe of the All Father and met Ornduhl's blow. The host of dwarves donned their mail and joined the fray, falling upon the Red God. They hurled themselves upon Ornduhl in a blind rage, and the Red God slew them where he met them. Some fell by his gaze alone, others to the Sword of Embers, so that the halls ran with blood for days after.

And lo, Argrind, cased in iron, used the Axe of the All Father to drive his foe from the room. Ornduhl fell beneath the strength of the Iergild, seeing in it the fire of the All Father. The king's attack carried the echoes of Narrheit as they lingered in the great hall of the dwarves. Ornduhl, unrecovered from his wars with the gods, his mind full of doubts from the whisperings of the the Lord of Chaos, feared that these were the chosen of the All Father and that, perhaps, the All Father himself might come to their aid. The Red God fled the halls in rage, cursing the dwarves, the world, and the All Father.

THE CLOAK OF RED

The Red God fled the halls into the deep north, where his sister Modius dwelt in peace amongst the men of those parts. He watched her, stalking her from afar. She had taken little part in the wars of the gods, and then only to hunt Ornduhl's minions that hounded her groves and the men under her care.

As the Red God followed her, she became aware of his presence, for little moved in or on the earth that she could not see. She beckoned him to her as a brother long lost, and fed him in her halls. Ornduhl lingered for awhile and listened to the world of her making. Green and deep it ran, even into the earth. All things around her grew and flourished and the primeval world echoed in her every thought and deed. The men who served her did so out of love and respect. They hunted for her and brought her food. When they fought, they asked her forgiveness for the blood they shed. They worshiped her and listened to her every word. This galled Ornduhl, and a wrath filled his mind and he left her in her abode

Fear stole upon the Red God. Perhaps the echo of Narrheit lingered in his mind. Perhaps he saw some piece of the Arc of the Time he had not seen before. Who can say? He saw Mordius growing stronger. Though she had given the greater part of herself to the Great Tree, weakening herself, she was regaining her might. He saw then that the men who paid her homage gave of themselves, passing the breath of life of the All Father into her and making her stronger.

Ornduhl became envious of his sister's enlightened beauty and her power. It drove him rapturously mad. He plotted to slay her before she, too, could hound him like his brother.

In those days Mordius kept her Hall in a grove of birch upon a broad hill. These trees lifted to the heavens and dug deep in the ground and grew close together like a wall. Her board she kept in the middle of a great hall of these trees, and it was always laden with food. Her servants adorned her feast hall with a likeness of her, carved in wood. Here, men made sacrifice of wild meats, grains, and fermented drinks. Each night, Mordius presided over it all and feasted with the lords of the tribes of men. Men called this hall the Hall of Harlking, which means "plentiful" in their speech.

Upon a dark eve, when the moon lay in the arms of Ealor, and the sun passed beneath the Wall of Worlds, Ornduhl visited Modius in Harlking. She greeted him and moved to make him welcome, but he leapt at her and cut her down, laying her low with the Ember Sword. She fell to the floor, stricken, her life's blood running into the earth and drowning the roots of the hall. She looked up, catching her brother's eye, and saw the madness of evil in it, and she made to stop her life's force ebbing from her. Men all about the hall rose against the Red God and made to slay him, but none in that hall had such power and he cut them down.

He saw then, Mordius upon the ground before him, laying in the ruin of her hall. Dropping to his knees he called to her, "Sister, all this was foretold upon the Arc of Time; what is now, must have been."

She looked upon him and with clear voice, "With envy and treachery you have come to my halls and slain me upon my step. There is no crime greater, and for it, none shall suffer you ever more, my brother." This shamed and outraged Ornduhl, and from that day hence, he became evil incarnate, the enemy of all that was good.

Slipping beyond speech Mordius used her ebbing strength to lift a shroud of her blood and this enveloped him in a thick mist. He rose, choking upon the ruin of her. It lifted him on high, filling his nostrils and throat with the foul taste of death. The mist choked out the air, making to kill him, but in the end he mastered it. Harvesting the mist he wove it into a cloak that he wore ever after.

He turned, cloaked in her blood, so that he might pass beneath the halls for all to see, man, beast, or god. And all men spoke afterwards

that they saw Ornduhl leave the Harlking Hall in a Cloak of Red. And ever after he wore that cloak, and it bore both the sorcery of Mordius and his own hate within it, and it proved to be the greatest of his armaments. The red cloak blinded Corthain to the world, so that the god saw nothing from the Fortress of Iul except a haze. His mind, blinded, turned away from the world, until Frafnog the dragon wrestled with the Red God, shredding the cloak and scattering it across the wide world.

The men of the north, overpowered with grief by Mordius' death, knew not what to do. Some staggered hopelessly through the wilderness, caught within the grips of a terrible fear. Others, however, were not unmade so easily, and they found hope in the blood stained ground of the grove where Mordius fell. When spring came a small host of brightly colored silver trees, mostly birch and oak, came to life, growing in the ground where her blood had been spilt. They grew larger than any other tree of Aihrde, excepting only those earliest Avurgen, for these trees bore the wealth of Mordius within them. It is from this line of trees that the Mueren trees sprung. These trees were healing trees and holy trees to men.

To hear the March Lords of the Eldwood speak, the Great Tree of the Druids is one of the last Mueren trees in existence. This is not so, for the tree in the Eldwood is a descendant of the Great Tree in the east, which has given no seed these many centuries.

These men hated Ornduhl and swore vengeance upon him.

Those who were lost in the wilderness turned to other of the Val Eahrakun to worship, great and small, evil and good. They found gods in these creatures and called upon them.

So it was in this fashion that evil came to the world, borne by Ornduhl's jealously, his hatred for the dwarves, his lust for power over men, and all for the chaos Narrheit caused.

In honor of his fallen sister, Corthain swore an oath to forever maintain a balance of power amongst the gods; he became the Justice Maker. He renewed his great contest with Ornduhl in these years.

The stain of the Red God and the death of Mordius retreated in time. The Avurgen from the Days before Days still wandered wild, and the dragons made great nests across the world. For three hundred centuries, Erde thrived beneath the light of the sun, and the men and dwarves lived out their lives as they were wont to do

THE LONG PEACE

After the fall of Mordius, many of the people of the tribes of the Engale, Aenochians, and Ethrum abandoned the lands around the Harlking Halls. They wandered into the wilds in search of new homes, unstained by the taint of the Red God. Despite her death, they worshiped Mordius still, for they understood that in the long gone days of the world's youth, she passed the greater part of herself into the Great Tree of the All Father's design. They worshiped this tree, unseen by man or dwarf, and through it, Mordius. They called it the Tree of Wisdom, the Ash, The Mother and the Father, and it was a place and symbol of power.

Mordius was not the only god that these men worshiped, for ever did they find solace in the Val Eahrakun, for both peoples, gods and men, were forgotten by the All Father and he heeded them not. There were three tribes of note that were dislodged from the death of Mordius. These were the Engale, Ethrum, and Aenochians.

THE ENGALE

The smallest of the three tribes were the Engale. They dwelt furthest north, and in their youth they sailed the frozen seas and explored the lands there. When the Harlking Halls fell, many turned from their homes and migrated south, seeking to renew their ancient kinship with the dwarves of Gorthurag. They traveled south by way of the Crusp mountains and there they quarreled with the dwarves of Grausumhart. Moving on, they skirted the Dulcet and finally came to the Arnhun Mountains and the homes of their fathers by the Sea of Erun. The Kings of Gorthurag welcomed them back as long lost kindred, and the people of the Engale settled in the shadows of the mountains.

There the Engale flourished, building towns and roads, castles and cities. The dwarves passed their knowledge to them freely and aided the Engale in their endeavors. Experienced seamen, they joined the dwarves of Alanti on many voyages and taught them the ways of the northern seas, where fogs and cold dominated the waters. As is told elsewhere, the kingdoms of the southern Engale flourished until the Goblin-Dwarf Wars when they joined their dwarven friends in those long, grueling struggles.

In the north those Engale that remained became a hearty sea-faring folk. They cut a living for themselves out of the frozen lands and islands and worshiped mighty gods, even the All Father and the Great Tree. They were a fell people, quick to laugh, but hard and fierce.

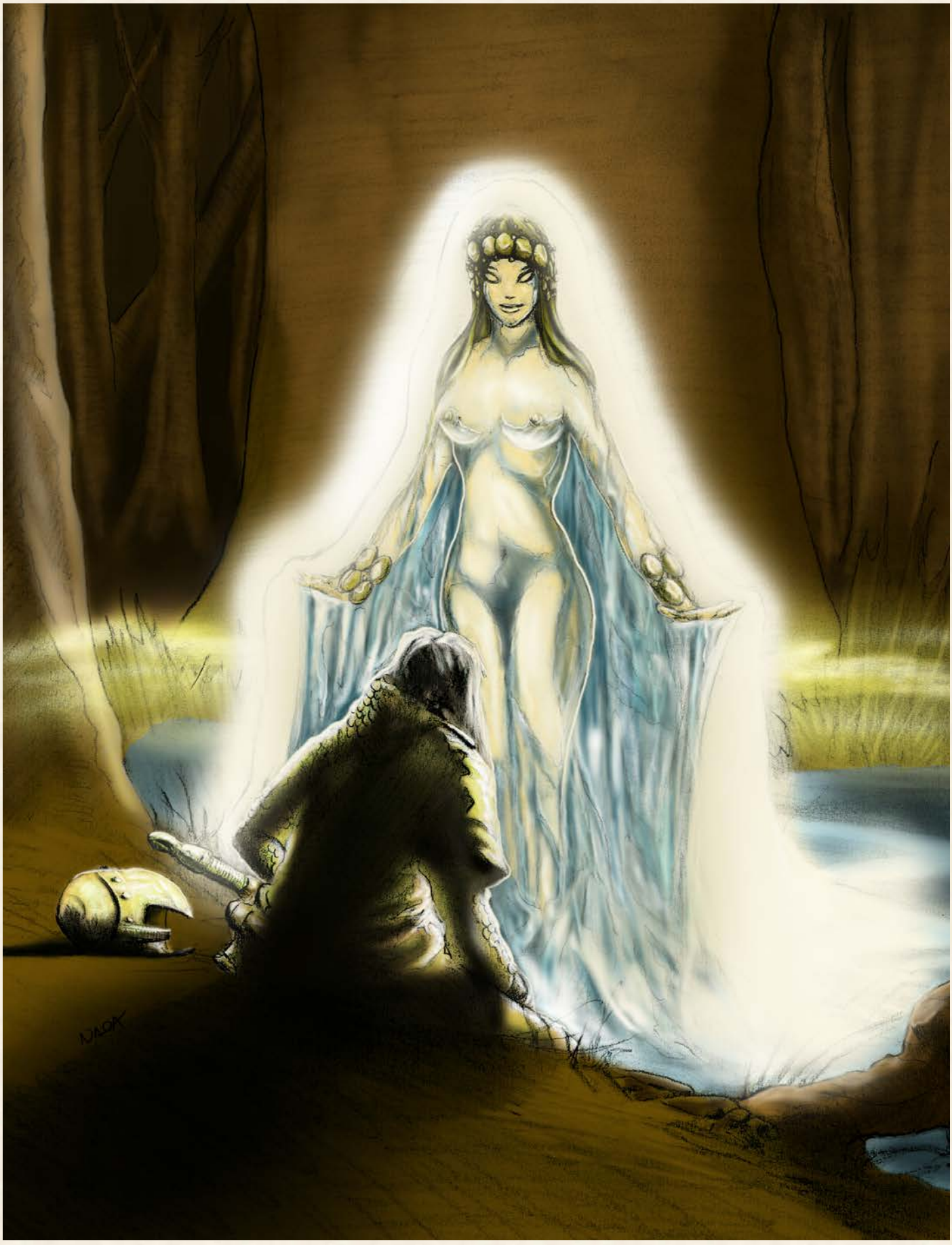
THE ETHRUM

The Ethrum traveled a different path then the Engale, for few remained in the north after the fall of the Harlking Halls. Those that did grew wild, living in small bands and their deeds, great and small, passed out of history. The majority of them moved south, following parallel roads to the Aenchians, until they came to a great chain of mountains, the Holmgrad. There, they parted from their kin and moved to the west and south where they came to another long chain of mountains. Some followed these mountains south, hemmed in between that country and the wilds of the Dulcet. Others passed between those mountains, the Shadow Mountains and the Holmgrad, through what later was known as the Kleberock Pass, to come to the western Lands of Ursal.

Here, they settled along the western shores of the Inner Sea, building long houses in the open country. But they soon learned that this land was the haunt of the stone giants, and the giants did not welcome them. Worse, the dragons that dwelt in the mountains came forth to hunt them, and they hounded the Ethrum for sport and food. So the Ethrum moved south, east of the Bleached Hills, until they came to the open country north of the Bergrucken Mountains. Some moved further east and had contact with dwarves that dwelt upon the Sea of Shenal, in and around the large town of Ursal. The bulk of them, however, moved south between the hills and mountains.

Those lands were occupied by the dwarves of Norgorad Kam, whose great kingdom lay in the Bergrucken. The dwarves welcomed the Ethrum only grudgingly: they remembered them as kin from long ago, but wondered where they had come from. They had only rumors of the deeds of Ornduhl in the Halls of Argrind and the Harlking Halls, and they cared not for the meddling of the gods of men, and for these reasons and others, they kept these newcomers at a distance.

The dwarves forbid the Ethrum access to the mountains, laying claim to those, even to the sparsely populated north and west. They granted them all the lands between the Bergrucken and Rhodope Mountains, where the mighty Ethvold forest stood, barring them only from the roads and houses of the dwarves that lay in that forest.



In those days the Ethvold dominated the greater part of that country. The forest spread from the Bleached Hills in the north, all along the flanks of the Bergrucken and Rhodope Mountains in the east and west, to the swamps of the south and the Amber Sea. It was deep and dark, and the abode of Tefnut and a host of the Val Earhakun. Amenut made his house there, as did Nunt of the Deep Pool and Heth, the servant of Toth.

At that time a warrior-priest named Aedgen led the Ethrum. After meeting the dwarves, he turned his people south, for the Ethvold seemed a welcome home to them. It harkened to their abodes in the northern forests and promised shelter from the giants and dragons that hounded them.

Coming to the headwaters of the Ardeen River, Aedgen ordered his people to make camp so that he might explore further and find a good place for them to settle and build homes. He traveled by boat, bringing with him a small company of rangers led by his brother Areos, and a company of soldiers led by his youngest brother, Kayomar. They followed the river down its southern way, exploring and mapping as they went. After many weeks they came to a bend in the river that led into a deep valley surrounded by stark cliffs and mountains, until at last they came to the confluence of two rivers and a mighty falls.

Aedgen and his followers camped and explored the adjacent lands, and pondered how best to master the falls. It was Areos who found a way to pass over them, and he brought them to the lower river safely. It was then that tragedy struck, for they came upon a creature of ill intent, and it rose from the waters and fell upon the company, slaying many and dragging Areos to the bottom of the river. Aedgen alone with his younger brother Kayomar, escaped, washed ashore south of the cliffs. They stood upon the edge of the Ethvold, alone and unarmed, with no way to return to their people. They could not go back up the river for the course was too strong. To the east was a wild and wicked land that promised long journeys. So they struck out into the deeps of the western road, into the Ethvold Wood. They hoped to move north and return to their people, but there were no roads, and the tracks of the wild beasts led him ever deeper into the long valleys.

Here Kayomar met his end, for the pair stumbled upon a great tusked beast that fell upon them. The brothers fought like lions, with stones and clubs, but the beast caught up Kayomar in his arms and, lifting him high, crushed the air from his lungs. As his bones shattered, the young warrior took the beast by the tusks and pulled with such might that he tore its head asunder. For all his courage, the warrior died of his wounds, and Aegden laid him to rest in the cool earth, and he called that land the Valley of Kayomar, so it was called ever after. Though time has swallowed much of that people, it is prophesied that whoever finds the Tomb of Kayomar, shall be accounted the greatest warriors of their age.

After many days, Aedgen stumbled, hungry and tired, upon another river. Broad and swift, it cut its way through the forest in a rocky channel. Trees grew in abundance along its banks, flanked by reeds and water grasses. Coming to the river, he saw the sun for the first time in many weeks and learned that he was heading west, and not north as he had hoped. He was utterly lost, for his brother Areos had been his eyes in the wild. He stood there, upon the river and glared down its length, pondering what course to take. No fear crept into him, only a determination to return to his people before they were lost.

It is here that Tefnut found Aedgen. She, alone, of the Val Earhakun had had no contact with man or dwarf for all the long ages, dwelling as she did in the rivers and forests of her home. She found Aedgen upon the shores of the Tarvish River and was curious. She watched him,until at last she could bear her curiosity no further, and she rose from the waters. She stood thus, without raiment of any kind, a marvel of beauty, and called to him.

Aedgen was amazed. Tefnut's beauty was beyond that of any mortal, and the light in her greater than any he had ever seen. They talked upon the river's edge, and such was his speech that she became enamored of him. Her voice echoed the deep places of the forest and conjured images of safety and power, and Aedgen loved her in turn. Tefnut nursed him to health and learned all there was to learn of him, his people, and their journey. She guided him, then, to the deep vale of country that lies between the Tarvish and Ardeen Rivers and gave him that land. It was unspoiled by any and he marveled at it.

They dwelt there together for a long season.

When summer came Aedgen's thoughts turned back to his people. He implored Tefnut for aid in bringing them hither. So it was that in the far north, upon the headwaters, that the people first encountered Tefnut. She rose from the water one midday, and called to them to follow her. Aedgen's people were amazed, for such beauty and power they had never seen. For all that Tefnut was, came of the flowing waters and deep pools of the world, and her power was little spent in those days and much of what had, lie in the Ethvold itself. Not until that forest was lost was her power diminished.

The Ethrum followed Tefnut south. She calmed the river for them and, after many hardships, brought them to the deep vale that lay in the long valleys of Kayomar, that men would later call Jariel. That land became the heart of the tribes of Ethum for many ages. They worshiped Tefnut and the gods of the Ethvold that were later called the Og Aust, the Old Gods.

THE AENOCHIANS

When the two tribes of Ethrum and Aenoch came to the Holmgrad mountains, the Ethrum broke from their kin and moved into the west. The Aenochians dwelt for a time upon the feet of the mountains, but eventually turned east, traveling into the broad grasslands that lay between the Turmberg Mountains and the Northern Forest. Here, they ran afoul of the Madriu, men who had long ago settled upon those wide, open steppes.

The Madriu were horse people, and traveled in large camps, hunting with spear and arrow. They did not welcome these new men and attacked them, driving them back to the Holmgrads. The Aenochians turned south and wandered to the shores of the Inner Sea. Even as the Ethrum were moving down the Ardeen River, the Aenochians were camped upon the doorstep of Grundliche-Hohle, a dwarf kingdom of some renown. The dwarves welcomed the Aenochains and guided them across the mountains to the fertile valleys that lay to the south.

There the Aenochains settled upon the headwaters of the Olgdon River and built many towns and houses. They farmed the valleys and had great concourse with the dwarves in the north. Their peoples moved down the river and into the Vale of Fund, crossing it and coming to the Udunilay River. In a time of years, they crossed the river bottoms and came again to the plains of Achrothos beyond. Here again they ran afoul of the Madriu, and warred with them for many years.

From their wars with the Madrui the Aenochains mastered the horse and brought that beast into the Lands of Ursal. They also learned of the wild gods of those men, Val Eahrakun of their own country. And rumors came to them of the Great Tree in the mountains beyond the mountains and they wondered at it.

It came to pass that one day Baetan, a renowned hunter, picked up the trail of a large stag. He pursued it along the banks of the Udunilay for many miles. At times, he sighted the stag, and it fueled his desire to bring it down and adorn his walls with the crown of its antlers. Whenever he came close to the beast, it would flee from him. After many days stalking the stag, the forest ended and Baetan came to a broad, open country of rich grasses, many lakes, pools, rivers, and streams.

Never, in all his travels, had he encountered such beauty, and he named it then, the Al-Liosh, the Land of Lakes.

The trail grew cold and Baetan never saw the stag, nor any sign of it, again, but he walked into the Al-Liosh and claimed it for his people. No sooner had he done this then he discovered a woman dwelling in the wild, living alone on an island in the lakes. She welcomed the hunter into her home, feeding him with fish and wild berries. Baetan fell in love with the woman, and remained with her for many days, until at last she bid him call his people to him and bring them to the Al-Liosh

This Baetan gladly did. Many followed him, for in those days they were still wanderers and unsettled. So they came to the Al-Liosh and fell under the spell of Baetan's wife. Soon, they learned that she was of the Val Eahrakun, and she had dwelt in the Land of Lakes for many years. She named herself Imbree, and all the people loved her.

Imbree taught the Aenochains many things in those days: how to shape iron, to hunt the fey, and bits and pieces of the Language of Creation, so that charms and minor sorceries were theirs to command. More importantly than all else, she taught them a secret knowledge, and knowledge she professed that was known only to the Val Eahrakun, which they kept secret. Imbree taught the Aenochains that they were the hidden hopes of the All Father, and that more than all else they should love themselves, for in them lay the world's salvation.

In time, Baetan died and his son, Nepeleos, born to him by Imbree became the chief, and Imbree became his consort. And when Nepeleos died of a poisoned dart, his son, Adlede, also born of Imbree took his seat next to her. So it was for many generations until at last the Aenochians grew weary of her lordship and meddling. Then the power she gave them turned against her, for they had little fear of her and no knowledge of Narrheit.

The Aenochians rose up against Imbree, slaying her priests and her consort, their chieftain, and drove her from the Al-Liosh. As she left, they saw her mounting a large stag and riding away, Imbree laughed at all that she had wrought.

For she had lain the seeds of power in the Aenochians, and it was cruelly done. Imbree was, in fact, Imbrisius of the Val Eahrakun, the Maiden of Pain, and in the Aenochians she had planted the seeds of their lust for power. Her consort, Narrheit, set her the task, for it was he who had taken the shape of the stag and lured Baetan to the vale of Al-Liosh.

And they named him then, calling him Set, which is serpent in their tongue.

Narrheit's intention was not to introduce true evil into these early men, only a lust for power and a love of their own greatness. From that, came many of the traits of the Aenochians that led to the god-emperors of later years and the long wars, and the calling to the Darkness that was named Unklar in after ages.

But in those long forgotten days, they settled into the broad valleys and countries and multiplied.

OF THE DWARVEN KINGDOMS

As has been told, the dwarves first dwelt in the Arnhun Mountains, and long before any of their people founded realms beneath the mountains, they wandered far and wide. Gorthurag was the first of their realms and word of it spread far and wide. In time, other dwarves followed their example and created their own realms beneath the earth. There were five such kingdoms: Gorthurag, Grausumhart Grimdraw, Roheisen Hohle, Norgorad Kam, and Norgrund. Of them all, Gorthurag was the first, Grausumhart the next, Norgorad Kam, and Norgrund.

Nine more kingdoms sprung from the original five. The kings of Gorthurag sent colonists out to create bastions in the wilderness, and these were Alanti, Grundliche-Hohle, and Amvile Cris. From Grausumhart, four such kingdoms were created: Bogda- Rawd, Gondlim, Londrok-In, and Krag-ot-Thune. From Norgorad Kam came the ninth kingdom, and it sat in the Rhodope Mountains and was called Maglun. The dwarves of Norgrund dwelt in the far east and north and never colonized. The dwarves of Roheisen Hohle expanded slowly and never spread from their halls.

The kingdoms dug ever deeper into the earth and built halls and mansions for themselves. Roads were cut through the trackless wastes, connecting the realms. Dwarves settled along many of these roads, in towers and in way stations, offering travelers refuge from their long journeys. In this way the Kingdoms passed news to one another, and traded for goods and skills.

The dwarves trafficked with many humans in those days, but none more so than the dwarves of Gorthurag who dwelt upon the Sea of Erun. At first they sailed south into the Shallow Sea, then headed east, hugging the coasts at the feet of the Damnefauk Mountains. From there they crossed into the Amber Sea. Still hugging the coast, they traveled north into the Sea of Shenal and into the Inner Sea. The lands were rich and filled with game and fish, so they built an outpost, the first of many to come; Ursal.

Ursal stood as a way point for the dwarves as they sailed from their homelands, pushing ever west. After passing the Domen Mountains they came to the deserts south of mighty Lake Vanhir. It was Anderoth who first ventured out into the deeper waters, leaving waterless land behind. His adventures carried him far across the ocean. With the aid of Ealor, he came to a long chain of islands that cut the ocean in half, stretching from the lands of Aroyo and the greater northern continent. Anderoth built a series of outposts there and explored all the lands to the north, eventually coming back to the Dulcet, the Sea of Erun, and the Lands of Ursal.

Many followed in Anderoth's wake, exploring the Green Sea and discovering the Isle of Koth. One of the greatest sagas of those days recounts the tale of the meeting of Anderoth and Kalin upon the shores of the jungle of Is. Anderoth, after returning from his voyage, departed the Sea or Erun and headed west, where he entered the deep waters of the Dulzdine Ocean. He discovered the lands of Dur and shipwrecked upon Ikem's Horn, where his brother perished. Afterwards, he sailed further even into the Green Sea where the dwarf sailor Kalin was even then exploring. They met and rejoiced together, and feasted upon the slopes of the jungle mountains. Afterwards, they built a hall and called it Kalderoth, and it became a refuge for all sailors for many years.

As men and giants spread into all regions of the world, the dwarves found them and trafficked in goods and skills. A network of trade soon developed. The dwarves built a series of outposts on the islands that cut the Oddine Ocean in two, and these became the foundations of the Kingdom of Alanti. Long were their halls and tall, built of marble

and beautiful stones. Alanti alone of all the dwarf realms stood above ground, but so great were the keeps and walls that men spoke of it as a mountain above the earth, and the dwarves who dwelt there felt at home as if they lived beneath it.

The mansions of the dwarves of Alanti spread from island to island. The mansions of the dwarves of Alanti spread from island to island. Long bridges that spanned between the many islands served as roads and platforms for ever greater constructions. Their fleet of ships grew huge and the sails were like a forest riding the seas around the many halls, bridges, and mansions of the dwarves of Alanti. Eventually, Alanti waxed powerful and broke away from the kings of Gorthurag, and chose one of their greatest explorers to be their king. So the kingdom of Alanti was born, though in truth, they paid a tithe to their father realm, for many years after.

The dwarves of Alanti took to paying homage to Ealor of the Seas, and Anderoth became their patron. All across the wide world these dwarves sailed, and where they sailed some stayed and established more outposts and colonies. Some were large, others small, but almost all of them prospered and grew in wealth and power.

In time, the dwarves of Alanti grew greater than all the other dwarven kingdoms, for their colonies were plentiful and their wealth came from far and wide.

THE END OF THE LONG PEACE

After 300 years, the peoples of Aihrde had spread far and wide, leaving their own marks in the earth and upon the water. The Val Eahrakun had retreated to their holds and given way to the tramping feet of the All Father's people. Their power, however, was not diminished, least of all the Red God, who had returned to the Homeless House, feeding on his hatred of the dwarves and plotting to destroy them..

Fourth Oration - The Dwarven Laments

hese are the days of sorrow and loss, when all that came before changed forever. The power of the Folk waned and men rose. It is the end of the glories of the Days before Days. This is accounted the Fourth Rin upon the Arc of Time.

Of the Coming of the Goblins

During the long age of peace, the dwarves perfected their arts, becoming masters of construction and the forge. They built ever deeper halls, and their cities sprawled along the flanks of the great mountains. Mansions of stone stretched out beneath the world like the roots of trees. In Alanti, the dwarves built their homes upon the sea. The streets and buildings, carved from white marble, stretching between island realms, were a wonder to behold. It is told that the Alanti dwarves became more learned than their fellows in the Language of Creation. In time of years, all the massed knowledge of the Folk was gathered there and placed in monumental libraries.

Then goblins came into the world, and the age of peace ended forever. The memories of those days linger only in legend and dream.

From where the goblin's originated, none knew. Many whispered of dwarves turned evil, corrupted by the dark of deep places and greed. There is truth in this tale. As has been told, the dwarves were plentiful and tunneled beneath the world. They became scattered far and wide, so much so, that many lost contact with their fellows, living out their days in solitude, far from the kingdoms. These dwarves did not share in the discoveries of the kin, and they waned and their knowledge was never as great. Ornduhl found these outsiders, alone and with little understanding, and made easy prey of them.

Ornduhl taught these wayward dwarves new things and convinced them that their brethren had spitefully kept these secrets from them. He twisted their thoughts and buried their memories with foul tongue, making them hate their kin. Slowly, the Red God gathered them, until there was a small host of several tens of thousands.

The Red God taught these dwarves a vile brand of sorcery. When they mastered it, he revealed his true nature. He sung the song of how he was not of the Void, but rather the hidden desires of the All Father come to life, equating himself to unlimited power. Ornduhl told of how he stole away into the world and hid himself in dark places. He was not like them, for they were made of the Language of Creation, pounded from the substance of the Void. They listened with rapt fascination, all the while wondering on this hidden desire of the All Father, which stood before them. In doing so, they changed. Their own spite corrupted them, their bodies shriveled, and their hair fell out. They lost the form which the All Father had cast for them and adopted one which resembled nothing the world had seen before, a malevolent reflection of dwarves: goblins.

Like their new master, the goblins loved the cool dark and the shadows. They loved water and learned to coax it, guide, and use it in all that they did. They loved it, for it carried an echo of the world they knew before their bondage.

In this they assumed, as Ornduhl had planned, a greater identity. They absorbed images of Ornduhl's memory. They learned of the All Father's thoughts as well. They saw the Arc of Time, the Endless Pools, and sprawling mansions of the Homeless House. Many became malevolent, hungry creatures, lusting for what they did not know. But some few feasted upon the memory of the Red God and tasted of the Arc of Time, and these gained an immortality reflected in their master. These earliest goblins, the eldritch goblins, being powerful reflections of Ornduhl's memory, could die only by fell magic or strange curse.

The eldritch goblins were fiercely independent and fought amongst themselves continually. Ornduhl coaxed them into choosing a king and queen, for he knew that without leadership they would war on one another, spoiling the war he plotted against the dwarves. They chose Ichlun as their king and Oglotay as their queen, and they were a horrid pair to see. The eldritch goblins dug great holes deep into the earth, using magic more than skill, and there they carved out a kingdom, a realm they called Lugtrunda. And here in the depths of the world, the goblin king mated with his goblin queen, and she spawned, laying eggs upon the ground. The goblin host was horrified, for this was utterly unnatural, a bestial thing. But Oglotay nested with her eggs, mothering them, all the while laying more. So came into the world the goblin kin, those drones, warriors and slaves, do the bidding of the eldritch goblins. Oglotay was called Machen in their tongue, which is simply the "Mother."

Once in a great while, the goblin queen lays an egg laced with red veins. These are known to carry the seed of a new queen, lesser than the Mother, and these they bore off to new colonies in other parts of the world. These lesser queens mate with eldritch goblins, and produced offspring of their own. It is known by the wise that only the Mother can produce other queens, and if her lines ends, so do eventually all the goblins, but for the immortals.

She dwelt for many long centuries in Lugtundra, or in the common speech of men, Ichlin Yor.

The first encounters of goblin and dwarf are not known to the chroniclers, historical records mention the Kav Orun, the cave dwellers, in the year 5123df. Forty years later, the Mammoth Scrolls record a letter which mentions these same folk with the following:

"Master Rudlung has reported that when the corridor collapsed, it opened into a cavern just to the left of our own, running parallel to it. He found there one of the Kav-Orun in possession of an uncut (undetermined) stone. The Kav-Orun proceeded to shout obscenities at Master Rodlung and claim the stone for his own. He retreated down the corridor. Master Rodlung thought little of it, ordered the cavern filled, and continued construction."

The Scrolls report numerous similar incidents in the following years, but mostly the goblins lived in their holes far from the workings of the dwarves, designing mischief, squabbling with one another, and preparing their vengeance.

The Goblin Dwarf Wars

The goblins lived thus for many long years, nurturing their hate. Born of the Red God's spite, they took possession of it, and in time of years forgot wholly that they alone had left the All Father and wandered into the wilds. Though their chief residence was in Lugtrunda, deep in the Grundliche Mountains, they had many more besides, for they were spread far and wide when the Red God found them, and he never

plotted to bring them together, but rather that this new breed of creature would assail the dwarves from many quarters all at once. They built dungeons in mountains and hills, they tunneled beneath the dry steppes and even beneath bodies of water.

The queen herself lay in the deeps of Lugtrunda, laying eggs. The goblins grew fearful when the dwarves founded the kingdom of Grundliche-Hohle, for it was near their queen, and they called upon the Red God to protect them from the dwarves. It was believed that if ever the dwarves found them, they would root them out, destroy them, and slay their queen. And so it would have been.

Ornduhl came to the goblins in their halls, enveloped in the Cloak of Red. The goblins saw him then as a beast of wild cunning and tremendous danger. They knew that he was not a kindly master. Even so, they beseeched his aid in protecting the queen and he gave it.

The Red God took up a hammer and cast himself into it, so that it was an extension of his arm, and he smote the root of the mountain. Once, twice, and a third time. Upon the third blow, it broke asunder and he opened a rift between the world of Airhde and the Wretched Planes. He bid the queen abide there in one form, while her body remained in Lugtrunda. There she was guaranteed the protection of all the power of Huadun and the Homeless House, for none entered those wretched places that did not pass through the Furthnopt. So it came to be that the goblin queen existed in two realms, but the eggs she lay fell only in Aihrde, at the root of the mountains, and these were harvested by the goblins of that place and nursed until they hatched

It is held that if ever she is closed off from the world, that the goblin kind shall, in time, perish but for the immortal eldritch goblins.

The Red God was not idle during these years. He sent his minions to teach the goblins the craft of making armor and weapons. They were quick to learn, using water to shape all that they did. No two armors were alike, as each of the goblins cast armor for himself, and each chose whatever weapon they wished. They chose no symbols or masters, carrying only the statue of the Mother with them wherever they went.

THE KINSHIP DISPUTES

In the five thousandth, two hundred and seventh year, as the dwarves reckon the time, Argrind IX, last of the Darkeye, returned to stone. He followed his father, Argrind VIII, who reigned for an unusually long time, so that when he took the throne as Argrind the IX, the new king was rather young. During his ninth year of kingship, young Argrind came upon a giant while hunting in the mountains. The giant, sitting upon a boulder of some size, saw the young dwarf and called out to him. “Come hither, beardling, my cousin. Come hither and let me see my dinner, uncooked.”

Argrind grew wrathful, calling to the giant. “What now? A block of bone and a bag of flesh? The forge scrap has a voice, too? I find it unlikely that you could master any tongue, more be it that a madness has taken me, than one such as you may master speech.”

“I would speak with care, little one. For my ire is hot and hard to cool.”

“I care not for the ire of a wayward ember. So move along before I stamp you out.”

The giant knew this was the gravest insult, for his people had been set aside from the beginning, and the All Father had no sight, nor thought, for them. He carried in his belt the short tusk of a boar and this he used as a weapon. “Let us hear the talk of dying embers when your skull opens!”

They battled upon the mountain peak, and before his guard could come to his aid, the giant tore the young king open from his groin to his sternum. He fell back into the pine nettles and lay there with his eyes open, looking upon the blue heavens above. The giant loomed over him with a leering grin, the king’s gore upon his hand. “How now, beardling? You’ll not live long with such wounds, but long enough I suppose to know the feel of my teeth.”

But before the giant could eat Argrind, the king’s guard found them. Upon seeing the king, madness took them, and they fell upon the giant and cruelly slew him, severing his limbs one at the time until the giant lay like a fallen tree. They left him thus for the worms and carrion to eat. Seeing Argrind dead, they closed his eyes, setting him upon the road to the Stone Fields.

The guard took up the king’s body and bore it back to Gorthurag, and there lay him to stone with great pomp as is their want. After, it is said, the guards quit their posts in shame, for they had failed their king. These dwarves wandered into the wilderness, and there they formed the Black Company and called themselves the Eajern, the Cursed. They succumbed to grief, but could not die, and it is said that until such time as the true king sits upon the throne of Gorthurag, they must forever stalk the wilds without friend or home

This marked the beginning of the enmity between the dwarves and giants. For, ever after the dwarves hated giants of any stripe, holding them all to guilt for the one’s crime. In truth the giants, by and large, were always a cruel people and earned this wrath. However, greater than this feud, the death of Argrind IX led to the Kinship Dispute, which left the world a bitter place and the dwarves a reduced people.

Argrind IX was young for a dwarf, a beardling. He sat the throne for only nine years, and when he died he had no issue. He died with no words of who should follow in his stead, and the dwarves were bewildered. There was no precedent for this, for the dwarven line had held true for 5000 years. So it was that the Dwarven All Father called upon Argrind’s mother’s sister’s son, Isenharg, to take up the Axe and Crown. Isenharg did so, but with much reluctance, many misgivings, and doubt.

Before the crown was set upon his brow, emissaries arrived from Grausumhart and its aged King Uthkin I. Uthkin sat the throne of his realm for over 1400 years. His was the old blood, the first dwarves, whose lives out lasted all that came after. He was the last of his kind and the oldest of all the dwarves then alive, all of his comrades having long ago returned to stone. As the oldest living dwarf he was, or so his notice read, entitled to take up the mantle of the Dwarven All Father and take over the realm of Gorthurag. The folk of Gorthurag deliberated Uthkin’s claim, some arguing they should yield to the elder, but the majority of them were filled with wrath and saw this as an insult. “Who is Uthkin to speak to us as children?,” they asked. And so it went.

In the end, folk of Gorthurag returned Uthkin’s emissaries with a trunk of wood and a message. Read in the wide hall of Grausumhart in front of many of that realm’s lords and captains, the note read: “Oh, Lord King of Grimdraw. For your claim we send back this answer, set in the velvet of this trunk.” When the trunk was opened a cloud of smoke rose from within and there was nothing besides.

Uthkin took umbrage at this insult, calling for his armor and weapons. “Avenge me, Lords of Grausumhart! Too long have we suffered the

arrogance and the insults of our cousins to the south. Let us bring our iron to their doors and see how arrogance stands against axe and hammer!" All through the realm the dwarves mustered, turning their forges from peaceful manufacture to weapons and armor.

Rumors of war came to the south, and the Lords of Gorthurag began to arm themselves as well, so that the dwarves of both realms turned their minds toward making armaments for war. Long beards and longer memories, or so the dwarves say, and for several years the two king- doms made ready their armies. At last, housed in iron they set forth in great armies, above and below the earth. When they first met on the field of battle, both sides quickly learned that they had little heart for this war, and many refused to slay their kin openly. Of course, some were slain, and the more that fell the more bitter the others became, so that in the span of several seasons, the dwarves were beginning to fight openly. After the first few battles, the dwarves became hardened against each other, but more, against hardship, suffering and death itself.

No side proved the mightier, and the dwarves bent their crafts to making ever more clever weapons and armors. They called upon their kin in the other realms, and they enlisted the aid of men. In those days the Engale lived upon the shores of the Sea of Erun and in cities of stone upon the slopes of Gorthurag. They were late returned from the far north, after the fall of Mordius. They were grateful to the House of Darkeye and all their people, for the Darkeye had welcomed them in, not as vagrants but as long lost friends. The Engale were led, at first, by King Riese and later by his son and the sons that followed.They proved the most stalwart of Gorthurag's allies.

At first, the wars took place in the Crusp Mountains, fought upon mountain roads or deep tunnels. The conflict eventually spread into the lowlands and the Dulcet. Gorthurag's were the greater people, and stronger and more skilled, and with their Engale alliez, they dominated the early battle. Grausumhart boasted more warriors, however, and with their greater numbers they matched Gorthurag's forces in the field. In the space of a few years the war grew bitter, and the minor Kingdoms of Bogda-Rawd, Grudling-Hohle, Londrok-In, and Krag- ot-Thune, all colonies of Grausumhart, joined the fray. They fielded a host larger than ever seen in the world until that time, and fell upon the dwarves and men in multiple columns. In a series of hard fought battles Grausumhart drove Gorthurag from the north.

The king of the Engale and all his folk fell back to the sea to defend their homes against the dwarves marching out of the west, and Gorthurag's armies were driven from the Crusp and into their own halls in the Arnhul Mountains. The folk of Grausumhart lay siege to Gorthurag, and it was a long and bitter struggle.

When all hope seemed lost to the folk of Gorthurag, the lords of Alanti arrived, bringing a host from Grundliche-Hohlee, led by King Fundin Though few in number, they had long ago mastered the art of working in steel, and their weapons and arms were far stronger and laced with the power of their All Fathers. They mastered the field, and in a series of bloody battles they secured the Sea of Erun for the men of the Engale. Afterwards, they marched into the mountains and fell upon the armies of Gruausmhart. The gates of Gorthurag opened, and a host issued forth, driving the northerners back to their mountains.

This was called the Winter's Walk, and it proved a bitter retreat, for the weather turned foul, and the dwarves of the north had lost most of their equipment in the siege. They were relentlessly pursued by their kin, even into the most bitter mountains and the southerners slew them where ever they found them.

In all these long wars and battles the other great kingdoms abstained. Norgorad Kam, Roheisen Hohle and Norgrund sent no men, nor material aid to either side. They closed their doors to all and would hear no complaint or entreaty.

A short peace followed the Winter Walk, while both sides regrouped, building weapons and gathering stores for the wars to come. The Engale replenished their numbers and renewed vows to the dwarven king of Gothurag.

When the war began anew, the dwarves did not assail one another in their mountain kingdoms, but rather met in smaller armies, sent all across the world to hound the lesser kings and their folk. These are called the Small Wars in the Mammoth scrolls. The fighting was brutal, and few were spared. Beardlings as well as longbeards fell to axe and sword, homesteads, villages, and towns were put to the torch. Many fell in lonely outposts, in way stations on the roads between the realms. Others died in castles and dungeons, holed up against impossible odds, with no hope of aid from their fellows or mercy from their assailants. In this war the dwarves of Londrok-In were utterly ruined and their kingdom became a shell of itself. Her grand halls were emptied of almost all her people, and that folk dwindled ever after and closed their doors to all who sought them.

In the Kinship Dispute, the men of Engale proved the most fell and deadly to the dwarves. For many years, they lived by the sea, where they prospere in trade.Their people frequently traded with their own kin, the Ethrum who, as is told, settled upon the eastern and western slopes of the Rhodope Mountains. These folk had adopted the horse from the Aenochians, who in turn took it from the far eastern tribes of men. When the Engale first rode against the dwarves, mounted on steeds, the dwarves were stricken dumb knew not how to defend against them. In those clashes of rapid movement and small engagements, the horsemen proved the better. The Engale hunted their rival dwarves, visiting such slaughter upon them that the dwarves learned to fear the steeds of men. The fear spread even to those of Gorthurag who called the Engale friend, for they saw the havoc and terrible damage wrought with little cost.

In these years the dwarves were hardened, becoming accustomed to the chaos of war.

The wars raged for years. From the Arnhul Mountains in the east to the Thurmberg in the far west, through the shadows of the Northern Forest, in the deserts of the Dulcet, and the shores of the Sea of Erun. None were spared, woman or child, dwarf or man. And the long roads became wild places, for none patrolled them, and the giants came out of their lairs and hunted both sides. Not only giants, but other monsters; foul creatures crawling from pits or caves roamed the open country, hunting the slow or weak. The roads to the Endless Pools were crowded with the broken forms of souls destined for eternity in the Wretched Plains, the Pools, or the Stone Fields and Heth, guided them on their way.

After many long years, Isenharg grew impatient. He gathered the greater part of his arms and set off for the north. To the pounding of many thousands of drums, he shouted, "To doom, we march! To doom! To doom, we march! To doom!" And the drums and horns filled all the valleys, echoing his call.

In Grausumhart the dwarves answered the call. Old King Uthkin had died many years previously, and his great grandson, Austcun I, sat the throne. He marshaled the armies of his realm and all those colonies as well. He set off south along the long roads of the Crusp Mountains.

The armies met upon the high mountain meadows of Jardale. All through the host, the symbols of the clans stood out. Along the slopes and ridges of the north, the dwarves carried the totems of Grausumhart upon staves of deepest blue. The hunting owl rode upon shields and breast plates, axe heads carved like wings, the beaks and heads topping helms. South, in the green grasses of the meadows, and in broken country that tumbled away to ruin below, ranged the armies of Gorthurag; theirs bore the hammer above an anvil, for their home was the Forge of the All Father. Behind them marched a great host of men with the many symbols of their houses. Long spears, swords, oval shields, and horned helms marked the Engale.

For many hours the hosts watched each other. The skalds walked amongst them, chanting dirges of terror, of the wild roads and the slaughter of the innocent, of loss, suffering, and death. Their songs conjured images of every foul crime and deed that their foes inflicted upon them, reminding all of the reasons they were here. They spoke of the kings that should be and could not be, and they charged them all with doom.

As the sun peaked in the pale blue sky, a deep intonation rose from the hosts of Gorthurag. "Doom," it said. "Doom." Again, "doom." And the sound of it lingered upon the mountain air. "Doom." Again and again the voices took up the word until all the host chanted the battle cry and the mountains shook and the meadows lay low for the sound of it.

One warrior broke ranks from the host of Gorthurag. His comrades called him Erik Broodstone, for he buried his family years ago beneath one large stone. Erik, in his grief and madness, shouted and charged with mace and hammer, racing across the wide field where he fell into the ranks of Grausumhart, grinding iron to ruin and bone to gristle. As Erik vanished into the host the whole of Gorthurag charged, their iron boots, it is said, rousing even Corthain from the Fortress of Iul. And Grausumhart unleashed their own armored legions, and the pent up fury of both peoples exploded across the mountain tops.

The battle raged for four days and four nights. Iron legions marched across untamed meadows and clashed with such force and violence that the snow tumbled from the nearby mountains. With axes, hammers, iron clubs, maces, and flails they lay into each other. Armor and shield echoed the pounding wrath of the dwarven hosts, now grown bitter and filled with hate. Time and again, the hosts charged, battering into one the other, then retreating to regroup, treat their wounded, and ready to attack again. Hour by hour, the fields gathered their grim harvest, as dwarves fell to dwarves. Soon, the dead lay in heaps upon the meadows, the tracks around them, the peaks, slopes. Wherever there was dirt, it turned to mud, so great the loss of life upon the blood soaked ground.

On the fifth day, the two kings at last met upon the field. They fought each other, as their bodyguards fought all around them. In those days Isenharg was unmatched upon the field. His great helm bore no mark or design, but was faceless and few could look upon it without fear. His shield bore the hammer and anvil of the All Father, and his armor was fashioned with such skill that he moved as if he wore no armor. He wielded the Axe of the All Father. The two kings fought a long, hard battle, and both suffered grievous wounds. In the end, Isenharg smote Austcun such a blow that that dwarf was cut asunder and died. His death threw his armies into dismay, and they fell back upon the peaks and slopes, and Isenharg called a halt to his own armies.

Of all the host of Grausumhart, Austcun's son by the same name, stood the field alone. Setting his shield aside, he pulled his helm off, and let his hair and beard fall free and open to the wind. Blood soaked axe in hand he stood thus for a long while. At last he walked forward to his father's stricken form and looked down upon the wreck and ruin of the battle. His rage was terrible. The earth bent beneath him and the air turned to flame. All fell back from him, for they feared the wrath of the All Father in him. Isenharg stood alone, bleeding from many wounds.

Austcun bent and lifted the crown from his father's body. He held it in his iron glove until the blood dried upon the gold, and only then did he turn to his cousin. "If you will not yield to our heritage, Lord of Gorthurag, nor will we contest yours. Know from this day forth that our kindred are sundered, and you and all yours set adrift on a sea of your own greed."

And Isenharg replied, "We plot no such course on any sea, but hold what is rightfully ours as given by the All Father of our realm and the All Father of us all. Go your way, and be done with you. It is best we walk alone, or so I council."

So the the Kinship Disputes came to an end. From their beginning in 5207, they lasted 250 years, ending in 5457df with the sundering of the realms. Isenharg I, cousin to Argrind IX, ruled as king in Gorthurag, while the Uthkin kings, led now by Austcun II, remained in Grausumhart. The Mammoth Scrolls reckon this the end of the First Age of Dwarves for, after it, the world changed and it was a harder place for it..

THE FIRST GOBLIN-DWARF WAR, *5590-5593*

Over a century passed and the various kingdoms of dwarves and the sons of Engale recovered, somewhat, from the bitter contest of the Kinship Dispute. Trade between many of the realms fell off. Some, like Londrok-In never recovered, while others turned to men to carry their wares to and from the corners of the world. In this the Aenochians excelled, for their people were great in number and they had mastered the horse, wagon, and cart.

t came to pass that these years of hardship were the very years that the goblins unleashed their wrath. They issued forth from their caverns and halls in great numbers, bound in armor and bearing weapons of iron and brass. They made war upon the dwarves far and wide. So began the great Goblin-Dwarf Wars which brought the world so much that is evil, and yet, so much that is good.

The goblins, under King Ichlun, issued forth from their caves and dungeons, from the Crusp Moutains to the Thurmberg. They swept across valleys and plains in a wave of terror and war. As is written, they wore armor and carried shields and weapons of iron. They favored weapons that caused gruesome wounds: jagged knives and short swords, spiked balls and whips. The suddenness and ferocity of the attack stunned the dwarves, for few of them believed the rumors of these fell people. Caught wholly unaware, they threw up weak defenses that could not withstand the goblin attack. The dwarves fell, cut down by the host of the Red God's hate. These were largely innocent people, farmers and their kin, those who lived above ground and had no means of defending themselves. Many had survived the Kinship Dispute only to die in the greater war that was only now just beginning. They fled before the goblins in terror.

The terror of the attack did not last, however, for the dwarves were fresh from their wars of the Kinship Disputes and well armed, with experienced battle commanders. The king of Grausamhart led the initial counter attacks against the goblins, and his troops were filled with such rage for the slaughter of the innocents that the goblins could not stop them. Other kingdoms joined the war, though they did not fight together, Gothurag and Grundliche-Hohle foremost among them. The

latter kingdom found a nest of the goblins upon their doorstep, and there the fighting was greatest for the fo-refather of Dolgan, Fundin II, plundered the upper layers of Lugtundra, what the men called Ich-lin-Yor (and later Ngondoro), driving the goblins to the deep places beneath the world.

Had the forces of Grundliche-Hohle known that there stood the heart of the goblin realm, they likely would have fought until they unroofed the Wretched Plains and pulled the goblin queen form the Homeless House to slay her upon the All Father's dirt. But they did not have such knowledge, and thought only to root out a nest of the viperous peoples.

So ended the first Goblin-Dwarf war, and the dwarves claimed it as a great victory. But in truth it was not so, for the goblins had not shown their strength, but had rather merely tested the dwarves. Oglotay continued to lay eggs, and Ichlun rallied his armies. In the space of a few years they came forth again, this time in even greater numbers.

THE SECOND GOBLIN-DWARF WAR, 5616-5640

Five and twenty years passed before the goblins rose again. The Mammoth Scrolls speak of an uncountable host, of fields overflowing with the goblin kin, led by their fierce king and his sorcerers. The goblins issued from holes and caves all over the world, in the mountains and plains, along the river beds, in the deep woods of the north, and the wild hills of the south. Girded in bands and rings of iron, bearing weapons of all design, they swept from their halls, falling upon the dwarves with such rapidity that those people were at first overwhelmed. Only one goblin realm withheld its power, husbanding it: the home of the goblins, Lugtundra.

In this, the second Goblin-Dwarf War, the dwarves were unmade. They fought above and below the earth. They fought on open fields with large hosts, mounted and on foot, and from the valleys to the heights of the mountains. They fought in castles and walled towns, vainly holding back the tide. But, as it has been told, the dwarves were not as skilled in the acts of war in those days as they became in later ages. The Kinship Disputes had not wholly embittered them, and they were still young and filled with joy, mirth, and the love of beauty given to them by the All Father. Worse still, the dwarven realms were sundered in the Kinship Disputes, and only those who fought as allies in that conflict offered aid to one another, so that the kingdoms fought largely alone. Only Gorthurag had allies at hand, the folk of Engale, who dwelt still by the sea. And for all this, they could not stand against the goblin rage.

So fierce were the battles of this great war that tens of thousands fell. Enitre towns and villages vanished, castles burned, and the dwarven people fled beneath the earth. At first, the lesser kingdoms, Grulding-Hohle and Bogda-Rawd, were swept from the mountains and closed their doors. Their kings both fell in the retreat, and their bones were mounted on the chariot of the goblin king.

Having cleared the northern mountains, the goblins entered the Crusp with the greater part of their hosts, and there forced the dwarves into their great halls. Londrok-In, unrecovered from the Kinship Disputes, was utterly sacked and her people made homeless, fleeing into the far north and crossing the seas to the Gal-Land where, in their poverty, they built halls of ice and wood. Grausumhart closed her doors, leaving many roofless and wild in the mountains and lands to the east. The last of that great realm's colony kingdoms, Krag- ot-Thune, hearing of the slaughter and unable to send aid over such vast distances, called all her people to her and closed her gates.

Other far flung realms followed suit, Roheisen Hohle, Nogrick, and Amvil-Cris closed their doors.

As the war raged, shifting into the Lands of Ursal where the four realms stood. They struck first at Magdul-Hohle in the west. A host of goblins, led now by demons of the Red God, came down the Valley of Is, surrounding the King's Mere, to come to the gates of Magdul-Hohle, that realm that lie the Rhodope Mountains. There, they called for the king to come forth.

He did. Gurden One Hand, was the first of his line by that name, and had ruled in Magdul-Hohle for more than a century. He bore a double-headed hammer, the symbol of his house, laced with runes of power. He wore a small, heavy, iron helm, but carried no shield for he had lost his hand in the Kinship Disputes. A bronze plate, greaves for the arms and legs, and a skirt of chain, served him for armor. The king looked over the goblin horde as they chittered and howled. When he spoke his voice carried the weight of stone and promise of death. "I am Gurden King." His words silenced the host. "Be off my doorstep, or suffer for it."

A foul looking demon, twisted coils of gray and fang, crept forward on many legs. "And what sufferance can you give, oh Gurden One Hand?"

Gurden unstrapped his hammer and dropped it to the ground between them. The impact shook the earth, and tis said said the echo carried even to the world within the world and made the dragon Inzaa turn in her slumber. "Come closer, foul one. I did not hear you clearly."

Fear took the creature and it coiled in upon itself, hissing softly, so that only these words were heard, "Not yours to command, One Hand."

"Speak clearly, foul one."

The demon leapt high, screeching in madness and fear. Its voice echoed the deep torment of the Wretched Plains and the wild rage of the Red God. All lesser men quailed at the sound of it, goblins, dwarves and demons alike. But Gurden One Hand did not flinch, nor did he move. Not until the demon closed upon him, did he move. Tearing his helm from his head he smote the demon such a blow with it, that the creature's head exploded in a curtain of misty gore and shattered bone, and there it died.

Howling their rage, more demons rushed the king, and he smote a second and third with his helm, crushing them to ruin. But even so, they threatened to overwhelm him. Throwing the helm aside, he took up his hammer. This he swung wild above him, and all about the king were lifted into the air and hurled into the walls and ground to dust, for the rune-bound hammer unleashed a wave of elemental creatures, and they howled in the glee of destruction.

Cleared of foes, Gurden One Hand placed the helm back upon his head and sounded his armies to attack. All along the valley, doors were flung wide and tunnels opened, and the dwarven host came forth, falling upon the goblins on all sides. At first, the dwarves had them, clearing the valley to the gates, but more came over the high walls of the ridge-lines and attacked them from above. More came up from the east, pressing them hard, and they climbed up the steep cliffs and into the valley from that direction as well. For two days and nights, they fought. In the end, however, their numbers were depleted, and the dwarves were defeated.

Gurden One Hand called his people into the halls, but too late, for the gates were forced and the goblins rushed inside. All the upper halls

were ravaged and many put to cruel deaths before the king, and his soldiery dislodged them and shut the gates against them.

So the goblins had the victory, though they did not take the kingdom. Such was the destruction that Gurden One Hand wrought upon his foes that, from that day to this, the goblins fear the thought of him and the hammer and helm he bore in battle.

In all these wars, men fought only sparingly. Some of Ethrum joined the dwarves of the Lands of Ursal but not in the mountains, containing the fight to the dark roads and forest deeps of the Ethvold. Some joined the goblins, especially amongst the Aenochians and eastern tribes. Most men fled, for the goblin wrath fell wholly upon the dwarves, and the tribes of men they left unmolested. The Engale fought at the side of Gorthurag as always, but now from fleet horses and they moved their people from one fastness to another and knew no rest in those days.

In the end, only the realms of Gorthurag, Grundliche-Hohle, Alanti and Norgorad Kam stood strong enough to carry on the war. The latter realm suffered great after her sister-kingdom was ravaged, for the goblins pressed the dwarves of the Brass Halls from all sides. It is then that the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle set aside all memory of the Kinship Disputes and set forth with a great host. They crossed the great Bridge of Ursal and scattered the goblins there. Crossing into the Massiff, they bridged Lake Orion and came to the foot hills of Norgorad Kam. King Fundin II led them.

The goblins turned, fearing to be cornered in the high mountains between a hammer and anvil. They rallied, but the dwarves were too great, and Fundin swept the goblins from the hills and valleys. An army from the Brass Halls issued forth and joined Fundin, so that the kings fought shoulder to shoulder, driving the goblins to ground everywhere they went. But the host was vast and rallied, strengthened by fresh ranks from the Bleached Hills, and they pushed the dwarves back almost the gates. Thus, it was that the sons of Tefnut came to their aid, the men of the Ethvold. They came with spears and bows and fell upon the goblins, catching them wholly unawares. The goblins turned and to fight, and the dwarves fell upon them from above. In this way, the greater host of the goblins in those lands were destroyed and driven into the Ethvold, where the Ethrum, sons of Tefnut, hunted them like wild animals and slew them wholly, showing no mercy. None of that host ever left the Ethvold.

The day's victory was met with sorrow, however, for the goblin strength was beyond understanding, and in the east the doors to Ichlin-Yor, closed all these years, opened. A great host issued forth, crawling across the mountains as a swarm of locusts. They drove all before them, coming close on to the doors of Gurndlich-Hohle, and the armies lay locked in battle hundreds of miles away.

In the grip of some madness, Fundin turned his armies and marched back across the wide lands, racing to his home, but he was far and away, with no hope of bringing aid to his people. He came then to the shores of Lake Orion and called on the gods to aid him. This, no dwarf had ever done before, for their minds turned inward at creation and they spoke to the All Father alone, though rarely in prayer or for aid, as such an act violated the debt to him. Fundin shouted to the gods and made sacrifice upon the cold waters of the Lake. "Ealor! As ever you favored the All Father's children, come to my aid! My people or sorely pressed and in need."

And Ealor heard him, and crossed beneath the world from the Green Halls, coming soon to the shores of Orion. In a great surge of water the god rose before the host of Fundin. Looking upon the dwarf, he smiled, saying only, "Anderoth, your kin of old bid me come to your aid, and for that I give you the fleet of the dead."

The waters fell away before Fundin, and before him lay a ragged fleet of ships manned by the spirits of dead men and dwarves. In fear, the dwarves crossed over to the lake bed where ropes and nets dropped to

the ground. Climbing on board they gathered to wait for they knew not what. When the last of them boarded, Ealor called the waters to close, and the lake crashed upon the ships and all those on her decks. But behold, the water did no harm to the host of Fundin, and they breathed freely beneath the waves.

Anderoth ordered the ships to set sail, and they charted a course beneath the world. They crossed through tunnels of darkness and skirted the River of Erde that is the Arc of Time. They saw the Furthnopt and the dragon caves of the Homeless House. They sailed until, at last, the ships surfaced far on the western shores of the Inner Sea and only a few days march from Grundliche-Hohle.

So it was that the army of Fundin came to the Vale of Harion before the gates of his realm. There, they found the goblins battering upon the doors with massive trunks and the doors giving way. Giants and trolls laced their ranks, and sorcerers hurled runes upon the walls of the mountain fastness. Seeing this, Fundin let sound his horn, and all the horns of his host answered so that the Vale shook with it. The cacophony of noise caused ice and snow packed upon the hills to come crashing down into the goblin army. Chaos reigned in the goblin ranks as they turned to see the source of the sound, but too late. Fundin's arms fell upon them and scattered them far and wide.

Though Grundliche-Hohle survived that day, they learned soon enough that the goblins they scattered were only the vanguard of the host to come. Fundin took note of his people, and saw they were spent. Long journeys and hard battles in the distant Bergrucken, followed by sailing the seas under the world, to end in battle upon their doorstep. They were bloodied and ground to a nub. Fundin called all his people from far and wide, any who dwelt still in hidden caves and holes to come to Grundliche-Hohle. And those that could, did, and the gates were shut.

Hearing this, the king of the Brass Halls closed Norgorad Kam as well, gathering first all those that would come. Some of the Ethrum even came to dwell there and made a peace with the dwarves that lasted many ages.

This left only Gorthurag, First Home, and her sister-kingdom Alanti, in open warfare. Long and hard they fought, always far from their homes, for Raul King would not desert the Engale who dwelt then upon the Sea of Erun, for he judged the debt they owed those peoples far greater than life. Raul led his legions north and south, east and west, and everywhere that they clashed with the goblins. They had the better of them, and drove them into the wilderness. But each campaign wasted the dwarves, and the numbers of the goblins seemed without end.

After suffering many losses, the goblin king called off the battles and rallied his people. From far and wide they came, gathering in the fields of the Dulcet, until at last their host covered the steppes like so much black water.

Raul rallied his own folk and Odon, the king of the Engale, whose ancestors had stood by the dwarves of old in the Kinship Wars, gathered his folk, and joined Raul.

"My King," spoke Odon, "This battle is lost already, and you cannot linger here for the safety of my own peoples. Surely, yours and mine own will be lost. Return to your halls and suffer not to look back at us, for the gods will see us through, or not, as they choose."

And Raul turned to Odon and embraced him. "I will not leave your side. Let it never be said a man proved a better friend than a dwarf." He turned to his own son and gave him the Axe of the All Father and bid him return with whomever would go to the halls of Gorthurag. The boy refused and Raul commanded him. No son of a dwarven father disobeyed his king, so Isenhard returned to Gorthurag with the heirlooms of his house.

He returned alone.

When the goblin host attacked, they met the dwarves and men upon the shores of the Sea or Erun. The battle raged over the plains and waters and into the high hills. Untold numbers died, until at last Raul himself fell. A wicked glaive took his eyes so that he fought blind. He did so valiantly until, in the end, the numbers bore him over and the goblins tore him asunder. Odon himself tried to break the ring of iron that surrounded Raul. In his fury, he scattered the goblins long enough to reach Raul's body, and there fought over it. He bore the sword of his house, the Auckling Blade, and none could break his web of steel. But they shot him with wicked bolts and javelins, and there he died, pierced a dozen times.

At this, the hosts of man and dwarf were broken, and they fell back to the high halls and into the deep wilds. The dwarves gathered who they could, man and dwarf alike, and brought them to safety before the gates of Gorthurag closed. The Engale fled whither they could, some by sea on their ships or those of Alanti, others into the Dulcet, and others still into the southern wilderness.

The dwarven death dirges, the Nine Lamentations, originated in these days, reminding all the Folk of the loss suffered upon the fields of battle. The Engale never recovered and became a fell people, wild and dangerous. Few in number, but fierce in rage, they bore ever after a hatred of evil in all its forms, and they cursed the Red God even in death.

Only the outposts and realms of Alanti held out against the goblins, for those twisted creatures feared the deep water and would not cross it. So the sea kings sailed their armies where they would, attacking the goblins along the coasts and up rivers. They rescued many of the Engale and bore them over the sea, giving them refuge upon the islands they called home. Together, they harried the goblins ever after in the long years of goblin rule.

And so the goblins came to rule the world of Aihrde, but for the mountain kingdoms of the dwarves and the sea kingdoms of Alanti. Their master was Ichlun, and the seat of their power Lugtundra.

For 400 years the goblin king, Ichlun, ruled Airhde. Little is known of these days, for the goblins did not keep histories and men were only just beginning to track the passage of the Sisters through the heavens. It is known that the goblins turned all their might to building great keeps upon the heights above the dwarven realms. Their numbers grew uncountable as the queens continued to lay eggs and none now harried them. They paid little heed to the men of any country and fled from the raiders of Alanti. It was in these days that Ondluche, an eldritch goblin, rose in might, using his sorcery to serve King Ichlun. Ondluche proved far more clever than many of his kind, and his mastery of the gifts of the Red God went unsurpassed.

As the years turned, Ondluche rose in the councils of King Ichlun until he stood next to the throne. He always chided the king, begging him to break the unbreakable doors and root out all the dwarves, for, he said, "if we should fail now, there will come a day for a reckoning." More and more he called upon the king to destroy the dwarves, until at last the king called him fool and banished him from his realm. "Go now and find me a dwarf that might unseat me! You cannot. For there are none left in the world who echo the All Father. Dwarves are a broken race, spent, tired and not but a memory. As are you, sorcerer."

Thus Ondluche left the halls of Ichlun, an outcast. He took only one of his kin with him, Angmule, brother of Agmaur, who later slew the king of Gorthurag in the Stone Wars.

THE RINGS OF BRASS

The sea kings waxed powerful in war during the rule of the goblin king. They mastered the construction of war ships, and all the armaments of those craft. Long in beam, swift and with shallow drafts, their ships plied the coasts and rivers. They crafted light arms and armor, lacing them with the rune magic of creation and a power the goblins could not easily overcome. With these weapons, they harried the goblins, driving them from the coastal regions. Once cleared of enemies, the dwarves constructed towers and walled forts on barrier spits and islands in estuaries and fjords. From these fortifications they grew bolder, attacking ever deeper inland. They plundered the goblin's holds, caravans, and towns, slaughtering all without mercy and retreated to the sea. Upon the few occasions the goblins countered, they could do little beyond laying siege to the coastal forts; these, protected by the rivers or sea, proved hard for the goblins to master, and when they did the dwarves retreated into the ocean to strike at some other target.

Other dwarves lived in scattered bands, hidden from the goblins. They fought small battles against their foe, but did so only with great reluctance, for they feared to bring the attention of the goblin armies. Some dwarves wandered the land as paladins, bringing terror to all the corners of the world. They would come to a goblin feast hall in the wilderness and, kicking open doors, fall upon all those inside, slaughtering them without mercy. They departed as quickly as they came, leaving behind the heaped, dismembered bodies of their victims. The goblins feared the paladins more than all else, for they were older dwarves, bent on death, and sought only to wreak havoc before they passed to the Stone Fields.

At times the dwarves, in one of the realms, opened their gates and a host came forth to battle the goblins, but never for long. After defeating an army or sacking a town, they returned to their realms and closed the gates. The goblins took to keeping large armies on the doorsteps of the surviving realms, guarding every entrance and hole. Nonetheless, the dwarves grew skillful in warcraft, for they were the All Father's children; they heard the Language of Creation and were masters of the Rune Lore. Their numbers, too, replenished over time, and they made good their losses of the last war.

All this while, the dwarves in their many realms bent themselves to the arts of war, forgetting the love of beautiful things. They built arsenals of axes, glaives, hammers, swords, crossbows, boar spears, and other heavy missile weapons. They forged armor stronger than any that had come before; helms and shields, chain and plate covered their bodies from head to toe. This was a golden age, when the dwarves perfected the arts of war.

Here, they achieved their greatest mastery of the runes, weaving them into their weapons as never before. It was a golden age for the rune smiths, for they mastered complex runes, and learned to set them in sheets of brass and dragon hide. And these sheets they laid into items, great and small, smelted into the iron and steel. Weapons grew lighter, though more fell, with edges honed and points sharpened to an unnatural state, they were given names and with those names the weapons lived, and they echoed the promise of vengeance. The dwarves adorned armor with runes of strength, written within the inlaid brass, and it became unbendable.

In these days the greatest of the dwarven rune-smiths resided in Norgorad Kam, and they worked the brass sheets as no other. They carved runes of tremendous power, whose longevity far outlasted all else. They explored the language in all its subtleties, unearthing hidden meanings and deeper wisdom. They learned to unfold the words, and in this way they discovered the Void. Rumors of the planes of creation had always circulated amongst the knowledgeable, but few understood them, and none but Fundin's folk had ever seen them. The smiths in the Brass Halls saw now into the Void, into the Maelstrom, the firmament, the roots of Eahrtaut the Great Tree, where Mordius set the greater store of her knowledge and beyond. They saw the world unfold in all its history, seeing time as it had been and understanding how it would be. They learned of the Gonfod and the Wall of Worlds, of Inzaa the dragon god beyond the Arc of Time. Interspaced through all these visions were the roots of Eahrtaut, sunk deep into the firmament, twisting and turning through the Maelstrom as passages through a mountain. The rune smiths marveled at them and sought ever more knowledge and the unfolding of the world.

Through long years of study the dwarven smiths created that combination of runes that breached the Wall of Worlds. The first smiths crossed over and were lost to the Void or the chaos of the Maelstrom. Those who followed grew more cautious and they plied the cosmos in boats. But their boats proved frail, and they were abandoned. The Rune Smiths suffered great losses before they turned their minds to the roots of the Great Tree and attempted to breach them.

Who discovered the complex formulae that allowed the dwarves to step over and into the root-tunnels of the trottigen giants, none now can say. But at last a portal, cast in a ring of brass, enclosed with many runes, opened a gate into the tunnel-like roots, and the first dwarf stepped through.

What the rune smiths discovered was in fact a vast network of passages carved long ago by the greater dwarves of Inzaa, those same dwarves who the Dragon God had enticed from Airhde when the world was young, the trottigen. The greater dwarves were steeped in the Language of Creation, and if they did not possess a complete mastery of it, they understood many of its complexities. Trapped in Inzaa, these refugees always sought to break their bondage and return to their own lands in Aihrde. They sought to create gateways through the firmament, which might penetrate into their ancient homelands and allow them egress to the world of their youth. What the trottigen found were the roots of Eahrtaut, and they tunneled within them, ever hoping to return home. They carved the runes of life and death upon the tunnel walls and upon the fresh cut stairs. These were the runes of power, all the knowledge of the All Father and Inzaa.

These dwarves possessed access to the Obsidian Book, that pool of knowledge wherein the All Father imparted, as in a great cloud, the Language of Creation to the Dragon God, which she turned in on itself. In bits and pieces, the dwarves copied the text in runes upon the steps of their tunnels. These mingled with their own understanding of the Language of Creation, the self-same runes the dwarves of Aihrde had mastered in their building and weapons of war and the rings of brass. This was the second and final time the Language found a home in the written word, and the only time both Languages were written together. Only the most skilled have ever been able to identify the languages, and only partially.

Long the trottigen giants followed the roots, as they twisted and turned, coiling back upon one the other, climbing through the firmament. It was a maze, however, and they were foiled in their attempts, for the Dragon had woven darkness about them, poisoning their thoughts

against success, and the giants knew not how to achieve their ends. Eventually the trottigen left off their attempts to return to Aihrde, and they remained as slaves to the Dragon God.

Thus, the tunnels stood empty for countless ages, until the rune smiths crossed over into them. After the first breach, the rune smiths opened more, and they began to explore and map the tunnels. They also studied the runes carved upon the passage walls and floor. The catalogued what they learned in scrolls and books until at last they felt they understood the tunnels and the ring gates.

The rune smiths laid all the knowledge of their labors at the feet of Kenud King, Third of His Line, Lord of Norgorad Kam and upon hearing the news it is said that he laughed so that the brass of his throne picked up his voice and cast it back; that it carried through all the halls, where one may hear it still in quiet times and in it one is given hope for a brighter future. Kenud called the smiths to task and instructed them to pick 20 of their most intrepid to travel to the other realms and bring knowledge of these rings to the other kings.

They organized small, fierce groups for the undertaking. Each group had warriors for defense, rangers for tracking, an All Father, and three rune smiths, each possessing knowledge of the Rings of Brass. They stole forth from Norgorad Kam, into the light of day, traveling to the far reaches of the world, to Grundliche-Hohle first, and then Rohesien-Hohle. They are ventured into the western lands where Norgrund stood alone and into the east to First Home and the dour faced dwarves of Gruasumhart. They traveled abandoned roads, through wild country haunted by dreadful monsters. Some were lost on the way, others suffered pain and death. Most, however, arrived at the doorsteps, forced to find entry into kingdoms long closed. The tales of their adventures are oft told in the realms of the dwarves, and their deeds are numbered with the greatest of the ancient world.

When at last the knowledge of the Rings of Brass was brought to these far-flung realms, the smiths of those realms set to work, casting their own Rings to breach the Wall of Worlds. Through great labor, smith craft, and danger, the planes were opened to the dwarves, and for first time in many hundreds of years, the kindred were reunited.

Kenud King, third of his line, called a meeting of the realms to plan how to wrest the world back from the goblins. He invited them all to the Brass Halls to feast and lay out their designs. So they came: Fundin III from Grundliche-Hohle, Ourgun VI from Amvile-Cris, Thorston II of Bogda-Rawd, Bern Longarm of Kargot-Thune, Froden III of Magdul-Hohle, Arngun IX of Norgrund, Orn Greybeard of Rohiesen Hohle, Daud the Good of Alanti, and Isenhard IV of Gorthurag. No kings of Grausumhart, or her sister kingdom of Grulding-Hohle, came to the meet.

Amidst much argument the kings discussed what best to do, until they decided to move the greater part of all the dwarven armies to the halls of Gorthurag, leaving only enough behind in the various kingdoms to hold the gates against attack.

Using the Rings, the dwarves sent a vast store of arms and warriors to the halls of Gothurag. Isenharg King stood to lead, though no other king yielded command of his armies. In the year 5812, the dwarves at last felt strong enough to challenge the goblins and their foul king.

THE THIRD GOBLIN-DWARF WAR, 5812-6010

In the early autumn of 5812, without warning, the dwarves opened the gates of Gorthurag. The goblins, shocked, roused themselves from their stupor to see what this might portend. At first, darkness greeted them, and silence. Captains began to call to troops and, here and there, horns sounded. Slowly, the armies marshaled. As they gathered in their many ranks before the open gates, a great tumult rose from within; the deep sound of iron on iron. It carried over the field and horns followed it, echoing through the climbing rocks. The sound rose as a wave of water, washing over the goblins, planting the seeds of fear. The sound rebounded and rolled back up the valley so that it seemed that others were behind them, and the goblins turned this way and that, shouting and calling to their dark masters.

Flames sprang to life in the deeps beyond the gate, followed by the thumping sound of catapults and ballista. Huge balls of burning pitch soared out and over the dwarves, casting shadows on the hosts of iron-clad soldiery lining the entrance. Even as the goblins began to comprehend what stood in the gloom, the flames fell upon them. The flame-covered stones cut through their ranks and exploded, showering the goblins in a storm of burning pitch and tar, blanketing all in fire. The viscous scum clung to everything it touched, setting armor, clothes, and flesh to burn. As the goblins caught fire, they fled in panic, spreading the clinging flames to their comrades who, in turn, burned and howled and fled where they could. As the flames began to spread, more bolts landed in their ranks, until the valley became an inferno of death, and the host was engulfed.

Into this, the dwarves flung themselves. Their mail seemed impervious to fire and heat as they cut through the ranks of the goblins. They struck the unbalanced, disintegrating army with such force that they cleared the valley in a few short hours. Those that survived fled into the country and were lost.

The host of dwarves swept down from the mountains, hammering a second army of goblins where it lay encamped upon the Sea of Erun. There, before the goblins could rally, the ships of Alanti fell upon them, firing flaming bolts and missiles from a fleet of ships that filled the horizon. In doom, caught between the hammer and anvil, the goblins fled until all were scattered, lost, or dead.

The dwarven army did not pause to enjoy their victories, but shifted to the north, entering the Dulcet. There, they struck the first of the goblin citadels. After a brief siege, it too fell, and all those within were put to the sword.

The goblins fell back into the wilds of the north. They fought as they could, but the Iron Host proved the stronger and they were driven ever back. Sending messengers far and wide, they gathered their kin, and called for Ichlun, their king, to come to their aid. So, they rallied against the dwarves.

Thus the third Goblin-Dwarf War began, that which the Mammoth Scrolls calls the Great War and which men call the Hundred Years War. Bitterly fought, this longest of the early wars destroyed entire generations of both peoples and forever changed the dwarves from a thoughtful people of craftsmen to a warrior's race. The debt they owed the All Father turned now, for many lay aside the forge, and took up the axe, offering their service on the battlefield to pay the debt, more so than any items of the forge's manufacture.

The war spread far and wide, but no army of goblins stood for long against the Iron Host. They crossed the country, bringing terror wherever they marched. The host pulled down towers and walls, burned castles, sacked towns, lay waste to crops and fields, and rooted out dungeons, pulling down the ceilings on high. They moved from kingdom to kingdom, stopping only long enough to hone weapons and replace losses, then on to the march again. Wherever there was water, the

fleets of Alanti supported them with food, supplies, and aid. Thus, the Iron Host dominated the world from the Turmberg Mountains to the Arnhul, from Lake Vittangjarvi in the north to the Amber Sea.

The goblins went underground, and the war followed. In dark places beneath the earth, in dungeons and caves, they fought. The armies fell away and small bands hunted one another. Countless dwarves fought powerful goblin forces, heedless of the destruction of war. They fought long, horrid battles beneath the earth, in dark tunnels far from the light of day. Who may say what acts of heroism and treachery went unrecorded, what desperate characters lived and died in those deep places. Who may say, indeed, for not even the dwarf histories, as told in the Mammoth Scrolls, record these dark years. They speak only of terrible times in which many a dwarf lost his beard, of plagues and famine, of horror and destruction, and of death.

For years dwarves and goblins warred under the world. At first, the dwarves had the upper hand, but the sorcery of the goblins held them in check and threw their hosts back. Then, the goblins hunted the dwarves and plundered many a hall. Eventually, the rune-smiths perfected the rune stones, and they countered the sorcery of the goblins and drove their forces back in turn.

The war ground on, neither people yielding, nor caring for death, loss and other sufferance.

The goblins plotted as ever in their dark holes in Lugtundra. There, the queen lay eggs day and night, and for many long years Ichlun harvested them and held them back from the conflict, until at last, he had gathered a host of such size that the earth quailed beneath its tramping boots. When he deemed it ready, he set forth, following many long tunnels and roads into the west, there to unleash his might, beneath banners of gold.

In the end, the Iron Host met the goblin horde upon the Fields of Ravens, their numbers uncountable. Here, Isenharg slew King Ichlun. With the Axe of the All Father he struck him down. It is said that when the immortal Ichlun fell, that first he called for Ondluche to come to his aid, but the sorcerer remembered his ill treatment at the goblin king's hands and turned away. In the end the goblin king called for mercy, begging Isenharg to spare him, but Isenharg's heart was like iron, and he hacked off the goblin king's head. A howling rose in the Field of Ravens and thundered over the heads of the goblin horde, and they knew fear such that they fled the field of battle, scattering to the corners of the wide world.

Thus ended the Second Age of Dwarves.

THE GOLDEN AGE & THE SORCERERS

With the fall of Ichlun, a new age dawned. The dwarves called it the Rin Eagalt, the Golden Age. This was the age of the sea kings, as the realms of Alanti came into their full glory. The dwarves never returned to the surface of Aihrde in strength, never rebuilt those halls of stone beneath the Sisters. They delved deeper into the earth, building wondrous tunnels and halls beneath the world. These days are also called the Peace of Tunnels, for there were no goblin attacks and war passed away into a memory. During this Golden Age, the dwarves reached the pinnacle of their craftsmanship. In the making of all things, whether weapons of war, armor, jewels, or the construction of underground halls, they never surpassed these days.

It was also an age for men, for their people, spared much of the horrors of the Great War, began to multiply and spread to all the corners of the world. The Ethrum turned to the skies and tracked the stars and the progress of the Sisters. They paid homage to the Gods of the Ethvold; Heth, Amenut, but to Tefnut most of all. For it was she that the mortal Aedgen wed, and for him she bore many sons. These sons reigned after their father, and their sons reigned after them. That line, men held as divine; for it held the blood of gods. They ruled from the Vale of Jariel, and their power spread throughout all the lands west of Lake Orion. This was the first kingdom of that people. Some turned to Toth as well, and they gave the Sisters and all the gods names of their own. They held Corthain above all others, as he guarded the Wall of Worlds from his fortress.

Elsewhere, men flourished. The Aenochians spread through the western Lands of Ursal, from the Amber Sea to the eastern steppes. The Engale, gathered in their halls of the north; the Inklu built temples of stone in the southern jungles; the Rykaard, settled upon the isle of Aroya; the Aathuk mastered the dragons and ships of the air; and all the other tribes spread to the four corners of the world.

Trade blossomed during the Rin Eagalt, for men at last came into their own, and the dwarves turned to them for textiles, wood, tapestries, and other sundries. Of them all, the Ethrum flourished for they excelled in tapestries in these days. They wove such intricate cloth, empowered with words of the Og Aust, so that the images animated and constantly moved, ever reenacting the scenes they depicted. Many dwarves valued these items in those days, and the halls of the kingdoms soon boasted the art of man. It is told how King Imontep of the Ethrum gave to Isenharg VI a lengthy tapestry depicting the many triumphs of the dwarven kings of Gorthurag. The tapestry, much valued by the dwarves, hung over the throne of the king for many long years.

In the latter years of the Peace of Tunnels, the sea kings of Alanti grew great in the councils of both dwarves and men. Their colonies spread across the world, and they traded with people worldwide. Already famed for their marbled towers and houses, the Alanti grew even greater. The wealth of the world was theirs: pearls from the oceans, platinum and gold from the dwarves, silver and fine tapestries from the tribes of man. They built ever greater ships and cities upon the sea, reveling in the glory of their strength. They mapped the heavens, and the course of the Sisters. They charted the deep waters of the oceans and came to know the movements and variates of the currents. The Alanti were the greatest of the dwarves and lived in peace; a peace the whole world enjoyed, under the Alantine kings.

As is written, the Red God taught the goblins the first sorcery, and the dwarves mastered rune magic. During the long reign of the goblin king and the wars that followed, men of many tribes mastered the use of both magics. They, too, worshiped the Val Eahrakun in all their many shapes and forms.

Of all the sorcerers of those days none rivaled Ondluche. Living alone in the wilderness but for his comrade Angmule, he studied the art of magic, mastering both runes and sorcery. He prayed to the Red God, and it is said that Ornduhl visited him often, revealing to him many things that were and might be. He taught spells of wondrous power and opened the gates to the Homeless House and the Wretched Plains, teaching Ondluche how to pass through the Wall of Worlds. And in the desert, far from the eyes of man or beast, Ondluche built a tower of tremendous power that he called Meiklberg, and there housed such treasures and wonders that the world had never before seen gathered in one place.

Others, men and goblins, gathered around him and became his apprentices. These acolytes spread through the world, building temples to the Red God and making sacrifice to him when in need or when they desired.

Yet all things must end. As it is written, the goblins had not been unmade in those closing years of the Great War. They spent many years hiding in holes and caves, ever fearful of the wrath of the Iron Host. For the most part, the dwarves forgot them and paid those who yet lived little heed. Some few continued to hunt them, professional soldiers, embittered from loss or filled with an inherited rage, rooting them out where they could.

But because of their neglect, Ondluche made good work of his sorcery, crafting ever greater spells to exact a vengeance that was altogether his own. And queen Oglotay continued to lay eggs, but she held them so that they did not hatch, not until Ondluche bid her to release them, so that when war broke out again, the goblin's numbers surpassed that of ages past.

THE DRAGON RIDERS OF AATUK

As is written, the men of Aathuk wandered far afield, leaving the Forge of the All Father even before the founding of the first of the dwarven kingdoms. They settled, as all their peoples did, upon the Sea of Erun, but migrated with the other tribes, crossing the Dulcet and into the wilderness. Their journey was long, and as the other tribes settled in and learned of Mordius in the far north, the Aathuk wandered on. They crossed the frigid seas, coming first to the Gal-Land.

In the Gal-Land they dwelt for some time, building towns upon the sea, but there came an age where Mailuhm, the sun, flew high and far from the world, and the seas in those climes froze. The Aathuk, always restless, moved north, crossing the ice bridge into a wide empty land upon the roof of the world. They explored the country and found little life there, for few could stand the snow, the ice, and cold. The growing seasons were short, and those creatures that dwelt there, large bears, seals, huge ox, yak, and other bovines, were fierce and difficult to hunt. The land was quiet and still, the forests deep, the mountains stark, cut and carved by the ever blowing wind. Here the Aathuk found a true home, for they were a people of themselves. They lived, as was their want, far from the haunts of man or god. They named the land Aatuk.

The Aathuk wandered ever further, exploring the vast wasteland. They broke apart as a people, spreading out in small bands. Some preferred the coasts, others the woods, still others the higher mountains and stark landscapes. They built vast mansions and towers to house themselves, and they trafficked with each other when in need. They built sleds to cross the icy tundra and boats propelled by magic to cut the frozen sea.

They traded with few others but for the dwarves that dwelt in the Channel Lakes and Turmberg and those of Norgrund Kam. The Aathuk studied all they came across, but mostly they pondered the heavens, seeking an understanding of the All Father and the gods of the Val Earhakun. In those long ago days, they mastered stonemasonry like none but the dwarves, and they built towers upon the slopes and hills and, later, the mountains. They mastered glassblowing, and discovered ways of creating all manner of objects in that medium. The Aathuk invented the lens, allowing them to watch things from afar, and the heavens became the object of their desire.

From the dwarves, they learned of runes, and the magic contained within them, and with these they built flying ships and greater viewing scopes. They plied the heavens, climbing ever higher into the emptiness, seeking to find gateways to the other worlds and the Void.

The Aathuk paid homage to no gods, but worshiped their ancestors and the elements. And in their youth, they mastered the dragons.

It is said that a prince of their people, Cynquil, came upon three dragons feasting on a bovine of his heard. He called to the dragons, not knowing their true nature and ordered them to be off, thinking he could, at least, salvage the meat. But the beasts only growled, the larger of them, turning from their kill to face the young man. Cynquil hesitated and, though armed with a sword and a shirt of chain, he did not know what strength the beasts possessed. He watched them through all the long morning.

Prince Cynquil saw the dragons were meticulous in their actions. As they ate, they cleaned themselves, and any disagreement caused them to stretch out their necks, and show their armored hides, fangs, or claws. They spoke to one another in their own tongue, though the words seemed to tumble into the air, more than from their throats or mouths. He listened to them and, using sorcery, he understood their language. Their pettiness amused the prince, as they bragged to one another of their deeds and misdeeds.

At last Cynquil rose and strode toward the dragons, and they growled, spreading wings across the ground and tails snapping to and fro. As Cynquil approached he cast runes into the air and walked among them, making him seem ever greater than he was. When he stood in their midst, he uttered more runes, casting them out and about to settle like chains upon the dragons; for they were charming runes and runes designed to ease one's mind and open it to suggestions. When he spoke, his tongue was honey and dripped of kindnesses, compliments, and other words of praise that made the dragon's minds ease, and they thought better of the prince.

Cynquil talked to the dragons of flying and wondered aloud how it must feel to fly so high in the heavens. In truth, he knew the pleasures of flight very well, for he piloted a craft that sailed the skies. And the greater of three dragons thought to himself that here was an ignorant creature who deserved his pity. The dragon offered to bare the prince aloft, thinking that later, he could shake this creature from his back and slay him. Cynquil climbed onto the dragon's back, and bound himself there with runes. Hardly had Cynquil finished his runes than the beast launched into the air, wings beating the winds into submission. With powerful strokes the creature rose, flying clear of the forest. It climbed high and fast, rode the winds, and cut the clouds, and Cynquil knew such joy as no man or beast in all the wide world. His laughter pealed on high, and he called the dragon the greatest of all creatures of the sky, earth, and seas. The dragon's heart softened at these words, and it took a primal joy in the man's happiness. For many hours they flew, until the beast returned to the clearing and its kill. The dragon's companions had finished the feast, and looked up at their return.

Once upon the ground, Cynquil called the beast many complimentary names, and the dragon was secretly gratified.

But then Cynquil challenged the dragon to battle, offering to spar with him, not to the death, but in contest only, for he deemed the dragon held might above all things. Indeed, he was a young dragon, but in the full of his power. The dragon thought to himself that here was an easy proof of this creature's frail being, and took up the challenge. With deeds both bold and swift, Cynquil defeated the beast, wielding runes and blade in concert. When the dragon fell to his arms and might, it called for mercy, and Cynquil called him friend and servant and bound the beast to him.

"No mercy can I give, oh drake of heavens sent. For I deem you have held back the greater of your powers in this contest, and given me the victory for such a creature you are." Though, in truth Cynquil knew he had bested the dragon.

And the dragon became enamored of Cynquil and knew his words were true, and he was the greater of the two for he had spared the man. And it seemed to him that he must stay with the man, protect him, and allow him to visit the heavens on high.

So the first of the dragon riders came to be.

The power of the Aathuk rose in the estimation of all people then, for the greatest of their peoples mastered dragons. They tamed the dragons always in the same manner; first to conquer and subdue, then to offer flattery in place of condemnation and make the dragon seem a beast greater than it was. And they were great indeed. Many of the Aathuk died attempting these feats, for they were wild beasts that never surrendered easily, and though few dragons were as strong as Cynquil's, few men were as strong as the prince. But those who won through, did so to ride dragons upon the heavens and serve their people in peace and in war.

After many centuries of peace, the power of the Aathuk spread beyond the land of Aatuk and they came to hold sway over the vast country of the Channel Lakes, the lands of the east in Januk, and the broad Forest of Rond. Few could withstand the dragon riders, and their power grew great. These are held the Avowed Years of the Aathuk people, for dark kings ruled them in madness and chaos. They used the power of the dragons to build an empire that spread beyond the alabaster towers of their homes. Men worshiped them as gods and paid them tribute. Tis rumored that the Narrheit rose high in their estimation, and though that creature was never worshiped, his shadow is seen upon the halls of the Aathuk, so that those who were weak and willful listened to his call and became slaves to his madness. The Aathuk ruled thus for a thousand years, mirroring the power of the south and the dwarven kings of Alanti.

In their interactions with the dwarves, they passed on the knowledge of dragon mastery to only a few. The dwarves of Norgrund Kam, long allies and friends, took to it as no other dwarves could. Few other of the tribes of man ever learned the art of dragon riding. What was common in Aatuk and Norgrund Kam proved rare elsewhere.

In time, the power of the Aathuk waned, the dragon kings fell away from power, and the Avowed Years ended. The original goals of the Aathuk were not to build worldly kingdoms, but rather to turn to the heavens and conquer the will of the All Father. So, they flew ever higher, until their adventures ran afoul of the Wall of Worlds and many were lost, confounded in the infinite clouds. Some few broke free, whether to serve Corthain, or plunder the far reaches of the Great Empty, none can say.

But some, as is told, came to the realm of the goblins.

THE FALL OF THE DWARVES

In the 8603rd year as the dwarves reckon time, Ondluche took the crown of Ichlun for his own, and his people called him king. None knew what powers he used to seize the ancient throne, but many suspected, for he had long ago mastered the sorcery of the Red God and now knew the rune craft of the dwarves. His people bowed to him,

though they hated him more than any dwarves or men. He ruled in terror, and they served in fear.

In these years dragons came to the goblins, borne on the ruins of the Avowed Years and in the teachings of outcasts of the Aathuk. Black

dragons, retching acid with each breath, became their favorite beasts of burden, but green and white served them as well. Ondluche ordered the marshaling of the hosts and the hatching of the goblin eggs.

The eggs! Their numbers were vast, for all these years the queen and her subject queens laid eggs and held the greater part of them from hatching, and their numbers grew ever larger. It is said that when Ondluche saw their number, that he was struck dumb.

Rumors had long circulated in the dwarven halls that Ondluche had returned from some desert realm and seized the crown, but word of the hatching awoke the dwarves to their danger. Too late, they realized the threat to the Folk. They began marshaling the Iron Hosts once more, calling to the kings of Gorthurag, Grundliche-Hohle, Norgorod-Kam, and the others, as well as the sea Lings to send their armies to meet the Hoblin king. Graumushart and her sister realm of Grulding-Hohle marshaled their hosts, but they did not join their kin, for the sundering was too long an open wound.

Ondluche chose his time carefully, when the moon stood on high. Calling his hosts to attack the dwarves wherever they stood, they struck Grundliche-Hohle first of all the realms, for it stood upon the doorstep of Lugtundra.

In the fourth Goblin-Dwarf War, called the Wasting War, the goblins fought relentlessly to unmake all that the dwarves had created. Their armored hosts came forth in waves, they rode dragons enslaved to their wills, the sorcerers carpeted the ground in front of the horde with vile magic, and whole armies battled while mounted on wargs. Together, these forces assailed the iron-cased dwarves. The battles fought in this Wasting War were beyond brutal as the hatred the two peoples bore each other reached a maddened lust. Dwarven warriors, male and female, fought with axe and mace, cleaving the goblins who in turn fought with whips and chains, cleavers and swords.

The dwarves of Norgrund rode forth on dragons of their own and assailed the hosts in the open.

For a century and more, this war raged across Aihrde. In deep places, on high peaks, in the open, even in the heavens where dragons warred, and at last upon the sea. Everywhere there was destruction and death. The dragons came at last to Alanti, and visited war and death on that fair kingdom.

Alanti, with her great fleets and island cities fair, the most wondrous and beautiful of all dwarf realms, was thrown down and swallowed in acid and flame. Her high sea walls burned down and the oceans made to flood her many realms. Many of the great homes of the early kings were lost. The war consumed the world that existed in the Days before Days, its glory lost forever. Krag-ot-Thul fell, her halls brought down upon her king. The goblins plundered Madgul- Hohle, and left a ruin, her last king borne aloft and cast into the heavens. Of that realm, many survived and fled into the wilderness to live homeless, though some came to Norgorad Kam and there took up their abode. Tis said the king's grandson escaped to live in exile.

Grulding-Hohle fell too, cut off from all her people and allies. Those dwarves fought alone for many years, in the dark underground. Their halls were pulled down upon them, their treasures despoiled, and many done to death. But the goblins left behind uncounted dead, littering the halls and corridors. But her dying was hard and the tale an echo of sorrow.

The Grulding dwarves found themselves cornered in the deeps, with no help or promise. Lorhin King rallied the last of his folk, leading them to the surface on a wave of blood-red gore. Before them, all fell or fled, even to the conquered and ruined halls below. Thus Lorin King came to the gates in triumph and broke free into the valley before his realm with the remnants of his folk. And there the goblin army stood, serried ranks of cleavers, glaives, knives, and axes; their numbers like the trees of a forest.

The king took 40 of his guard and ranged them before the gates. He bid his people to climb the cliffs behind him and flee into the mountains, while he and his guards held the armies at bay.

So the Clegerarch began, that battle that dwarves sing of in sorrow and triumph. The goblins hurled themselves upon the king and his 40, crashing against the iron wall of their shields. The dwarves threw them back, and all the while the folk began to climb the cliffs behind them, pulling themselves up with ropes and spikes, making slings for the young and old. And when many were on the cliffs, the dragons came, with goblin riders, and washed the cliffs in acid and gas. Dwarves fell by the scores, plummeting to the earth below, screaming in pain and terror, washed in death. Some of the dwarves turned and fought the dragons, leaping upon their high necks, shooting bolts and the like. These are accounted wondrous feats, and many a dragon lost his wing. The goblins attacked, and the 40 fought on, and the climbers climbed, and the dragons fell upon them. All day, the battle raged until the rock in the earth could drink no more. and the blood ran in currents.

As the moon rose Lorin King fell, brought down by a mighty troll. The beast lifted his body and hurled it far afield into the goblin host, and they fell upon it in a mad frenzy. At this time, only 18 of the 40 remained, and at the sight of their fallen king they plunged into the mass of the goblin forces. Enraged, the dwarves clove through the goblins, slaying them in droves. Singly and in pairs they fought, and some turned this way and that, lost in the press. Others cut their way through the wall of flesh. Here one fell, there another, lost to the blood rage of the goblins. But everywhere was blood and death until, in the end, two brothers alone made it to Lorin's ruin, and they stood over him, waging their bloody campaign.

The goblins never ceased attacking and rushed, time and again, upon the brothers, trying to pull them down. At last, wearied from the contest the younger brother stumbled and the press forced him from his brother's back to fall in a wash of iron and bone, flesh and blood. The lone brother fought on until a thrust in the back drove him to a knee and he was overwhelmed in the press. At last, rent and torn by many wounds, the brothers died and their bodies consumed with the king upon goblin cook-fires.

Most who climbed onto the walls died, falling to the dragon's wrath. Though tis said that some few escaped into the high cliffs, fleeing over the snow capped mountains, down hidden trails and secret paths that only the dwarves knew.

The Clegerarch ended only after the moon stood high above. And thus were Grulding-Hohle and her people destroyed. Few now speak of the Grulding Dwarves, for the sorrow is too great.

In reprisal the dwarves sacked the goblin holes and rooted out the lesser queens. These they burned to death, and stomped and destroyed their eggs, one after the other. None were spared. In the end, the king of Grundliche-Hohle led a host against Lugtundra. Ever close to one another, the armies fought over the high mountains and in the deep valleys, until the dwarves came to the gate to the goblin king's realm.

They burst in, laying waste to the guard, and there rooted them out. In the deeps of that place they found the goblin queen, Ogoltay. Immense in size, the massive creature could not move herself, but lay upon her side, birthing eggs of goblins all the while dwarves hacked at her iron-

like flesh. They could not slay her, for the root of her lay deep in the world. But they bound her, using magic of the runes and forge, and encased her in a temple of stone that after men called the Ferin Ul, which is 'the sty'. Then, they left with the temple, carrying it through the Rings of Brass, deep beneath the earth. They set iron guardians to be her jailers, and there the queen remained for many years, until after Winter's Dark.

None claimed victory in this fourth war, for the toll proved too great. Those who fought remembered only sorrow. Over a century's worth of bloody combat, the sacking of halls, and the uncounted slaughter, the loss of the queen ,and the ending of so many lines found Ondluche in ruin and at road's end. Standing in the ruins of Lugtundra, seeing his queen gone, and all laid waste, he turned his mind to the sorcery of the Red God.

As he pondered the sorcery, there came one to his hall who seemed a man in his elder years. Captured sneaking in the shadows beyond the throne, he was cast before the goblin king in chains.

"What now is this? Why befoul my thoughts with a man-thing?"

And the man rose and shed his cloak and stood before the king, grizzled and foul. His long hair was stringy, his beard wispy, the splotchy flesh upon his bones loose. "Wisdom, oh Goblin King."

"From you? Decrepitude does not mean wise. It means weak."

And Narrheit opened his arms and revealed the Arc of Time to Ondluche. The goblinking saw the long road of it, from its beginning, even to the Endless Pools. But more, Narrheit opened the mind of the goblin to the madness from whennce he came, for Narrheit was ever the most youthful of the All Father's thoughts, and filled only with need and, but for Toth, he alone saw into the wilderness of the All Fathers's being. And this was as the All Father willed it.

"Now, wizard! You see the beauty of all that can be in the madness of creation! Embrace it!" Narrheit rose in size, and his form changed to dust choking all that stood around him, many of whom died of the poison of him. Ondluche survived however, and he watched as Narrheit rose, until he flooded the halls, slaying all about the goblin king.

Ondluche knew fear then, for in the cloud of dust were the echoes of desire and want, and they seized him, and he saw now how to end the race of dwarves forevermore.

Ondluche used his might to warp the world, bending it, seeking to open a rift into the Maelstrom and rain death upon all that lived, to destroy the glory of it and the power of the dwarves and men. But the power of the Red God mingled with the rune magic and he failed to open the rift. Instead, Ondluche's spell splintered the mind of the All Father, opening gates into the All Father's imaginings. The All Father groaned, lay beneath the world, and died.

Passing from the physical world, he entered the Net of Ea-Raena and spoke to her his final thoughts, before he flowed out and into the Void, flooding the Arc of Time, creating limitless worlds and planes. Thus, the multi-verse came into existence, springing out and across the Void and connecting with Aihrde in a billion hidden places. The All Father assumed a different form, shed his physical shape, following a path of his own design, and thus the Dreaming came to be and it touched all things in time and space, unbound. And this was as the All Father willed it.

With this, the dwarves were thrown into consternation, and the goblins renewed their attack. Ondluche used the power stolen from the All Father to assail Gorthurag. He brought the kingdom down, slaying her king, Isorn III, and his seven sons before the gates and battling her hosts before the halls for nine days and nights. In the end, the dwarves fell, and the walls were breached. The goblins under Ondluche plundered the halls with such vicious slaughter that few survived. Those areas sealed to them, they buried; those not, they pulled down or blasted with magic.

Here, the Axe of the All Father passed from the world, lost or destroyed, none could say.

Ondluche left the ruins of First Home and returned to Meiklberg, his desert tower where he brooded upon all that had passed.

Angmule, his lieutenant, however, remained. He spent many years filling the wide valley before First Home with mud and muck, diverting rivers to the ruin, making all a swamp. He peopled it with vile creatures of his own design and left it as a trap for all to see.

Thus ended the oldest and greatest of the dwarven homes. No realm ever matched its glory or might. No realm could. There, the All Father fashioned dwarf, man, and giant. That was the beginning of the peoples of Aihrde. And the end of it, for there died the fathers of all the dwarves. Its glory ended in doom, and it became a haunted place, the once magnificent halls now a trap to the unwary, a place of wreck and ruin. The valley before the gates, once alive with men of the Engale and dwarves in all their might, now a mire of dread and darkness, called now the Seven Swamps, for it is said that the seven sons of Isorn haunt the valley still, calling out for their father, whose body the horrid swamp had devoured. All around the gentle slopes of the valley's arms were honed to broken ridges and deep gulches. All the glory of First Home turned to ill.

The dwarven grief knew no end, and a madness took them. They abandoned all order or hope and fell upon the goblins wherever they could, in mass or alone. The goblins knew fear, for the dwarves were possessed by a hate that quelled the gods. They fought from dragons. They rooted in the world, overturning rocks and pulling down caves. When all else failed, they tore the goblins out of holes with fingers raw, and battered them with the fists until death consumed them.

In the year 8733df, the king of Norgorad Kam, Dognur VII, threw aside his crown and stalked from his halls in iron plate, bearing a two-handed axe. He rode the winds of rage into the east and came to the desert that surrounded Ondluche's hall like a sea. He strode into the sand as one possessed and came to Meiklberg's gates. These, he rent with bare hands, pulling them down upon the guards, who howled about him as they died. Entering the hall, he challenged Ondluche to battle, his voice filled with hate and malice so potent that it flooded the axe in his hands, turning it black. And the goblin king fled to his high hall and gathered what host he could about him.

Dognur climbed the high steps that led ever further into the halls of the sorcerer, and all that came before him fled in fear and wonder. At last, he stalked into the throne room and fell upon the guard of the goblin king in a maddened fury. In a wash of ruin he harvested their souls, his black axe draining more than blood as it cut flesh and bone, laying waste to all it cleaved. The tormented pain the goblins suffered as the axe slew them carried far and wide, and the Red God looked up from the Homeless House in wonderment, for such suffering was his, alone, to dispense.

Ondluche summoned his sorceries as the last of his guard fell, and he cast the net of them far and wide to ensnare Dognur, but the dwarf waded through them untouched. The furious king cast aside his helm and the black axe, too. Climbing the throne, he gathered Ondluche up in his hands, grasping him by the throat. Dognur VII, the king of Norgorad Kam, strangled Ondluche, the goblin king, grinding his neck and bones to gristle in his iron fist. All who remained fled the halls in terror.

Knowing well the goblin curse of immortality, Dognur took the corpse and beat it into dust. He found a chest of wrought iron and placed the dust of Ondluche within. He traveled with the chest for months until he came to the Sea of Shenal and the ruins of the Bridge of Ursal. There, he took a ship out to the wild waters of the Amber Sea. Climbing upon the gunwale, Dognur cursed the Red God: "Damn you and all your creations. May the iron of you be bound in the Homeless House for all time." With that he threw the chest into the ocean, where it lay in the deeps for many ages of the world.

Dognur never returned to the brass halls of his people. The battle at Meiklberg left him in constant pain, his hands burned, especially where his flesh had met Ondluche's. Eventually, the pain unhinged him, and Dognur wandered the wilderness for years, halfmmad, lost and homeless. Finally, his journey brought him to the Illumbrain Coasts where he was ambushed by bandits, who slew him with a spit of fire. The bandits who remained the took the Black Axe, and it disappeared from the memory of the world.

The Wasting War forever changed the world of Aihrde. From the fell magic of Ondluche, the splintered imaginings of the All Father came to life, and gates to other worlds were laid bare.

Realms great and small cut the firmament, and they had many names. Of them all, Shindolay, the Land of Seven Rivers, Faerie, had the greatest connection with the world of Aihrde, for bound within it lay the same design that gave birth to the goddess Wenafar. In Shindolay, the immortal elves, sprung from the purest of the All Father's thoughts, had long dwelt in timelessness; their existence like mirrors of the beauty of Wenafar. They saw the gateways and crossed to Aihrde and they came even to the deeps of the great forest, the Rond that stands beyond the Marl. Newly woken, Wenafar came to them, and she taught them what she would of the world's making, of the power of things. She loved the elves and gave them knowledge.

Gnomes and halflings also sprung from the thoughts of the All Father, and as such, were unlike the dwarves, giants, men and goblins, who alone of the people of the world, were pounded out of the substance of the Maelstrom and bore the mark of the Language of Creation.

Other creatures sprung forth at this time. Dark things, like the orcs that rose in the Marl. Gnolls, beasts of wild abandon, and many more beside came to Aihrde, all from the thoughts of the All Father's splintered mind.

These new races were young, few in number, and knew not the world at large. They hid themselves in fear and wonderment at all that they saw. Many years passed before they passed out of the darkness of their hiding and into the world at large.

A long, dark age followed in the world of Aihrde. Little is known about these days, for the Mammoth Scrolls do not speak of them, as the scribes of Gorthurag had all perished and the Scrolls were lost in the ruin. Indeed, the last entries of those dwarven histories refer only to the closing of Grundliche-Hohle, the power of Norgorad Kam, and the rising dominance of Grausumhart after the Wasting War.

Norgrund fell during this long age. Word came from the east that a drake of massive size had overthrown its dwarven master and scorched the halls of his king. It devoured all it found within. The more it ate, the greater its presence grew, so that after many days it filled the halls with its stench. The dwarves could not dislodge the beast and fled to the deep halls. But even there its filth followed them until they died or fled, carrying their wealth into the wilds. So ended one of the greatest of the dwarven realms.

In the 89th century, as dwarves reckon time, the king of Roheisen Hohle closed the doors to his realm. Twice, the goblins had laid siege to the great kingdom in the Wasting War and the king, ever watchful, saw the goblins growing again in power in the wilds. He sealed the kingdom with runes of his own crafting, and the dwarves of that place suffered not the light of day ever again. In time, the isolation became a bane upon them, and they could not walk in the day for the Stone Curse struck them, and they were lost to the world.

The realm of Amvile-Cris wasted away in the mountains of the Damenfauk. Never deep, the halls of Amvile-Cris were sprawled over many miles of land beyond a high mountain glacier. Long had they mined those hills, and eventually the dwarves pulled the last of its wealth from them. Her wealth wasted, her people took to wandering and those who remained passed from the histories of the world.

The Age of Dwarves ended soon thereafter. In 9804df the Stone Wars between dwarf and goblin began. This war, fought wholly underground, shattered both peoples and left their halls in ruin. It was a murderous war between small groups and armies with no mercy sought, nor any given. Legends speak of atrocities by both sides, of rooms of blood and bodies hacked and mutilated. In 10302, the goblins, led by Agmaur the Immortal, plundered Grausumhart. Old King Rotterkin X made to slay Agmaur, but was felled instead, for that goblin had a greater role to play in the years to come.

Bogda-Rawd suffered a similar fate. Her people never numerous, the small kingdom failed to recover from the Wasting War. When the gob-

lins broke into their lower halls, they fought them for long months until at last the dwarves dislodged them. Their victory was short lived, however; the goblins had poisoned the air, forcing the dwarves to abandon their halls. They sealed the gates, hiding them behind runes of magic, and they set a prophecy upon them. It spoke of the gates opening only to "the wind of time". Thus, the halls are said to stand in all the glory of yesteryear, unspoiled by man or beast, abandoned and empty, filled with a wealth of treasure and all the glory of that age of the world. But like so much from the Age of Dwarves, Bogda-Rawd was lost and few, if any, know where it might lie.

The Stone Wars ended as they began, without circumstance or cause. Men later said that the conflict ended only because the combatants could find no one left to slay.

The Stone Wars, fought intermittently for 500 years, left the twin folk so broken that they never again ruled in Aihrde. The might of the dwarves lay in ruin and her many kingdoms gone or shadows of their former glory. Only a few of the great citadels survived. Amvile-Cris remained in the west, but her wealth was gone and people were few. Grundliche-Hohle remained closed to the world for many years, its people trying to rebuild their strength and power. Roheisen Hohle and Norgorad Kam stood firm, but the former closed her doors and fell to the Stone Curse, leaving the latter the last remaining kingdom of dwarves. The dwarves of Norgorad Kam took pride in knowing that from her beginning no army ever passed her gates, nor pulled her might down. Norgorad Kam alone stood as she was built, an echo of an age of dwarven glory.

The songs which reference the Ages of Dwarves are sorrowful tales. Hints of the glories of a past where Aihrde lived in peace, where war was unfamiliar. And lo, it is the truth, for there was a time when the dwarven kingdoms sprawled across the world of Aihrde in glory and majesty. A time filled with hope and promise. But these are memories only, largely forgotten, they are the ghosts of memories of a once great people, for the dwarves are a spent race forevermore.

THE LAMPS OF HEAVEN

When the All Father passed from the world, the multi-verse sprang into being and Wenafar set herself the task of lighting the evening's sky, for in those days the world was flat and the Sun and Moon were not always present. Taking council with herself, Wenafar set to lighten the heavens with gentle flames and bring light into the darkness. She sought out Frafnog the dragon, and he, smitten with her great beauty and wisdom, set to aid her in her endeavor. She took thoughts from her mind and set them in the heavens, setting them upon a course, each their own. The task proved long and arduous. When at last she lay back, exhausted from her labors, Frafnog rose and breathed a great breath of flame and fire across the dark emptiness of the Void, beyond the Wall of Worlds, lighting lit the thoughts of Wenafar so that they burned in the sky with a brilliance for all to see. Where he passed, the lights clustered thickest and this was called the Dragon's Trail. The whole world marveled, and evil creatures cowered, for they knew not what strange portent this was.

So the stars were made. The dwarves were amazed, for they, of all the world's creatures, had studied the makings of the All Father and never before in all their long memories had they seen such lights in the empty dark. They called them Cullu Einth, the "Lamps of Heaven."

So the world stood through the early ages of the Faulerde, the peoples of the All Father. The Sisters raced through the heavens, bringing day, night, and the seasons. The stars shone in the deeps when the Sisters were off on the Rirm ot Sul. Thus, it was when Nulak-Kiz-Din walked the Paths of Umbra and Unklar, the Horned God came to Aihrde.

Fifth Oration - Of the Age of Man

Wherein men assume the mantle of the world. Herein the Ethrum came and the Aenocihans. Of the rise of gods and the reordering. Of sorcery and the age of wizards. The rise of the God-Emperors and the Aenochian Empires. This is accounted the Fifth Rin upon the Arc of Time.

Of Gods & Men

For two full Rin the dwarves dominated the world of Aihrde. Their fall marked the end of the fourth Rin and the beginning of the ages of men. From their shallow roots, the thirteen tribes of men grew. The fathers and mothers begat sons and daughters, and they multiplied and spread across the land. They wandered wild for many years, settling whither they would. They proved a hardy race and came to many climes and countries, whether hot or cold, wet, dry, in the forests, mountains, or deserts. In the space of many years, the tribes grew upon the face of Aihrde.

As is written in the Mammoth Scrolls, there were thirteen tribes of men. Some of the tribes were large, others were smaller. Of these the Aenoch, Ethrum, Inklu, Niada, Aathuk and Chianuk are named the greater peoples; the Nehian, Madriu, Engale, Zuala, Katha, Oanthuil and Ustracan are the smaller of the tribes. These men lived long lives, mirroring the dwarves. Not until the Judgment of Corthain did this change.

As is written, the All Father fashioned the bodies of men and giants first, but he set them aside for his mind saw greater things. When he breathed life into the dwarves, his breath passed over both men and giants, and they awoke to the world. In the beginning they did not gather around the feet of the All Father, and did not hear his teachings of the order of things, nor learn of the Language of Creation. Men wandered from the Forge and settled upon the Sea of Erun. Though some remained near to the All Father, the greater part of the giants wandered further, beyond the sea, into the wilderness.

Man possessed no comprehension of the world around him and looked upon the world as strange and terrifying, for he had missed the teachings of the All Father. The running water and shifting winds, the sand upon the sea, the clouds, lightning; all seemed strange and without purpose to them. The All Father was but a distant memory. Men lived by the sea for a time, but life there was harsh and rumor of the world came to them. As is written, many of them wandered from the Sea of Erun and across the Dulcet, and to the mountains beyond.

There the Val Eahrakun found them, wild and free, but lost in the ways of the world. They came to men upon the road, and they taught the children of the All Father, the way of things, and men worshiped them as gods.

Of all the Val Eahrakun, in the beginning, Mordius took the greatest interest in men. She sought to guide them on their journeys, and in this her handmaidens joined her. The cult of her worship grew far and wide. It spread to all the tribes of men, whom they called the Mother Goddess. They learned the manner of the world, of the hunt, and how to till the land, and how to fight the dark that lies in deep places and the night. They turned to the Great Tree of Mordius' design This, they held above all creations and saw in it the center of the world. In this they were not far from the truth, for much of the design of the All Father lay within it, and its roots tunneled the firmament. But the tree stood in the far east and few men ever saw it.

Men lived in peace for a great while.

In time, however, men grew restless, as was their fate, for they had no purpose set to them by the All Father. The tribes began to separate, some going into the frozen north, others to cross the seas, and still more into the uttermost east. They followed the tracks of the giants or, where there were none, blazed their own trails into the wilderness. The cult of Mordius traveled with all the peoples, and she was worshiped in many guises by many men, but it took its greatest hold over the tribes of the Engale, Ethrum and Aenoch.

After many ages of the world had turned, the Red God learned how men worshiped his sister. He stole into the Harlking where she dwelt and slew her, so that her blood ran upon the ground. He fled the hall in the Cloak of Red, and the kings and priests of the three tribes became distraught. A madness seized most men, such that they fled back into the wilderness, abandoning their villages and towns. As word of her death spread from tribe to tribe, born out by the dreams of holy men, her power over men was broken. They turned to the worship of other gods, Corthain, Narrheit, even to Ornduhl, and the others who were first named in these days - Ealor, Toth, and Tefnut, and many more besides. Though in truth, Ornduhl paid little heed to mankind, being ensnared in his own hatred for Argrind's line and the whole of the dwarven world.

Ever they called on the gods for aid and made sacrifice to them. They learned the Val Eahrakun were diverse and wondrous, foul and fair. They learned that some offered aid and others did not.

As is written, the trees of Harlking Hall died when Mordius fell to Ornduhl the Red God. In her blood, the Mueren trees sprang to life, and these flourished and grew wild. They stood tall and strong, with bark of silver, and broad leaves, deep and green. The bark flaked all year long, and men harvested it and called it holy, as consuming it healed wounds and lifted men's spirits. It bore wisdom for the skalds and druids. The leaves mirrored the eyes of Mordius and they, too, were harvested for they brought luck to those who carried them. This was called far sight for those who called upon Mordius and the Eahrtaut (the Great Tree), or the Cup of Wisdom, which the ancient tongues name the Veskotolmud.

Little of the history of men of those days survives. The Mammoth Scrolls reference only three of the tribes: Engale, Aenoch, and Ethrum. As is told in the Lamentations, of all the houses of men, the Engale returned from the north to the Sea or Eru, were were drawn into the Goblin-Dwarf Wars, and they were destroyed. Aenoch and Ethrum, upon the death of Mordius, fled their northern homes and settled in the Lands of Ursal that lie between and around the three dwarven kingdoms of Grundliche-Hohle, Norgorad Kam, and Roheisen Hohle. They had much concourse with the dwarves and, like the Engale, they learned from them. But unlike the Engale, these folk turned from the dwarves and set their fate in other stores. As is written, the Ethrum took up the worship of Tefnut, but the Aenochians became a godless people.

OF ETHRUM

As is told elsewhere, in the Vale of Jariel the Ethrum King served Tefnut, and the men of that line wed her so that their line passed from father to son through the same mother and their kings were held as divine. They built cities in the forest deeps and traded with the dwarves. They paid homage to Tefnut and all the old gods. The First Kingdom lasted a thousand years, from roughly the year 7500 to 8645, but in the end it fell to the chaos of the fourth Goblin-Dwarf War. In those days, the Ethrum returned to the forests of their forefathers, living wild, and hid from all for many long years.

The greater part of those people stayed in the wilds of the Ethvold. The forest was expansive in those days, consuming much of the western Lands of Ursal, and the chaos of the age rolled past them. During the Stone Wars, their ancient friendship with the dwarves of Norgorad Kam haunted them, for the goblins invaded the Ethvold, rooting out those people wherever they found them. The Ethrum grew wilder and made blood sacrifices to the Old Gods, the Og Aust, and called on Tefnut for aid.

It is known that during these years Ornduhl became acquainted with men. The goblin's war with the Ethurm proved difficult, for they proved dangerous in the dark places of the forest. They called to him, and Ornduhl came, wearing the Cloak of Red. They begged him to make paths in the woods for them, so that they could hunt the wild men in safety. The Red God bent his mind and powers to unmaking the trees, but the trees would not yield. He came then to the headwaters of the Blue River and sought to choke its flow, but Tefnut rose before him, cursed him, and bid him leave her domain forever more. Ornduhl balked at facing her, for she was young, beautiful, and powerful. She also bore kinship to Ealor, god of the seas, and he remembered well the battle of that mirthful god and did not desire to renew it.

Ornduhl stayed his hand from moving in the open and turned, rather, to terror. He unleashed a host from the Homeless House and they hounded all they found on road and bridge, above the ground and under it. But Ornduhl rose above the maelstrom and, riding a red wind, he fell upon men in their homes and castles in terror. Some he murdered, some he spared. Those who lived, spread the word of the terror of the Red Wind throughout all the valleys of Kayomar. Those survivors carried with them the horror of the Red Wind, and the cloak it wore, from house to house, the terror of it spreading far and wide. Thus it is, that men of those valleys speak of ill tidings as a Red Wind.

Despite this, the Ethrum grew great under the rule of Tefnut, and the line of her sons rose and reigned in the halls of her people. They made concourse with the dwarves of Norgorad Kam and had much knowledge of those dour people. They built cities, walled against the night terrors, and waxed great in the Ethvold. The worship of the Og Aust flourished, and temples sprang up through the deep forests.

This is accounted the Second Kingdom of the Ethrum, and despite the terror of the Red Wind, it was held the greatest age of those people. It lasted from 9829-10405 when the god-emperors of Aenoch overwhelmed it all.

OF AENOCH

As is told, the Aenochians fell under the charms of Narrheit and his paramour. Already the greatest in numbers of all the tribes of men, Narrheit awoke in their leaders a great avarice, and filled them with a lust for knowledge and power. When the Goblin-Dwarf Wars began they played one side against the other, but avoided coming to blows with either, all the while culling them of their secret knowledge. Their chieftains learned both the dwarven arts of metallurgy and the sorceries of the goblins, and they used these powers to their own ends. Through these machinations, their power spread through the lands of Aenoch, and the Aenochians weathered the long wars with little loss. Though, they seeded a distrust in the dwarves that remained ever after.

In those days, the Aenochians laid the foundations of the first of their cities upon the confluence of the rivers Udinilay and Uphrates, in the land of Al-Liosh. There they thrived and grew, though they did suffer under the yoke of Imbrisius. When at last they overthrew her, the people of Aenoch began to spread out from those lands, pushing down the banks of the mighty river Udinilay to the sea. They spread north as well, to the Red River and the Flintlock. Many moved into the distant east and had traffic with other men that settled there in years past. In tribes and bands, the Aenochians spread out and settled the lands. They worked in stone and bronze and worshiped gods of many stripes.

The Aenochians grew in number and power, but to their kindred the Ethrum and Engale, they remained a backward people. For Aenoch's brief concourse with the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle, paled in comparison to the Ethrum; and the Engale were a great people for it.

During the fourth Goblin-Dwarf War the Aenochian joined the goblins and their arms were seen at the footsteps of Grundliche-Hohle. But it availed them little for, when the world was sundered by the sorcery of Ondluche and the All Father driven whither he would, they fell back from the wars in dismay. For in those days, strange creatures came to Aihrde, creatures not of the natural order, not of the Language of Creation. They were beastly things, creatures with the heads of lions and bodies of dragons, flying horses, all manner of combinations that more resembled a mad sorcerer's nightmares than the All Father's creations. Some were mistaken for gods, and the Aenochians fled from them or worshiped them as their need dictated.

Here the Aenochians took a wholly different course than all the others peoples of the world. Their worship of gods extended only to their use of them. Idolatry became the order of the day, as men worshiped creatures of all shapes and sizes, and tribes came to call on beasts at their patrons. They adorned their houses, armor, tools, and weapons with the emblems of their patrons. The first chariots came to the world, made by Aenochian smiths, and these bore their princes and lords in battle against all foes. Though in truth, they mostly contested with each other, over domains great and small.

During the Stone Wars, the people of Al-Liosh began to triumph over their neighbors and their domains spread down the long reaches of the river Udinilay. Towns fell to them, and the men of Al-Liosh forced tribute from the conquered. Over many years and the rule of many kings, the whole of the country, from the fertile lands bordering the river, to the sea, lay under their standards. Men called them the Chariot Kings, and none could stop them.

When the dwarves fell, the men of Al-Liosh paid little heed, for those wars had grown distant and the dwarves and goblins were of no consequence. Only an echo of them lingered in the halls of the Chariot Kings, reminding the kings of the goblins and the sorcery they taught them, but this was of little consequence to the kings of Aenoch.

THE BULL & THE SORCERERS

After the Stone Wars, the dwarves and goblins were spent. The Red God rose from the Homeless House and came to the world. He looked upon the fields of ruin in gladness. He saw that his lust for vengeance

had come to fruition, for the dwarves were almost wholly unmade, and their kingdoms lay in waste. The insult of Argrind was revenged, and Ornduhl knew joy. He climbed to the heights of Mount Eedlemere, where the All Father had sat in days past, to

survey the dwarven ruin. There, upon the broad portico of old, he stood. Columns towered over him and cobbled stones groaned beneath his feet, and the ceiling caught the echo of his mood.

The Red God laughed and laughed at the wreck of the world. His voice carried far and wide across the land, rolling as a red storm off the mountain and across the northern forests. His laughter flowed through the Kleberock into the Lands of Ursal, and all that heard it knew fear. Its echo carried into the seas and the skies, it reverberated through the roots of the Great Tree, into the Maelstrom, and even to the Great Empty beyond.

Corthain sat in the Fortress of Wind and heard his brother laugh. For many years, even since the murder of Mordius, Corthain had turned away from the world. The power of the Red God had blinded him, and the world seemed to lie beneath a shade of red mist. When the laughter of Ornduhl came to Corthain, it woke him up as if from a long dream, and he turned his attention again to Aihrde. The spell of the Cloak of Red broke, and the world unfolded before him, and he saw on the Arc of Time all that had transpired. What he saw aggrieved him, wounded him, angered him. He rose in wrath to earn the title men would one day bestow upon him, Slayer of Gods.

Corthain called his mighty steed Helthdir to him, and the Rune Maids as well. Mounting their horses, they crossed the Wall of Worlds, breaking through the heavens in a mighty tumult. Horns echoed through the skies, and the clouds burst so that the sun shone through all the machinations of the world. And the dragons rose to join him, for long had they suffered under the torment of the Red God, for he hated them for the loss of his eye so long ago.

The Red God looked up, aggrieved at his brother's return. He wove a great cloud about him to hinder Corthain's approach and opened the gates of the Shadow Realms, so that his hosts emptied from the Homeless House to rise up in his defense. Howling their rage and glee at freedom, they poured through the gate; misshapen creatures, monsters of wild visage, minions of the Red God and mad, every one.

Corthain's host heard the howl as a dark wind and saw the army of the Red God and knew this as a presage for the Gonfod to come. The host fell upon Ornduhl and his minions all along the mountain slopes as a clap of thunder that shook the world to its roots.

All about the portico the battle raged, upon the mountain's slopes and in the heavens above. Dragon fire ripped the evening skies as they vomited their hate upon the Red Host. So great was the heat of their onslaught that the clouds opened, unleashing a terrible storm that engulfed both hosts. Lightning arced to cut the darkness in jagged rage and the mountains slopes grew slippery with watery blood. Everywhere were wicked blades of all shapes and sizes, spears and swords, all born into battle, wreaking havoc on flesh and bone. There was no order to the tumult, only madness and death.

In the midst of it all stood Ornduhl, girded in armor of plate fashioned from dragon bone, with the Sword of Embers in hand, wrapped in the Cloak of Red. Few could withstand his glare, and all those who managed to approach died upon his hellish blade. Ornduhl laughed as he slew them. In all his beauty, he laughed, and the sound of it carried far over the noise of the battlefield.

Thus, Frafnog found him. Landing upon the rocky ground before the porch, that dragon, first born, stood before Ornduhl like a mountain. Ornduhl laughed at the beast and pulled his head free of his helm, and his hair fell, long and black upon slender shoulders. His eyes shone.

"At last, beast. We meet. Too long have you lain in hiding, and only rumor of you could I find."

The dragon rumbled deep in his chest, and his eyes narrowed. In truth, Frafnog had come into his prime, filled with the wisdom of age and the power of youth. He coiled around himself, his tail wrapping around a column, and his long neck pulled back, like an adder poised to strike. "Aye." The dragon's voice was as a great slide of gravel over a rocky slope. "We meet at last. What measure must one take of the Red God to know his quality?"

"No measure made, charts the Red God, Dragon."

In the Red God, Frafnog could see signs of weakness, for Ornduhl had given much of himself in his minions, the Homeless House, diverting the Arc of Time, binding the Cloak of Red to him, and the goblins not least of all. As the dwarves were wont to say, "Nothing comes of nothing," and Ornduhl the Red had given so very much to the worlds of his creation.

"I see a measure, and you are less than you were so long ago. The world is lost to you."

A shadow of doubt passed over the Red God, and he frowned, the furrows on his brow marring his forehead. "Let us dance, Dragon, and I'll show you the ire of the All Father!"

Ornduhl leapt high, riding the terror of the Cloak of Red. The dragon balked, snapping his head to the side so that the blade cut its throat. Deep and burning, the open wound bled, and the blood spilled out. Ornduhl did not wait to see what damage he wrought, and landing, turned and rent a gash in the dragon's leg and another in his chest. Agony shot through the mighty dragon, an agony of fire and hate, of loss and sorrow and the numbness of the Void, for through the Sword of Ember unleashed the might of the Red God. These wounds never fully healed, and pained the dragon ever after. Raising his fanged maw to the heavens, his cry echoed the mountain slopes. Rocks slid down upon the portico and swept all that stood near into the doom of chaos below.

Ornduhl smote Frafnog again, and the dragon reared upon his hind legs and came down on the earth with a mighty stomp. Such was his weight that the ground leapt, but as boulders flew high Frafnog pulled the column of the portico free and slammed his massive head and neck upon the roof of the All Father's house. This threw the Red God high; he staggered back into the collapsing rubble, buried beneath the falling house. And Frafnog breathed hellish fire upon the ruin. Beneath his breath, the stone melted, fusing Ornduhl into a prison, no mortal could ever hope to escape.

But the Red God was no mortal. Breathing life into the stone, it rose, an image of himself, tall and terrible in its beauty, and the stone rained blows upon the dragon, driving him down and off the ledge. Frafnog rose swiftly on his mighty wings, and coiling his tail about the golem, hurled it to ruin in the rock below, smashing it to bits so that pieces of the golem rolled and tumbled down into the lowlands, there harvested by sorcerers of later days. Frafnog breathed again, and Ornduhl threw up the Cloak of Red as a shield and fire washed over it, like the sea over a rock.

Thus the battle raged for many hours, and all that came near to aid one or the other, fell victim to the chaos of the struggle. In the end, the Red God's Cloak frayed, for it was never only his, but made of the blood of Mordius, and he enslaved it to his purpose. Time and again the dragon's breath washed over the Red God, and time and again he smote the beast. Ever more the cloak began to fray, pieces of it blasted away, taken by the winds to lands far and away. As the cloak disintegrated, so did the dragon bone armor, for no beast of his own kin could withstand the might of Frafnog, not living, nor dead. The armor finally gave way.

Shorn of his armor and cloak, the Red God stood naked before Frafnog, and he knew fear. He saw the truth of his weakness, and the unspent might of his foes, and ever did he rue the day he gave of himself to the world and its peoples. But lo, he was not destitute in the face of the dragon, for he was of the All Father's first thoughts and his hidden desires, and in him no creature, great or small, found the taste of victory. The Red God rose in a mighty pyre of burning wind that cast back the shadow of the flame of the All Father as it had burned when the Sword of Ember cut his flesh. Frafnog was taken aback, for that light reflected creation unsullied and now it was the dragon's turn, for a cold fear crept through him. He balked, growling in rumbled rage, moving from the Red God, for he knew then that no power of the world could defeat Ornduhl.

Then Corthain came down from the heavens, unsullied and fresh, for he had not wet his blade on the blood of his enemies, deeming that his time had not come, and the Gonfod was not arrived. All fled before him, or died at the sight of him, as he waded through the morass of battle seeking his brother.

Ornduhl saw him from afar, and his pillar collapsed in of itself and in terror he fled from his brother, for he was sore and spent from his contest with the dragon. His laughter gone, the Red God left the dragon and Corthain and the battle behind. His host fell back as well. Everywhere terror reigned, and they saw death in the eyes of Corthain and his people. They fled to the portal, back to the Wretched Plains, or into the world at large, to hide themselves from the hunters that followed and hounded them.

For his part, Corthain sought Ornduhl but could not find him, though he plundered the dark places about the roots of the mountain. In the end, he ordered the field and set stone upon the walls of the Portico, making the All Father's seat of old into a dungeon, buried beneath rock and slag. When all was set according to his design, he bid his host disperse and rose to the Fortress of Iul in the Void.

Ornduhl vanished into the deep places of the world, to brood and ponder what next he must do. The goblins were spent, and he was without ally. His hosts were scattered and the Homeless House filled only with the echoing howls of fear. Huadun's time had not come, for the Gonfod was yet to begin.

At last the Red God's roving mind came to the tribes of men, those misspent creations of the All Father's. He knew of the men of Engale and they loved the dwarves as brothers in arms. The Ethrum hated and cursed him. But there were others. Ornduhl cast out and learned of all the tribes, from the far north to the southern jungles where the Inklu held sway. He came to them, one and all at once, and passed through them. Many turned to his worship, others fled from him, some fought; but they were all weak and he found little strength that could carry on his war as he desired.

It was late in the year, before the snows fall, but long after the summer's green had passed, that a call came to him. From deep within, he heard it. Not since the goblin king of old had called on him had he heard a voice so strong and filled with need. Through a mist he saw the face of a man. Tall and narrow, old, with a wispy beard; his eyes were greedy, filled with a hunger for things he little understood, things he had only glanced upon. The Red God spoke to him, through the mist, in the guise of a demon. The man was amazed and sought to master Ornduhl with incantations and words of power.

Ornduhl played along, bending the mortal to his whim, until at last the man called him to come through the flame and mist and the Red God did as he was bid. With little understanding of the depth of the world he had opened, the sorcerer sought to master the Red God, not knowing what he had snared with his sorcery, and in his ignorance he bound himself to Ornduhl in ways that he never imagined. Ornduhl named himself Nehabak, which in his tongue is the word for vengeance.

As Nehabak, he plundered the sorcerer's mind. He learned of the people of Aenoch, of their birth upon the Sea of Erun, their long journey to the north. He learned of their despair at the fall of Mordius, and their long wandering in the wilderness. He found them then, snared to the machinations of the Val Eahrakun, but of that he could not unravel the whole riddle, and it never occurred to him that Narrheit had already sewn seeds of discord in the Aenochians. Nehabak saw the power of them and knew that in them he had at last found the raw material for his vengeance.

Nehabak learned then of the people of Aenoch, how they called to him unknowingly with goblin sorcery. He took many disguises and traveled their many realms. He spent a great while amongst those people, first as a jackal, but later as a crocodile and also a bull, and this latter form was his favorite. He saw their power and their greed for life, and began to twist it. Most of all he coveted the sorcerers, gathering them together and teaching them knowledge beyond their wildest imaginings. They lusted for the secrets the Red God told them, and waxed in their strength. They began to learn of the memories of the All Father, and sought to adopt immortality.

As word spread, men flocked to the worship of Nehabak. In whatever guise they sought he appeared, and made it so that they believed that he was theirs, gained by them and their sorcery, to use for their own ends. Thus Nehabak/Ornduhl allowed them to believe until the time should come that he should reveal himself. He appeared in his true form only to the sorcerers, and he made them slaves of his desire, though they never understood this. Only the druids avoided his calls, those people who still placed their faith in Mordius, and these had discourse with the people of Ethrum. It is written, that those who cursed the Red God, were not wholly affected by the Judgment of Corthain that came in later years, though the truth of this few can attest.

THE RISE OF THE GOD EMPERORS

In the years that followed the Red God's arrival in the lands of Aenoch, the power of the sorcerers rose above all others, even the lords of the Aenochians. They formed a cabal, and they adorned themselves in red cloaks. Men called them the Red Men, and fear presaged their coming. Enamored of Nehabak, they ordered temples constructed to their bull-headed god. They forced others to worship him and those who balked were driven into exile or slain. The Red Men made sacrifices to him, for in blood they found him ever more prescient. The seed of Ornduhl's power flowed through the Aenochian veins.

In those days, the sons of Baetan and Imbrisius still sat the throne of Al-Liosh, for they were divine and bore the blood of the Val Eahrakun, and they lived long lives. It came to pass that even as the Red Men rose to power, that Queen Tentopt sat the throne. She saw her power waning in the face of the new god, for even her son, Aa, had yielded and fallen under the Red God's sway

Queen Tentopt called upon Imbrisius, her ancestor, seeking her aid. Imbrisius turned a deaf ear, however, for she did not care. But her consort, Narrheit, whom the Aenochians named Set, came to the queen's summons. He laughed away her plight as he bedded her upon the floor before the throne of Al-Liosh. "There! I have given you aid against the Red God who you call Nehabak. Relish what I have given you, for few others have such a gift." And he got her with child so that soon there-after she gave birth to a daughter.

Eventually, the sorcerers came to Tentopt and bid her yield to the power of Nehabak. And she bid them to summon their god, and if he would bed her daughter and give her a child that she would bow to him. They called Nehabak, and he came as a great bull and there mated with Meryet, daughter of the queen, for she was full grown and could rear a child. But Ornduhl was beguiled, for few held the power to unravel the deceits of Narrheit, and he got Meryet with not one child but many. The girl gave birth to a host of abominations, and these were named the Sons of Set, for they were born of the blood of man, but also the blood of Narrheit, Imbrisius, and Ornduhl. And these rose as an army to defend the queen, and the Bull left the halls for he was in doubt and saw the hand of Narrheit in the coupling.

Civil war followed as the sorcerers of Nehabak fought the Sons of Set. In the year 10,376 as the dwarves reckon time, the Aenochians of both sides rose in great numbers, fielding armies of men and chariots. They fought in the open fields until at last the Sons were defeated, fleeing the fields to all the corners of the world, where ever after they caused chaos and discord. The sorcerers came to the throne of the queen and bid her yield to their power. But she refused. She cursed the gods and swore that her line was a line of men, born of the All Father of old, and not corrupted by the Val Eahrakun, but strengthened by it. They slew her then and fed her to the bull upon their altar. Meryet, her daughter, eluded them and fled into the east and was lost. But Aa they set upon the throne and he ruled as king.

Led by their sorcerers, with the Bull at their head, Aa gathered the might of his people and led them to war. He first consolidated his power over the river people, from its headwaters to the sea, and afterwards led his armies to the Red River Valley in the west. With chariots and sorcery he overwhelmed all who stood before him and soon brought all the scattered peoples of the Aenochians under his rule.

Once Aa conquered the Aenochians, he turned his attention to the east and conquered the horse tribes of the Madriu. He styled himself as greater than a king, and the Bull crowned him God-Emperor of Aihrde and his power spread from the Voralberg in the west to the Dohen Mountains in the east; from the Amber Sea in the south to the Grundliche Mountains in the north.

His sons and their sons followed in his stead, and their power grew and spread over men of many races. The Southron Desert people fell to them, as did the men who dwelt in the ancient forests of the Marl. Here they encountered orcs for the first time, as that people, born of the All Father's death, were young and infesting the roots of those mountains. The Chanel Lakes fell under their sway, even to the Banning Sea. In the west they crossed the Ursal Bridge and scattered the dwarves and men of that country. They built a city there, Avignon, and from it they fanned out into the lands of the Ethrum and conquered that people. Though many of the Ethrum resisted them, retreating to the forests of the Ethvold and the protection of Tefnut and the Og Aust. The god-emperors came to rule a vast and powerful empire.

The god-emperors built towns on the rivers, and cities soon thereafter. They built roads between them, so that commerce flowed from the far west to the uttermost east. Their sailors plied the seas like no folk had since the fall of Alanti. Their scholars tracked the stars and knew the heavens. They cataloged the gods of men and the histories of dwarves and the powers of the giants. They named giants, demons and devils and found the place of Aihrde in the cosmos.

Wealth poured into Al-Liosh from all corners of the world, and the Aenochians grew drunk upon their might. No people had ever subjected so many, nor controlled utterly so great a space of the world. They styled themselves gods over men, dwarf and goblin. All bowed to them, but for the Great Sorcerers, who, ever after, have plagued the rulers of man. They cut down the trees of Mordius, burnt the temples of Corthain, and drove out many of the lesser powers. They became ever more lustful of power and wasted men with tyranny. No lust of a god-emperor was ignored, and as time passed they became ever more perverted in their quests for power and knowledge. It became a saying amongst the Emperors, "for all that is or ever was, is mine."

And ever were these people the tools of Nehabak, for he saw that with the fall of the dwarves and the power of men, he could rule in Aihrde as no other could.

For 500 years and more the god-emperors ruled from Al-Liosh. They were feared and worshiped, loved and loathed.

THE ROUSING OF THE DRAGON

During the reign of Antek IV the Aenochians unearthed the Halls of Frafnog's lair and there hounded that most ancient of beasts. First of dragons, Frafnog could not remember the number of years that were his. He slept mostly in those days, scarred as he was from his war with Ornduhl upon the portico. He cared little for the world at large. But when the armed men came to his lair and pestered him, he slew them with a swipe of his huge claw.

But more came, and sorcerers with them. Mighty battles shook the earth as the God Emperor's forces hounded the dragon in his lair. But they were lost to the dragon's ire. One alone escaped the den of Frafnog, and after relating his tale, died in Antek's feasting pits, for he was unforgiving of failure and loved to feast upon the flesh of men above all else. The god-emperor sent more sorcerers and warriors to the dragon's lair, and in this he acted against Nehabak's demands, for in truth the Red God feared rousing the dragon, for he came to know that this was indeed his old foe. Antek heeded him not and sent a great host of soldiery, led by the Red Men, to root out the beast.

First they built a great fortified encampment, and then set to widening the entry halls, for Frafnog kept the caverns narrow, so that he had to crawl and slither to get to the root of his mountain lair. With sorcery, the invaders opened the way and lumbered siege weapons into the dark; ballista, small catapults, wagons of pitch, and other sundry devices. The dragon's breath burned the air as he growled in the dark, unwilling as yet to reveal himself.

The Red Men grew overly confident, pushing ever deeper and faster, until at last they came to the deeps of the lair and with spells widened the door to Frafnog's lair. With them came elemental demons, wraiths of the Wretched Plains, and other sundry monsters, as well as men girded in iron and bearing weapons of magical design. Thus armed, they stormed the room.

Beyond the dark, lay the dragon, coiled upon himself, half in a subterranean lake, half upon the cold ground. The first through saw the beast's eyes, glowing in the dark, its body, the lake and the darker cave around them. But that is all they ever saw.

Frafnog roused himself, springing forward faster than any ever dared suspect, to unleash a gout of flaming breath that washed over the men and their minions in a cataclysm of burning death. Spells, thrown up to ward the flame, disintegrated, and their casters were turned to shadows upon the walls and floors; armor melted away as warriors were burned to death; the elemental demons burned to a hot wind and blasted up the tunnel; and the wraiths ceased to be, blasted into nothingness so that even the Endless Pools were denied them. The sorcerers who remained tried to rally, but before their spells could slow the beast, he crawled into the widened tunnel and fell upon them with fang and talon and his horrid breath.

With ballista, magical arrows, pikes, awls, swords, and axes, the men held their ground, and died. Some few scored wounds, and one poisoned bolt struck Frafnog beneath his eye before he unleashed his breath for a third, and then a fourth time.

When at last Frafnog cleared the tunnel and rose into the cool evening's air his rage was beyond keeping. His eye grew dim as the poison clouded his vision, and the wounds of the Red God, never truly healed, ached. The first and greatest of the wounds, the one on his

neck, opened up, and trickles of blood ran down the beast's neck and chest. The men of the encampments fell beneath Frafnog, most dying, some fleeing into the wilds. None could stop the dragon.

Frafnog did not pursue those hapless few that escaped. His rage was the fire of a god's, and he turned north, intent upon vengeance against the god-emperors.

In towers of flame and fire, he fell upon the cities of the Aenochians, and in his anger he cared not whether they were good men or bad. The Red God, Nehabak, fled, as he had no desire as yet to reveal himself. Frafnog scorched the lands of the Red River first, and then turned west and crossed into the lands of the Ethrum. There, hunted all he saw, burning towns and villages, boats on the rivers, men in their fields. Dwarves, elves, whatever creatures came into his view, all perished.

The dragon moved over the Inner Sea, turning north along the mountains and crossing the plains. The beast visited his rage upon the Horse Tribes of Mardiu, and they fled from his wrath, or died on the steppes. He soared into the Channel Lakes to burn and scorch and leave his mark like none other. He passed down the Marl and brought a wave of destruction to the sea, scorching all that sailed its surface.

In the end Frafnog came to the lands of the Long River and Al-Liosh. Coming from the south, he set all to ruin along the

Udunilay, burning any and all, plundering, devouring, and slaying all who challenged him. When Al-Liosh at last stood before him, with her long walls of white stone, towers, and temples, he hesitated. He flew slowly over the city looking upon the glory of its majesty. All there could see the weight of him and his size was beyond imagining; four hundred feet long, and half as wide, with wings that blotted out the sun. Frafnog, first born of Inzaa, his eyes emblazoned with his mother's ire.

When all had seen the dragon, and the stink of his fear soiled the hearts of men, Frafnog fell, plummeting like a mountain into the city. The buffet of his wings tore roofs from buildings, the tail slap brought towers to ruin, his roar broke the hearts of men and drove them mad, and his breath washed over them like the fires of damnation. The dragon raged in Al-Liosh for days, killing and burning. When the wages of his rage were at last paid, Al-Liosh lay in ruins, the Red Men fled to the north, their temples cast down. Frafnog called the god-emperor forth. And Antek IV came, for such was the power of the dragon that none could resist him, and with him came the remains of his court.

Long the dragon looked upon the god-emperor. In his gaze, Antek suffered a fear few could bear, and only the blood of the Val Eahrakun that flowed in his veins kept him sane. In the end Frafnog could look upon the man no more, and with a snap of his mighty tail he tore head from torso and ripped Antek IV in twain. The dragon devoured the god-emperor, grinding his bones to meal.

Even as Frafnog roused himself to lay waste to the last of Al-Liosh, Wenafar came to him. She interceded on behalf of man and begged him to stay his wrath. She bid him leave off his war and let history unfold. But Frafnog was not so easily dissuaded, even by one of the Val Eahrakun. Long they struggled, the effulgence of Wenafar set against

the iron bones of Frafnog, until at last she convinced the drake to return to his lair deep in the earth.

Thus dragon fear was born and after that age all men came to loath them and fear them for Frafnog's rage had burrowed a fear of dragons in the hearts of men, and ever after only the greatest of those folk could stand against their might, though they knew not why.

Thus ended the days of the god-emperors.

THE JUDGEMENT OF CORTHAIN

Corthain watched the sorry plight of the people of Aenoch unfold, though in this, as all things, he withheld judgment. Seeing in the rage of Frafnog a punishment fitting their tyranny, he waited only to see if the dragon would hound Ornduhl to the Homeless House. But Wenafar stayed his purpose and he turned then to his own devices, for he deemed it was at long last a time for judgment.

As is written, Corthain spent but little of himself in the making of the world. Only the Rune Maids and the flying steed bore the essence of him. Unsullied, he remained whole in the face of the long ages of the world. He knew that Ornduhl was powerful, beyond understanding, and in control of things others could not fathom. So Corthain fashioned a weapon, a spear, and he poured himself into it, such that it was heavy with power. Its haft he took from a fallen oak fed by the blood of Mordius, and he coated it in the silvery bark of a Mueren tree. He set two spurs on its end, with points fashioned of Iergild metal. But its head he cast of his flesh laced with the iron of his will, and the bias of his judgment and nothing made by man or god proved more unyielding in all the ages of the world. The spear he named Erahmindear, that is, the Righteous.

The Red Men who survived the rage of Frafnog fled into the wilds. Here, they constructed a great tent and built anew their altars to the Red God. They called on him for aid, and he did come to them. In his true form he stepped from the fires of the altar, his beauty shining as a light in the darkness. They beseeched him, calling for aid, power, and darker sorceries so that they might rise again from the ashes of the dragon ruin.

Thus, Corthain found them. With a brush of his hand, the tent fell away. Corthain speared the greatest of the Sorcerers, killing him instantly. Tossing the meat of him aside, he faced Ornduhl, the Red God, and spoke, "It is time, brother." With his words all the illusions and magics of the sorcerers were lifted as if leaves in a mighty wind, and they failed, the Red Men fleeing is dismay for they were unhinged. Such was the power of Corthain's voice. From that day, he was called Iul, meaning "wind" by the men.

And Ornduhl spoke, "The Gonfod is not upon us brother. You overplay your hand." He changed then, taking the form of a mighty bull, huge and muscled, massive obsidian horns crowning his broad head.

The brothers battled upon the field. A giant red bull and a knight with spear and shield. Time and again, the bull gored Corthain, tearing flesh and bone, throwing him this way or that. Each time, he rose and lanced the beast with Erahmindear, rending flesh to bloody ruin. The earth gave way and they fell beneath it, into deep river-filled caverns. Still they fought, tearing at one the other in a madness of love and hate. Airhde itself gave way beneath them so that that they fell into the roots of the Great Tree where they cut into the Tunnels of the Rings of Brass. Neither gave ground, nor showed the other mercy, until at last they came even to the Eternal Pools and the Futhnopt. There, Huadun roused herself and in her wrath drove Corthain from the Pools.

The Red God pursued. They rose then into the heavens, tore the Firmament asunder and came again to Aihrde.

Here, beneath the silver light of a pale moon, Corthain lanced the bull, his spear breaking his rib cage and pressing even to his heart. He drove it home with such unknowable wrath that both brothers shed their physical forms upon Aihrde and plunged through the world and into the Maelstrom, across the Arc of Time, and even to the Homeless House. There, Ornduhl sought to gather his power but the pain of the spear was so great as it drove through the wall of his chest that he fell back yet again. But Corthain would not yield, and he drove Ornduhl back against his high throne, in the Halls of Ulmandius. Ornduhl fell into his seat and there, at last, he grasped the haft and bent himself toward it. Such was his power that it cracked beneath his fingers. Corthain never hesitated and drove the spear home, through the Red God's heart, and he twisted it so that the flesh tore asunder. In the end, he pinned his brother to his throne. The spear broke off, leaving the Red God bound to the stone of his own chair. Whether by chance, or design, none but the brothers could say, but the spear's tip remained, as did Ornduhl.

Ornduhl gave out a groan and lay still. From his mouth there rose a last breath, a poisoned wind, and it blew from that place and rose to the world above where, it is said, it fell to many parts and plagued men in all their realms, and where those who understood such things, harvested the hate of it and used it to their own ends.

Corthain came to the ruin of Ornduhl on Aihrde, the body he left when the spear entered him, and he commanded the body to rot. It disintegrated into a morass of tar and ichor, never to be seen on the plane of Aihrde until many years later. For it was foretold by Toth to Corthain on that selfsame day, that naught had transpired that was not written on the Arc of Time, and that the Red God would rise again, when the blade of Erahmindear was pulled from his chest.

Corthain turned then to the hosts of men and cast judgment upon them. "You are the Fulerde, the peoples of Aihrde, made of Erde's intent, but you have strayed from his purpose. From the Red God's hand you ate, like slaves devouring the feast he set before you. You sought to master the gifts that are those of the Val Eahrakun, for they, and they alone were born of Erde's thoughts and not his deeds. From this came corruption, for it is not the role of the Fulerde to serve as slaves to the Val Eahrakun, but slaves you are. So I damn you to slavery. Ever and anon until your Master returns, I bind you. I bind you to the Val Eahrakun. From them you must seek warmth in the cold and water in the fire. You will seek their aid in your every endeavor and call to them for fear of the dark. This until the Shadow of the All Father releases you. This is my judgment. Ask not for forgiveness, nor seek atonement, for there is none from me, nor ever shall be."

Corthain's judgment had a far greater affect than he ever intended. In his rage, he unleashed the power that he would later infuse into rebuilding the Wall of Worlds, and he drove the greater part of the Val Eahrakun from Aihrde, for his power was unspent and without equal. Only the named of that order could resist him, but they did not. Though dismayed at his Judgment, they retired to his will, without fighting, for they had grown weary of the world. Only through prayer and worship and very powerful incantations could the Val Eahrakun come to the world in any form, for the Judgment bound them from Aihrde. The Og Aust suffered most of all.

Corthain broke the Wall of Worlds and returned to his fortress in the Void. From that day to this he was ever known as the Slayer of Gods.

So ended the first years of man.

THE TWO PEOPLES

For three hundred and more years the world suffered in darkness. The fall of the god-emperors left many peoples free to follow their own paths, as the ties that bound them together foundered. These were the days after the Judgment and the lives of men were greatly shortened so that they lived for decades only and not centuries. Some escaped the Judgment of Corthain, but they were of the blood of Tefnut or other of the Val Eahrakun that mated with men, or else they possessed powerful sorceries to prolong their lives. Most notably these men dwelt in the lands of Ethrum, where men had long been known for their long lifespans. These men counted themselves as true men, as made by the All Father, not sullied or changed by the Judgment of Corthain, but they were bound by it nonetheless, as slaves to the gods.

In time, however, men recovered from the wrath of the gods and began rebuilding. They possessed the range of knowledge given to them by Ornduhl, the dwarves, and the goblins. They used it to rebuild the cities left in ruins by the wrath of the dragon, though they were shadows of their former selves. Travel between the kingdoms foundered as many roads fell into disuse, vanishing into the wilds, but trade flourished nonetheless as men took again to the seas and plied the oceans, carrying goods to and fro. Man rebuilt the kingdoms of old, and the greatest of these, as had been before, were in the lands of Aenoch and Ethrum.

Some men remained as thralls to the Red God, but these worshiped him in quiet, secret places and temples, but his power was forever broken by the rage of Corthain and existed only in the glass eye forged by the great blue dragon, Ineltex, in the Days before Days, but that gem was lost. Those cults that sprang up found little aid from their master, except for the knowledge of sorcery he left behind in places all over the realms. Those who lusted for the power of Ornduhl sought to recover the scrolls, books, and other devices that he had a hand in, to learn of and use the magic he taught to man. But they also sought the Eye of Ornduhl, but it did not come into their possession.

The Red Men cursed Corthain for his Judgment and interference. It came from them that only when the Red God should be freed of Erahmindear's iron would the Judgment be lifted and man be returned to his rightful dominion, for only Ornduhl possessed the will and power to hold back the designs of Corthain. These men longed for the return of the Red God, but also secretly feared it, for with him, the Val Eahrakun might return to glory and the old world be born anew.

ETHRUM

The traditional home of the Ethrum, the Ethvold, suffered under the reign of the god-emperors. Great swaths of the forest fell to the artisans and armies of the Emperors and never recovered. Where the great forest stood men now cultivated the land, and the trees became a memory. But more than the axes and awls of men, the Ethvold it suffered from the Judgment, for the Og Aust were of the Val Eahrakun, and forbidden now to interact with the world as it was. Their power waned, and with it the forest they called home. As the centuries played out, they retreated into the deeper parts of the wood until they were memories only, remembered by few. The Ethvold withered and shrank in these years, and the echo of it alone held men to the old days. It was written by the priests of Tefnut that the power of that forest and its people was bound to the Og Aust and not until the Judgment was lifted would they be great again.

Despite the loss of the Og Aust, the greater part of the Ethrum returned to their natural rhythms. They resettled the Vale of Jariel and rebuilt the great temple to Tefnut, and called on her, though she did not come. They turned to other gods for these were the days of the Val Austerlich, those children of the Val Eahrakun, who came to the world in their stead.

The Ethrum turned from the old ways, and with new gods at their head, they invested one with the kingship, and he ruled over all his people. Towns, newly built, or rebuilt, were now walled, with high towers and bastions. The stone work for roads was laid, and a small network soon stretched from town to town. The high pass to Norgorad Kam was opened, and the dwarves greeted the Ethrum as long lost cousins, and trade blossomed. So many of the Ethrum had served as slaves upon the emperor's ships that they possessed a knowledge of sailing as never before, so they took to the seas, plying the waters south and north, into the Inner Sea.

Eventually the kings expanded their influence into the north, even to the shores of the Inner Sea where dwelt a kindred people, who dwelt on the Hanse River long before Tefnut found Aedgen upon the banks of the river. These would not serve any master, but gladly traded with their cousins. Here, too, lived many of the Aenochians, remnants of the long years of the god-emperors. In the north, they were turned away, for the stone giants and trolls battled for domination over the Gottland, and the land was wild and dangerous. But they befriended the stone giants of the northern Rhodope Mountains, and these people and the Etrhum had great traffic between them.

The Ethrum returned to the glory of their early years, and they thrived and multiplied.

AENOCH

The lands of Aenoch hosted the god-emperors and as such boasted wide roads, walled cities, aqueducts, vast swaths of cultivated farmlands, and all the multitudinous trappings of civilization. As such they suffered far more than any others from the wrath of the dragon. The wealth that had poured into the region from tribute was gone. Those who led them were mostly dead or driven into exile.

Slowly Aenoch recovered, bringing the wilderness under the plow and raising walls around the rebuilt towns. For many years the scattered Aenochians turned inwards, with no central rulers. Families waxed powerful as they fielded retinues of trained soldiery, and these small armies led by powerful lords came to dominate the landscape. They warred with one another, but these were largely small affairs that never saw great loss of life.

This was an age of castle building in Aenoch. The lords relearned the arts of fortification, and they built keeps with walls and towers. These soon dotted the land, springing up on hilltops, at river crossings, along the roads and other defensible places. In their halls, the Lords ruled with iron hands, for no god or state held them back. The commoners gravitated to them, for these years saw the arrival of the orcs from the east, who raided and plundered where they would.

The Aenochians turned again to the sorcerers, but this time they set aside the tributes to the Red God, and returned to the power that always lay within them, that same power that saw them drive out Imbrisius of old. The sorcerers now served their lords, and they commanded magics of a more personal nature, forgetting many of the machinations of the goblin lords and casting off the rule of gods. What temples they did build were small affairs, and the temples did little but intercede with the gods. No one had forgotten the manipulations of Narrheit, Imbrisius, and dread Ornduhl.

So in Aenoch, it came to pass that petty lords, who controlled little beyond their own castles and small towns, ruled the people.

All this while Al-Liosh lay abandoned, a burnt out hulk of the dragon's wrath. So it was until Doniert came to the ruins. Doniert was of an ancient house, related (or so the legends say) to Aa, the first of the god-emperors, and steeped in the sorcery of his forefathers. He set to rebuilding Al-Liosh, beginning by making sacrifices to the gods and asking their blessings. These deities skirted Judgment of Corthain, and gave Doniert aid through intermediaries, these were the Val Austerlich. For this he is believed by most to be one of the first priests.

Doniert rebuilt the palace of Al-Liosh, and cleaned the lands of the debris of the dragon's wrath, and styled himself Lord of the Lakes. Men soon called him their king, for Al-Liosh was a place of great wonder to all the Aenochians, as it was accounted the heart of their people. The city was both beautiful and profound, steeped in the magic of the Val Eahrakun and the god-emperors and all the glory of ages past.

Others Lords came to Doniert and paid him tribute, but they did not yield to him their power. They remembered the days of god-emperors, and would not so easily call him master. So Doniert reigned as the king of Al-Liosh, but the lords and chiefs of the Aenochians kept their power, and thus the king's power was a shadow of the past, and many princes arose throughout the land with a power they would not relinquish, even after the Winter's Dark.

THE VAL AUSTLICH

The Judgment of Corthain forbade the Val Eahrakun from interacting with the peoples of the world directly, but it did not lessen their power. Ornduhl was driven to ruin and bound in the Homeless House. Ealor, Lord of the Oceans, ruled from the Green Halls. Toth stood upon the Arc of Time. And so it went with them all. Long they suffered the Judgment and called upon their brother to turn back his words, but those words could not be unspoken, and the Judgment of Corthain remained the law of the world for many long years. Few of the Val Eahrakun desired to have no hand in the making of the world, and some voiced a fear that the new peoples of the world - the elves, the orcs, and all the others - possessed no guidance, as they passed through a world littered with the deceits of Narrheit and the designs of the Red God. Corthain refused their pleas, and bid them to exert whatever influence they would outside the world of the All Father. Ealor alone sought to contest the oath with force, but too long had he lain in the Green Halls. The Wall of Worlds confounded him, and Corthain would not come forth to fight. But the hearts of the Val Eahrakun still lived in Aihrde, and their designs had shaped its destiny, and despite their power not being the equal of Corthain, they counted themselves as his peers and would not be denied.

So it was that the Val Austlich came to be; the Val Eahrakun gave of themselves and made gods, lesser than they, but greater than the races of Aihrde. They sprang to life with a lust for the world and purpose as set by the Val Eahrakun. These powerful beings roamed Aihrde seeking what they would and where they would. Men learned of them and turned to them for aid and power, for comfort and guidance. They were named Durendale, Oglotay, the Rune Lords, Aenouth, Athria, Burasil, Demeter, Glorianna, Grotvedt, Urnus Gregaria, Wulfad, Amenexl, Angrim, Krateus, Adrius & Zernius, Rhealth and others besides.

These were the gods of men, and they supplanted the Val Eahrakun in men's hearts, for unbound by the Judgment, they alone interacted with them. And when they were worshiped they grew strong and when forgotten weaker still than ever they had been. So they fostered the temples and gave blessings to those who gave them their love. Many forgot the Val Eahrakun, remembering them as tales of long ago, tales whose truth was doubted. But the learned and powerful knew of the greater beings, and they understood the Val Eahrakun were beyond measure and they were called upon from time to time and worshiped.

The Val Austlich served those that made them, and they served that purpose set out for them. But they, like the Val Eahrakun before them, were whole and not without thought or designs of their own. Some warred with one the other, while others made common cause of the managing of Aihrde. After many years, the Val Austlich set a meeting place in the Maelstrom for their numbers to congregate. Following the roots of Eahrtut deep into the firmament, they built Aalun-Hart-Ra, the city of the center, which stood as a glorious realm until the Darkness overtook it in the sixth Rin of the World.

THE LANDS OF URSAL

As the memory of the god-emperors and the War of Gods faded, men threw off the yoke of yesteryear. Industry thrived: textiles in the north, around the lands of Avignon, metallurgy in the Massiff, and in the east around the Red River country. Food was grown in abundance throughout the lands of Ethrum and Aenoch, and trade along the sea lanes carried the diverse produce from one peoples to the other.

In and around Avignon, and along the coasts of the Sea of Shenal and the Islands of Onwaltig, the two peoples blended as trade bound them together, as had not happened since the days of their youth around the Harlking Halls of Mordius the Green.

A common calendar was adopted to help the traffic of goods, and a trade tongue as well. The tongue was an amalgam of Ehtrum and Aenochian, and in time it evolved into its own tongue called the Vulgate. Men learned it readily enough, as did dwarves and giants, for all their tongues shared the same root at the beginning of the world.

In these days elves came to the Lands of Ursal as well, wandering out of the far north, curious and hunting. They found men strange, and so they mostly hid in the woods and wilderness, passing them by when they could. In time the elves learned from them all manner of manufacture. Other peoples benefited from contact with men as well, halflings, gnomes and more besides, but as yet these people had no reckoning in the annals. Only the orcs are mentioned, having come to Aenoch after the fall of the god-emperors, grew fat on plunder and wandered further west, crossing the sea, and entering the empty lands in the Gelderland.

THE ISLES OF MARK

In the 92nd year as men record time (11480df), the kings of the two peoples came together in an attempt to bind the two tribes in union. In those days a great stone bridge stretched across the straights of Ursal. Its span was fully 90 miles, being built upon great pylons in the shallow waters where the two lands were closest. Legends tell of a width that exceeded half a mile. Men simply called it the Ursal Bridge, but its true name resided with the Dwarves, who called it Andstein, which means to "bind an oath through stone." This bridge was for the dwarves a holy place where the ancient kingdoms established some form of oath, long forgotten. Upon the high span of the Ursal Bridge the kings met. From Aenoch came King Doneth I, and from Ethrum, Thul-Ep. They traveled with many nobles and lords, priests and clerics, and all came together in congress.

As it was in the latter days of those peoples they could find little common ground and they soon came to blows. They could not agree on the rules of law, and as the exchanges grew more heated, old rivalries, and older grievances, came to the fore. The lords quarreled, and in the end each sought to set their own king above the other. Thus were kings given more power in thought and word than they possessed before. Each of the peoples returned to their lands and proclaimed their kings their overlords, and it is for this that men account this meeting the true birth of the twin kingdoms of Aenoch and Ethrum. They mirrored each other in differences, not unlike the Sisters, the sun and moon, but there was no playful rivalry between them

Thul-Ep returned to his people and called them to task. "We are the river lords, the children of Tefnut, and none stand above us. Now let us build an empire that will cast the shadows of our power upon all the world." The people of Ethrum set about building towers and castles. They threw up towers upon the high mountains, and roads between. Forums sprang up in the small towns, with statue-lined, columned plazas, each one greater than the next. They built castles with high walls, upon the rivers and overlooking the roads. And they built ever greater temples to the gods, far from the traffic of town and hall. They put effort into expanding their trade fleets and spread their power far and wide. They turned to the forest for its wealth, but ever was it bound to the Og Aust, and those gods were diminished from the Judgment. Their castles showed strength, and their wealth came from trade. But despite all this, they were a scattered people, fiercely independent of all that came to their halls.

The peoples of Aenoch grew in strength and number faster than those of Ethrum. Their people were far more industrious, adapting to the new world and the new races far more readily than their neighbors to the west. Foremost amongst their dealings were the gnomes; a small industrious race. Filled with the merchant's craft, they soon aided in Aenoch's economy, so much so that that realm waxed in wealth. Nine clans of the gnomes settled in and around the lands of Aenoch. The clans grew in stature, and benefited by their dealings with Aenoch as well, and in time, their clans split again and again until they numbered 47, each ruled by a thrushbeard, a chieftain.

The kings of Aenoch waxed ever greater in wealth and power. Each king grew wealthier than the last, and they learned to prey upon the pride of the princes of their realm. And the lords of Aenoch, filled with the deceit of Narrheit, fell to the king's machinations.

Aenoch outstripped its neighbor to the west, and the Aenochians dreamed the dreams of their ancestors and, many foresaw the return of the god-emperors of old. They soon began to seek out new lands. They conquered the peoples in the east, upon the wide Plains of Achrothos, and they absorbed the Islands of Vilshofen. The Aenochians crossed the seas, and put their stamp upon the northern coasts of Inklu as well. Soon they controlled the eastern Lands of Ursal all the way to the Dohmen Mountains, and all the land around the Amber Sea, which they called the Aenochian Pond.

In the 207th year of their recorded history, King Olivier IV of the House Golden, proclaimed himself emperor. He became Olivier I and he ruled his empire from the stone halls of Al-Liosh. Through cunning and force, he made the princes of Aenoch bow to him. Those who refused were done to death or exiled. Many of whom crossed the Sea of Shenal to the lands of Ethrum, or became brigands on the sea and in the wilds.

In a few years the empire became fabulously wealthy, her nobles as rich as the kings of Ethrum, and the emperor's wealth was beyond description. The Aenochians derided their neighbors as weak and foolish, until such time as Olivier V, invited Ethrum's king to come to Al-Liosh and kneel, so that they, too, might enjoy the fruits of the power of the empire. The king sent emissaries to Ethrum with the offer.

The Ethrum king, Tultulun II ot Ruthan, ordered the emissaries placed in a tower until such time as he could phrase a response. But his people were unruly at the insult and hatred of Aenoch grew greater than ever it had been since the rule of the god-emperors. For years, the merchant ships had been harassed and the sea lanes crowded with pirates that bore the emperor's stamp of approval, and the Ethrum suffered most of all the free peoples. Their merchants were harassed when they traveled to Aenoch. Raiders plundered the Ethrum coasts and hid beneath the watchful cloak of Aenoch. These and many more grievances besides served as fuel to feed the flame.

It came to pass that in those days, in the southern lands of Ethrum (what later would be called the Eldwood), the noble family of Ecber Tarvish, who had rose to prominence in the fur trade, called for the king in the far off capital of Ruthan to make ready for war. When the king proved reluctant, Tarvish rose in rebellion. He turned to the Og Aust and the old gods, and called upon their fellows to join him. Seventeen of the most powerful families did and the rebellion spread rapidly throughout the entire realm.

Tultulun II was overthrown in the Bloodless Revolution, and Ecber ascended to the throne. His first act was to execute the emissaries from Aenoch, after which he had their pickled heads sent back to the Emperor in Al-Liosh. Ecber's rule was short, but his son took the throne after him. The reign of the Tarvish left a greater impression upon the Ethrum than any other. Many called them Emperors, and looked to them in the same manner that they did the Aenochians in the east. The Tarvish Emperors ruled in a benign fashion, but nonetheless, made their kingdom ready for war.

Olivier's son, Olivier VI, would not stand for the deaths of his emissaries. The king marshaled all the forces of the empire of Aenoch, gathering them near the western span of the Ursal Bridge. The great host took two years to assemble and included men of many nations: the armored princes of the realm, the knights of the emperor, and the soldiery of the commoners. They banded together with companies of chariots, wild horsemen from the east, stone wielding warriors in wild garb from Inklu, gnomes in iron shirts, orcs from the north, common brigands, and others who answered the call.

The Tarvish gathered the Ethrum but to no avail. Their people were few in number when compared to the easterners, and they never commanded large armies, but lived in the dying Ethvold, in high-towered castles and small towns.

The war that followed was long and costly, plaguing the Tarvish for many years. The wealth and power of sorcery of the empire destroyed the westerners. The war began with a series of set-piece battles where Olivier VI overwhelmed Avignon and destroyed the Ethrum there. Soon after, they conquered all the lands north of the Massif and even to the Burnevitse.

It was during a lull that the Tarvish turned to their friends the stone giants, enlisting their aid in building a great wall from the northern tips of the Bergrucken to the sea. With a speed that astonished the easterners, the giant wall was constructed, and for fear of the giants the Aenochians did not interfere with its construction.

For years this hemmed the Aenochians in, but eventually the Great Wall of Ethrum was breached and the Tarvish overthrown. The Aeno-

chians entered the lands of the Ethvold, despoiling all they touched. Using vile sorcery they uprooted trees, burned others, or simply cut them down. Thus the power of the Og Aust was further broken and the Ethvold made lesser still.

Nine great battles followed as the Aenochians slowly conquered Ethrum. These battles men called the Isles of Mark, for upon each of the eleven fields where the armies met, a great marking stone was later placed by unknown hands. The unnaturally carved stones were blank, jutting out of the ground several dozen fee, gray monoliths marking the defeats of the Ethrum. These are called the Marking Stones, or the Isles of Mark and the songs about them are many and sorrowful.

When the Tarvish were at last overthrown, the third in their line being beheaded and his head made to adorn the scepter of the Emperor, Olivier VI crowned himself God-Emperor of Aihrde, styling his reign after his ancient predecessors. His smiths and sorcerers forged for him a crown, the Cunae Mundus Usquam, called in the Vulgate, the Cradle of the World.

A reign of brutal tyranny followed the conquest. The Ethrum lived out their days in servitude to the emperors in Aenoch. On occasion they rose in rebellion, and even for a time some lived under the rule of the descendants of the Tarvish in the south, near the forests of the Eldwood, but these rebellions were forcefully put down, and those in arms put to death.

THE SECOND EMPIRE

For three centuries the lords of Aenoch ruled a sprawling empire, from the Rhodope Mountains in the west to the Dohmen in the east. They spread further south, from the lands of Inklu, driving back the peoples of Naid. They built colonies in other lands as well and spread their power to the east, following the coast of the Amber Sea. In truth, they did not rule as the god-emperors of years past, for the Second Empire never included many of the other peoples of Aihrde.

No dwarven lands came under their thumb, nor did the elven tribes who lived in the forest deeps and it never extended much beyond the Lands of Ursal and northern Inklu, and failed to conquer all the people of those lands. During the occupation the orcs made constant war from their fortresses in the swamps, hills, and mountains. The horse lords soon shirked the overlordship, and though they paid tribute to the god-emperors, they did so more from habit, than fear. Not until the end of their line did the Emperors of Aenoch bring the world of Aihrde together, and then it was their master, the Horned God, who did so.

During the rule of the Aenochian Emperors, the Val Austerlich rose in the estimation of all men. Men adopted them as their gods and fell to worshiping them as never before. Others stole away to the forest deeps and worshiped the trees from the Days before Days, returning to the druidic worship of Mordius and the Great Tree. It is said that a sapling, a living remnant of the Trees of the Mordius' Grove, throve in the Eldwood. This tree, called the Great Oak, became a god to many. Others fell to worshipping dark creatures, horrid memories of the All Father. Within the Empire there existed a strange mixture of good and evil, slavery and dominance, a plethora of powers feeding off the collective imaginings of man. For ever had it been so. From the earliest days of the worship of Mordius to the present, men were superstitious and did not understand the ordering of the world as set down by the All Father upon the forge. The Val Austerlich waxed in strength the more men worshiped them. And men forgot who they were and their place at the feet of the All Father.

The rule of the Emperors of Aenoch was marked by chaos, and so chaos reigned in all of Airhde. And this was the gift of Narrheit to the world, given so many years ago, but whose echo remained.

The magnificence of the empire is marked well in the annals. The Aenochians built magnificent cities and fortresses, and their roads crisscrossed the land. Walled towns and castles sprang up along their length. Trade flowed. Scholars tracked the heavens and studied the flora and fauna of the world. Historians plundered the world's wealth, ever in search of knowledge. The sorcerers rose again, leading men in the arts of magic, crafting everything from medicine to metals. They worked in stone, channeled light, and helped build ever greater structures and weapons. They rose too in the councils of the great, even to the Imperial House.

In general, there was peace. The Aenochians waged sporadic wars with the horse tribes further to the east, or with the roving bands of orcs that came from the far east in ever greater frequency. They fought the hobgoblins who enter the tales in these days, and even drew blades against the dwarves of Gundliche Hohle and Norgorad Kam. There were occasional rebellions, usually of the Ethrum, but these were put down, and brutally so. Overall, the power of the empire went unchallenged.

Some emperors ruled with a genuine concern for the welfare of their subjects, some ruled with malice and cruelty, and some with indifference. So great was the wealth of the Aenochian Empire in those early days that it mattered not how they ruled, for the Emperors took a piece of it all, and with their great wealth they bought greater power.

It is in these years that the Ethvold, traditional homeland of the Ethrum, fell to ruin, retreating back beyond the Danua River in the west and the coastal Edenflow River in the south and east.

During the reign of Marcus IV, the unbroken line of the Golden House became entwined with wizardry. Marcus styled himself a sorcerer to rival the goblins of yore, and in truth, he waxed more powerful than any sorcerer had for a long age. With his black arts, he exercised ever greater control over his lords and nobles. The traditional independence of the princes had survived all these long centuries, and they balked at his desire for more power. When the princes hinted at rebellion and threatened the emperor's person, he reacted quickly. He let loose a poisoned wind to smite their houses, and when it fell upon them it killed them in their beds, men, women, and children. There was little they could do, but even before they understood fully the sorcery that befell them the emperor's assassins fell upon them, slaying many more. The descendants of these lords remembered the days and weeks of slaughter well. They called it the Festival of Clowns, for the emperor's assassins covered themselves in masks before stalking their prey.

Marcus lived in fear ever after. He feared for his line and its extermination, for all men hated him. To safeguard the inheritance of his line, he crafted a powerful spell and cast it upon his line: a binding with the throne of Aenoch and the Cunae Mundus Usquam, the crown of his forefathers. It was prophesied that only one which bore the mark of the true house could rule in Aenoch. The mark was seen in Marcus' own grandchild, Owen, who later ruled as Owen IV. The mark, borne by all members of that house, consists of a singular vine upon the back, whose tip ends in a point.

After three centuries of rule, the Empire of Aenoch began to crumble. The long wars with the horse tribes grew worse as the tribes, displaced by orcs from the Marl, pushed ever harder against the empire's eastern frontier. These fierce tribes raided the eastern provinces and drove the imperial troops into the west. Eventually, the emperor could no longer

protect those peoples, and they rose up against empire, and thus the east was lost. Worse still came from the Northmen in their long ships. Long ago, after the fall of Mordius the greater part of the peoples of the three tribes, the majority of the Etrhum, Engale, and Aenochians left their homelands in the north, but some had stayed. In the long years these groups merged into a singular people, dominated by the Engale, and slowly spread south, east and west. They came to the Inner Sea, where they settled in the Haltland and Trondheim. There, they built towns upon the northern fences of the empire and began preying upon the men to the south. Filled with a rage of violence and lust for plunder, they began raiding the lands. These northmen were ever a plague for the twin peoples, even into and beyond the rule of the Winter's Dark. Emperor Owen VI expended great amounts of wealth to combat these foes, and in so doing, stripped his lands of troops and resources.

It was during the reign of Owen VI that the people of Ethrum rose in revolt, casting off the shackles of the empire. The peasants, long oppressed rose first, throwing off the yoke and slaughtering all that they found, Aenochian or Ethum. They were led by a warrior-cleric of the Eldwood who called for all his people to return to the worship of Tefnut and a return to the old ways. He took up an iron-capped hammer and shield and to defend the failing wood. And he was named a paladin of Tefnut and all those who served his guard as well. Soon the nobles of the Tarvish dynasty joined the revolt and it spread north.

The emperor called on his princes to muster more arms, but before he could gather the strength, his nobles rose against him.

The Wars of Liberation caused much devastation on both sides of the Straights of Ursal. Imperial armies marched to and fro attempting to crush the rebellious subjects, break the armies of the princes, stave off the raids of the Northmen, and the ravages of the horse tribes. The empire's coffers emptied, and mercenary troops, unpaid, turned on the emperor as often as not, plundering towns and villages, loyal or rebellious. The land burned and her people were despoiled.

At the height of the war, the Tarvish leaders of the Ethrum lay siege to the great fortress city of Avignon. For many long months they starved the city, but when this tactic proved fruitless their commanders led a bloody assault upon the walls, eventually breaching them and bringing the city down in flames. They were led by the paladins of Tefnut, and when these fell upon the godless people of that city they unleashed a wave of holy slaughter. Much destruction fell upon the folk of Avignon. Hostages were taken from the wealthy, and a great host of lords and ladies were put to death for serving the Emperor in far off Al-Liosh.

After the city fell, the Lord of Tarvish looked to his own defense. His armies were spent and his coffers empty, so he turned to fortifying his conquests. His first order concerned the Bridge of Ursal. He ordered the ancient edifice destroyed so that the easy traffic of armies between the east and west would come to an end. For many months his masons and engineers worked upon the bridge, tearing out many of the supporting foundation stones until at last, that wonder of the ancient world, fell into the sea. And though the war had ground to a halt long ago, this event signaled the end and a severing of the poeples.

After many long years of intermittent war, Emperor Marcus Owen I, great grandson of Owen VI, fell at the hands of an assassin's blade, and the line passed into obscurity.

There was a great bloodletting after the fall of Marcus Owen, for the lords of the palace sought to hold power, but failed against the weight of the combined princes of the realm. Many were killed and Al-Liosh burned for the second time. The emperor's guard revolted, putting most of the house lords to death, and sacked the palace. One of the greatest losses in those days was the crown of the emperor, the Cunae Mundus Usquam. When Marcus Owen was murdered the crown fell upon the throne. There it lay for and none would lay a hand upon it.

But Narrheit, who of the Val Eahrakun was named, and unbound by the Judgment, came amongst them, disguised as a simple monk. He roped the crown in a powerful magic and lay his thought upon it. From that day forth the crown bore the taint of madness with it, so that any future claimant who took up the throne must suffer the torment of that

Val Eahrakun. It is said that in this Narrheit undid even himself with this trick, for he suffered as much if not more than others in the coming of the Winter Dark. The priests of chaos say it otherwise, for Narrheit fears nothing, not even the Gonfod.

So ended the Second Empire of Aenoch.

THE COBBLER'S AGE

Even as the empire fell, new kingdoms and principalities rose to replace it. With the emperor dead, and all his progeny slain, there was no clear heir to the throne. The crown itself was missing and the throne left vacant. None amongst the princes had the power to seize it and hold it, or at least, if they did, they had not the courage. So the empire fell away and new structures rose in its place.

By these latter days there was little left of the old divisions of the tribes of Ethrum and Aenoch. For centuries the peoples had traded, warred, conquered, migrated, and mingled one with the other. The peoples had interbred through the coastal regions of the Lands of Ursal, and along the trade routes. For most, the purity of one's blood, whether Ethrum or Aenochian, was of no matter. Only in some of the older families of both peoples, and in the frontier regions of places such as the Darken-

fold or Rhuneland, did the old bloodline prejudices linger. Here they either protected their lines from what they saw as wastage, or were so far removed from others that the possibility of interbreeding never arose. The old tongues, long suppressed by the mpire, passed into the memory of men, replaced by the Vulgate, a singular common tongue, spoken by all but the old aristocracy.

For the first time, sorcerers, separate from the seats of power, rose to prominence, and men were not ruled by kings alone. The magic of the Old World lingered in dark places, in dungeons and abandoned cities. Great artifacts surfaced and were lost again. Men mastered the spells of old, remade them, and cast them anew in different forms. These wizards and sorcerers gathered in guilds, enclaves from which they master-minded the world's events or, at least, thought they did. These men and women bent their minds to unraveling the magic of the world, understanding the secrets of the dwarves, the runes of ages past, or the goblins. They devoted their entire lives to searching for the Language of Creation and constantly worked on increasing their power.

Too, it was an age of priests, for the Val Austlich, unrestrained by the Judgment of Corthain, created bridges to their devotees through priests, clerics, druids, and shamans. Temples, in ages past built to honor and respect the gods, became places of worship and sacrifice, places where the priests could speak with the gods. Men turned to the gods as never before, and the power of the Val Austlich waxed great through their intermediaries. Durendale came to the world, the Cobbler took shape too and drove many men into the wilderness on hunts and wild adventures, Glorianna with shield and mace, Burasil of the elves, and others beside.

It was an age of warriors, heroism, and legend. Many tales speak of errant knights carving out kingdoms for themselves, of mercenary captains commanding armies of freebooters in great battles and acts of war, of adventurers plundering ancient holds and sometimes unleashing demons of the Days before Days and slaying them, or dying at their hand, in iron and blood.

This was an age of heroes, when men, elves, and dwarves battled the evil remnants of the Old Empire, fought monsters of myth, fashioned weapons of overwhelming power, and strove with one another for dominance of the world. It was the Cobbler's Age, for that god drove men into the wilds, filled with a lust to conquer or die. It was truly an age when the gods reigned supreme and heroes, like Aristobulus, Luther, and Daladon Half-Elven, ruled the day, clawing their way through the powers of the world even to god-head, and in doing so, creating that third order of higher beings, the Val Tulmiph.

For two centuries small kingdoms of men ruled the Lands of Ursal. Born of the refuse of the Old Empire, they warred with one another, rising and falling as fate or chance might dictate. From the lands of Ethrum the kingdoms of Kayomar, Maine, and Anglamay rose. In the east, hundreds of small principalities suffered no master's rule, and their power was spread thin. Where the emperors had fought for whole regions, these men fought for river crossings, forests, hills and the like. No power ruled, and for this the Children of Chaos were able to exert themselves. For the first time, halflings and elves passed out of the shadows and into the realms of men.

The gnomes, fewer in power and numbers, remained in the east, protected by the walled towns of mayors and burghers. Theirs proved to be a precarious life, for not all the folk loved them, as they had served the crown in the long Wars of Liberation. Eventually, many of the clans left these enclaves, first settling the foothills south of the Grundliche Mountains. The gnomes spread into the west as well, but were rare. The Flintlock became the home of many clans, and in later years, their only refuge.

The halflings enter the annals of these days in a strange fashion. It is reported that in the year 614oy, the city of Avignon, only slightly recovered from the Wars, commissioned 42 wagons owned by the halfling Mac Muddles. The unnamed court scribe, no doubt in the employ of the city exchequer, goes on to mention the employment of the said halfling's whole family as drivers, porters, cooks, and craftsmen. They traveled the land in tight bands, family units bound together by race and language. The lagers of wagons served the halflings in many capacities, as homes, shops, caravans and even, or so it is reported, as castles.

The elves too made their appearance in the annals, though little is known about their history. They came to the world during the Goblin-Dwarf Wars and served Wenafar, the faerie queen. They lived secretive lives, always lingering on the borders of the lands of Fay, the Seven Rivers, and the world of Airhde. But increasingly, as the ages unwound, the elven folk grew curious and crossed over to Aihrde to dwell in the wild places. Many of their folk grew to love the world, for the strangeness of the place was unlike anything in their experience. Chaos reigned, and Aihrde seemed to offer a different face at every turn. These elves lived in their own realms deep in the wilds, for many years avoiding the reach of man, until the Wars of Liberation when they found themselves at odds with the emperor and many joined against him. A fierce people when roused, the elves left a lasting mark on the men of the west as they settled in the abandoned wilds that lay between the kingdoms of men.

The greatest of these elvish strongholds lay at the feet of the Rhodope Mountains in the hill country men called the Shelves of the Mist. Queen Adavia ruled the realm of Elean, and here the elves lived in peace, being content with the wonders of those dark woods and deep valleys. They grew great in wealth and power, for the knowledge they brought from the recess of the All Father's mind was great and the patronage of the Val Austlich, as set by Wenafar, proved beneficial.

Bands of elves settled elsewhere across both the lands of Ethrum and Aenoch. The most notable of these bands lived upon the edges of the wild, north of Kayomar, home to the elven prince, Lothian, father of Daladon Half-Elven, who later came to play a great role in the history of the world and rose to the order of the Val Tulmiph.

It is said of dwarves that "water washes away a stone sooner than a dwarf forgets," but even the dwarves forgot, or at least set aside, the memories of the ancient wars, at long last rekindling their forges. In Norgorod Kam, they opened their doors and welcomed the coming of strangers. Dagmar I ruled in the beginning and when he fell to stone his son, Dagnir I continued his father's dealings with other peoples. In the east, Grundliche-Hohle opened its gates, King Angorn IV bringing the wealth of his folk to the world. And of the many kingdoms of old, these two alone, were opened.

So it came to pass that in the traffic of the world there were many races and peoples and the face of Aihrde was forever different. But the giants and the dwarves were unchanged.

THE HOLY FLAME

Long after the fall of the Second Aenochian Empire, during the long chaos of the Cobbler's Age, Gerard, fresh upon the errant path, with no more than 21 summers to his name, found a broad, gray slab of stone, nestled upon a ridge. Upon the slab stood a flame, burning without fuel or smoke. The flame burned in the wilderness, far from

the haunts of men, but near, or so it is told, the Falls of Areos, for in the Vellum Sheets are words of a lost poem

so the flame lies to overlook
where Tefnut falls and brother lies
the land is wild and overgrown
old trails end where anew

Leaving off his steed, he approached the flame with caution, thinking some wary beast of the old world lay in wait. Sensing no apparent danger, he approached further to investigate. "What flame in the woods now? No fuel to burn but the stone of your bed. I see you, but no warmth comes of you, nor does your ire light the forest around you." His attempts to move the flame proved fruitless and after awhile he stepped back and simply watched it.

As evening fell, Gerard brought in his steed and set up a camp to contemplate what the flame might mean. He built his own fire, and ate salted beef and hard bread, drinking water of a flask, while his mount stood near, muzzle in a bag of oats. All this while the flame burned on.

When night fell, darkness settled upon Gerard until Ea-Raena came to the heavens, bringing her chariots of silver for all to see. In such a late hour Gerard stripped off his armor, cast down his blankets upon the ground, and lay down. He laid his sword beside him, wrapped in an oil cloth, and his axe he tucked beneath his head. Sleep came easy, as the evening was cool and the fire of his making warm while it burned.

Gerard dreamed strange dreams. Goblins rose from the darkness, pulling the world with them. The world turned liquid and rose up above the goblins, drowning them in misery, until all the heavens were blotted in deep, dark washes of colored water. These washes formed into clouds and rain fell, scattered in all directions, up and down, high and low, until only one remained and this fell to earth as a spark of light where it struck a stone of platinum white.

Gerard woke suddenly and leapt to his feet, sword and axe in hand. The evening was cold and the heat of his fire all but gone. In the embers he saw the fleeting smile of a fading face, but before he could react, a light moved in the woods and drew his attention.

From a tree's open flank water poured, catching the light of the passing moon, spilling upon the ground about its roots. Gerard approached and knelt before the pool to see what his dream conjured. The falling water took shape and form, and before him rose the face of a woman of terrible beauty. In her visage the light of the moon remained, but the power of the world lay all about her, and in her were written the ages of the world.

Lowering his weapons he fell to his knees, "My lady, spare me your ire, for never would I raise blade against one so noble as thee."

"Rise, knight, and know my intent. A blade forged of the Val Eahrakun I pass on to you and in it lies the succor of the world in times to come."

From the water at his feet Gerard spied a sword, long and beautiful. Forged of the metal of the All Father's ire, coated in the silver of the moon's light, and tempered with the calm mind of the Slayer of Gods, the blade bore no equal in all the annals of the world, of gods or men, dwarf of beast. Gerard took the blade in his hand and the warmth of the holy ire flowed through his veins, and he alone of mortal men saw the birth of a god.

"With this blade, Durendale, it is your charge to defend the Flame upon the Stone, for in it lies the final thoughts of the All Father in Aihrde, and in it resides the power of him."

So Durendale, greatest of the Val Austlich, came to the world. Durendale was born of many labors, and many gods, for Tefnut came to Corthain and called on his aid. "My garden of old, the Ethvold, lies in ruins and the glory of her almost washed away from the world. My heart is sorely wounded, and I spend my days bereaved. I cannot have it so any longer. I will not openly defy your Judgment, not yet. I beseech you to give me aid, so that what actions I might contemplate and I might take, do not set us one against the other. "

And he replied "Tefnut, I have always loved you and would deny you nothing of this realm or the other."

He took up a rod of iregild metal, that ore that came to Aihrde when the All Father shattered his hammer upon the forge. He cast a moment of himself into it and it was made hard and cold, filled with the iron of his honor. "Make of it what you will, but within, you'll find an hour of my honor. I give of myself reluctantly, for ever is my thought upon the Gonfod and Ornduhl the Red God. And I fear that we'll need this hour upon the River of Erde when the end shall come."

"It may be so My Lord, but my need now clouds all my thoughts, and I cannot think upon what may come to pass."

Tefnut took the blade and breathed her life into it and made it a living thing. Her breath was cool and sharp, and it honed the sword such that if swung true it could cut the wind.

Of all this, Ea-Raena, watched. And as is told she alone heard the last thoughts of the All Father upon Aihrde. She coveted this as nothing else, for as is known, he loved her above all things of his creation and to Ea-Raena, his words were to her, and to her alone. So she coveted them and shared them with no other. But she saw the Durendale, in all its glory and she came to Tefnut. Taking the sword from her she whispered into the cold metal and awoke in Durendale a deep knowledge of all that was and shades of what might be, for he heard the echo of the words the All Father spoke to Ea-Raena.

Thus Durendale, the greatest of the Val Austerlich, came to the world.

Gerard founded an order in his name, the Holy Defenders of the Flame, and they built a mighty fortress and tower around the Flame. For many years Gerard bore the avenging blade, but when his arm weakened and he could not carry the blade any longer, he passed it to one worthy, as did his successor, and so on through the ages, until a time came that it passed into the south and was lost. But still the Holy Defenders served, and for many long years the knights labored in the flame's defense and the sword's memory, even onto the coming of the Winter Dark and all the sorrow of that age.

OF TRIGAL THE MAGE

Evil has ever plagued the lands of Aihrde. And so it was during the Cobbler's Age.

During the long death of the empire, the emperors employed a host of magi, priests, scribes, and sages. These worked to further the ends of the emperors, or to unravel the mysteries of the sorcerers of old. One such was the magi Trigal. He served under many emperors, but did not rise to prominence until the reign of Marcus IV, just prior to the Festival of Clowns. In 449oy he secured from the emperor the letters necessary to found the White Order, an guild of wizards dedicated to unearthing the antiquities of the dwarves and delivering them to the notice of the emperor's household.

Trigal trained men and women, lords and peasants, in the art of sorcery. At first many were brought into the Order, traveling magi, practiced wizards and the like. But in time, Trigal focused a great deal of attention on finding young apprentices, taking them in and molding them in his image. And he set these on secret paths of his own design. Above all, he sent them in search of the rune lore of the dwarves, for he sought the Language of Creation. In the beginning, the White Order delivered many priceless items to the emperor and expanded the knowledge of the ancient craft of sorcery and the empire benefited thereby.

Trigal remained in the employ of the imperial staff into the reign of Marcus VI. During those days he led men on journeys into the uttermost west, even to the feet of the first dwarven kingdoms and the Seven Swamps. What wild adventures he had there, and how he had knowledge of the dwarf realms, few remember. It is known however that that when he came back from one such ill-fated adventure, he did so with foolishly empty hands, for he left the emperor's nephew in a cold grave on the other side of the world.

Marcus was enraged and had the magus seized. He ordered the Emperor's Watch to occupy his tower and sent his agents to learn Trigal's purpose in ancient Gorthurag. "My sister's son is dead and left abandoned on the far side of the world. I cannot bring him home but I'll know the purpose of his fall."

Trigal's tower was occupied by the Emperor's Watch and they unearthed a wealth of knowledge, long hidden from the emperor. It came to light that Trigal was not a simple mage or adventurer, but a powerful sorcerer who had alliances in many realms, and that he possessed powers beyond the understanding of his peers.

Many of Trigal's students were seized and tortured, and they revealed that the magus' work was vast, and much of it was conducted in secret, with only a chosen few enjoying the knowledge of his labors. His true purpose had been to understand the dwarven rune lore, lost to all the world but for a few, but even more than that he sought to master the sorcery of Ondluche, the goblin lord. In particular, he sought to understand the sorcery that allowed the All Father to pass from Aihrde. All this came to light and the emperor was discomforted.

The emperor spent no time condemning Trigal. He took possession of all that the wizard held dear. Ancient grimoires of dwarven lore, scrolls, goblin runes, artifacts of the old world were hauled to the emperor's treasure room.

Trigal was brought before Marcus in chains. "For a long years you have served me, my father and his father before him. You have given us wealth and power, though clearly you kept the lion's share for yourself. And for this your named is cursed, your possessions forfeit, and you are banished from all the realms of Aenoch." He sent Trigal forth, penniless, with nothing but the clothes upon his back. He disbanded the Order, and those of Trigal's students who resisted him were thrown in the lion pits. He forbade any on pain of death to seek out or come to know anything of the runes.

Members of the Order scattered far and wide. Some continued their quests alone, others banded together. Some sought the power for themselves, others for the world. A few gathered together to search for Trigal, for they feared what he might do.

For his part, Trigal discarded his name and adopted one more fitting his designs. He took the name Nulak-Kiz-Din, a name with no translation in the dwarven tongues of Aihrde, nor of the Seven Rivers. It carries the echo of the languages spoken by the denizens of the Wretched Plains where tis said that the wizard spent many years. He took up the mantle of a golden robe and bore with him a rod, cast in brass, but wrapped in dragon skin.

In those days there was much information stored in the libraries of the dwarven halls. Nulak took the guise of a gnome scholar and gained entry to the deeps of Norgorad Kam, where much of this information remained untouched. He studied there for many long years. His sorcery was such that even the dwarves were fooled, at least for a time. When they discovered his identity, they cursed him. In those days, much as today, the dwarves carried a great malice for all sorcerers, for it was the goblin Ondluche and his sorcery that destroyed all that they had loved in ages past. They bound Nulak and branded his hand with an iron from the Hall's Forge and named him Baeglulth, which is Hand of Ash. This mark stayed with Nulak forever, and he bore it with him wherever he went, no matter the guise he took, giving him away more than once. The brand marked him a thief and a liar and a sorcerer.

The dwarves drove Nulak from the Hall, but it mattered little to him, for by then Nulak had more than enough information. He gathered to him a group of stout fellows, rogues and warriors and a few priests, and he began a trek into the west to return again to Gorthurag, the First Home of the dwarves, now long abandoned.

Nulak's long adventures, filled with dreadful deeds, great heroism, and battles with ancient beasts, do not come into these tales, but suffice it to say the wizard found what he sought in the west.

Gorthurag, long abandoned after its destruction in the Goblin-Dwarf Wars, stood like a hollow tomb. Nulak sought after the Mammoth Scrolls, those ancient texts within which the dwarves recorded their own and the world's history. The sorcerer hoped that they might somehow reveal the hidden knowledge of any of the runes, or the Obsidian Book, or other devices which would lead him to greater power. Though he never found the lost archives where the scrolls were buried, he did find other clues, and dangerous ones at that.

The magus learned that when the dwarf king, Dognur VII, slew Ondluche, he found upon the goblin's broken body a tube of brass within which were many sheets of brass, upon which written runes from the elder days. These were the Ondluche-Eroan, the Runes of Ondluche. Though the king did not know what he possessed he took them up and bore them into the world. They fell out of the history of the dwarves when Dognur gave them over to some of his allies. The Rune Sheets vanished into history. Nulak also learned of the greater runes, those of the dwarf fathers of old, and all these runes he set into schools, what scholars call the Four Pillars, the Arcs of Time, Paths of Umbra, Gray Mist, and others named.

Nulak took up his staff once more to quest the world over, seeking the Ondluche-Eroan. In time these sheets were recovered, one after the other. Some found in lost dungeons, others in a lord's possession, and still others, discarded as scribble from the elder days. But his mind was ever bent upon a particular set of runes, the Paths of Umbra, for these, or so he believed, would allow him travel throughout the multi-verse.

In those days, Nulak's followers spread throughout the world, and with them many of the runes. What Ondluche had once guarded with care, men now used heedlessly. The knowledge of the runes spread, and it deepened the power of the sorcerers, but also gave birth to a new breed of magic, and the first of the rune marks came to Aihrde. These were different from the sorcerers, or even the wizards. Where before the knowledge of the powers of old was voiced or understood in complicated spells that were like echo chambers for the language of creation, the rune marks possessed a magic that was much closer to that which was once carefully crafted by the dwarves or goblins of old.

Nulak cared not for the rune marks, or use of the runes, nor the power of wizards and men, but rather continued his quest for the Paths of Umbra. In time, he succeeded. Long after many of his old enemies were dead and turned to dust, Nulak unraveled the mystery and found the Paths of Umbra.

With the discovery in 676oy of the Paths of Umbra, Nulak gained a power none had possessed for countless years. He reconstituted the White Order, and gathered about him a host of sorcerers and wizards. From the Paths Nulak learned the makings of the world, of how the All Father had created the Val Eahrakun, the Arc of Time, and the Endless Pools. He learned, too, that many of the All Father's creations lived as powerful entities, bound to the Void for eternity. Nulak learned of one, a dark stain upon the early creation of the world, that even the goblins feared and of which the Red God would not speak. It seemed to be an unmastered power, without thought or creed or idea of all that transpired and the sorcerer wondered at it, for it was a darkness like none he had seen before.

Nulak knew, through his mastery of the Paths, that though gates opened by the great goblin, Ondluche, existed that would let one pass into the multi-verse, none existed to the Void but for the Rirm ot Sul, and that track none but Anderoth the dwarf had found. Nulak knew the Wall of the Worlds stood strong against the prying eyes of those creatures left in the Great Empty, but now he possessed the knowledge to breach the Wall and free what lay hidden beyond.

He used the Paths to cross over into the Void and there cast himself out in search of he knew not what. He unearthed all manner of knowledge, some he mastered, some he discarded. He spent hours without count drifting the currents of the Void, capturing echoes of creation. But in time he spied the Undeeps and a darkness so black it marred the Void itself. When he saw it, he lusted for it, and the power it must contain. He knew that the darkness looked back upon him, but whether mindless or otherwise, the wizard could not discern.

The Magi was at the height of his power, and he thought to himself that he could master this darkness and bring it to Aihrde, and it would rival any of the gods of men, for he deemed it to be fragments of the All Father's Language, pure and unused. In this he was not far from the truth. The darkness was without deed in all the annals of the world and was thus pure, and unspent. In this Nulak was wrong. In ages undreamt of by men, a darkness escaped the jumbled dreams of the All Father. The Val Eahrakun, fearing the darkness as unsought, drove it into the Great Empty to the Undeeps, where no creature, nor thought of any creature, ever dwelt. That was accounted the First War of the Gods, and the darkness existed beyond sight of all there was, for all the Rin of the World. It was a stain upon the memory of even Corthain and the Red God, the echo of which carried far into the makings of the world.

Nulak thought the Darkness was mindless, and that with it in hand, that he could challenge even Corthain in the Fortress of Wind. And for his arrogance the world would forever change.

Nulak failed to understand, however, that the creature he found was not a mindless creation of the All Father's whim, but one of the greatest of the Val Eahrakun. He failed to understand the maxim of all that is or ever will be, that from nothing comes nothing, only labor brings thought to life and action to deed. And he failed to understand that the All Father's actions, even those he took no notice of, possessed purpose and design, without exception in all that he did, or all that he ever conceived. Thus the darkness that rose from his dreaming rest, in the Days before Days, was a labor of his design, willed or no. Nulak touched that labor with a thought of the world of Aihrde, and images of the world came to the darkness, that alone brooded in the Undeeps, at the beginning of all that is. It was in ignorance that he set about to bring this terror to Aihrde.

Nulak built a tower in a cleft upon the far western reaches of the Holmgrad Mountains. This country was wild, occupied by no men, only trolls and stone giants. The tower rose about him, built upon the natural cliffs. He named it Ure. There Nulak set to fashioning a magical staff that bore the Paths of Umbra upon it, and he called it the Winter Rune, and with it he opened many gates into the Firmament and Maelstrom. These gates he bound in a pillar of iron within Ure, and ordered them for his own use.

At last he stepped through the portals, through the Wall and into the Void, and with the Winter Rune traveled to the distant darkness. The stain upon the Empty lingered there, cast as little more than a moment of the All Father's reckoning, and it pretended to be amazed and enthralled at all the wizard said to him; but the darkness wove about Nulak and it sought to bind the Magi. The sorcerer was no fool, and he saw then that the Darkness bore more than a little mark of intelligence. Though Nulak did not fear the Darkness, he marked it as more aware than he initially thought, and he decided that he must be more careful and bind the creature with greater dweomers. But the Darkness bound him in the Undeeps of the Void.

When Nulak returned to Airhde, he fashioned thirteen rods, each woven with runic sorcery. Spells, fell and powerful, laced the rods and set a trap for the Darkness. In this way Nulak hoped to safeguard himself. But he was deceived, for the mark of creature's power was in him and it poisoned all that he did.

Nulak set to making the casting of the Paths of Umbra a reality, and in so doing, alerted other mages, far more cautious than he. Patrice of the Wood lived a simple life in the Kellerwald Forest, south of Al-Liosh, and knew of the White Order and much of its doings. Patrice was a powerful wizard and a goodly man. He kept to himself largely, seeking only a greater understanding of the world and its origins. As such he unraveled the Arc of Time and had some forethought of what the future held. Patrice studied Nulak and his confederates, and in this way learned of the Paths of Umbra, and the making of the Winter Rune. He set out to stop them, gathering a band of sorcerers from across the lands of Ethrum and Aenoch to combat the White Order, and they called themselves the Elarios, which is "those who stand upon the wall" in the Vulgate.

These were the very days of the great adventures, where men rose from obscurity to rule kingdoms in both Ethrum and Aenoch. The greatest of these was Luther the Paladin, called the Gallant, of the minor House of Hearn. His people dwelt north of the Vale of Jariel and were counted as one of the oldest families of the Ethrum, with a lineage buried in time. He rose through a wash of blood and battle to become king of the Ethrum, ruling lands that covered much of the old Ethvold. He slew the last of the Tarvish in single combat to seize the crown. He called his realm Kayomar, harking back to the early days of his people and the brother of Aedgen that died so long ago. His became a powerful, if short lived line, but the foundation for all that came after.

Riding at his side were a group of companions who the gods fated to ride the crest of history beyond the Winter Dark. With Luther rode Daladon Half-Elven, son of the elf, Lothian; Dagnir the dwarf, grand nephew of and eventual king of Norgorod-Kam; Aristobulus the White Mage; and others. Many of their boon companions died, victims of many adventures, lost now to the annals of time. Many more rose and remained as powerful men throughout the Lands of

Ursal. The greatest of these, Robert Luther, Luther's son, became Kayomar's greatest king. Jaren the monk, founder of the Order of the Scintillant Dawn, penned the very prophecy that foretold the Winter's Dark. And Aristobulus' apprentice, Rapscallion, who bore the mark of emperors, succumbed to the designs and greed of the White Order.

Patrice looked to these, for ever did that wizard command the sight of the future. He saw in Luther a connection with the blade Durendale. In Daladon he saw more, for the Marcher Lord, as he was known to some, would in years to come lay with Wenafar, the faerie queen, and sire the demi-god, Utumno. And he saw Aristobulus, who would become the greatest wizard of any time, save for perhaps Nulak. Seeing these futures, Patrice brought them into his fold and council, and made them his allies in the war against the White Order.

For years Elarios struggled against the White Order, seeking to confound Nulak's plans. They met tragedy and sorrow, overcame obstacles to win unsung victories, suffered defeats and death. The war was not one of states and kings, but of men, singly and in pairs, of wizard duels, of personal battles deep in dungeons, or upon the heights of lost towers. The struggle raged for years. The tales of these battles are legendary and defy the space of the chronicles. Luther battled dragons in dark caves, spouting flame and death. Aristobulus matched Trigal with spells within spells in a grim contest of sorcery which lit the very heavens. Daladon hewed giants like wheat to claim the last sapling of Mordius' grove. It was an age where innocence died, when the Avenging Sword, Durendale returned. These were days of action, days of struggle. An age of heroes.

Patrice's Council consisted of twelve wizards of like power. The most notable of these, those who come into the tales of these days, were Crisigrin, who in later years traveled the seas of time upon the Blood Runes, Helius the Singing Fool; Ozanna the Blackhearted, and Sagramore, who, through the curses of Nulak and the horned god, fathered the race of blood thieves, the vampires, and Aristobulus, called the White Mage, greatest of the Elarios. These mages, their servants, and the Kings of Kayomar waged a ceaseless battle with Nulak and the White Order.

The war came to a head in 706oy when Aristobulus's apprentice turned mage, Rapscallion, knowing the truth of the Mark of Emperors that he bore, turned on his master, betrayed his friends, and sought out the counsel of Nulal-Kiz-Din. Nulak led him in the destruction of all the pretenders to the throne, and sought to set himself above all others. The Noble Lords of Aenoch, who kept a long memory of the god-emperors and the Wars of Liberation, rejected the Mark and sought to unseat the Beggar Prince as they named him. So war spread across Aenoch and towns and cities took sides to fight bitter battles.

After several years the Beggar Prince came to Al-Liosh with his army and cleaned it of any who opposed him. He took the palace, although he would not take the throne nor the crown that sat upon the high seat all those years, for he deemed the time was not ripe. In this Rapscallion spurned Nulak's advice. The wizard sought a quick end to the civil war of the Aenochians. He saw then that Luther was crowned in the west, and ruled over the mighty kingdom of Kayomar. The Paladins of the Holy Order of the Flame gave him allegiance, as did elves and dwarves and other diverse peoples.

The Beggar Prince would not heed the mage; indeed, he spurned all of the White Order and scattered them on missions hither and yon, seeking to win by strength alone. And he longed to contest arms with the westerners, for he came to be possessed of a grim hatred of his one time Master Aristobulus, the king in Kayomar, and all his comrades.

The Beggar Prince gathered his armies and commenced the conquest of his kingdom. War flamed across the lands of Aenoch.

In the chaos and terror of those days none could predict the outcome. War again consumed the world and the power of the sorcerer Rapscallion and the White Order seemed unstoppable. In 718oy, Rapscallion, having conquered most of Aenoch, at last felt the time was ripe, and he took the throne in Al-Liosh, placed the Cunae Mundus Usquam upon his own brow, proclaiming himself God Emperor of Aenoch and Lord of Ethrum, though that land lay far beyond his reach. When Rapscallion took up the crown and placed it on his head no affliction came upon him, and this he took as a sign that only the true heir might ascend the throne. Though many had attempted it before, none had survived the crown's curse, for of old it was bound to the line of the god-emperors, and it, too, bore the mark of darkness upon it as set by Narrheit.

The emperor took the name Sebastian Olivier I.

With these proclamations, Rapscallion, the Beggar Prince, Sebestian, brought upon himself the wrath of the Council of Patrice and the kings in the west, most notably King Luther in the high towered halls of Du Guesillon, of Kayomar.

THE WAR OF THE STRAITS

It was in these years that the elves began to discuss leaving Aihrde and traveling through the rings of brass to their ancient lands of the Seven Rivers, for they saw the coming of a dark and cold age. Many of their lords gathered in a great meet at the feet of Queen Adavia of Elean, and debated the merits of remaining to aid those gathering against the new emperor, or returning to the Land of Seven Rivers. The loss of life was strange to them, for they were deathless, whereas men were not. The elves, too, never understood the Judgment of Corthain, and how it made men seek hurriedly for a vanity that they never attained. The Prince of Lothian, who dwelt in power even in the shadow of Kayomar, sought most of all to leave the world, for he had quarreled bitterly with his half-human son, Daladon, and wished nothing more than to rid himself of the pain of his quarrel and the world itself. Many stood by Prince Lothian, his son Meltowg, lords and ladies, and many of the host besides. The elven sorcerers joined their voices to his, for they had seen the Arc of Time and foretold the coming of the Dark.

For all of their foreknowledge and wisdom, the elves hesitated.

With Aenoch behind him, Sebestian, moved south, conquering the coastal duchies and the isle of Vilshofen. His armies began the construction of a fleet to protect his southern conquests. While construction was underway, the emperor turned his attention to the west. He absorbed the peoples of the Red River valleys in several short but brutal campaigns. After that he passed beneath the Voralberg Mountains, following an ancient path built by the dwarves, and invaded the lands of the Detmold. These small realms fell quickly, for their peoples were disorganized. Sebestian subdued the lands to the north and south of the Detmold, until he controlled all the land between the mountains and the Straights of Ursal. These conquests took the better part of six years, and for another two he refitted his armies and constructed a second fleet, this one to carry his armies into the lands of Ethrum.

Seeing these events unfold, the queen of the elves bid her people leave Aihrde and cross through the rings of brass to the land of Seven Rivers. There they could find peace and safety and bid the world decide its own fate, as ever it had in the past. Many began slipping over the borders of the worlds, to the rivers where they made peace with themselves however they could, for all knew that they had abandoned the world in the face of a horror not seen since the rise of the Red God, for they had seen the darkness that lay upon the Arc of Time.

In 726oy Sebastian crossed the straights and lay siege to Avignon. He was met upon the field by the Chivalry of the Lords of Anglamay, and thrown back across the sea. The emperor's setback was short lived, for when he returned he led his armies in person, and they broke the walls of that high town and drove the great host of knights back into the hinterlands. All the while Sebastian's fleets ravaged the coast, sacked and burned towns, until most submitted to his rule.

As war rolled across the great straights, the remaining kingdoms gathered in a Holy Alliance and plunged themselves on a crusade against the emperor. King Luther of Kayomar abdicated his throne in favor of his son Robert Luther, and taking the Durendale Sword into the east, he swore to slay the sorcerer Nulak or the Emperor Sebastian, whichever came near him first. His old companions traveled with him, Aristobulus the White Mage and Daladon Half-Elven and a small band of heroes. Their task proved fatal, for Aristobulus fell to a demon lord from the Wretched Plains and the companions, one by one, were slain or lost. Luther, seeing the fall of his many comrades, heeded the gods, and carried the Durendale from the plain into the Dreaming Sea, there to guard and hide it from the enemy.

Daladon Lothian, alone surviving the venture, returned to the west, determined to raise more armies and continue the war. He learned then that the elves, choosing to depart, had been leaving Aihrde for many years. In a rage Daladon cursed his people and damned them, and the echo of his curses followed many into exile where they choked on the bitter taste of it.

Unknowingly, Daladon cursed his own half brother, Meltowg Lothian, a prince of the elves. When Meltowg heard his brother's challenge and damnation it tore a wound in his heart that would not heal. He became possessed of a driving need to battle the evil that surrounded the God Emperor's throne. He left his father in the Land of Seven Rivers, returning by secret ways to the world at large. None came with him, but in time he gathered a small band of elves and joined the battle against the east. Thus began one of the greatest epics in the long history of Aihrde. Metlowg was deathless, and he waged his war against evil for a thousand years and more. In time, his lust for war drove him mad, and he destroyed any and all who stood against his grim purpose. His tale became one that men told in after ages, and was bound in the Lothian Chronicles. His was a strange and twisted path that ended as it began, with curses and death.

In truth, not all the elves fled the world with the queen. Her own daughter, Londea, remained behind with an order of elven warlords, called the Lunar Knights. They fought on into the new Rin of the world, though only a few remained when the Winter Dark Wars began. Aside from these many others stayed behind, hidden in the deep forests, the deserts, or other wild places. Most notable of these were Nigold, king of the wood elves of the Eldwood. There were others, some growing corrupt by the victories of the dark. These evolved into the twilight elves, neither good nor evil, but possessed of a great knowledge of sorcery.

In these waning days of the Fifth Rin, Nulak stole away to Castle Kelsion in the far north where Patrice had come to reside. He sought to end the power of the old mage.

The castle lay upon a large hill amidst a wasteland of bogs. Standing water, crowded with the remnants of decay surrounding the castle, spreading for many miles through the tundra. The air was cold and

hard in the lungs, stinging with each breath. The hint of moisture congealed in the throat. No wind blew. The skies hung pale blue as the mage crossed through the water. Sodden, his cloaks dragging through the mud, Nulak came to the gates and tapped the butt of his staff upon them. "Lord Patrice! It is I. Your colleague of old, come out now, so that we might speak. Or better yet, let me in so that I might dry by your fire."

"It is an ill wind that brings you here Master Trigal. And no wind blows." The voice came from all about the mage.

"I will not be here long, Lord Patrice."

The gates swung wide and beyond them lay the cobbled stones of the courtyard and several archways. Passing through the first, Nulak found himself at steps leading up. Following these he passed beneath an open door and into a warm, well-lit hall. To one side upon a bench sat Patrice. Tall, narrow of limb and chest, he hunched a little in his age. His robes were long and white, though dirtied around the sleeves and feet. His beard he wore short and groomed, and his hair as well. It was white, thin, offering no contrast to the pale skin of the mage. His fingers were black, a sign of the sorcerer's trade. A small fire burned in a hearth in the wall.

Nulak took a seat upon another bench and warmed his fingers by the fire. "Yours is a most unpleasant country Lord Patrice. Why have you settled here?"

"It is for the heavens Master Trigal. Here I can see the heavens and follow the movements of the sun and moon. On certain days I can even see the Wall of Worlds, and beyond. If I apply myself I can see the River of the All Father, the Arc of Time."

"I have seen that river too, but not from Aihrde." Nulak sighed. "It is a pity."

"Indeed. Shall we begin? Or would you like some refreshments first?" "You have nothing to eat I could digest, Lord Patrice."

"It is probably true and just as well Master Trigal." He said the name with only a slight hint of the power within it and Patrice pulled upon it, seeking to draw in Nulak.

The mage smiled. "Clever, Lord, very clever. But none know my name, nor will they ever."

Both rose, facing one another, passionless. Nulak lifted his hand and Patrice followed, both unleashing eldritch sorceries that battered the walls and shook the ceiling above. The duel began in a wild hail of fire and water as the two sought mastery over one another. At first Nulak held the upper hand for his sorcery was powerful and his knowledge of the Ondluche-Eroan deep. But Patrice, ever more skilled, drove him from the hall and into the courtyard. He sought to unravel him, to learn his true name, for with this he might bind him. Nulak eluded the sorcery and struck back with power that shook the building, shattering the pillars so that the awning fell to the courtyard with a crash.

The mages continued their arcane duel. His power unveiled, Patrice summoned lightning and struck Nulak so that his arm was numbed. The mage staggered back only to suffer a second lightening strike. Patrice then bound the stunned Nulak in ethereal ropes, lifting him on high, choking the life out of him, but always seeking his name.

Nulak held the Winter Rune, and with it removed himself from the combat, the castle itself, only to reappear in the bogs beyond the walls. Following him, Patrice slammed his staff upon the ground at his feet so that the earth split. A crack split in the crust and the water and mud fell into the abyss, and the crack snaked across the ground to where Nulak stood, gathering himself for his next spell. The mage fell into the crevice and was lost in the drenching bog water that filled the rocky gash. As he fell his sorcery whipped striking the walls behind Patrice and brought them and the mage down in a mound of stone and dust. Bound in globe of seering white, Patrice staved off the rubble and he walked through to where Nulak had vanished.

Nulak rose from the ground like an avenging demon, and he lashed fire upon Patrice, burning away the globe. The two clashed again, casting sorcery upon one another as they both rose into the air. They hurled bolts, whips of flame, ice, and eldritch powers from beyond the world of Aihrde. In the end Patrice gave out, his sorcery proving no match for the might of Nulak-Kiz-Din, and he was thrown down.

Nulak, tired and battered, cast on high and pulled forth magic from the Firmament, and he bound Patrice in a piece of it. "My friend,you shall not die. Not this day,not the next, nor for many long days ever after. I shall set you on high so that all the world may see you and you it. In later ages, men will look up in the dead of night and see that none may suffer to live without me unless they suffer greatly."

Nulak hurled Patrice into the heavens. Using the Winter Rune, he cast him into the Void, where he resides still, or so it is said, as a light in the sky, circling the world, as it came to be, every thirteen years.

Ever after Nulak was called the archmage, and he was the greatest mage of the world.

The emperor in these days began to fear the power of the archmage, and because of this he forged a blade of Iergild metal and imbued it with arcane powers. By secret ways he stole himself into King Luther's old land of Pendegrantz where the Holy Flame had been removed to, and he bathed the blade in the Language of Creation. So great was the heat of flame that the steel of the blade turned fiery red, and Sebastian lay spells of unmaking into the receptive metal. The magic mingled with the Language and bound the Spell of Unmaking with the blade, so that ever after the Emperor felt secure against the powers of the mage. And it was after said that that blade, Discepero was the only blade that might strike at the heart of darkness and drive it into the wilderness.

With the White Mage fallen to a demon lord, and Patrice cast out, the Elarios proved too weak to combat the White Order of Nulak. In the end, one of their own number, Ozanna, betrayed them. They were overwhelmed, some slain in their towers, others bound to the darkness. Those who were able, fled, and hid themselves away, to return and fight another day.

Only a few remained to stand against the powers of the emperor and the archmage. Daladon Half-Elven and Jaren, alone of all the great heroes of that day, stood in defiance. Though sorrow followed, for even before they could rally the Half-Elven fell to a dragon in the south. Jaren bore his body back to his home in the Eldwood, laying it upon the ground at the feet of the Great Oak. There the tree consumed his body and soul, harboring it for another day and other battles. Jaren returned to Robert Luther's side and bound himself to the fate of that greatest of kings.

Robert Luther ruled all the lands of the ancient Ethvold, from the southern coasts to the Gottland. The Great Wall of old was manned with all the many diverse peoples driven from Anglamay and it connected the Inner Sea with the long fence of the Bergrucken Mountains, that in turn crossed the whole land to the Amber Sea. Even beyond

the fence the people of the Massiff and the Lechtunfield swore him allegiance and braced themselves for what all knew must surely come.

Robert Luther was young then, and in his prime. He was a knight of great renown, never once unseated from his horse, nor fallen victim to the bloody field. He gathered all beneath his banners that would come and at the head of the Holy Alliance he defied the Emperor and taunted him to come and battle. All stood in awe of the power of the son of Luther, and none would answer his challenge. The emperor knew he could not best him in the field, for his might was great and the size of his host uncounted. For his part Nulak suffered doubt, for Robert Luther's might but also that of Sebastian, for the Emperor's power had waxed upon Aihrde and it was not bound to him as he had hoped. In this breathless moment all three watched one another.

So stood the powers of the world when at last Nulak-Kiz-Din, in his towers upon the Ure, used the Winter Rune to break the seals upon the gates and travel the Paths of Umbra to summon the darkness to the world of Aihrde.

THE FEAST OF DEATH

As the last breath of the Days before Days blew across the land, Emperor Sebastian Olivier I sat upon his throne with the Cradle of the World upon his brow. Behind him stood his councilor, the High Priestess, Nectanebo, servant of the goddess Imbrisuis, mistress of Narrheit, Lord of Chaos. Before them both stood Nulak-Kiz-Din. Folds of sorcery wrapped the archmage and he was clothed in power. "I have the power to summon a beast from beyond, and with it at your heel, you may bring Robert Luther to ruin."

"I do not trust you mage. I never have. My master of old, dead though he be, spoke wisely about you."

"I am but your servant in all this. I crave only knowledge, not worldly power as do you."

"Still. But to bind you to me I have brought Nectanebo, priestess of Imbrisius. She commands the power of the Val Eahrakun."

With that the woman stepped from the dais and approached the mage. Her movements were carefully judged and reflected the power of her being over men, both physical and sorceress. She was heavy with the voice of her mistress when she spoke, "Nulak Kiz Din, Trigal, mage of a thousand years, I can see into you. I hear an echo in my mind of your every thought. I know the truth of you."

Nulak looked back upon her with cold eyes. She smiled at him. A cold, merciless smile.

"My Lord, he seeks to betray you. He seeks to own the world. But not with this creature. This stain upon his mind is a tool only."

"I am not surprised. You are too far on your journey to want only to be a servant of my throne. But summon your beast Nulak, and we'll square accounts between each other on some later date." The emperor trusted in his sword, bathed in the Language of Creation as it was. And Nectanebo trusted in Imbrisius, who spoke into her ear.

Using the Winter Rune, Nulak stepped back into Ure, his fortified tower that stood in the Gotland, wherein lay the iron pillar and all his gates to the many realms. Passing through, he saw the many mirrors, each one a gate to a world. He chose the one that bridged the Wall of Worlds to the Void. Nulak made ready the rods of binding and calling upon his fountain of magic, he spoke the Incantations of the Paths of Umbra, bound in the Winter Rune, to summon the beast from the Void.

None could have foretold the true horror which the Paths of Umbra would bring. Indeed, had Nulak foreseen the consequences he would not have cast the spell, and had the emperor known the fate which darkness would deal him, he certainly would not have consented to the atrocity.

The Darkness, wrapped in shrouds of the substance of creation, stepped into the world of Aihrde. Nulak knew then, instantly, what it was, and that he could not best it, and sought to flee. The archmage cast forth power, using the hidden rods to brace himself, but many of these were tainted by the darkness and they failed the archmage so that he fled back to the Pillar and sought to close the gates. But it was too late and darkness stepped through, so that Nulak had to flee again, and he fled to the court. But he did not use the Pillar, but mundane magic, for he feared the darkness would follow him.

The darkness stood upon the bridge between the Tower of Ure and the Void, within the Iron Pillar and he cast out for the mage. He saw first all the gates to the many realms and even those that allowed the mage passage around Aihrde. Unbeknownst to the emperor, the mirror behind his throne, large and reflecting all that went on in the throne room was itself a portal, bound to Ure, for through it Nulak had watched all that the emperor did and said. It allowed him passage to the throne room. Through this the Darkness came.

Sebastian Oliver, last of the House of Aenoch, turned in his throne and sought to master the Darkness. He cast a spell of binding, one designed by of the Wizard Aristobulus. Nectanebo joined him: calling upon Imbrisius, she threw ropes of power about the darkness, hoping to hem it in. All was for naught, for the Darkness was pure and unspent through all the long years of his banishment.

So, as is told, in the year 748oy, the devil came to Aihrde and the long days of the Feast of Death began.

The Darkness was fresh to the world of Aihrde, and the Judgment of Corthain did not bind him. He was of the Val Eaharkun.

The Darkness slew the high priestess Nectanebo upon sight, even before her spell of binding fully completed its cycle. Sebastian, alarmed, drew forth his great sword, Discipero and commanded the beast to yield. It was the first and last time any mortal commanded the Darkness in any tone. The Darkness slew Emperor Sebastian and cast his broken body upon the dais, where its ruin lay for a thousand years. He cast aside Sebastian's sword and crown, and took his seat upon the throne of the god-emperors. He as yet took no shape or form, but remained a dark wash of evil that few men could look upon without being consumed by madness or death.

This shadow from the darkest imaginings of the All Father set to destroying the known world. He broke the archmage and bound him, such that Nulak became his voice on Aihrde, and all those of the emperor's house who did not bow down he unmade. He lay claim to all there was or ever would be, and men of all stripes fell in terror at his voice.

The Darkness was fresh come to the world, and had only echoes of the long Rin that became, and these were flawed, for he had them of Nulak's mind, and though great in power, his understanding of the world was never whole. But this the Darkness knew, that he was of the All Father, his child, born in th Void long ago. And he saw the world though flawed eyes, for to him is was incomplete, and what was done,

was not done according to his own ordering. He would make good the All Father's flawed design.

As the Darkness pondered his own purpose, a fear stole over him, and he remembered the Val Eahrakun and how they drove him into the Undeeps at the beginning of time. These thoughts troubled him and he sought order around him.

He took for himself a name, Unklar, which is darkness without light, an ending without redemption.

For his fear of the Val Eahrakun Unklar roused himself and fortified the Keep of Al-Liosh. Rending the earth with a great axe, he clove huge rifts about the city, laying waste to its walls. With his breath he clove the earth for miles in every direction. He then drew the might of the rivers Udunilay and Uphrates to spill into the wreckage and it soon became a swamp of fell death. He turned then to the city. Her towers he destroyed. The houses and palaces pulled down. The wide avenues he turned over on themselves. All was destroyed and with it all those who had dwelt in that fair town and their lives were spent in the filth of it and their bodies became the rot.

Then, lifting the ground on high, he made a true mountain of slag amidst tumbled buildings, and set his high citadel atop. The slag itself he fashioned in the shape of a tree, thousands of feet high, a grim mockery of Wenafar and the Great Tree in the west. All this he surrounded with mighty buttresses and fell towers. And this abode he named anew, calling it Festung Aufstrag, the Citadel of Command. The ruins of Al-Liosh sprawled underneath Aufstrag and into the swamp far around and were filled with water and filth. And these were renamed, called the Grausumland, the Gray Pools.

From his own substance Unklar fashioned the ungern, the children of the dark, and he made them mighty. He made them in the deeps of Aufstrag, and set them loose upon the world. He bound many people to him and made war upon all the lands. He filled the rings of brass with his fear, and the shadows of his thought crept through all thoughts of men, dwarves, and the many peoples of the world

In all this Unklar failed to note that the Crown, the Cunae Mundus Usquam, the Cradle of the World, the one which had rode upon the brow of the emperors of Aenoch of old, became unsettled and it fell from the throne and rolled down the stairs. The ringing of its fall sounded like a singular bell, tolling the demise of the world. It caught the eye of the emperor's chief constable, Baron Harakon Petrovich. The baron stole the iron banded crown and the sword of his fallen master and fled the world, stepping through the mirrored gate, to the tower of Ure, and even to the planes beyond, where he hid both items from the prying eyes of the undeserving.

The elves watched events unfold in horror from Shindolay, the Land of Seven Rivers. Many became distraught and called for a return to Aihrde, where they could stand or fall with the Holy Alliance of Kayomar. For these folk, Aihrde held a special place, a true home that was not fashioned from the passing of the All Father as the lands of Fay had been. The lords and ladies of Shindolay became embittered in the debate, and them. Ever a prideful people, neither those who supported returning to Aihrde nor those who opposed it would yield. At the last the Lord of Lothian forbade any to leave until "the fog of darkness was ended." The Lord was farsighted and saw the unfolding the Wall of Worlds and the coming of the Winter Dark.

Many, remembering the words of Daladon Lothian, made to return to Aihrde. They rode from the Seven Rivers, crossing the lands between the worlds, but they found themselves barred from Aihrde by the will of Unklar. Attempts to force the issue failed, though they cast themselves against the portals with deeds of magic and strength of arms. Despite all their practices, the portals held. So the elves remained for countless years, living in limbo, refusing to return to Shindolay. They called themselves the Fontenouq Elves, which mean, roughly, "the abandoned" or "lost." These elves grew in bitterness, and they harbored hatreds for the dark one in Aufstrag, but also for their kin in Shindolay.

In the world of men, the Holy Alliance gathered their forces to resist the coming dark. They built fortresses, fortified the fences anew, and lay in stores for a war they increasingly felt was hopeless. What peoples to the east, in and around the Massiff and the Gelderland, still remained fell quickly. Many were killed outright, others carted off to Aufstrag as slaves, and others simply vanished. Rumors of the slaughter spread to the west. A wave of panic rolled over the people, and many cast themselves into rivers or hid themselves away. They despaired, for truly none had believed that a return of the terrors of the old world would ever come to pass, and many could not bear the face of evil which strode the plains. Those who remained suffered an abiding fear, that gnawed at their waking moments, and fueled feverish nightmares. Only the king seemed impervious to this fear, and wherever he went people were heartened thereby, so he traveled the length and breadth of his land giving comfort to those in need.

A respite of sorts came to the folk of Ethrum, for Unklar first turned his attention to the gods.

OF THE TVUNGENOS

Unklar feared the Val Eahrakun, but for the Val Austerlich he worried less. He sought to bind them to him, but many would not yield so he cast himself a form. Huge and mighty, with massive horns upon his brow, his skin as red as fire, though his legs were covered in thick black fur. He stood upon hooved feet and looked out across the world from yellowed eyes. He forged a mace to wield in battle and a dark cloak of clouds to follow him wherever he went.

He called to the Shadow Realms and to the Void, and all the dark places of creation; he called for allies. From the depths of the Wretched Plains there arose a tumult of many voices as great hosts of creatures crawled from the filth of their wasted existence to heed his call. These were the slaves of that place, bound by the Red God no more, for he sat upon his throne unknowing.

Unklar gathered them in several hosts, and he bound them to him, making them slaves to his will and design. They were called "the tvungen" by their enemies, the "fettered," what later men simply referred to as the devils of Unklar. These creatures stank of evil, but longed for the order of the world to be theirs. They saw the design of Unklar's purpose and sought to be a part of it, or at least to mimic it.

Many of the voices in the Wretched Plains did not heed Unklar's call, but rather heaped curses upon him and swore to slay him and the tvungen. These, men called the "tvungenos", or the "unfettered," these beings remained free from Unklar's control. These demons were marked not by their independence, but by their utter madness.

Unconcerned for those wretched creatures, Unklar gathered together the tvungen, fleshing out his ranks with their cohorts. Unklar armored himself and took up Utriel, the Mace of Judgment, and marched to war at the head of his host. They marched then on Aalun-Hart-Ra, the City that lies at the Center, where the gods congregated. He tore down their gate and assailed them in their bastion, laying waste to it all. During this War of the Gods, the ranks of the tvungen were greatly

depleted, for the Val Austerlich did not yield their power freely. Unklar proved careless of the ranks of the tvungen, as well, for he loved nothing, not even the loyalty of powerful minions. The war waged for years in the high halls of that place. The deeds of man and god fell into the abyss, and few remained to remember them, but the struggle was hard and took more from the Horned God than ever he believed it would. In the end, Unklar cast the city into ruins and left the survivors shadows of their former selves. The greater part of the causalities, however, Unklar himself suffered: his hosts were devastated, and where thousands had gathered hundreds now remained.

The tvungen, of course, are of the ranks of the Val Eahrakun, and slaying them is not an easy task. Many died at Unklar's side, only to return to the halls of the Wretched Plains, to lick their wounds. Their return to their nests however, was fraught with danger, for in their absence, the tvungenos assumed command of the gates and portals to the rings of brass, the towers and dungeons of the Wretched Plains, and many of the great cities of the plane fell to the demons, which they ruled in their raving madness. These realms were, as they always have been, home to pitiless dead, those who once lived an evil or miscreant existence. Those lost spirits found no order in the rule of the tvungenos.

When the tvungen returned, they sought their seats and towers, but the tvungenos laughed them off and cast them the beggar's coin. War erupted soon after. It spread throughout the Wretched Plains as the two sides fought bitter battles, one to regain their strongholds and power, and the other for the love of hatred and tumult. The dead they left untended. Utter chaos ensued. In some areas the tvungen ruled; in others, the tvungenos. In others still the dead rose to prominence, ruling their own kingdoms of wild nightmares. So the Wretched Plains, unforgiving in its conception, leaderless in the absence of the Red God, descended into a deranged horror and dreadful nightmare.

The lines that divide the two entities, the tvungen and the trungenos, are not so easy to discern. They do not war as nations of men war, though they hate each other. In all the evil of the Wretched Plains, the tvungen live in islands of calm where their evil is perpetrated in cold calculation, while all around them surges the sea of chaos, warring with and upon itself, even as it does upon the islands of dread in its midst.

Only one constant defines the Wretched Plains: the creatures who dwell and rule there are evil, unashamed and unrepentant; evil in their thoughts, actions, and deeds. There is no nobility of spirit, no justice that drives them. These are broken creatures, shed by the All Father as flawed because of their evil, lost without the Red God, slaves to madness or Unklar.

OF NARRHEIT AND THE FALL OF THE GODS

Those Val Austlich that dwelt in the world and escaped the sacking of Aalun-Hart-Ra saw the onslaught too late. Wrapped in their hidden worlds, safe in the fealty of thousands, they failed to realize the threat and evil of Unklar. For eleven brutal years he stalked the Val Austlich, slaying them or casting them into chains. In this War of the Gods, some few escaped his wrath, Durendale, the Great Oak, and others, but many fell and ceased to be.

Narrheit, lord of chaos and evil, alone stood against Unklar. He was of the Named Val Eahrakun, and thus never bound by the Judgment, and as he watched Unklar overwhelm all there was, he was unamused.

Narrheit took up residence on a hill north of the mighty Grundliche Mountains and called Unklar to him. "Oh Horned God, come to me and lets unravel you together."

Unklar heard his call and remembered well the sting of Narrheit's rage in the battles before the Undeeps became his home. He wondered at what hidden strength Narrheit had, to challenge him so. Taking up Utriel he crossed the mountains and called upon him there.

"Your people are scattered far and wide o' Lord of Chaos. Your siblings gone or distracted. What now gives you leave some hidden power."

Narrheit smiled. "I am last born. That is true. Though trust not the darkness, for I am far seeing and know the will of he who made all, though in truth I care little for it."

"Well. Narrheit,your tongue at least is gilded." With that Unklar struck Narrheit with Utriel and he shattered like ice. But from the ruin of him rose a tower of madness and it fell upon Unklar with a fearlessness the Horned God could not fathom.

They fought upon the rolling hills north and east of the Grundliche Mountains. The dual rocked the earth and the thunder of their clash shook the towns and castles as far away as the lands of Kayomar. At the height of the battle Narrheit lifted his sword to cleave down the dark one, but Unklar turned the ground beneath him to ice and struck the earth a mighty blow. The ice crumbled, shattering into a thousand shards. One such shard gouged Narrheit's face and he staggered and fell into the newly formed glacier, and was trapped. His wound bled copiously, and his blood spilled into the earth.

And Narrheit smiled for he saw in this the work of many things and that chaos must come from Unklar's arragance. "Why do you smile Lord of Chaos? Do you relish defeat?"

"You are my seed Undeeps," for thus he styled the Horned God ever after. "And for you all shall love me ever greater."

The Horned God bound Narrheit and imprisoned him in seven brass towers. Around the towers he built a keep, and around the keep he built a city, with walls interspersed between twenty-one towers. This was the City of Seven, and it contained Narrheit for a thousand years. The City of Seven became a strange, wicked place, where many things escaped the order of the world of Winter Dark, for in truth the towers of brass never fully contained the chaos of that god and it seeped out into the world. In the long days of the Winter Dark, the Lords of Law, and many others beside, traveled there to enter the Seven Towers and battle chaos, for they relished that peculiar entertainment.

So terrible was the battle between these two gods that the lands about them became a wasteland, frozen now by Unklar's spells, a glacier spanning hundreds of miles. In later days it was named the Frozen Salt Flats, for a frost of ice forever remained and the soil of the place was poisoned, for it bore the evil waste of Narrheit's wound.

Of the other Val Eahrakun, Unklar dealt with them singly or not at all. Ealor in his Green Halls saw little and cared less for the world above, and Unklar feared the water. The Eahrtaut, the one tree, stood still on the Marl, and Unklar could not break its strength, though he tried. Frafnog slept and Tefnut returned to the waters of the world. Corthain saw the coming of the Darkness and knew its name and he brooded in his Fortress of Wind for he had no foreknowledge of this, and he husbanded his strength, for it was the Red God who waited for him upon the Gonfod. Of Unklar he knew not, for when last he had fought the darkness he had the whole host of the Val Eahrakun beside him, and the world was young. And now they were much diminished.

With the fall of the gods, the folk of Aihrde fell into despair. The dwarves once more closed their kingdoms. The last of the elves passed

into the Land of Seven Rivers, but for a few who remained. The fey and other folk fled to forest deeps and hid themselves away. The orcs, hobgoblins, and even those eldritch goblins who remained, bowed to Unklar and joined him in warring upon the men of the world. Many peoples in other lands flocked to Unklar's banners, and he welcomed them, melding them to his own designs.

For 40 years Unklar waged his war against the broader world of Aihrde, and wherever he went the clouds of winter lingered ever after.

At the last, only the men of Ethrum held out. They stood against the dark for a great while, led by King Robert Luther, his family, and Jaren of the Order of the Scintillant Dawn. These last conflicts, the Catalyst Wars, were long and brutal, and saw the collapse of the Holy Alliance, the end of the west, the death of King Robert Luther and the extermination of much of the royal line of Kayomar and the end of active resistance on Aihrde for a thousand years. These wars were long and tragic and fully recounted in the Mourilee Chronicles, for it was she of all the Lords of Kayomar who escaped.

Mourilee Lothian Pendegrantz, sister of Robert Luther, fled with many other refugees of Kayomar into the far distant west. The victory of Prince Erik Aristobulus Euryiance over Unklar's navy in 789oy left a window for them to escape, and this they did.

They gathered what ships they could and in the company of Luther's bastard son, Morgeld, set sail for the Rirm ot Sul, hoping to escape to the Void and the Fortress of Iul and Corthain's mercy. For years they sailed, the journey a legendary trek fraught with countless horrors. Aside from one, a fisherman (as is told elsewhere in the Fisherman's Tale), the refugees never found that fabled path, though their voyage sent them to the far edge of the world, even beyond the Arnhul Mountains where the first dwarves built their homes. They came then even to the end of things; the Edge of the World, for these lands bordered the Wall of Worlds.

There the survivors found a deep-water bay, surrounded by high cliffs. Beyond the bay lay a well watered land of deep soil and green grass and they named these the Ethlium Lands, that is "Man's End", but later they called them the Greenling Fields, for even in the Winter Dark the light of the sun fell upon the land and the grasses grew. A broad escarpment of jagged cliffs hemmed the Greenling Fields on the landward side, breached only by a singular valley, that itself was guarded by a wide river. And the Valley they called the Valley of Mur, that is the "light" in the dwarven tongue, for when first the morning's sun rose, it cast its rays down the long cleft of the valley and shone in the Greenling Fields, and it was accounted a thing of marvelous beauty.

The refugees were amazed for they felt they had come to a land built to house them in safety after the long years of turmoil and war.

In truth this was a realm fashioned by Tefnut. Seeing their distress through their long struggles, she departed the Ethvold, her home, and came to this land to shape it anew, and to make it a bastion for the children of her children. She made her abode in the cool waters of the river so that ever its turmoil was her own. It was her power that kept the Shroud of Darkness, as later cast by Unklar, from the Greenling Fields for she was of the Named Val Eahrakun and no power might stop but through great effort.

The Ethrum built a city upon the bay, calling it Faurenost. They spread through the Greenling Fields, building farms and villages and roads between. The hills they called the Escarpment, and they constructed a wall upon the western banks of the river. The wall possessed no gate, nor did they bridge the river, for they deemed that whosoever should attack them would be given no easy access to the Greenling Fields. They set a council to rule them, and these were the Paladins of Faurenost. And one of their number they called emperor.

South of the bay stood an island of granite, seemingly one stone thrust from the turbulent waters. This isle guarded the approaches to the bay. The Ethrum built a tower there so that they might watch the seas to the south for the coming of the dark, but Prince Morgeld bid them give him the tower, so that he might settle his folk upon the lonely isle. "Give me this isle of stone and I'll hold the southern passages for your people. Unless I and all my company pass to the Wretched Plains, we shall keep any from approaching from the south." And the Ethrum granted the Prince the island, and charged him with its defense.

Prince Morgeld fortified the island, building walls even into the sea, and these stacked upon one the other so that taking one meant only another stood in the way. He set a singular stair from the sea that wound up the bastions, so that any bent on taking the island would do so at great cost. His fleet he set in coves, sheltered from any storm. Atop it all he built a palace of marvelous beauty, its windows facing west to the Wall of Worlds, so he could see the All Father's mist. The prince learned in time to look past it, to look into the uttermost Void that is beyond all things.

He called his island the Land of Bliss, for it grew no food, nor any plant of any kind but some few wild mosses, and no animals but wild sea birds occupied its heights. There he lived his deathless life in the company of other immortals, all refugees of the world, bound in the ecstasies of pleasure and defeat. Here, he ruled with an iron fist, holding the Black Spear, Gorgothorium, in his grasp.

All the other peoples of Aihrde had fallen into bondage. Under the dark god Unklar they bore little hope and many died for want, and others wandered in the wilderness. In time, rumors came of a prophecy as spoken to Unklar by Jaren the Wise before he was taken and bound in pain and blood upon the walls of Aufstrag. It was said that the Books of Jaren foretold that when the Durendale Blade was found, it would knell the end of Unklar's reign.

Rumor of the prophecy spread far and wide, and men came to the ruins of Du Guesilon, where Robert Luther fell, and there they found the ghost of Jaren. Or so men said. The ghost haunted those towers with promises of an age to come. Others did not believe this, and saw only the broken spirit of a defeated man, who sought a king that died on the walls of his castle.

Other legends circulated as well. They told stories of the return of the sword Durendale, how Luther, father of the king, would carry it to slay Unklar. Too, the Holy Flame would emerge from hiding and remake the world with its language, removing the stains of Unklar. More importantly were the tales of the blade Discerpo, Sebastian's sword, for it was told that within that steel the emperor, no mean sorcerer, cast the Spell of Unmaking. A horrid binding which, if properly cast, would close the Paths of Umbra and seal Unklar in the Void once more.

With the fall of Ethrum, none remained strong enough to oppose Unklar. Rumors of him spread to distant lands, and men built temples in his honor and made sacrifice to him. Those who resisted were devoured, or vanished into the wilds and the dark places of the world, to hide from him and his servants, to bide their time. Not since the Second Rin, when Ornduhl the Red God ruled Aihrde, had one of the Val Eahrakun thrown its shadow across all the world.

So the Age of the Cobbler ended, and the light of the sun left the world. The Age of Winter Dark began.

Sixth Oration - Of Winter Dark

Being the Sixth Rin of the World. An account and History in brief of the Millennial Darkness, the Winter Dark also called the Long Centuries; of the Warping of the World, the Binding of the Twin Sisters; the myriad wars of Unklar, the Horned Go; of Aufstrag and the coming of Hell; the Mogrl and other beasts; of the Winter Dark Wars.

In the beginning, some open resistance to Unklar's rule remained. Of the dwarves, Grundliche-Hohle and Norgorod Kam held out for some time. Many other folk in distant lands did as well, though their tales do not come into this telling. Most of the people of Aihrde fell to his worship, for fear of him.

After the fall of Ethrum, the forces of Unklar battled the dwarves of the Bergrucken until at last they were driven into the Brass Halls, Norgorad Kam. They remained defiant, and the king of those halls would not at first close his doors, but the fall of Kayomar and the Ethrum he saw that the evil wind of Unklar would end the Brass Halls. He called all his sundry folk into his realm and what folk of the Etrhum he could save. He ordered the outer tunnels pulled in and sealed. At the last he came to his might gates, with his war hammer in hand he looked upon the setting sun. "We'll warm ourselves in the dark as is our people's want, but gird ourselves for war, for as with all things, this darkness shall pass." The gates he ordered shut and sealed.

When Unklar arrived he called the dwarves to come forth. They did not, but sounded their horns and challenged Unklar to come into the halls "For even if you can break these gates, your folk will be years dying in these deeps." The Darkness answered this challenge, but the gates would not break, no matter the power thrown against them. In the end, Unklar himself attempted to batter the gates down but they would not yield and promised to root them in time.

Unklar turned then to Grundliche Hole, for he knew that its magic was less than Norgorad Kam. The dwarves of the Grundliche Mountains were a society of warriors not steeped in the rune magic of their cousins. For this they paid dearly, for Unklar battered their gates open and unleashed his vast host to the halls. For nine years the battle continued, and the losses upon both sides defied comprehension. The terrible suffering, the murder of innocents, the grinding battles, the fall of warriors and lords echoed through the halls until at last it was done, and the kingdom lay in wreck and ruin.

The fall of that kingdom echoed in the world, and from that day to this, the dwarven folk shudder and weep at the memory of it, for the greater part of those folk were cruelly slain, but many were carted off to doom in Aufstrag where they became slaves to his will. Only a few fled into the hinterlands of the Grundliche Mountains, there to live wild, dangerous lives. Thus ended one of the oldest and greatest Kingdoms of the dwarves.

Of Hell and It's Making

Thus Unklar, the Horned God, settled within the Halls of Austrag and fortified it anew, building ever greater bastions. He constructed an out-wall in front of the gate, and towers within. The gates he made of brass, forcing the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle to construct it, though they cursed it without his knowing. These gates he named the Ahargon Den, the Mouth of Darkness. He called to those who served him, and he gave them places in the halls of his power. The tvungen who remained in Aihrde, great and small came first. Many others followed. Sorcerers, goblins, wicked-hearted men, orcs, hobgoblins, and other beasts beside. Some of these were mortal, others of the unnamed Val Eahrakun. All served the dark power that sat upon the thrown of Al-Liosh and the world.

As warning to all those who resisted him, Unklar took up the battered body of Jaren the Wise. The monk still lived, though his aged body could not have lasted long in the dungeons of that place. Unklar gave of himself to the monk, breathing the breath of life into his lungs, so that Jaren became immortal. The Horned God crucified Jaren then, nailing his body above the gates of his citadel, the Ahargon Den. There he hung for a thousand years, the slow trickle of his blood spilling upon the ground. Many came to see him, reveling in his suffering, and his blood became a drug to evil lords who thirsted for such things. Nulak-Kiz-Din himself took particular pleasure in tormenting Jaren, and he spent many years in the task. But too, it was a holy sufferance. It is told that one Leonidas, follower of the Scintillant Dawn, came to Jaren and took up some of the blood in a cup and bore that cup into the world.

Years passed, and Aufstrag became a cesspool of all things vile, a living thing, a hell. Tunnels, great and small, fanned out beneath the halls into the rock of the world. Towers and buttresses rose into the sky, and the fortress city climbed higher. Within the city itself the construction never ceased, as walls were torn down and new ones built, rooms filed in or hollowed out. Aufstrag's bulk proved large enough that all those within could build and rebuild to their eye's desire. And so they did.

Eventually, twenty-one domains were established, and each of these comprised many levels of rooms and ramps, tunnels, halls, and stairs. They bore such names as the Bone Halls and the Horned God's Acre, and they housed terrors; nightmares born of Unklar's fell design or worse, those of their own ill intent. Aufstrag became the embodiment of evil in Aihrde, and all things that sought a place in his hierarchy dwelt there.

As is known, the souls of the restless dead meander upon the Arc of Time. They pass from the world of the living to the Endless Pools, though some are waylaid, marked by their lives' evil deeds to pass beneath the Furthnopt, the Maw of Huadun, and come even to the Wretched Plains. Unklar sought to change this, and set his will against that of the Red God. He sought to bend the Arc of Time to him and his domain, but that power was beyond him, for the ordering of the world had long been established, and the Judgment of Corthain still bound that ordering. What Unklar could affect was a culling upon the Arc, and those minions he deemed worthy, whose evil stood forth in his darkness, he culled, and brought them to Aufstrag to suffer his will for eternity. There the evil dead gathered, to serve in torment for all time.

Men called it Hell, and knew it as the equal of the Wretched Plains, and yet was unique in all the Maelstrom for it existed within the world and without.

Unklar's power waxed great in the early days of his rule, and after the fall of Grundliche-Hohle he set himself the task of reshaping the world. Foremost, he gathered together those of the orders of Val Eahrakun and Val Austlich whom he had not slain and bound them to himself. Of these he made seven his Captain Kings, and granted them dominion over wide regions of the world, though he kept the Lands of Ursal as his private domain.

The Captain Kings ruled in his name and they were called by men the Lord of Sorrow, Mongorth, Ammon, Cruxel, Naelek, Hexin-tul, and Goragon. They were greater devils and marshaled battles of tvengun and hosts of men. In time they proved to be an unruly lot and rose in rebellion against their master, and fought one another for greater control and power. The Lord of Sorrow was chief amongst these Captain Kings and commanded Unklar's hosts in battle, often against the other Captain Kings.

The Captain Kings set forth to rule in the dark one's stead and they largely ordered the world as he willed it. These Captain Kings sought to control the Val Eahrakun and Val Austlich that remained in Aihrde. These they made to serve the darkness or else imprisoned or, where they could, slay them. Though many fled into the wilderness, many more fell into darkness.

The Lord of Sorrow moved into the west and there built a mighty structure that housed all his filth, and it became a den of iniquity so foul that men called him Lord of Flies. He ruled there as a beast, eating the living from the spit and torturing the few who defied him. In after ages he rose against his master many times, but was never removed from his seat of power, for his rule pleased the Horned God more than any other.

The other Captain Kings built their houses as best suited their desires, but they were spread across the world, far removed from Aufstrag and the power of their god. Men worshiped them or fought them as suited their own design.

Unklar did not restrict himself to the divine ordering of things. He set about creating a true Empire of men. He ordered roads built between the larger cities and fortresses, building castles along the way to better house his troops and imprison his enemies. He awarded loyal men with lands and serfs, and these appointed assessors to gage the wealth of the land, and marshaled legions of troops to guard it. Taxes, duties, and tithes filled the coffers of Unklar's minions, who performed the role of lord or lady. The new masters controlled the more mundane affairs of the world, paying the dark god in sacrifices of blood and treasure.

At last, Unklar took rest and pondered the world, and his ownership of it. He thought upon the countless ages spent in the Void. Ever as powerful as the early gods, Corthain, Mordius and Ornduhl, Unklar knew his substance. He knew of himself as a memory, a passing emotion of the All Father's, and therefore, unbound by the Language of Creation, nor restricted in his doings by the substance of the Void. He saw the work of the All Father, and thought to himself that creation had gone astray. The Horned God thought too that he would repair the damage done by folly and neglect, for ever did he see himself as the better part of the All Father. With this in mind he set to refashioning the whole of the World of Aihrde.

OF UNKLAR AND THE MOON AND SUN

When Unklar came to Aihrde he made war upon the gods. Of all those he contested with, only the Sisters avoided his wrath; or so it was in the beginning. The Sisters turned their minds away from Aihrde and all its suffering, and their light was pale upon the world. These were accounted dark days, and were the very years of the Catalyst Wars.

In their hearts the Sisters longed for the deeps of the seas, the mountains, and all the manifold regions of the world. They turned then to the Maelstrom, and set themselves to gathering worlds of their own, for there was much in the empty places that was filled with the debris of the Firmament. The Sisters knew not the Language of Creation, and their world's were imperfect. The Maiden of Light fashioned great balls of burning gases, but they had no foundation. The Maiden of Night built worlds of cold stone, and they had no life. They set them to spinning in the Maelstrom, but to no avail. Their labors were imperfect, for they never forgot their games and the chase of one the other through the heavens, and what little of the All Father's wisdom they learned in the long ago Days before Days, they had long since forgotten.

Unklar came to them then and asked them what life they gave their worlds. And they replied that there was none. He smiled, feigning sorrow and pity he beguiled the Sisters. He told them that they should go the Void and cast about for the power of the Language, and they would gain the gift of life. The Sisters lamented their world's lack of life, and for a short while removed themselves from Aihrde's heavens even to the edge of the Great Empty. The world fell to darkness and terror. It was called by men the Long Night for it lasted many years.

Unmolested, Unklar set to remaking the world in the quiet dark. Beneath the world he found the bones of the All Father, and he harvested what magic from them that he could. He cursed the Sisters, for they were undiminished by his power and even as he, they were made of the All Father. More, they were made of the flesh of his flesh, and were whole and powerful. At first the Horned God made war on the Sisters by taking up the lust of the All Father and hurling it into the Void. There it burned with a fierce fire and lit the heavens. He did this to dampen the Sister's light.

This was the All Father's lust as fashioned by Unklar, and it was later called Al-Aihrde Cun by the dwarves: that is, the All Father's Eye. The elves called it the Taler-ur-ion, the light unseen. Men called it the Day Star, for it burned ever bright in the night sky and one could often see it in both the early morning and early evening. Unklar's great spite bound the world of Aihrde to the star for many seasons, for he wished to mock the people of the world of what they could not have. The Day Star marred all the beauty of the night sky, in that it diminished the Sisters and the ancient stars of Wenafar's making. It cast no warmth on Aihrde, nor did it shed any light to the world, and the Winter of those years was cold without match. It was ever after an evil star that men did not look upon unless through need.

During the Long Night, the dragon Frafnog grew restless, for his love of Wenafar was undiminished with time, and he could not see the stars of her making for the Day Star blotted out their distant light. So the great wyrm defied Unklar, and rousing at last, he took up the heart of the All Father and gave it to Wenafar and bid her fashion it as she had the stars of old and hurl it into the heavens. This she did and it hung in the north sky, and the Day Star dimmed in its presence. Unklar despised it.

The All Flather's Heart as cast out by Wenafar, is called by the dwarves the Al-Aihrde Onu; that is the Stone of the All Father. The elves call it the Taler-ur-seth, the guiding light, while men call it the Evening or North Star. The star lit the world with a dim light and gave comfort to those oppressed.

Thus the Long Night ended and light returned to the world. But in the end it proved weak and only alleviated the sufferings of men a little.

THE BINDING OF WENAFAR

Unklar sought out Wenafar after a time, and beseeched her to join him in his efforts. She was far-seeing, and held as one of the greatest of the Val Eahrakun and Wenafar spurned the Horned God, "Be off darkness, for you are the mote in his eye and bring discomfort to all you touch." But she did not fully grasp the power of Unklar and had forgotten that it took the might of all the Named Val Eahrakun to drive Unklar into the Undeeps and she misjudged him.

In the north of the Lands of Ursal lay a small mountain without consequence. The dwarves of old had built a hill fort upon its flanks, but that they abandoned in the early days of the Kinship Wars. Unklar came to this mountain and raised it up, burying the fort and all around in heaps of stone and fresh soil. The Horned God drew water from the earth so that it pooled at the top in a mere, and he set many trees to grow about it. The mere was deep and still and cold, reflecting the heavens above as would a mirror. It was the most beautiful of all his creations, but its design was otherwise.

Into the water he set a powerful magic so that whomsoever looked into it became snared in time. The passing of days had no meaning for its victims, so that they remained there until their gaze should be broken. Unklar named it Monrudge, and it was a prison and a trap for Wenafar.

Birds were Wenafar's greatest love, and these she made of herself in the Days before Days and released to roam the wide world. She watched over them, and they were her eyes and ears all over the world. Rumor of a mere came to her, for birds spoke of it to her, relating tales of how no creature, great or small, could pass over it without being lost. She stole away to the mere in secret, to glean what she could of its making.

Few were the places of Aihrde that Wenafar had no knowledge of, and this was one. She knew it was of Unklar's making, and saw many of her birds laying dead around the mere. She approached cautiously, but without fear, for she was a Val Eahrakun, and accounted the hand maiden of the All Father. That fearlessness was her undoing, for when she cast her gaze into the deep waters and saw the light of the skies above her, she fell into a trance. Sitting down by the lake she marveled at its beauty and wondered at the heavens that were partially of her own devising.

Unklar came to her then and wove a mist around the mere, and set snares and traps of his own devising, such than none could easily come to Wenafar's aid. In later years, rumor of her came to men of bold intent and many tried to rescue her, but they left their bones, and their tales, upon the jagged cliffs of Monrudge.

There she remained for many hundreds of years.

THE SHROUD OF DARKNESS

Upon a time Unklar rose to the highest reaches of Aufstrag and he looked out and into the Void, searching for the Undeeps where he dwelt for the many ages of the world. The Wall of Worlds obscured his view, and he saw it as a fence that kept him out of the world's making and the joy of its youth. He thought the fence ill conceived and pondered its destruction.

With his great might, Unklar devoured the fog of the Wall of Worlds, consuming it so that a greater part of its might came to reside within him. It discomfited him, for the fog was of the All Father's design, and as such bore all the power of the Language of Creation.

In a great blast Unklar vomited forth the Wall of Worlds, and it flowed from the spires of Aufstag as a powerful wind, cold and bitter. Great clouds of his stink settled far and wide across Aihrde, blanketing all in a world of winter and dark. It settled upon the world as a fog, rising into the heavens, dampening the light of the sun. Men named the fog the Shroud of Darkness or the Cold Mist, for with it came a terrible freezing. Sheets of snow and sleet blanketed the northern lands in ice, and much of the south as well. The Shroud hung over Aihrde for 800 years, and in time the warmth of the sun and the pure, unfiltered light of day, became legends to the people.

Thus the Winter Dark settled upon the land.

The Shroud kept much of the light of all the stars, the moon, and sun from Aihrde, and the world withered. Those years were counted as the longest of the Winter Dark and most terrifying for many died of need and want. After Unklar's war with Inzae when he shaped all of Aihrde anew, the Horned God thought upon the world and saw that without light it would utterly die, and with it his minions and slaves.

THE WINTER DARK

As the Shroud of Darkness blanketed Aihrde, the snows began to fall. The northern ice shelf crept south, consuming the lands of Aatuck, Wodonmohle, Surne, and much of the Gal-Land as well. The Banning Sea froze, and all the traffic stopped across the waters for many years, until the men there learned to put skids on their boats and pulled them with the giant bears, or used the wind to cross the ice. Only in the realms of the Dragon Riders did men live as they had before, for those people, though diminished, were steeped in sorcery, and used their knowledge to hold back the cold. Even so, their dragons grew old in the pens and were seldom used.

In the south, the Ice Shelf crept across the Oddine Ocean even to the southern reaches of Inklunaid and the lands of Koth. Elis, the ice consumed utterly and her people lived wild and dangerous. In the lands of Koth the dragon god Lamul ruled and kept the powers of the ice at bay, drawing warm winds from the Jungles of Is to her people and keeping the island an oasis of sorts.

Those same winds crossed the island-ruins of Alanti. The shattered remains of the dwarves who dwelt there still, and the men of the ancient Engale who served them, avoided the bitterness of the cold of the dark and dwelt in some peace, for it was known that Unklar feared the water and in his heart he feared Ealor, though here, as everywhere, the Shroud blocked out the sun and men suffered for want.

It was in the lands of Is, where the Green Sea washed the jungled shores, that men suffered the least. The snows and ice never hounded the jungles there, for 'tis said the back of the Dragon Inzae broke the surface of Aihrde through the Wall of Worlds, and all the firmament and the warmth of her Unklar could not match.

All the great lands of Ethrum and Aenochia suffered from the cold and the filtered sun. The winters were long, the springs short, cold, and wet, and food was scarce. In many places the snow did not melt in summer, keeping the land locked in a season of death. In the early years of the Winter Dark, the suffering was great indeed, and many died for lack of food and shelter. Many took to the road and wandered, others ate the beasts of the field and hunted creatures great and small for food.

As is known by the wise, when Erde first made the world all was dark, and there was no light but the fire of the waking mountains. The All Father longed for light, and he plucked a rib from his body and gave

it life and light and this light he named Mailahm. He cast Mailahm into the heavens for her to bring light to the world, and under her gentle touch all manner of plants blossomed and thrived in the half dark of the world's youth. These plants, seeds set by Mordius of the Val Eahrakun long before, grew wild and abundant beneath the light of the moon. They are counted the Fael Mur, and grew for an age before even the dwarves and dragons walked the earth. After the coming of Mailuhm, that is the sun, and true daylight, many of the Fael Mur died off for they could not long suffer the light of the sun and fell from the memory of all things. Their seeds lay beneath the earth for the long Rin of the world, but in the half-light of the Winter Dark, these plants rose again from their long slumber. Within only a few seasons they grew, and people learned to cultivate them, and animals to eat them, and the world's suffering grew less with each year that passed.

The return of the Fael Mur is accounted a wonder by most, and an accident of happenstance by many, but others say that Mordius understood the world of the All Father's making more than any other. Though her eyes never strayed to the Arc of Time, she bore a wisdom few could match. Some say she fashioned the seeds in the darkness of the world for a time of greater darkness. Thus it was that she was one of the greatest of the Val Eahrakun.

And so, while it took many long years, the want faded, and men adjusted to the world of the Winter Dark.

THE DRAGON

Unklar surveyed his work and deemed it good, and he sat upon his throne in Aufstrag, and slept for many years. In truth, Unklar spent much of his power in recasting the Wall of Worlds. Forming the Shroud of Darkness had taken much from him, and never again would he be the power he once was.

The elves, under their new king, Calphone, hid their realm with a magic of mist, not unlike the Shroud of Darkness, and the Land of Seven Rivers became a distant memory. Men called it a place of magic, of terrible powers, of the fae and the things of Wenafar's design.

When at last Unklar awoke, he found his vassals at war with one another. The Captain Kings, seeing nothing of their Lord for many years, warred upon one another for dominance of Aihrde. They fought battles upon the broad plains, within the skies, and under the ground. They placed huge armies of men, orc, and ungern into the field, and these forces clashed in contests of arms and rocked all the world.

A rage took Unklar, and he flew forth from Aufstrag to force the fealty of his vassals once again. Men flocked to his side, for none could resist him in those days. Nulak, always waiting in the wings, once more served as the Horned God's voice. The arch mage's power waxed great as he rose in the estimation of Unklar. In dismay, the Captain Kings faltered and fell back. They feared Unklar and cast themselves upon his mercy. He chastised them, binding them with ever greater spells, and forced them to do his bidding once more.

With the war finished and the fury of his vassals abated, Unklar turned his attention to the world once more. He pondered long and hard upon how best to bind the peoples of the world to him, for many seemed defiant and resisted him still. Dwarves, wandering knights, bands of men, the giants, and others besides.

The Horned God took stock of all that stood around him, from the Firmament and the Maelstrom to the multi-verse as created with the splintered mind of the All Father. He was blind to the Arc of Time and the purpose of the All Father. Of the Green Halls he feared to tread for water was ever a bane to Unklar. Of the Red God he heard only rumor, and Corthain he saw in the Fortress of Wind and new the Shroud blinded that god to the world of Airhde. Tefnut was lost to the world as were many of the Val Eahrakun. In the east he came to the Marl, and there found the Mother and Father of All, Eahrtut, the Great Tree. He grappled the tree and set to pulling it from the ground. The earth shuttered, and the mountains about broke in half, leaving stark and jagged cliffs in their wake, but the tree would not move. Unklar saw then that the roots were so deep as to reach beyond the world. He saw that they breached the world in many places, into the Maelstrom and the underworld that is Inzaa.

And he saw the dragon, Inzae, and was amazed for hers was a black he could not recompense with any thought, for she was destruction and death and the essence of unmaking. Unklar took mighty Utriel, the Mace of Judgment, and smote the dragon through the worlds. The blow rang such that all of Aihrde shuttered, though the dragon took no heed, lying deep in her slumbers. Unklar saw a battle with her in his mind's eye, and his unmaking and the unmaking of all that he and all the Val Eahrakun had labored upon.

For his part Unklar knew not the origins of Inzae, and he feared her for it. He realized that he could never overcome her, as he had the other gods. He watched and waited for a great while until at last he understood that the world of Inzaa resided on the underside of Aihrde. This Unklar could not abide.

As is written, the world of Aihrde rested upon the Maelstrom as a great disk, walled upon all sides by the fogs of the Wall of Worlds that Unklar devoured and replaced with the Shroud of Darkness. Aihrde stood as the center of creation. Beneath the world he found the bones of the All Father and within these, the magic of creation. Unklar stole the magic and used it for his own purpose, bending the world, wrapping its form around the All Father's skull so that the edges met. There he pinned them with the bones, binding them together, so that all the edges of the world came together. The pinning lay deep in the south and he stood upon it and cursed it, and his breath bound time to an oath that would only break with his unmaking. That land was called the Lankg-ot-And, the Oath Land, and the Four Corners, and The Land of Frozen Breath.

So it was that Unklar thought to remake Aihrde around Inzaa, and pin Inzae in a prison of the All Father's bones, for he deemed even she could not break the bones of him. Unklar understood little of the dragon, for she was before all and will remain past the Gonfod. Inzaa's power cannot be contained by any power of the All Father's making. Her world was unaffected, so that the two existed as they always did, bound to one another through time and space. The Roots of Eahrtut spread far and wide, and these Unklar could not bind either, and they continued to grow out in many directions, for the All Father's labors continued though his form on Aihrde was no more. Unklar learned then of the worlds beyond Aihrde, and was displeased.

The Horned God cast a net through the Shroud of Darkness, and the net was his thought taken shape. It bound all gates to Aihrde from opening so long as he sat the throne of the world. Thus it was for the Rin of the Winter Dark

OF THE BINDING OF THE MOON AND SUN

When Unklar saw that the Day Star burned bright but held no life of its own, and the Evening Star was the same, and the Shroud of Darkness weakened what little light they held, he tracked down the Sisters in the limitless waste of the Maelstrom and bid them return to Aihrde. Unklar took the shape of an elderly man with long beard and kindly visage. In his image he looked as an old dwarf, or other kindly being, and though the Sisters knew Unklar, it softened their minds to him. He recanted his evil deeds, speaking regretfully of the world's suffering and

the death of many plants and animals, and he bid the Sisters return to make the world thrive in their light. The Sisters resisted only a little, for they were possessed of a great sorrow at all the loss, and Unklar cleverly cast himself as a wounded creature who had meant no harm. They returned then to Aihrde and too late learned his great deceit, for in the deeps of Aufstrag he had forged great chains, the Urlnarch.

When the Sisters came to Aihrde, Unklar heaped them in the Urlnarch and bound them both to the world and the world to them. Thus the Sisters could not leave Aihrde of their own volition, but remained chained to it, and it is said that in the still quiet one may hear the grinding of the Urlnarch in the heavens over Aihrde as the moon and sun pass over.

The Moon and the Sun hurled now through the heavens apart and rarely came to each other, and they knew great sorrow, for ever in the past they had enjoyed one another the more when they raced through the heavens together. This suffering none could heal, even after the Dark fell from Aufstrag and returned to the Void beyond.

To mock the Sisters, Unklar bound them to the planets of their making as well. These he set deep in the heavens so the Sisters would always see them. And the sight mocked the Sisters, for they were without life. The folk of Aihrde named these planets Illus, for it was cold and hard, and Nexus, for it burned gas in the darkness. Some there were who worshiped them and made of them gods, so that Unklar's did not achieve his full purpose.

But Al-Aihrde Onu Unklar could not touch, and that star burned in the wintry heavens throughout the long Winter Dark, giving hope to the hopeless.

So were arranged the Sun and Moon, creations of the All Father's of old, and the great northern star, the Evening Star, that guides and protects the folk of Aihrde and the southern star, the Day Star, that reminds men of the coming dark.

As before, his tasks completed, Unklar returned to Aufstrag and slept, secure in Aufsrag's towers and halls of stone, weaker all the more for his expenditures.

THE LONG YEARS OF THE WINTER DARK

As is told, during these long years, the people of Aihrde could offer Unklar little resistance. Though food grew in abundance and the wealth of the people was much as it had been before, life during the Winter Dark was harsh. In the ordered world of Unklar's Empire, men suffered the yoke, and so these words were carved upon the great gates of Aufstrag: "Suffer Not the Tyranny of Fear. Embrace the Dominion of Law. The Yoke Shall Set you Free." And men came to believe these words, and suffered all that was delivered to them.

Though in truth the powers that eventually challenged him began to surface in small ways.

The scattered remnants of Patrice's Council fought on. Aristobulus, bound to a demon lord, one of the Unkbartig, suffered such torments that he lost his form and became a shade. He served his tormentor thus, bound to him with no shape or form. After many years he stole away and hid himself ever deeper in the pits of the Wretched Plains, the shadow of a shade, until at last none could find him and he made good his escape. Aristobulus wandered that realm, lost and alone, until at last he learned to bend light, and could take form once more. In this way he returned to Aihrde, to haunt the world of Unklar, and to seek power wherever he could. He found Crisigrim the mage, wandering mindless as a beggar, tormented by the Lords of the Winter Dark, and together they sought to unravel what had come to pass. Sagramore, their companion of old, they eventually found, but his tale was horrid and he feasted on the flesh of living men, bound in chains in a cave in the north and thus they left him. Rumors of others came to him and he continued to seek them out for he brooded on war and vengeance.

The Order of the Holy Defenders of the Flame struggled on as well. Their master, his name lost to history, took the Flame from its hiding place and moved it to the Tower of Hope in the ruins of Du Guesillon. None of the enemy dared to tread in that place, for the ghosts of the king and Jaren remained, tormenting all to death. The knights used the flame as a signal, desiring its power to bring Luther, whom they sainted with godhead back from the Dreaming Sea, and he is accounted the first of the Val Tulmiph.

A single knight always stood vigil in the snow-bound ruins of the castle, to keep watch and to bear word when the paladin should return. This vigil they kept for 600 years until his return was realized.

In his slumbers, Luther roamed upon the Dreaming Sea, restless, woken by the flame. He cast out upon the world to haunt the darkness and light it for those in need.

South, in the Lands of Ursal, in the Eldwood, a band of rangers and elves came together to continue the legacy of the March Lords, named by some the Watchers in the Wood. This was an order dedicated to the Ethvold of old and the memory of the Og Aust. They remembered well the worship of the old gods, and too they remembered that at the feet of the Great Oak in the Eldwood, their ancestors had laid the body of Daladon Lothian, the Marcher Lord of old. The body lay amidst the mighty roots of the tree, but it did not decay and his spirit remained entombed upon the world, held in the embrace of Mordius and fed by the water of Tefnut for his tomb was born of the Eahratut. They called to the Marcher Lord of old, and bid him return to the forest and lead them in war. And so Daladon left his tomb and took up his black Noxmorus once more.

The March Lords fought lonely battles against hopeless odds in the dark of the world. Daladon was accounted the second of the Val Tulmiph. In their struggles, the wood elves joined them and the king there removed himself to the greater Darkenfold, and it became a land bound to the Eldwood, where the powers of Unklar dared not tread.

Many drifted to the Darkenfold, seeking sanctuary against the tyranny of Unklar. Soon the Darkenfold became a lawless place, a land of bandits and rogues, and dangerous creatures that dwelt in the deep folds of the wood. This forest, itself a remnant of the Ethvold, was a living thing. The Darkenfold was all that remained of the ancient Ethvold and within its boughs their lingered memories of the glory of yesteryear, and an anger at loss, so that all that entered those woods felt the brooding presence of the forest. Many could not bear it and could not enter, others who did became lost in the forest's deeps. The Darkenfold also housed the greater power of the Og Aust, who, though bound by the Judgment of Corthain, lingered as shadows of their former selves. Their presence emboldened the wood and it resisted the snows and ice, so that something of a semblance of the old world's seasons remained there unconquered.

Of all the free peoples of the world, none suffered as the halflings. They suffered the hunt, for it became a sport for the Lords of Aenoch to track them and slay them, for food or trophies. In a few short decades their numbers dwindled. They vanished from the cities and fled to the wild. Living in tight clans, only the heartiest survived, and they became crafty, turning the tables on the Lords of Aenoch and hunting

the hunters. In time they became a fierce people and the Hunt a dangerous game only the most skilled dared.

Norgorad Kam, alone of the realms of the world, suffered little during the Winter Dark. Long ago the dwarves mastered growing food in their deep halls, and even Unklar could not wholly stop the use of the Rings of Brass, as they lay in the roots of Earhtut. The dwarves did as they had for thousands of years, tunneling new halls, mining, and crafting works of need and desire. Beyond the halls the dwarves suffered torment. Many, dislodged from Grundliche-Hohle, ventured into the wild and built what houses they could. The greater part of them were hauled into the bowels of Aufstrag, and made to serve the dark lord.

Thus the world thrived, or languished, depending on who or what one's station.

Unklar at last awoke from his slumbers to find the world of Aihrde blanketed in a cold, dark, sheet of snow and ice. He reveled in it, and called to his minions to cease their squabbles, which they had begun anew. The Horned God set to order what he could, and thought what next to do. As the All Father before him, his mind was ever restless, and he sought to create life and fashion things as he deemed the need.

Unklar turned then to Aufstrag, and in the bowels of it he carved out a forge. The size of it defied comprehension, sprawling over many levels of the tower. Rooms were hollowed to hold mountains of coal and wood. Hearths, many as large as ships, some as small as shields, he set to fire with bellows of flesh and bone and these burned for as long as Unklar sat his throne. The largest hearth he set in a hall of pillars and there lit the fire himself and set his breath upon it, and thus he set it to burning, remaining so until the Gonfod and the end of days. This he called the Stodtine Plum, that is the Flawless Fire, and he alone worked this forge, until Dolgan the dwarf came to his service. Here the hounds were made, the mogrl, and many other horrors besides.

An army of slaves descended into the pit to suffer the making of armaments and devices of the Horned God's desire. Many of these were dwarves, and they took up hammer and tong, chisel and wheel reluctantly, but they served Unklar's desires for those who did not their lives, and not throw them away upon the dark. Many listened, though some took up arms and took the battle to Unklar, but to no avail, for he was in the full of his powers and no force in Aihrde could stand against him.

The forge changed the nature of Aufsrag, for it created such a wave of heat that the structure suffered damage from top to bottom. Her walls dried and cracked, and the weight of stone began to settle. So Unklar ordered the stacks constructed. The walls were hollowed and chimneys built, some as wide as tunnels, others smaller and these crawled their way to the surface of Aufsrag and vomited smoke and ash, so that the swamps all around were covered in a black darkness, and the air became acidic. They were called the Stacks by all who lived there, and they became roads through Aufstrag, though dangerous for they were flooded with sudden gouts of flame and heat. Despite the danger, creatures used them to travel to and fro in the mighty tower, and others came to live in them.

The forge became a place of wicked experiments, tortures, and crafting. The folk of Aufstrag named it Klarglich, that is "The Pit of Woe," for the suffering screams of the damned filled the forge and carried through the Stacks, so that all in Aufstrag came to know them. Unklar first used Klarglich to create the Hounds of Darkness. Those sulking beasts, birthed from the tortured bodies of faerie kin, possessed but one purpose: to root out the elves upon whatever plane they existed. Though the creatures never found the elves in the Land of Seven Rivers, many dying in the attempt, they signaled things to come.

Soon thereafter, as is recorded by the Elven Scrolls, the folk of Shindolay, the Land of Seven Rivers, found an entrance to Aihrde: a tunnel torn through the roots of Eahrtut that birthed in the Fartuk Steppes. The princes sent out the Quest Knights to rescue what kin of theirs they could find, for they saw no end to the Winter Dark. These lords had two purposes: to find Londea, the daughter of the queen, and to locate the elves of Fontenouq. Though they hunted for many centuries, they failed in both tasks, many suffering death, many suffering a fate far worse. Londea had passed upon the Blue River, and the Fontenouq had never returned to the world. Of them all, only one returned, and he brought reports of evil and mayhem and of a world under the iron will of Unklar's rule.

In despair, Melius the Wise, the greatest of the elven magi, bared the gates to the Seven Rivers. From that moment none of his people were able to willingly travel to Aihrde, and none could return who were beyond the Seven Rivers. However, Melius did not wish to be wholly sundered from the world, so he took up a root of Eahrtut, and where it breached the world he fashioned a portal after the manner of the rings of brass. He set this portal in a ring, the Aurefex Mutatio. Within it stood a gate from the Seven Rivers to Airhde, and, unknown to Melius, to Fontenouq as well. The magi placed the Aurefex Mutaito on a stone, and set many knights and magical effect to guard it. Around them Melius built the Castle of Spires, bound to the ring, so that the castle stood in many planes at once.

It was in those days that Nulak-Kiz-Din found the dwarf, Dolgan, son of Hirn, in the Grundliche Mountains. He was but a boy, unused to the world, and not yet come into his own, and could not long resist the archmage Nulak ensorcelled him, and bound him to his service. Dolgan was the last of the line of Angrod of old, Kings of Grundliche-Hohle, and possessed a great gift for forging and crafting. The young dwarf's hands bore the skills of the lords of Gothurag of old, and through him those crafts were born anew. He worked for Nulak, making items of the wizard's design. It was he that made the spikes that held Jaren the Wise above the gates of Aufstrag, and for that Jaren never forgave the dwarf. In time, Unklar learned of Dolgan and his skill, and bid the mage give him over, and so Dolgan passed into the service of the Horned God.

Wars uncountable were fought between and with the Captain Kings, and ever and anon did Unklar spend himself to end these conflicts, and ever did he leave vestiges of his power in hidden places.

In the latter days, Aristobulus took himself to the City of Seven, where Narrhiet lay bound, the only place of chaos left upon Aihrde. There he founded the Mystic Enclave whose magi he directed to unearth the ancient Books of Jaren, locating Luther and the sword Durendale upon the Dreaming, and learning of the final fate of Daladon. For it was his intent to end the darkness, not for love of Aihrde or any pain of suffering in the world, but for vengeance and the lust that comes with triumph. Aristobulus's power had waxed great and he too was accounted one of the Val Tulmiph.

Unklar came to Dolgan at this time, and bid him fashion a crown for the Lord of Aihrde, for it wounded his pride that the Cunae Mundus Usquam was lost to him. Dolgan, after 300 years of servitude to the forge, had become a master of his craft, able to bend any ore, shape and mount jewels or stones, craft items of war or pleasure, and all the various nuances of the smith. His knowledge included the natural skills of his people, as learned from the All Father in distant times, but too, it included the skills of Unklar, for often had the Horned God aided Dolgan at the forge.

And there, in dark solitude, Dolgan bent iron and sorrow, and shaped the greatest of his creations, a crown to meet the Dark One's lust for beauty. He crafted the shape with rune magic held in the deeps themselves, and released by the might of the Dark God. He named it the Krummervole, the "Crown of Sorrow." So perfect was this creation that the forge-slave sought to keep it for himself, but Unklar took up the crown and laughed. The dwarf cursed him, and called him thief, for the crown filled his mind with the lust of greed. Upon his own brow Unklar sat the wondrous crown, and in his hand the Urtiel mace, "the hand of Judgment."

Thus did Unklar rule the world.

THE SON OF HIRN & THE MOGRL

In time Dolgan came before Unklar, and the Horned God knew him for what he was. He tried to force the dwarf into bowing to him to swear his fealty, but the son of Hirn would not yield, for he had at last come into his own and though he remembered little of the world of his youth, he was of the greatest bloodline of the dwarves of old. His blood came from the Language of Creation, and more, he was a dwarf of the line who had faced the Red God, and no power in Aihrde ever surpassed the Bull when in his youth. This act of defiance earned him a name amongst many in the pits of Aufstrag: they called him Dolgan Furchtlos, which is the "undaunted." Unklar named him differently, calling him Dolgan Ungekront, the "uncrowned." Unklar bound him to Klarglich then, and bid him do as he deemed fit, so long as he fashioned weapons of war for the dark lords and served Unklar when the Horned God had need of him.

In time Unklar found the peace of his mind disturbed by restless dreams. Dreams of war and vengeance, of deeds great and terrible, and of death. These thoughts troubled him so, that he roused himself, coming to deep Klarglich, the forge and pit of woe, in a rage. He bore with him a horrible intent and desire. His cloven hooves ground the stone of the forge to dust as he crept into the Hall where Dolgan, son of Hirn, son of kings, labored at tasks unnamed. So great was the power of Unklar, that Dolgan's servants died in screaming madness, or fled in terror, lost to the deep places under mighty Aufstrag, for his visage they could not bear. Unklar's skin burned hotter by far than any flames of any forge, and his eyes, terrible in evil, turned to Dolgan. His voice, deep with echoes of madness and memories rank and foul, thundered forth, "Make to your bellows, Dolgan, and do as I bid."

The dwarf and the dark lord labored long and hard in that fell place. Klarglich doubly earned its name of woe, for the horrors born of that making haunted the world ever after. With sorceries uttered by no man or beast, dark hearted magics, with rune spells crafted in a time before time, Unklar forged the great beasts of the pit, the mogrl. He made them from his own twisted soul, and from the filth of death, caught in the twisted shadows of Aufstrag's many layered halls. And he gifted them with life. As the All Father once made the sun and moon in the Days before Days, so he Horned God wove the Language of Creation into the mogrl, singing it through them, as Dolgan pounded their flesh to life.

After many days, the dwarf staggered from the effort of the labor. The Language bore upon him, weighing him down with power no mortal could contain. Dolgan hovered on the brink of madness, screaming now in pain, then laughing hysterically, then at last weeping for the terror of it all. Unklar bore him aloft, keeping him from destroying himself, for the Horned God needed the might of the Son of Hirn's hammer to forge and shape the life he created.

Unklar too hovered upon the brink of madness. Though he had breathed of himself into the hounds of darkness, Utriel, the ungern and many diverse creatures, never had he given so much of himself in one endeavor. In his lucid moments, Dolgan could see the suffering of the Horned God, and he relished it and pitied his, for they were, in that moment, brothers of the forge. Both born of the All Father. Both slaves of the forge. Both burdened with the terror of creation. The beast's face was torn with the effort of creation, and his pain-filled cries shook the caverns of Klarglich. Unklar bellowed and growled, all the while corded muscles strained at the task. Despite this, Unklar brought forth a dark never seen before, or would ever be seen again. His agony was their life, and they were pure in malice, with no thoughts but evil and madness and destruction.

With this creation, Doglan, son of Hirn, gave of himself into the making and was accounted of the Val Tulmiph ever after.

It is said that Unklar himself spilled into life from the All Father's dreams. Not since the All Father spun those dreams in the darkness of the Void had such creatures come to be.

The mogrl were terrible to behold, and Dolgan knew fear as he had when he wrestled with the black god himself. The coming of the creatures was a weighty thing in the world, and Unklar named them mogrl, and they were beasts of horror. The mogrl rose in a rage, one after the other, filled with the fire of their dark god. They climbed, crawled or flew from Klarglich and spilled out and into the greater towers of Aufstrag until they found egress and came to the world as waves of fire and ash.

In the last, Unklar wandered from the hall, filled with a lust for war like he had not felt since first he crossed through the Iron Portal. He rose high and laughed, shaking the Krummervole in his mighty grasp, so that it split the high roofs and walls of Mithgefuhl and, turning, he said, "Dolgan. Make ready for war. The time of doom is at hand."

THE WINTER DARK WARS

(For a full account of the Winter Dark Wars see below)

In the 1003rd year of his reign, which is the 1803oy by the old calendar, Unklar unearthed knowledge of the Dreaming, that sea of limitless thought that lay beyond and within the Maelstrom; a plane that touched all the many diverse realms of the All Father's devising. He knew not what the Dreaming was, or how it came to be, and it was beyond the knowledge of his making. He became aware of Luther's presence, and he saw that people far and wide called to him, and he knew then that the Dreaming Paladin, for so he named him, was the source of his restless slumbers.

In a fury he returned to Klarglich and fashioned warriors from his own ordered nightmares. These slivers of Unklar's imagining traveled the dreamscape, hunting the paladin. They fought on many occasions, but the paladin proved too strong and killed them or drove them off. These slivers weakened Unklar more than he knew, for when the paladin, who had become master of the world's dreams, fought the warriors upon the dreamscape, he woke from his own slumbers so that he lived upon the dreaming and he learned to enter the minds of all those upon the world, including the minions of the Horned God. The paladin came to know Lords of Unklar's realm, to understand their fears and weaknesses. Because of this, Luther was resolved to return to Aihrde, and take up the long abandoned war.

It was during the dreaming wars that Luther learned that Dolgan, son of Hirn, had gathered a host of slaves, dwarves, goblins and men, and led them in a revolt in the very pits of Aufstrag. Many tales abound as to why Dolgan took up arms against his dark master. One recounted

that he befriended an eldritch goblin, the very one who had sacked the dwarven kingdom of Grausumhart 3000 years before, and that the two rose in rebellion together. Some tell how Dolgan could not bear the stealing of the Krummervole by Unklar, and he therefore threw off his shackles. The truth of the matter bore the likeness of no other tale for Dolgan saw the Unicorn.

Devils brought the beast before Dolgan, burden with a halter of barbed wire so that whenever it bit the chain cut its mouth and throat. Stained with blood and the filth of the Upper Halls they left it before the forge master. "Take this gift Ungekront, from your master, for he is tired of its braying."

Another spoke, laughing all the while. "But make me a pretty trifle and I'll reward you with all the gems of Bone Pit!"

Dolgan glowered at the pair for a moment. "Be off, before I take umbrage at your presence."

"You speak to freely slave. I am a Lord of the Upper Halls and you should be wary of my wrath."

Dolgan took up his forge hammer and smote the beast in the head such a blow that it came asunder and the life of it spilled out upon the ground. He trod through the carnage of it and made to strike the devil's companion but that one fled in a madness of fear.

The unicorn was barely alive and Dolgan, seeing its wonder and beauty, took pity on it. He called for clean, cool water and quenched its thirst. Then for hay and he housed it in a stable made for other beasts. But the unicorn never recovered its strength and it began to fade after only a few days. When the creature died, it gave Dolgan the right of its body, and he used the horn and blood of the creature to fashion an ax to rival the Axe of the All Father. This fell weapon he named Havoc, that is in the ancient tongue of dwarves, "revenge." Filled with all the hate of rage of his people, Dolgan turned on the Darkness.

In 1012md Dolgan made war on the dark, raising the slaves of the Pit in rebellion. He and Agmaur gathered goblins and dwarves, men and orcs, and fought the troops of Unklar in the bowels of the earth. Untold was the suffering of these battles, what men came to call the Trench Wars. The wicked battles were fought in dark holes and darker corridors, in pits and tunnels, in dungeon caves, and halls of mud. They fought against an implacable enemy for the masters of Aufstrag sent orcs, ungern and other creatures into the dark bowels of Aufstrag. Knives and hatchets ruled the day, along with primitive powder weapons that left tunnels filled with mutilated corpses, smoke and ash. At last in the 1018th year of Unklar's reign, the dwarves and other slaves broke free and fled to the mountains in the north.

During this chaos, as the Horned God spent much of himself to unmake the damage Dolgan caused, Luther strode onto the plane bearing the Durendale blade, the Val Austlich of old. He came from the Dreaming Sea to the very gates of Aufstrag. There he battled the guard for control of the wall, and they fell back in fear of the sword and the Paladin returned. He cut Jaren from the wall, and took him unto the Dreaming where he healed his wounded ally. Then Luther and Jaren journeyed to the Isle of Wonder, where Aesop the Mage, had imprisoned Aristobulus. They freed their long time companion and slew Aesop, and traveled to the Eldwood to the grove of the Great Tree.

In these latter days, Unklar's power had waned, and those survivors who had hidden themselves for many years gathered in the Eldwood where the Great Tree stood. The Watchers in the Wood, the Holy Defenders of the Flame, and others besides, gathered for war. Dolgan came, and with him Agmour, the goblin. They were joined by Nigold, the elven king, and all his folk, who were a wonderment in those days, for as is told they had remained when the greater part of the elves fled the world, and elves were thought to be myths to many. And all of these folk made war upon the winter and the dark.

In the 1019th year of Unklar's reign the Winter Dark Wars began. These are accounted the greatest of the wars of the peoples of Aihrde, for they fought alone, unaided by many of the Val Eahrakun, until the end, and it ended this Rin of the world.

War spread far and wide, and in the space of only a few years, engulfed the whole of the world, from the Greenling Fields to the Horns of Ikem. The greatest part of the war took place in the Lands of Ursal, for here the new gods, the Val Tulmiph came together to fight Unklar and his minions. In truth, Unklar had spent a great measure of his power in making the world his own, the creation of the mogrl themselves cost him dearly, and he was not the power he had been in the days of his coming to Aihrde.

The Captain Kings could offer little aid to their master in his high tower, for they were pressed as well. Though the Val Tulmiph could not easily assail Unklar, they did free those in bondage. Narrheit escaped through the aid and sacrifice of Aristobulus, and Wenefar through the love of Daladon. And these were of the Val Eaharkun.

OF UTUMNO

The tales speak of the binding of Wenafar upon Mount Mondrudge where she gazed in timelessness at the Mere of Unklar's devising. Word of her plight came to Daladon Lothian in the Eldwood and he, traveling with the Hapless Fool, came to the mountain, and there overthrew the snares of Unklar and, passing through fire and ice, came to the roof of that place. He dismissed the mists and found Wenafar motionless, gazing into the reflective waters. Daladon woke her from her stupor, and breaking the spell upon her, brought her back to the world.

Wenafar gazed upon Daladon, and knew all that had come to pass and more, and she loved him for his sacrifice, and saw that through him a greater power might come to the world. She lay with the Half-Elven, and he got her with child. She bid him leave her, "But know that I shall come down from this mountain girded for war and from you comes a great worry for Unklar. We shall hound him unto the end." And Daladon left her, passing back into the south, and carrying the war on as was his want.on with the battle against the Horned God.

In nine days Wenafar bore a son, and she took him to the edge of the Dreaming and bathed him in the waters of that wide Sea. Wenafar named her child Utumno, and he was a shadow of man, and in him lay all their fears. She bid him take to the water of the Dreaming and learn all that he could of the world, but to find Unklar and his servants and bring terror to them. For Utumno was the darker side of her, and though no evil flowed through him, his thoughts were steeped in the black ink of fear. He took up the task and plundered the deeps of the sea and found many who dreamed, and if these served Unklar, he haunted them and their dreams fell away to nightmares.

And thus it came to pass that many of Unklar's servants came to doubt their master, and their future, and they began to suffer fear and this weakened them so that many fled or fell before the blades of the gathering storm. Utumno was named Lord of Nightmares and deemed the equal of Luther, who was Lord of Dreams. Luther always had the mastery in any contest, for in him Utumno's own fears were revealed, and the echo of them lay bare.

OF ROHEISEN HOHLE

As is known, the Third Rin saw the birth of five dwarven kingdoms. These were accounted the greatest and the first homes of the dwarves. Of the five, Roheisen Hohle was the smallest, built beneath the wide, shallow dome of Mount Tur, overlooking the many islands of Hallows Sound on the northern shores of the Inner Sea. Her people settled upon the slopes of the mountains, building towns and villages, where they farmed and fished the plentiful waters of the Sound. When chance revealed a series of wide, deep caverns beneath Mount Tur, they turned to mining, and they unearthed metals and other wealth. They worked the metal into tools and weapons and eventually left their villages to dwell underground.

The greatest of their people they named as their leader, and so Helgesthol came to the throne, and he founded the kingdom of Roheisen Hohle. Helgesthol was called by his people the Under King, and from that day to this his line has ruled beneath Mount Tur, bearing both his name and his wisdom.

Helgesthol's people grew in both wealth and power. In working metals into wondrous devices few matched their skill, and in stone work they stood above a people well versed in such arts. They alone mastered the art of binding metal into stone, a technique that allowed them to create wonders of art the like of which the world had never seen. Patient in their labors, never hurried or pressed, they were much like the stone and iron they worked. Thus they repaid the debt to the All Father, and they took the task to heart. At first they made tools and weapons, armor, shields and other devices, but eventually they turned their minds toward Roheisen Hohle itself. They widened the corridors and rooms and heightened the ceilings. They built meeting rooms and feast halls. They made houses, deep and wonderful, connected though lanes bored through the rock and over bridges suspended over chasms. They cast metal into all they did, and this allowed them to make shapes that no stone could hold. The halls of their kingdom reflected their skill, but these proved too simple a task and they set to decorating all the surfaces of their realm with reliefs, tales of dwarves and the All Father, of giants, dragons and all manner of diverse subject. In time the fame of their works spread far and wide, so that other dwarves came to see them, and marveled at their skill.

The dwarves of Roheisen Hohle were called the stone dwarves, and to celebrate their fame they carved a single chair from a block of iron-stone, and this they gave to their Under King, Helgesthol. From the Iron Rock he and his kindred ruled for many thousands of years.

Roheisen Hohle suffered during the early Goblin-Dwarf Wars, such that her Under King Helgesthol IX ordered the realm shut from the outside world, and their doors bound in the closing. He himself cast the runes of binding that closed all the gates to the outer world, and none knew the means of their opening. Once the doors shut the voice of Mount Tur fell away for many long years. Not until a dwarf of Norgorad Kam came to the realm, seeking entrance, did Helgesthol IX allow the gates to be opened. This visitor brought knowledge of the Rings of Brass, and they constructed on ring in the deeps of the realm, and the king set guards upon it so that none could use it without his knowledge. And for a time the realm was opened again. During this period the stone dwarves trafficked with their kin, but less than they had in the past, for they had become a reflective people, and their numbers had not grown.

The Ring failed them, and with each use it grew more fragile, until it cracked and filled with mist, becoming a road to death only. To travel through it cast one onto the road to the Endless Pools and their the listless dead wandered without guidance. After some years, Ondorog II, grandson of Helgeshtol IX, called off all labors to repair the ring and ordered the ring-room shut and sealed. The king ordered the outer gates opened so that his people could see the light of day upon the step, but they would not yield for none now remembered the words of binding as spoken by Helgesthol and the dwarves took this as a sign, and they remained underground ever after, and they were forgotten by men and became only a legend to the dwarves.

They dwelt thus for many, long centuries.

The peace of their halls ended when the dwarves of Roheisen Hohle fell victim to the Stone Curse. For many centuries they lay bound in their halls beneath Mount Tur, sealed there by their king's magic. The curse settled into the people, such that any light much greater than a torch destroyed them, causing their skin to calcify and turn to stone. Many died, and many more were horribly disfigured by the curse. It bound them to a world of darkness, and all the great wonders of their past were lost in the shadows of the halls.

The curse ruined the stone dwarves. They became ever more insular, shunning all contact, eventually leaving their upper halls and burrowing deeper into Mount Tur. The ages forgot about them and only rumor came from Mount Tur, and it spoke of a people lost to the world. In time few had even heard of the realm and those who had believed it long gone, consumed by time and happenstance.

During the Long Centuries, the fire giants came from Aufstrag and settled in the hills around Mount Tur. They unearthed the upper halls by accident and plundered them of what wealth they could. One amongst them claimed it as his realm. Nurrich the fire giant ruled there for many years, and his kingdom spread through the whole of the Hallows and he spread terror to all who dwelt there.

The reign of Nurrich ended when Daladon Half-Elven came to the dome of Mount Tur, and with the power of Wenefar broke it open, unrooting the fire giant king and all his people. They battled upon the ruin of Mount Tur for many days, but the giant proved the lesser, andhe fell into the ruin of the dwarven halls and passed from the world. Those of his people who survived fled into the wilderness. In his ruin Nurrich broke through the upper halls and revealed the wide realm of Roheisen Hohle to all and sundry and they were amazed.

THE COMING OF ORE-TSAR

When the dwarves of Roheisen Hohle were unearthed and their realm made open with Nurrich the fire giant's fall, the realm shook to its deepest foundations. Deep in the Hohle, where the Ring of Brass stood in guarded chamber, the seals broke and the room was laid open again.

As is known, the Ring of Brass in the Hohle opened to the Arc of Time and the Endless Pools where Toth, Shadow of the All Father and Keeper of the dead, dwelt. Toth saw that the Shadow was frayed and the Wall of Worlds was no boundary to the Endless Pools. He contemplated the opened gate, and wondered what it meant for the Gonfod, that is the end of days. A desire rose in him, as great as any that afflicted all the Val Eahrakun, and even the Shadow of the All Father lusted for creation. But he would not have it so, and he set his desire aside and gave thought to other riddles.

The Shadow's desire took up a life of its own, and it knew no thought but to cross the boundaries and come to Aihrde, there to guide and aid the Children of the All Father, to teach the knowledge of all things. It stole away through the ring and came by dark passages to the ruin of Mount Tur. There, Toth's Shadow passed Daladon Half-Elven as he slept tethered to his steed. Seeing the horse, Toth's desire took on its shape, and crossed the snow covered slopes with a great speed, passing into the south.

There stood the small town of Haven, racked with death, for the giants had laid it low in their flight from Daladon and the ruin Nurrich's realm. Toth's desire, long exposed only the restless dead as they walked the Arc, grew cautious, for the suffering of death was new to him, and he did not understand it. He approached all those who wept and he touched them, and their grief passed into memory, and they knew the wholeness of it but without the suffering.

One such was Philip. His three children, warm in their grave, were foremost upon his mind when he spied the steed. "I know not who you are, but I see that you bring comfort in my people's grief in this time of sorrow and tumult and as such you can only be one of the gods." He fell to his knees and worshiped Toth's desire, and called him Ore-Tsar, which was as to name him "Beyond Grief." And thus he, Philip, became Ore-Tsar's first follower. Philip became a pilgrim, and traveled the war-wracked world and spread the word of the god far and wide, and carried the comfort of him to many diverse peoples in many realms.

And Toth knew then that part of him had taken on a life of its own, and he accounted himself truly the shadow of the All Father.

THE WAR

As the war spread, Unklar's legions were beset upon all sides, for men left aside their plows and tools and took up arms. The Holy Defenders of the Flame revealed themselves, and summoned Luther from beyond the Dreaming Sea. The Paladin joined them with a company of knights and the wars spread further in the south. The elves too marched from the Eldwood and Darkenfold, and drove out the legions of Unklar that occupied Kayomar. Soon all of Ethrum was engulfed in the flames of war, and Unklar's Legions fell further back across the rivers of Maine. In this chaos the Val Tulmiph founded the Council of Light, and they worked in concert to destroy Unklar's hold upon the world. Their members included the White Mage, the Dreaming Paladin, the Undaunted, and others beside.

The Northmen came to the Lands of the Inner sea. Descendents of the Engale of old, these people were fierce and paid homage to gods of war and chance, and lusted for battle. Indeed, they worshiped many of the Val Eahrakun, and the All Father as well. The northmen broke through the fence of Ursal, passing by the ruins of Nurrich's realm, and they conquered all the lands of the north and made them their base. From there they plunged south, following the waters and river ways to hound Unklar's folk wherever they could.

When a great host of legions followed the Lord of Sorrow into the east to destroy the realm of Ethlium as founded by the refugees of Kayomar so long ago, they stripped the lands bare of soldiers, and this opened all to the plundering Engale, who laid waste to all the regions of the sea. As war spread through the lands of Anglamay, the lords and merchants there found themselves without protection, so they formed armies of their citizens and hired mercenaries, and built castles and forts to guard their towns.

The Lord of Sorrow fell in the end, defeated by the Paladins of Ethlium, his army utterly destroyed. Only rumor of it ever came to the Lands of Ursal again. The realm of Ethlium was laid to waste in the war, and those people removed themselves to return home, remembered in legend and song. In a short span of years they came to the lands of Ethrum and carved out kingdoms for themselves.

The victories in the west were echoed in the deeps of the Lands of Ursal, for Meltowg Lothian slew Melius and laid the Castles of Spires bare. In time Daladon, Meltowg's half brother, came to the castle and opened the portals to the Seven Rivers. But unbeknownst to him a great host of the Fontenouq, at long last, returned to Aihrde. Girded for war and set upon vengeance they spread death and chaos through Unklar's folk.

Unklar sought to master his arms, but was assailed by the Val Eahrakun,Wenafar and Tefnut. When the Krummelvole was stolen by the Council of Light and taken beyond the Shroud of Darkness into the Maelstrom, Unklar left off his throne and pursued them. In this he was undone, for Wenafar, garbed for war, joined with the might of Ea-Vette and together they burned off the Shroud of Darkness and it laid the world bare, and the Winter Dark faded.

At this the dwarves rose in the Grundliche Mountains under their new king, Dolgan, who ruled as Aegon II. Many of his folk gathered from their scattered dwellings. They carried the war into the mountains, and with them marched a host of goblins led by Agmaur the eldritch goblin. And they carried the battle to the foe and drove them from the mountains and into the plains. There, many of the Aenochians in Unklar's army rebelled, following their general Albrecht, and that lord carved a kingdom for himself out of the lands around the Olgdon River, and they called him the River King. Albrecht joined his mighty army to Dolgan's, and together they drove all the enemy from the north.

With those victories, the Empire dissolved and all but a few abandoned Unklar, for they deemed his time was at an end.

But lo he was returned to Aufstrag, and contemplated how to unseat his enemies. Meanwhile, the White Mage summoned the Council and they assailed the Horned God in his throne room. Nulak-Kiz-Din came out from hiding and joined Unklar in the final battle. There Aristobulus bested Nulak in a sorceress duel, a thing that had never happened before and elven warrior woman clove Unklar with the blade Discipero and with curses Unklar was banished from the plane.

Thus his reign ended at last.

Seventh Oration - After Winter's Dark

Being an account of the beginning of days after the fall of Unklar and the diminishment Aufstrag. The rise of Kayomar and New Aenoch and all the Young Kingdoms. Held to be the last before the Gonfod. The Age of After Winters Dark, the seventh Rin of the World.

Of the New Order

In 1040md, before Unklar was banished, a gathering of Princes and Nobles of southern Aenoch gathered to throw off his yoke. They called themselves the Electors, and they chose and crowned the 30 year old Pryzmira, Empress of Aenoch. They took the ancient crown of the House Golden, the Cunae Mundus Usquam, the "Cradle of the World," and set it upon her head. And many bethought themselves, that a new age had truly dawned. It was held to be the Seventh Rin of the World.

When Unklar came to the world he devoured the Wall of Worlds and vomited forth the Shroud of Darkness. During the long Winter Dark Wars, mighty Unklar fell, driven into the Undeeps, from whence he came. The Shroud was destroyed by the power of Wenafar and the unmaking of Unklar, so that only a remnant of it hung about Aufstrag, fed by the ever-burning fires of that foul place. For the first time in many centuries the light of Ea-Raena and Ea-Vette, the moon and sun, fell upon the earth. The stars, and the everlasting worlds, hung in the heavens as well, and all was as it had been in ages past, but for the Wall of Worlds.

As is told in the tales of the Winter Dark Wars, Wenafar used the power of Ea-Vette to burn off the Shroud, and as she did so, it rose into the heavens a great steam. There Corthain sent forth the First Wind, and gathered of it what he could and this he cast back about the world to guard it ever more against the Void and all that dwelt therein, including the Unklar of nightmare. Though the Wall of Worlds was never again as strong as it had been in the days of the world's youth, it stood again. The wall was in places faint and upon these Corthain set the Rune Lords watching so that any who might attempt to cross must, as of old, pass through his defenses. Thus the wise were bound from the Void and many sought the power of the Winter Runes as mastered by Nulak Kiz Din of old, for ever was it man's nature to improve his station, no matter how rash the action.

The Judgment of Corthain held, and men spoke that it would not be lifted until Corthain's blade should be removed from the Red God's chest and Ornduhl returned to the world. Much of the ordering of Unklar remained. The binding of the sun and moon, their own worlds set as lights in the sky, and other diverse machinations. At the Four Corners the Horned God's power unraveled, but if the world unfolded to its original conception who, but the wise, may say, but ever after men perceived the world as round and for them it was.

A new order of gods came to Aihrde, and these were the Val Tulmiph, powerful creatures risen to godhead by their own skills and by the faith of others. Their number was greater than the Val Austlich, though never so great as the Val Eahrakun, of whom so many tales are told.

Of all the wonders of the of Unklar's fall, the opening of the dwarf realm of Grundliche-Hohle was held the greatest. But too, that rumor should come of Roheisen Hohle and their king be heard from as had not happened for many Rin of the world was a marvel. The Stone Dwarves trafficked with their kin in Norgorad Kam, and there was peace amongst the three realms.

Many kingdoms of man rose in the ruins of the old Empires and lands of Ethrum and Aenoch. These warred or made peace as is the nature of such realms.

The elves returned as well. Many of the Fontenouq came back to the wilderness of the Gelderland, there to build their lonely towers. The wood elves kept to the dark places of the forests, and the wild elves to the plains, but the high elves returned as well, and wandered without a home. Strangest of all came of Utumno in the darkling of the Twilight Wood, for here were a race of elves, dark of skin, who had lived out the Long Centuries of Unklar's rule.

All the free peoples spread far and wide, building new realms on old foundations, and yet the world bore the imprint of Unklar's thousand year rule. The roads and calendar, all the vestiges of his imperial rule survived. Many of his servants still crawled the earth in search of vengeance, seeking a way to bring back the dark age. Distance of time removes the pain of the Horned God's rule, and the horror of the Winter Dark is recalled by only the very old.

Aihrde lay a world filled with the promise of adventure and glory, of lost treasure and power arcane, and battle against dark things that linger in dark places, at least until the Red God should return and the Gonfod at last begin.

The Catalyst Wars

In which the line of King Luther was brought to an end and the light extinguished from the world. Accounted the last great war before the Winter Dark, called in later years the Catalyst Wars, but by those who lived through them, the Wars of Kayomar.

THE MOURILEE CHRONICLES

These are the Chronicles of Mourilee Lothian Pendegrantz, sister to King Robert Luther. The years are counted by the Olden Year, which is the calendar of the Two Peoples. This version is abridged.

761	The armies of the Aenochians come across the Straights of Ursal and lay siege to the fortress city of Avignon. The Mayor closes the gates to them. The Aenochians invade all the towns in that part of the country, razing those that would not immediately yield. In the late summer The king of Kayomar joins with the king of Flaneu* attempts to break the siege. They are driven back with much loss, but slay the captain of the enemies' host.
762	The Aenochians push into Limnule, which is north on the shores of the Inner Sea, and burn the coastal towns. They cross the river into the Lithanian Steppe and are defeated in battle by the host of Robert Luther. The king's standard bearer, Billet of Greaf, falls defending the king. His body the enemy took and they stuff it with straw and made it a standard of their own.
763	The two kings attempt to break the siege in the early spring; the Holy Defenders of the Flame lead the assault. Many of their number fall at the hands of the enemy, such that the Flame itself is almost extinguished. After two brutal years, the town, starving and rife with disease, opens her gates to the dark. The Aenochians put all the lords to death but spare the populace.
763	The Aenochians invade the lands of Tildune and Beiuel, driving all before them. The king's sister, Vivian Brightleaf, commanding an army, is defeated at the Battle of Iaden Hill. Vivian falls there. Her young son, Owen Augustus holds the enemy at bay to defend his mother's body. So great the slaughter that none dare approach him, and he is done to death by arrows from afar. Vivian's body is devoured by the wolf Hachnor and Owen's skin made a cover for the shield of Mammon, the lord of the enemy's hosts.
765	A great army of the enemy crosses the Sea of Shenal into the Gelderland and there receive the orcs of that land into their hosts.
766	The Gelderland army pushes up the coast, across the Slate River and there defeats an army of dwarves from Norgorad Kam upon the slopes of Mount Fiedweir. They despoil all the lands between the mountains and the sea.
768	The Gelderland army crosses the eastern flanks of the Bergrucken Mountains. There they fight many dwarves, and are held in check in the mountain passes. The dragon Ruchtul drives them from the heights into the plains of Inzae's Back. There, Talerien Uther, son and heir of Robert Luther, slays the dragon with the Achel Sword. In the north the enemies' army crosses the Lithanian River with great loss of life but the kings are driven from the crossings.
769	A third army of the Aenochians sails to the Isle of Eloria and takes it with force and pushes into the Taggenbrun. There they defeat an army of the Salem King. The king was done to death and his realm ended.
770	Talerien leads an army of dwarves and men from the Bergrucken and captures the enemy's southern flank. The kings ride from the Great Wall and drive the Aenochians from the north and return to the environs of Avignon. The enemy falls back into the plains and across the river there.
771	The central highlands and Massiff fall. Robert Luther rides with his chivalry to the Vale of Jariel, crosses the river, and defeats the enemy at the Saline River. Talarien learns of the fate of his sister, Vivian, and nephew and in wondrous grief rides alone into the east. There in a rage he breaches the river crossing and rides into the enemy's camp. None stand before him and the Achel Blade. Upon the doorsteps of the Aenchion's fortress he finds Mammon and calls him to task. During the melee Mammon carries the shield of Owen's skin to parry the rage of Talarien, but the king's brother does no harm to his nephew's flesh, weaving in and out of the battle, until at last he hews Mammon's feet from under him. At that the host fails and flees, and Talarien severs Mammons hands and ears and takes his eyes and all these he threw in the river and Tefnut took them to her bosom so that ever after Mammon was blind and he hated men in madness. Talarien takes up the shield, calling it Owenshield and departs. There is some respite for the kings of the west.
773	In the winter, the Aenochians simultaneously push against the crossings of the Saline River in the south, in the central highlands against the Begrucken and Norgorad Kam, and in the north they take the head waters of the Tot River. Robert Luther's forces are broken in the south and driven to the Ardeen where they throw the bridges in the river.
775	Nulak-Kiz-Din, commanding an army of Ungern, overwhelms the lands of Flaneu and Sienna. Flaneu is overrun and her king slain upon the field. All the north to the Great Wall is lost. The archmage ascends in the councils of the dark god, Unklar.
776	There are not enough men to man the Great Wall, and it is breached, all those abandon it and flee to the south. Blind Mammon leads. The Aenochians spill into the lands of the north and west. There is great slaughter. By early summer they cross the Sawbones and in two weeks reach the Ington. A great host sets upon the Gottland, another passes around the Blauden Timberland and enters the Oday Breaks. Talerian Uther stops them and drives them into the forest with great loss of life. In the south, Robert Luther marshals the greater part of his host and defeats the enemy at the Battle of Sutran Deep. Their power is broken in that country for some years. The dwarves of Norgorad-Kam do not yield the passes.

777	Talerein Dragon Slayer bears the Achel Sword and the Owenshield against the greater part of the enemy host at Crossed Forks. He leads a charge of the Holy Defenders of the Flame. None stand before the Owenshield, and Talerein's wrath leads him deep into the host where he is slain by the Beast of Hrach. The Ethrum become distraught and a madness takes them, so that they fall upon the Aenochians in a great slaughter. They drive the enemy from the field and scatter their army. The body of Talerien Uther is recovered as is the Owenshield, but the Achel sword is lost. Few of the Defenders survive. There is peace for 10 years. The Aenochians begin construction of a massive fleet.
778	In this year Jaren the Wise speaks the language of prophecy. He sees a long winter ahead for the world. Robert Luther spurned his council, and told him to gird himself for war. Robert Luther suffers no talk of defeat, demanding that Jaren discover a way around the world's folly. Jaren begins exploring the Maelstrom through study and contemplation.
783	Another of the king's nephews, Vivian's second son, Robert Oralius, known the world wide for his knightly virtue, is taken unawares in the Mettlock hills by a poisoned dart, shot by a goblin named Giztlebone, an eldritch of his race. The goblin hides Robert's body in the hills, burying him with sword, mail, and shield.
789	The campaign is renewed. Only Kayomar stands now, held in the north by the fence of the Blaudun Timberland, in the east by the Bergurcken Mountains, and the south by the sea and the River Ardeen. The Aenochians attack in late winter before the snow melts, striking from the north and the south. They are joined by hobgoblins from the Bleached Hills. In the south a mighty fleet makes for the Straights of Ethenel.** In the south Prince Erik Aristobulus Euryiance, the king's son, commanding Kayomar's fleet, routs and destroys the bulk of Unklar's fleet. The prince, though, falls in combat, mortally stricken by a great iron bolt thrown by the giant Herigold. In the north the northern Marches are completely overrun (789-790), only the fortress of Pendelion holds the enemy at bay. The first siege of Pendelion is broken in 790 by the king and his host of knights. Jaren, 85 years old, travels a channel in time. He convinced a youthful Aristobulus, Luther, and Daladon to strike one of the temples of Unklar and keep the god from arriving on the plane. The plan fails, but Jaren is now obsessed with this quest. He returns, aged and tired.
791	Unklar's troops regroup, cross the wide Maenluth Plains and over the Perrin's Break into the west. They follow the Rhodopes south and cross back over into the Lake Kathryn highland country. They attack along the Powder River basin, through the Shelves of the Mist. Unbeknownst to the king, a second army is held in reserve north of Pendelion. The king moves his host to the Shelves to counter the thrust of orc and ungern legions. In the Battle of Merrick Fords (791), the liege men of Maine turn on the king and join Unklar. They fall upon the baggage train and encampments, slaughtering all they could find. The king, being outnumbered and surrounded, fights his way into the eastern marshes and there regroups. The king's youngest sister, Merilee Lothian ***, is slain in the encampments. Jaren again breaks into the time stream, this time into the future, to lay the seeds for his own survival, for he sees the end near, and knows that no amount of aid could give the king his victory. He begins penning the Books of Jaren.

791	The enemy army ravages the southern counties. In the winter Unklar's reserves fall upon Pendelion. A long siege begins. For nine months they lay siege to the city/ fortress. The king tries twice to break the siege, but the greater part of his host is fighting in the south. The enemy at last storms the city and conquers it. Another of the king's sisters falls in this, the second siege of Pendelion; the bodies of Gwenowin Lilly, and her children are stolen away and borne back to Du Guesillon by a magical weird of Jaren's crafting.
792	These twin victories open central Kayomar to Unklar. Robert Luther fights a withdrawal, hoping for supernatural aid as promised to him by Jaren the Wise. For the next eight years Unklar's folk storm castle and fort, rooting all the folk out of the Valley, despoiling what they can. The people fight bravely, selling themselves dearly. Unklar's folk suffer losses beyond understanding. There is no mercy, asked or given.
794	The prophecy comes to Jaren. He predicts the return of the White Mage and the sword Durendale. Robert Luther ponders upon these prophecies, wondering if Jaren's age has not finally caught up with him.
798	The king orders a paladin of the order of the Holy Defenders of the Flame to take the sacred dish to safety. The knight, Jared of Hale, bares the dish and flame into the Rhodope Mountains. He hides it there beneath the roots of a great sentient tree.
799	Du Guesillon, the king's high capital, is surrounded, and the siege begins. For almost two years Unklar's legions batter at the doors of the mighty fortress, but to no avail. The king laughs them from the walls and leads countless sorties into the fray, slaying much and more beyond. At last Unklar, the Horned God himself, comes to the castle. In a dark cloud of rage he unmakes the walls. With a great crash they fall to the earth. The dark assails the king in his Tower of Hope, the last bastion. Some of the last to fall are in the House Hearn, that is known as Pendegrantz. Jariel Galen, third son of Luther, fell on the steps of the tower at his brother's feet. Roger of Guis, Lord of the Defenders fell there too, as did the ranger, Varaince. At last the king stands alone. He sallies forth to fight Unklar, and the two fought upon the courtyards of Du Guesilon. Even so outmatched, the king fought bravely to the end, so wounding Unklar, or so it is told, that that god evermore feared the House Pendegrantz. The king falls on the 28th day of Nochturn, 800, and the light went out in the world. Jaren the Wise, Master of the Order of the Scintillant Dawn, stands alone. He could do little in the end but pen the Books of Jaren, wherein he foretells the fall of Unklar and how this might come about. Nulak-Kiz-Din comes to him then, for Unklar could not enter the Tower of Hope. He took the monk in battle and carted him off to Al-Liosh, which was afterwards called Aufstrag and bound him there, reserving for him a particular hatred, though the reasons for this are lost to us. A curse of memory he places upon the monk so that never more would he know what he wrote, or how he wrote the prophecies of the Winter Dark's eventual unmaking.
800	The Year of the Dark.

*Flaneu was a small realm that sat upon the feet of the Great Wall.
** These are renamed now the Straights of Euryiance.
*** The chronicler's mother.

Chronicles of the Winter Dark Wars

1119MD

As is written, the War commenced in the 1019th year of the reign of Unklar, styled "the Dark." A plethora of men and women gathered together under the leadership of Luther, Master of the Order of the Holy Defenders of the Flame, Aristobulus the White Mage, heir to the Council of Patrice, and Jaren the Wise, called the Falkynjager, for his lust for revenge consumed him in those early days. These and other Lords formed a secret gathering and bond, the Council of Light, and made ready for war.

The first act of aggression came not from the Council however, but from the long suffering elven warrior, Prince Meltowg Lothian. Ever hounded by his brother's curse, Meltowg had fought the dark in many places for all the Long Centuries of Unklar's rule. His body and mind carried scars, and many reported that a madness had long overcome him. Meltowg did not care. He traveled with a company of mercenaries, mostly elves, many of them Lunar Knights, but others mercenaries, as mean and evil as the dark god they fought. These men called themselves the Vale Knights. Meltowg had long ago learned of the Castle of Spires where the portals to the elven realms lay, and he had knowledge, gained from sorcery, of the elves of Fontenouq. He entreated Melius to open the gates to the Seven Rivers and Fontenouq, for the Dark was much weakened and he deemed it time. Melius refused and Meltowg and his company laid siege to the Castle. The kin slaying began as elf slew elf for possession of the portal. The siege lasted for a great while.

The early months of the war saw the Council gathering allies in the west. They traveled to the Land of Ethlium and the Imperial Paladins and found many allies there, chief amongst these, Luther's bastard son, Prince Morgeld, born of the unholy union of a Val Eahrakun of the Wretched Plaines and Saint Luther. He dwelt even then on the Isle of Bliss off the Empire's coasts. He promised to rally to their cause, for he ever lusted for battle, but more, he remembered the sorrow of his half sister, Merrliee Lothian, upon her dying long ago. He raised his people for war and their company was a mighty troop, for it held undying veterans of the Catalyst Wars, and for this they called themselves the Immortals. He thought to join his army to that of Ethlium's even as that people began refitting their fleets, making ready for the long voyage home. The prince failed, for his spirit was tainted, and he settled into a drugged stupor while his men stood by to arms.

The Council carried the war into the Grundliche Mountains, rallying the scattered people of Grundliche-Hohle.

All this activity brought the ire of Unklar down upon the Ethlium Empire. He marshaled the Lord of Sorrow, the greatest of his Captain Kings, and bid him destroy the enemy in the west.

1120MD

The One thousandth and twentieth year of the reign of the Dark saw the opening of the Gate of Thonor, one of the rings of brass of old by, the Lord of Sorrow. In this manner the host of the Lord of Sorrow passed from the Lands of Ursal into the furthermost west to the Greenling Fields that lay before the ring of hills, bordering the Empire of the Ethlium. He assailed the walls of the Valley to that realm.

The walls would not give and the people of the Ethlium held out against all that the Lord of Sorrow brought against them. The captain king brooded in his tent, wondering what power lay in this people to deny him his master's victory.

Unklar knew of Morgeld, and knew too his heritage. He called him the Fell Knight, for his spirit was not that of the Ethrum of old. And the Fell Knight held the southern approaches to Ethlium so that Unklar sent forth a fleet of black ships, filled with foul orc and ungern soldiers, to hound the Son of Luther and retrieve famed Gogothorium, his Black Spear and unhinge the fortifications of Ethlium. Being bold and fierce, the prince, roused from his drugged stupor by Luther, gathered his islander host and set his seven great ships to sea as if for war. The folk of Morgeld, the Immortals, were few in number but fierce in battle. These men and elves, many lords from the Age of Heroes, had cheated death in one fashion or the other and were grizzled veterans of a thousand wars. Armed and girded, they slipped from the Isle in a lust for battle. Terrance the gnome, Lord of Illusion, lately joined of the Council, cast a great wind of wizardry to hide the fleet from the Dark. By such devious paths the Fell Knight came upon the Dark Fleet and broke it asunder, and sent many orcs and other folk of the craven Lords to their doom in the ocean's depths.

Some of the Dark Fleet broke free, and they laid siege to the Isle of Bliss, which had been Morgeld's realm. They pulled down its high towers. They set there a great captain, and he ruled there for long ages and came to be known in after times as Trubsal, which is misery in the Vulgate tongue, and his isle was named, Unglucksfall. It is now known that this captain was a Mogrl, forged from the hatred of Unklar when he was young.

The Fell Knight suffered as well: four of his mighty ships were lost to the Deep Quiet, and one cut asunder and lost to him. So with lessened might, he sailed south around the great continent to Ursal. After much hardship the Fell Knight came to the Elorian Islands that lay south of the Lands of Ethrum. There he built a castle, and this new home he named Letzen Bastei which, in the Vulgate, is the "last bastion."

The Council joined with the Mystic Enclave, those who worshiped the White Mage, in the City of Seven. There in the High Tower of Delight they uncovered the Val Eahrakun Narrheit, and the Wizard made ally of him, bringing that evil and malignant god back into the world. Durendale revealed itself to the Paladins of the Flame, who still held out in the snows of Old Kayomar. So Luther of Old returned to his people from the Dreaming Sea, and they named him the Twice King, for he returned to rule as he had before. And returning, the land rejoiced and even prospered in the knowledge of the ending of the Dark.

The Council, seeing that Ethlium's walls would hold and that Morgeld defeated the enemies' fleet, passed beyond the Wall of Worlds to gather their allies. Wondrous adventures they had, few of which come into the tale of these days. Jaren the Undying was made anew, and burned with the Spirit of Revenge, and fell to Worship the Og Aust of Ethrum, Rus, and he too was named of the Val Tulmiph. And Jaren took a new name, given to him by the hosts of his enemies, the Falkenjager. Jaren also took a wife, and a girl child came of the union, and she bore the mark of the House Golden which is the royal line of Aenoch of old. All held this to be a prophecy of a doom to come. Though in the west, the people of Ethrum did not rejoice, for even removed in time they had not forgotten that all their sufferings might be laid at the feet of the Aenochians.

The war engulfed all the Grundliche Mountains. The goblins refused to join the power in Aufstrag and shut their gates.

Learning of the growing war, the druids of the Great Tree of the Eldwood summoned the spirit of Daladon Lothian, Half-Elven, who returned, taking shape of the bark of that Tree, made to take up his blade once more. Daladon pondered long on what he must do. In this state Helius, the Singing Fool, who himself spent the Winter Dark years hounding Unklar's minions, came to him and bid him travel to Mount Monrudge where the goddess Wenafar lay, bound by the machinations of Unklar. The Half-Elven assailed Monrudge to bring back the queen of fay.

Long and hard battles he waged upon the slope of the mountain, Helius ever at his side, until at last he broke through to the queen of fay. He found her in a wondrous grove of trees, sitting upon a stone looking into the mere of Unklar's evil. He lifted her up and thus broke the spell and freed her from her trance.

Wenafar knew then all that had befallen and a quiet rage took her. She took Daladon up and lay with him in the mists before she released him back into the world. The seeds of a god lay in her womb, and she nursed it, feeding it of herself, and giving the god knowledge of the Dreaming and the All Father.

Daladon left the mountain and wandered, reckless and wild, until he came even to the Moravan Plains which lie upon the doorstep of Ursal. There he fell, taken in the end by Mongroul Troll Lord, that is Nulak-Kiz-Din. He bore Daladon aloft, binding him to the throne of gods upon Mount Eedlemere, the very seat where the All Father sat pondering his creation in the Days before Days and where the Red God fought the dragon Frafnog in after ages. Here, Malikor the Dragon, one of the first born of Unklar's lust, set to watching and tormenting the ranger lord.

Unbeknownst to Daladon, a child came from his union with Wenafar. It was Utumno, the Dreaming god, who after came to dwell upon the Dreaming Sea with St. Luther.

The elven hosts were still lost to the world, upon their Land of Seven Rivers, and they hid themselves by narrow paths in the skies above and looked upon the world in pity and horror, and wondered if the time for their return had come.

1121MD

Rumors circulated far and wide of the return of the Paladin and the Durendale Sword, and the White mage as well. The prophecies as foretold in the Books of Jaren had lingered in the minds of people great and small. Many prophets came forth shouting for war and the end of Winter's Dark. People spoke of the Mordius Tree blooming again, and discontent with the rule of Unklar's minions spread.

The turmoil brought news of the binding of Daladon to the Council, and they traveled to Nulak-Kiz-Din's realm and assailed his minions upon the mountain. The dragon Malikor rose against them, and they battled in the air. The mage and dragon fought with fire and sorcery until the Falkynjager flew into the combat and smote Malikor such a blow on the chest that his wings folded forever and he plummeted in ruin upon the high peak of Eedlemere. So great was the dragon's fall that Eedlemere broke, and that most ancient of mountains sundered. The quake drowned a host of Mongroul's trolls in rock and slag, ending their days forever. A great shuttering went through the world, and the hosts of Darkness were dismayed.And behold the quest of the Half-Elven was finished, and the world given back to the queen taken an age ago, and the realm of Faerie at last set free. Bringing a host into the world's hidden places the queen, that is Wenafar, set the Sisters afire and the heat of the sun burned and fought the Shroud of Winter in the heavens all about the world. Unklar knew nothing of defeat, and

he rose on high and gave battle with the queen of fay. Wenafar fled to Aihrde, in the twilight of winter, and knew no recourse except to hide and hope. Nonetheless, the world was warmed by her coming and the Shroud weakened thereby.

Nulak-Kiz-Din, named now Mongroul by the wide world, stole from Aufstrag back to his lands where Eedlemere had stood under the eye of Malikor. And he knew dismay in the midst of the wreck and ruin. Mongroul fortified his lands anew, strengthening Turm Graugusse, which is the Iron Tower, and made the lands between the mountains a wicked desert of slag and horrid plague, and peopled it anew with hosts of evil intent. Taking on the shape of a Wolf, mighty and bold, he went into the east as to hunt. He searched for the Council and the Durendale Sword. More though, he hunted for Aristobulus the White Mage, who, tis said, stole the days from time, hounded the Dark on its edge, and corrupted law with his chaos for he leagued with Narrheit of the Val Eahrakun.

The world changed around the Lords of Winter's Dark. The dwarves of Norgorod-Kam proclaimed themselves in the midst of the realms of Unklar, and opened their kingdoms for war. Their mighty and fell Lord, Dagmar III, bore the scepter of one of the Captain Kings, and the Axe which is the rightful possession of the dwarf lords. The servants of Unklar fled from him, and the whole of his mountains, but for the deepest places, were made clean, and the dwarves knew much pride and rest in the days to come.

In the far west the Ethlium, led by the Imperial Paladins, drove back the Lord of Sorrow, and achieved victory, but the cost was great, and The Holy Council, their governing lords, entombed the fallen and dead of their realm. And ever did they look to the Western Seas in vain hope of succor for times were hard and hardy men few.

Being forewarned of Mongroul's coming, Aristobulus moved the whole of the Council to the reaches of Centauris, the city of the center, and hid them there away from Mongroul, for the mage knew Unklar's strength could not be surpassed, and nothing towards his unmaking would be gained as yet.

A great bloodletting occurred when the Vale Knights under Prince Meltowg Lothian stormed the Castle of Spires. The prince bore aloft the blade Noxmoros, a sword of his own making. In the ensuing battle, all the folk of both companies were slain, the Vale Knights and the garrison. A blind rage took Meltowg, bleeding as he was from a dozen wounds, and he ripped the Aurefex Mutatio from Melius's hands. He killed the elven wizard with his great sword. All lay in misery and death, the keys to the three realms, soaked in elven blood.

About this time many folk of the Mystic Enclave moved to the Rhodope Mountains and there, where in ages past Aristobulus had made a tower, they lifted it up again and fortified it, naming it anew, Turm Gewirr, "Tower of Chaos." In after days it was named Turm Damon, "Tower of the Demon," for men came to fear the White Mage.

1122MD

In the early spring, Grundlich Hohle reopened and Dolgan the dwarf, was crowned its king. He declared the Grundliche Mountains clear of the filth of Darkness and made war on Aufstrag. The Gate Captain, Coburg, Unklar's chief lieutenant in the lands of Aenoch, led a host of men, orcs and giants against the Dolgan whose folk were still few in number. As is known, only one road leads into the high mountains where the dwarf kingdom lies. The road, known as the Stone Way, was easily fortified by the dwarves and they restored the ancient defenses and renamed them Havok, which they held against the enemy.

Early in the year, Morgan, Lord of Paladins, and a noble of Kayomar, engaged an imperial legion. They forced him into battle, driving him into the Shelves of the Mist with the greater part of his host which numbered 187 paladins, 352 knights, and 2000 footmen. They were hounded by the scourge of darkness, great packs of wolves and evil beasts. Despite this, the men and orcs of Unklar's legions held their posts in fear for the coming of the Old King and the return of Kayomar, for they remembered well the battles of the Catalyst Wars and the losses they suffered in those days.

Unklar rose in rage, and fell upon those of his Captain Kings who still lived. He deemed them incompetent for, even as he was assailed in his lands of Aenoch, so were they being hounded in their realms. They battled for their lives against their dark master, and they were scattered and dismayed.

At Midyear, Daladon Lothian arrived in the Eldwood, taking up the leadership of the Watchers in the Wood. His folk made ally with good King Nigold of the wood elves, and the Half-Elven at last came to the Sacred Grove to see the Mordius Tree with living eyes, which he had planted over a thousand years ago.

In fear of his master's rage, the Lord of Sorrow marshaled his folk once more for an attack on the Ethlium. They dammed the river and battered the walls, breaking them apart. When his host made to move through the pass, the high priestess of Tefnut broke the dam and the pent waters spilled out and across the armies of darkness with great loss of life. Despite this setback a great host crossed over the mountains and laid siege with great desolation to all the Greenling fields. In the end, the Lord of Sorrow's folk were driven back and beyond the walls, which were fortified anew.

Men from the north, sailing in small dragon-prowed ships, began raiding along the southern coasts of the Inner Sea. They caused a great deal of destruction and loss of life. The imperial governors called for aid from Aufstrag's navy.

Lord Aziz, commander of the Imperial Legion in Kayomar, called for more troops to defeat Morgan. Indeed, the greater part of the Legions remained fighting in the far west, under the Lord of Sorrow and there were only a scant dozen or more legions remaining in the environs of Aufstrag. Troops were stripped from garrisons as far away as Anglamay to gather in the Province of Maine. Aziz moved to hunt out Morgan and destroy the Order of the Flame, hopping to thereby draw out Luther and the Durendale Sword and slay him as well.

The people of Anglamay formed a council of various burghers and town mayors. They appointed battle lords and hired mercenaries to defend them from the Northmen and the growing lawlessness of the provinces.

1123MD

In the month of Erstdain, the Lord of Sorrow attacked Ethlium with all his host, and in a great battle once more breached the walls and laid waste to the valley beyond. He encamped his army in the Greenling Fields, and made ready to besiege the city. The Emperor-Paladin chose then to break the dikes which ever held back the sea and flooded the whole of the valley, and it is told that beyond 90,000 of Unklar's lords, knights and troops drowned in that great flood, the Logn-Kor, black waters in the speech of Aufstrag. The Lord of Sorrow was not daunted and he split open the earth, creating a portal to the Wretched Plains. He fled from the wrath of his fell Lord, Unklar, and with him went the damned of Logn-Kor. With that the Lord of Sorrow left the war. Many speak of his act as one of treachery to his dark master, though some

whisper of deals between the Lord of Sorrow and Jaren Falkynjager, but the truths are lost in the councils of the wise.

THE BATTLE OF EADORE

How Morgan, Master of the Order of the Holy Defenders of the Flame, turned and met his enemy, Lord Aziz, in a contest of arms.

Morgan gave battle to an Imperial Legion on the heights of Eadore Ridge. With 2000 men-at-arms and 500 knights and paladins, he met the 5th legion on the 19th of Erstdain. The Legion of 16,000 men and orcs, formed into three divisions, was led by Aziz personally, and supported by many hundreds of skirmishers from other provinces and a further 4000 horse. Upon the eastern slopes of the Shelves of the Mist, Morgan ordered his men to build a wall of dirt and stone atop Mt. Eadore's long ridge. Aziz threw the 194th cohort, against the hilltop and it was utterly destroyed by arrow and pike, never drawing any but a little blood. Then a force of the 3rd cohort attacked along the flanks. The arrows of Morgan's folk were spent by this time, and the orcs mounted the dirt wall. The ferocity of the defense of the men of Kayomar staggered the orcs, long used to ruling through fear and fear alone. By sword and axe they were thrown down from the wall so that they made little progress.

By midday of the battle's second day the orcs fell back in dismay. So great had been the discipline of the knights and sergeants of Kayomar that they suffered little and slew much. Upon the morning of the third day the last cohort of Aziz drew up at the hill's foot and waited. Morgan sallied forth in rage with his 500 knights and paladins at the enemy's flanks. Such was their charge that the 63rd cohort of 5000 men was utterly destroyed and put to flight. Aziz fled into the Gelderland with his 4000 horse and quit the field forever. The battle was ever after called Morgan's Song.

Aziz's defeat spread disenchantment through the ranks of Unklar's Legions. In the central lands a quarrel broke out between the commanders of the 32nd and 40th legions. Lord Pius of the 32nd sought to hold his men largely in reserve to the orcs of the 40th. The two legions fought minor skirmishes throughout the remainder of the summer and winter.

All across the Lands of Ursal garrisons were stripped and sent to reinforce cities and towns in the south.

The Burghers of Anglamay gathered in council led by the Provincial Governor, William, and elected him as their spokesman to the lords of Aufstrag and the feuding commanders.

THE BATTLE OF GOKSTAD DEEP

The ravages of the Northmen spread throughout the Inner Sea, and many raiders passed through the straights, to attack Avignon and other coastal towns. The admiral of the imperial fleet dispatched the whole of his remaining ships to travel into the northern waters and destroy the raiders' homes. Twenty-five vessels bore the 58th legion from Aachen into the north, sailing for Gokstad.

The Northmen were forewarned of their coming, however, and had put 60 longboats into the water. They sailed to meet the imperial fleet in open battle, lusting as they did and still do, for death in war for these men had come from the far north, migrating over the years as the cold of the Winter Dark drove them ever south. And they were of the Engale and were a fierce, hardened people who worshiped the All Father of old, and gods of war and happenstance, and were more like dwarves in their outlook than any men of the south.

Never in the memory of men had a human fleet contested the seas with the ships of Unklar, and the captains were afraid. And the Northmen surrounded the larger vessels and disabled them with fire and axe, and so great was their lust for slaying, that they forgot all booty and with great waste burned the fleet into the depths. Making sacrifice to their grim gods they celebrated a great victory. And the 25 ships and all of the 58th Imperial Legion returned home never more.

DEATH OF NURICH

The Council of Light found the home of Nurich II, the fire giant king, and penned him at the feet of Mount Tur. Here, too, was Ozanna the black, a traitorous member of the Council of Patrice, and Nurrich commanded him to kill Aristobulus. The two fought a duel arcane, but Ozanna had grown at the feet of Nulak, and ever did the troll lord mistrust him and retard his power and skill. Ozanna was little match for the the White Mage, and Aristobulus slew him. The battle with the fire giants raged over hill and mountain, blood on both sides being spilt. Jaren the Falkynjager was horribly wounded, and Dolgan King's back broken. The siege ended when Daladon, using the power of the Great Tree, split the earth at the feet of Mount Tur, slaying the fire giant king and many of his kin. This deed the giants have never forgotten, and because of it a war between the rangers and the giants has been fought from that day to this.

When Mount Tur split open a wondrous thing came to light. The mountain housed an ancient dwarven realm, one buried in the morass of history. Roheisen Hohle, the Iron Halls, remained as one of the oldest dwarven realms in all of Aihrde. There dwarves lived, under their king, Ondorog Helgostohl IX, a line unbroken since the beginning of recorded time. These dwarves were few in number and suffered from the Stone Curse, an ancient malady which precluded them from traveling in the light of day. Despite this, they offered the Council and Dolgan King to the south what aid they could. The death of Nurrich also released the village of Haven from servitude and its leader, Philip the Guileless, as well. He left Haven, preaching the dictums of a new god. So it was that the worship of Ore-Tsar began.

In the year's closing days, Unklar was utterly besieged in his realms of Aufstrag, for rain began to fall, dampening the snow, and thunderstorms rolled across the swamps and marshes of the Gruasamland. These were portents for not in all the Long Centuries of the Winter Dark had it rained, but snowed only

1124MD

After the battle with the king of the fire giant, the Council retreated to the Eldwood to take stock of all that had come to pass. There they gathered forces arcane and minions to help them in their war against the dark.

As is written, Wenafar, freed from her bondage, warmed the heat of the sun. Because of this, the Shroud of Darkness unraveled in the far kingdoms, and the ice in the southern seas began to melt and by year's end, the channels of old were free and the movement of ships, great and small, made all the easier thereby. The rivers of the land flowed deeper, freed from ice, and the workings of the gods of old came to pass. The Og Aust awoke in the deeps of the Darkenfold, and men throughout Ethrum were gladdened thereby, though in truth they knew not why.

Unklar felt the loss of his far scattered realms. Few of the Captain Kings paid him heed, still unrecovered from his rage. They hid in their own towers and awaited the outcome of the war with the Council.

With the breaking of the ice, the raids of the Northmen continued unabated, and much slaughter and devastation came to the lands of

Ethrum and Aenoch. The Northmen built small forts along the coasts. The rivers served as avenues for the raiders and the first of them arrived in Augsberg, traveling up the Olgdon River. They plundered several castles and killed a number of the men living there. The Northmen saw Unklar's priests as evil men, and burned them wherever they could, as they did any who pay credence to the God of the Black Tower. They carted great mounds of booty back to the north. Lord Quin, commander of the 18th Legion, sought to stop them and moved men from the Luneberg Plains to the mouth of the river and to other extremes, hoping to block the raiders. In this, he was fatally outdone for a large party of Northmen fell upon his scattered cohorts and, in a series of rapid attacks, destroyed them. The 18th, mostly inexperienced men and tribal orcs, disintegrated, and Quin fell upon his own sword.

In the north, the new religion of Philip spread rapidly. It appealed to the farmers, artisans, the poor, and those oppressed by the tyranny of others. Its call was for strength of arms and hard work in the fields. Those who followed Ore-Tsar preached celebrations with feasts of wine and food. And the folk took up the beliefs of Philip the Guileless with hearty joy and happy militancy. They built churches to the god Ore-Tsar and made sacrifice to him. By year's end the religion spread into the reaches of Augsberg, entering the cities and towns there. Many servants of Philip traveled into the west to spread the word as well. These disciples moved from Avignon to Anglamay, and on to Sienne and even into Kayomar. Ore-Tsar was of the order of the Val Austlich and accounted a lord of Toths craft.

Everywhere people recognized the thinning of the Shroud of Darkness and rejoiced.

Albrecht, Commander of the 67th Legion, and Lord of the Imperi- al Horse, served Unklar in the battles against the dwarves of Havok Castle. During those frightful days, he diverted the greater part of his cavalry, useless in the mountains, to the Olgdon River, to guard against the northmen. In this he deceived his masters, for in truth, Albrecht had met with the Council and Dolgan King and they had struck a bargain. For a kingdom on the river he turned on Unklar, and brought with him 6000 heavy cavalry. Those commanders who did not join him, Albrecht removed quietly and put them to death in secret.

In the west, civil war between the followers of the commanders, Orkhan and Pius, broke out. A brutal strife entailed the destruction of many men and orc. Pius needlessly sacrificed many of his ungern and hobgoblin troops in a futile assault on several castles. They were utterly destroyed. Orkhan fell soon after, slain in battle with a small retinue of knights. Pius utterly routed the folk of Orkhan's 40th Legion. He settled his own people, rid now of ungern, throughout the area of Maine and ruled there as their Lord. He would not seek council from Aufstrag in those days, heeding the word of Nulak only.

Kayomar suffered greatly in the aftermath of the Battle of Eadore. With the withdrawal of Aziz, and Morgan too weak to stop them, bandits, unemployed mercenaries, and other freebooters attacked and plundered many towns and villages. The folk of Luther and Morgan tried to rally the people, to little avail. Morgan tried to raise more men and turned to the Eldwood for aid from the elf lord, King Nigold.

News of the the Grand Fleet's defeat in the far west spread as Prince Morgeld, as is told, settled in the Elorian Isles.

The greatest of misdeeds came when Nulak-Kiz-Din bewitched the Council into retrieving for him the pride of the goblins, the spirit of the long dead goblin king Ondluche. As is told in the histories, Dognur VII destroyed the body of Ondluche and cast it into the deeps of the sea. How it came to rest upon the shores of Aenoch none knew, but in this Narrheit's hand was suspected. Nulak gained the artifact and sought thereby to win over many of the Goblins whom Dolgan King had in his employ, for as is told, many of those folk, all eldritch goblins, had joined the dwarf in the Trench Wars under Aufstrag.

1125MD

The Council remained in their strongholds and made few overt moves against the enemy. Despite this, the enemy was dismayed and everywhere besieged. From the Wretched Plains great hordes assailed Unklar on his throne. These lords of the abyss, long held in check by the Horned God's bindings, rose against him. They brought the forces of chaos with them, and many report that Narrheit himself had come to roost in Aufstrag. And the Judgment did not not contain them. Great rumblings and quakes rocked the fortress, and for long months the rain fell black from the skies above. Using Urtiel to terrible effect, Unklar drove the lords of chaos back to their realms, but the cost proved great.

The Shroud of Darkness unraveled in distant parts, so that Unklar was forced to withdraw it to the realms of Aenoch and Ethrum. Spring came to the world at large, and it was called by men First Spring, for it was the first in many hundreds of years. Unklar brooded in his halls.

The religion of Philip the Guileless spread throughout all the lands of Augsberg and Aachen and down the Ursal Straights. The people built altars of stone, and carved the likeness of the horse god in symbols. They celebrated the world's coming spring with wine, dance, and great festivity. In truth the world began to bloom, even in Aenoch and Ethrum. Only where the powers of Unklar's minions remained strong was the Shroud thick enough to filter the warmth of the sun.

In places, the followers of Ore-Tsar threw off the yoke of the black clerics of Unklar and burned them at the stake. In many towns the magi were not distinguished from the priests, and they too were cast into the flame. The power of the horse god spread to Anglamay, and Philip himself traveled even to Avignon. The daughter of William of Anglamay, Eleanor, converted to this new religion, and she was brought to the love of the people thereby. The words of the disciples of Philip spread to the borders of the Rhodope Mountains. Against this, Unklar could do little, so beset was he in his keep. And the troll lord Nulak-Kiz-Din moved not, but waited and plotted, for he deemed Unklar's fall was at hand.

In the west the folk of Ethlium deemed their lands unlivable, and the greater part of them departed for the east in ships and galleys. Some few remained behind, living in the city which escaped the floods and war of the Lord of Flies.

The Northmen came down the water ways of Ursal once more in ships with dragon-prows to sail across the Amber Sea. They plundered the outskirts of Avignon and ravaged the coasts of Anglamay, burning many cities, villages, and towns, carrying off many to slavery and death. Too, their plundering reached the Elorian Isles. In the east the Northmen arrived at Trier. The admiral of the Black Fleet did not put to sea, but fortified himself in his ports. The Northmen plundered all the coasts far and wide, and as far inland as the rivers let them sail. A large fleet passed into the southern gulf but they were defeated and slain in a monstrous battle with ships of Morgeld's crafting.

In this year, Dolgan King returned to his realm and called for a great mustering of dwarves. Refugees who had for years lived in mountain fastnesses flocked to the opened gates of Grundliche-Hohle, though it is told that a band of Northmen raided even here, slaying some forty dwarves on the edge of the mountains by the sea.

Pius solidified his victory in Maine by fortifying his western marches against Kayomar, and he strengthened the garrisons in towns and

castles in the north, to guard against any imperial armies that might threaten him.

William, the imperial governor and count, was named lord of the lands of Anglamay by the burghers and other lords of those lands. Being a shrewd politician, he converted to the worship of Philip and Ore-Tsar. For this the common folk welcomed his rule and the people called him ever after, William the Good. He placed a great altar stone in the capital of those lands, which is Anglamay, and it became, in after years, a shrine of Ore-Tsar. William marshaled and fortified his people, and doled out land for those warriors willing to defend it.

In the waning days of the year, Albrecht, commander of the 63rd Legion, moved his troops into the Olgdon River basin, there to manage the defense of that place against the depredations of the Northmen, though it had become common knowledge that he did this more to create a bastion of power against Aufstrag than for any other reason.

1126MD

In the early months of the year, rain began to fall in the north of the Lands of Ursal, breaking the Winter's ice of the Inner Sea. A mogrl, fell servant of Unklar, settled upon the coasts of the Grundliche Mountains and slew many Northmen. He carved a home in the stone, and built there a great castle. In after years it was called only the Castle upon the Sea and was a horrid place of foul death and disease.

William called upon the Burghers of Anglamay to crown him Duke of all Anglamay, which was his homeland. The folk in other provinces followed his lead, and called upon their Burghers to grant them title to land and ancient rights, forgotten since the dawn of the Winter Dark. Albrecht fortified his castles along the River Olgdon. Pius consolidated his position in Maine.

The fleet of the Ethlium returned to Kayomar in these days, but they were not welcome and they sailed on, searching for a land to call their own. They split into two groups, one moving into the east, the other staying in the south.

The first and larger of the two settled in the wide, fertile country south of the Darkenfold. building a city which they called Brindisium, and their Lord carried the Imperial title of old. There were many folk who lived in those lands, and at that time they paid homage to the Horned God. Emperor Moridain ordered their keeps stormed and towns burned. The emperor's knights and men-at-arms reduced the lands and put many garrisons to death. The emperor then declared a crusade against all those who served the Dark, and they began clearing out all vestiges of the Horned God's worship. In the Winter, in a raid into of the enemies' strongholds, Moridain, was stricken with a poisoned arrow and died. His inheritance, the imperial crown, went to his son, Raymond. Raymond was not one of the paladins, nor did he hold his father's love of the ancient world.

It was in these days that Kayomar consolidated. With threats arising in the north and east, Luther Pendegrantz, with much pageantry, was crowned as Palatine, king of Kayomar. Representatives from King Dagmar III of Norgorod-Kam, Dolgan I, king of Grundliche-Hohle, and Daladon Lothian of the Eldwood, Jaren the Falkenjager, as well as Aristobulus, were all present.

Further east, across the Straights of Ursal, in the forested hills of the Harz, a mercenary Knight, Baldwin, settled with his knights and their families. Recently displaced by the civil unrest of Pius's rule in Maine, these men and women searched for a new home, and they followed Baldwin for he claimed to have seen the unicorn, a holy steed from legend and myth. In vain, he followed the beast, trying to see him once more, but the beast alluded him. In the high summer he established himself in the Harz. Through gallant force of arms he and his knights drove out the orcs and pacified the men of those dark wooded hills. By early summer the knight began construction on a great castle at Aachen. In other places across the countryside Baldwin fortified the towns with garrisons. Later he declared the creation of the Order of the Knights of the Horn. His daughter Ephremere, the Wonder of the World, was with him.

The Council mustered, and beneath the banner of the Durendale Sword, attacked Unklar and his many minions at Aufstrag. The battle was hard fought and lasted many days, but the Council failed once more, retreating from that place with scars that time cannot heal.

With the complete routing of his armies across the fields of the world, Unklar summoned his folk back to Aufstrag and closed the great gates. In a great weaving of sorcery he brought the Plague Riders into the world. They scarred the land bringing plague, famine, war, and death to the realms. Even the Paladins were hard pressed. The elven folk suffered the least and the most, for the last of the children of the wild elves were born in those days and their souls were trapped forever in limbo, so they could not follow the Arc of Time.

Albrecht, Lord of the Oldgon, declared himself king of Augsberg. His troops occupied all the castles along the length of that great river and held those lands in his name. He was called "River King" by the men.

Late in the year the dwarves of Grundlich Hohle launched a massive attack against the withdrawing legions which besieged Havok castle, utterly routing the enemy. Well over 15,000 orcs and men were lost, the remnants fleeing into the Punj. The dwarven king, Dolgan, proclaimed himself Suzerain of the Flintlock. He brought to the halls of Grundliche-Hohle a Lore Drake, who, of old, served the dwarves as historians and sages. She carried two eggs with her.

Agis I, nephew of the emperor of Brindisium, arrived with his fleet off the coast of Aachen. There he fortified a town on the coastline. He called his land Lakonia and his capital, Tegea.

In Kayomar, Lord Morgan gathered his knights and men-at-arms and attacked the orcs in the Wilds. The war raged around the ancient castles of that place, neither side having victory or defeat. The Battle of Weather's Gap drove the orcs into their fortress of Ox, and Morgan besieged that place. The Wood Elves, under Daladon Lothian and King Nigold, joined Morgan in his war on the Orcs.

The Shroud of Darkness over Ethrum began to disintegrate. Wenafar set great winds to blowing into the east. Her sorceries smashed into Festung Aufstrag and battered the towers there. Unklar strove to drive back the winds and nearly succeeded. Wenafar set herself in armor and contested the heavens with him. Her hair flowed red and choked the horned god on the blood of all those who fell at his hand. Even so he smote her with Utriel and might have bested her, but Tefnut rose in a pillar of water and joined Wenafar, and they overthrew him. With great malice Unklar fell back to his halls, his Shroud of Darkness in tatters.

Many people celebrated the coming of spring, and the seasons turned once more in Aihrde. Others were distraught, for their entire lives had been without the unfiltered light of the sun. When it burned off the snows of Winter's Dark, they were amazed and frightened. There was chaos in places, and many despaired, but in the end they saw the goodness of the world without the Shroud of Darkness.

By Winter's end, the war on the dark and Aufstrag seemed won, for the Horned God was everywhere beset by enemies and deserted by friends, and the world's spring had begun after so long a winter.

1127MD

The Council, under the command of Luther, attempted to muster the world's folk in alliance against the Horned God. Some effort was made, and attacks launched in dithering fashion, but the Nine Day War ended in failure for the free people were not yet strong enough to assail the Dark in his towers of Aufstrag.

Fantheous, the daughter of King Nigold, fell to the troll lord's possession. He took her to the Halls of his dark tower in the north. The Troll Lord hoped to break the alliance of men and elf and to do so, he bargained with Narrheit, giving him the child. In return Narrheit, gave Nulak-Kiz-Din the thirteen stones of Chaos. Narrheit hid Fantheus where he had hid the lost Paladin, Heiromyous, so long ago, upon the Bridge of Colors.

Fantheous was rescued later in the year by Daladon Lothian, though he knew it not. He saw only a helpless girl, whose mind had been stolen by Narrheit. He renamed the child Hope.

The elven king Nigold returned to the Eldwood, broken in spirit. The elves scattered across the world in search of Fantheous. Nigold left 3000 of his elves at the siege of Ox, but told them to stay only so long as the fort held, no longer, this on the strength of the promises of the Council that they would rescue his daughter.

Embassies from Grundliche Holhe arrived at the stone dwarves' realm of Reheisen Hohle, Dolgan's brother at their lead. The 47 clans of the gnomes of the Flintlock made an entreaty to the dwarven king for mutual alliance.

The Council of Light disappeared on the Dreaming Sea, there to combat the sorceries of Nulak-Kiz-Din. Morgeld, bewitched by the dark sorcerer, was made to slay his father, Luther. Nulak's plot was foiled. Though, in truth, as it after became known, he but tested his enemies, learning in the combat their many strengths and weaknesses. These battles arcane with the troll lord kept the Council occupied for nearly a year.

Baldwin, The Knight of the Horn, cemented his claims in the Harz. With gold from Daladon Lothian he employed many Northmen as mercenaries and attacked the orcs in the Detmold and Heristat.

In the spring, King Albrecht moved his capital to Acre and there, remembering the spirit and not the failure of the Nine Days' War, mustered the flower of his people. The greater host, numbering 15,000 men and horse, crossed the Olgdon River into the Luneberg Plains. They drove back the imperial legions and conquered the whole of the river valley. They came to the foot of the Red Hills.

Duke William of Anglamay mustered his battle lords, knights and others, and they made him their king. His own great castle of Anglamay was named the capital of those lands. William began redistributing the wealth of the land to various of his knights and lords and the city burghers. So came to Aihrde the kingdom of Anglamay and a governor and count of the empire was made king.

Late in the year, Baldwin, with significant victories over the orcs and lauded by his people, proclaimed himself king of Aachen. There was much celebration in his capital, Paderborn. His lands included the Detmold, Heristat, and the Harz Forests.

At year's end, Kain the Godless, Ducal Lord of the Wretched Plains, came to Aufstrag to serve the Dark. Ever was the master of the Winter Dark a lawful creature, but he knew that chaos begets chaos, and he sought to put one of the greatest abyssal lords against his foes. Too, he knew that Kain was always at war with Narrheit, and hoped to unsettled that Val Eahrakun's plans thereby.

1128MD

Even before the shades of winter passed, Kain mustered the better part of three legions and attacked Albrecht in the Red Hills. Several small inconsequential battles were fought throughout the spring and into the summer, but at the battle of Aaronborg Albrecht suffered a defeat and pulled back into the Luneberg. Later in the year, at the Battle of Arc Bridge, Albrecht was thoroughly defeated and thrown back across the Olgdon River. There was great loss of life on both sides.

In the Detmold and Heristat, King Baldwin waged a guerrilla war against the orcs for the whole year. The Northmen in his employ proved hard to control, especially when the orcs were driven into their fortresses. The King's mercenaries grew restless with the siege warfare, and began to desert, a problem that has ever plagued those folk and always served to great benefit of those who fought them. No aid came from the Council, who themselves were still embattled by the Troll Lord, Nulak. Baldwin's army began to disintegrate, but in the end, the Northmen's love of the old Knight kept them in the field and at war.

The Commander of the Punj mustered forth the 19th Legion and, flanking Kain's, attacked in the Luneberg, and plunged into the Flintlock to engage the dwarves and gnomes before those peoples cemented an alliance.

In the west, even as war unfolded across the plains of the east, Lord Morgan mustered his knights, paladins, and men-at-arms. He levied the free peoples of the Shelves of the Mist, and used the remaining elves of the Eldwood to storm the city-fortress of Ox. The city held for two months until Dagmar III, king of Norgorad Kam, led his folk to the field. Twelve thousand dwarven shields marched from beneath the arches of that ancient realm, bringing siege equipment and other armaments. The battle waged for many long days, with heavy loss of life, but the walls held and would not be breached. In the end, the dwarves mined a section of the north wall. When it collapsed, they poured into this weathered gap and held it against all attacks by the enemy until the hosts of men and elf joined them. So great was the toll on all sides in this gap that the battle is named for it. Eventually, the flower of Kayomar and the elves stormed the ramparts on either side of the gap and unhinged the defense, and Ox was thrown down. Morgan himself engaged Uradom, the orc Lord, in battle and slew him. The whole of the orc host was laid waste and with them many ungern, legionnaires, lords, and knights of Unklar. The last of the orcs were driven and hounded into the wilds north of Kayomar.

The Council escaped the sorceries of Nulak-Kiz-Din and returned to the world and war.

They arrived in time to fight at the Battle of Gotzenburg in the Flintlock. Herein, Dolgan King and his dwarves held the Gotzenburg fortress against the enemy for many months. The battle raged in and around the walls and ditches such that the ground turned to mud with the spent lives of dwarf and orc. The hatred on all sides bore out on the field, in blood and iron. The dwarves would not yield. The orcs would not stop. At last Luther arrived and threw down the emperor's commander, Feodor Pakevitch, in single combat. Though, for reasons lost to the histories, he did not slay the commander, but banished him

to his own lands. The legion fell back in dismay, and the dwarves sorely wasted, with numbers much diminished, could not pursue them.

Luther returned at last to his realm where he ruled only in name. He made truce between Morgan of Kayomar and Pius of Maine. Pius he named king there, being the provinces of Maine, Rotois, and the Lechunfield. Pius's son Aenor was recognized as heir by Luther. His capital he set at Chinon.

Aeronoush an elven hero found the clue to Fantheous's fate, and knew thereby that Daladon held her in safety. He bid the half-elven to seek the Silver Pool. There, in the skeletal bowels of a long dead giant, the truth of imprisonment would be found. The half-elven did so and learned that to cure her he must need possess the Truncheon of Hope. He brought this relic from the Endless Pools to his home in the wood and bid the child, Hope, to drink of it. In this way, Fantheous was returned to the world, and Nigold the elf king was made whole. But, in the end, tragedy stalked the half-elven, though none knew at the time, for even while drinking at the Silver Pool he was made to love Fi-Deal the hopeless, the green witch, and he brought her to his halls in the forest deeps.

Philip's disciples began the construction of a magnificent temple in old Avignon. They built it using the foundations of the imperial governor's palace. Philip arrived, naming one Sixtus as bishop of that prelacy. The disciples proceeded to organize the church in the central lands, founding a prelacy in Anglamay, in Aachen, in the March of Zeitz, and in Albrecht's kingdom of Augsberg. These realms were designed as religious realms that possessed no real boundaries, but were rather areas for the ordering of the worship of Ore-Tsar.

Aristobulus the White Mage met Nulak-Kiz-Din upon the remaining Shrouds of Dark that still hung over the lands of Aenoch. They parlayed for a time, speaking of things that had gone in the days before the dark. Many questions were asked and answered, for neither bore the other ill will, each only seeing another sorcerer bent on guiding the world as they saw fit. In truth, Aristobulus had risen in power to that of an equal to Nulak, and both were archmagi, and already of the order of the Val Tulmiph. This third encounter saw no battle but that of wits. The White Mage returned to the world assured of victory over Unklar and his minions.

1129MD

Called "The Long Year." Herein are related the deaths of many kings and the great battle of Olensk which broke the power of Unklar upon Aihrde.

In the early spring when the land was still cold King Baldwin, old beyond reckoning, lay upon his bier to die. Daladon, being close to the old king, took his daughter, Ephremere, under wing. Daladon took the King's daughter to the deeps of the Detmold and there, like her father before her, she saw the unicorn. Through his ensorcellements, the stallion bound itself to her line, and the two lived on in her son, Baldwin II. They say that the unicorn left in the grove a Winter Rose, and rode to the very gates of Baldwin's castle. The magical beast took up the old knight and king, and bore his everlasting spirit into Wenafar's realm, there to serve his beloved faerie queen forever and anon.

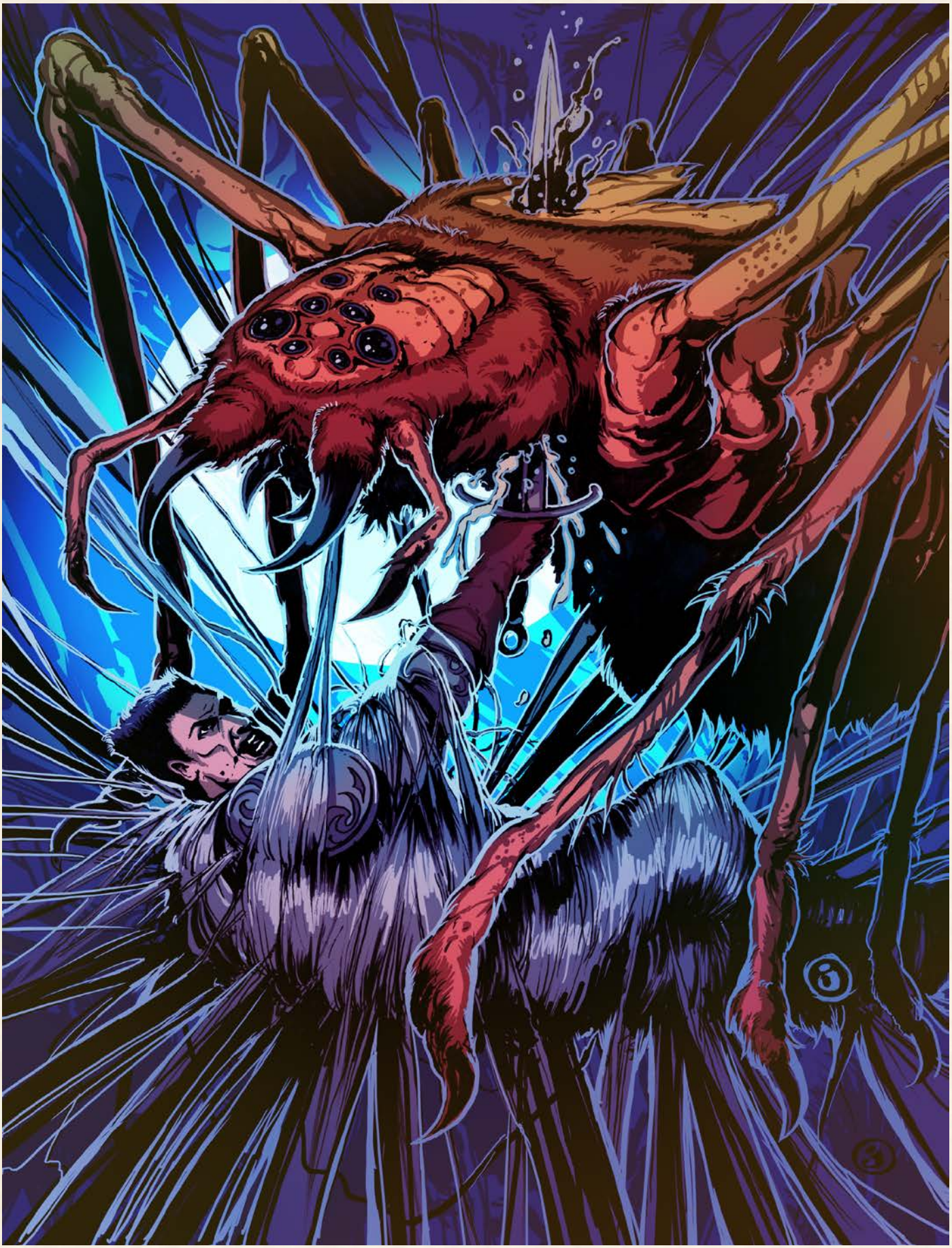
In the north, the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle made peace with the 47 clans of gnomes, and the Flintlock was given over to them to hold in fealty. Jarl Thrushbeard, their chieftain, embraced Dolgan King. The king is called by the gnomes, and indeed by the other dwarves, by the name Aegold II. The two people celebrated their union at the Feast of Forty Seven.

After three years of absentee rule, King Palatine Luther I abdicated the throne of Kayomar in favor of his friend and Mmster of the Holy Defenders of the Flame, Morgan. Morgan's own wife crowned him, naming him King Morgan I, and his first official act as king of Kayomar bound his line to Luther evermore. In the lands which Luther's family owned, even before the Winter Dark, where Luther was a boy, Morgan established an order of clerics. They built a temple there to honor and worship the paladin of the Dreaming Sea and the Durendale Sword. Morgan named it the Paladin's Grove, and in later days, it became the holiest of shrines for the lords of law and good. The Grove encompassed 300 acres of wooded land, surrounded on all sides by a low wall. The Druids of the Eldwood came to the grove at the behest of Daladon Lothian, and planted there a stand of Mueren trees, said to be the offspring of the Trees of Mordius from the dawn of time. By year's end the Holy Flame, in its dish of platinum, was placed in the altar chamber of the Temple where it sits to this day.

THE TALE OF THE FALL OF LUTHER

After the Feasts of the Forty Seven, Dolgan King unmasked a mystery where Togglin, a gnome from the north, revealed the whereabouts of the Pride of the Goblins. Dolgan summoned the Council, and they struck to the Maelstrom where they embattled the high priestess of the clerics of Unklar, Nectanebo XVIII, for possession of the Pride. Though in truth she bore it not, for it had passed into other hands.

Nectanebo XVIII took the guise of a horrific spider, but Luther was not dismayed. In a furious battle the Durendale Sword broke in half, for Luther failed to aid Daladon with the blade's might. Seeing his shame, Luther hurled himself upon the priestess, bearing only the broken half of the blade. In the ensuing battle the enraged Luther cast the priestess down, and she passed from the world forevermore, but not before she had poisoned the paladin, and he too fell and died. Luther ever loved the sea, and so his friends consigned him there. And behold, the Eveningsong came and bore him and the Holy Sword to the Dreaming Sea and the Isle of Blight. The paladin Lord was dead.



But lo, his power transcended the mortal realms as did all the Val Tulmiph, for he was even then a god. On the Dreaming, Luthor labored upon his sorrows and troubles and grieved at the loss of the sword. In secret he took the shards to the Paladin's Grove, and there lay them on a stone within the temple. There they would lie, awaiting the next bearer. In grief Luther walked amidst the hills of his youth, though he recognized little from those happy days. Into his reflections came Corthain, Justice Maker and Shatter of Worlds, who had battled Ornduhl at the beginning of recorded history. Luther fell to his knees and the god breathed a bit of himself into the paladin, reinvigorating him. Luther saw in this his own divinity, and he wove for himself a Mantle to wear in humility. Imbued with the gifts of Corthain, the Justice Maker, this Mantle became the article of Confession, which marked Luther's latter days in Aihrde. He became Luther the Confessor, and when at last he mustered the strength to return to the world of men, he returned as an angel of good, with the duty to cleanse men's souls.

Dagmar III fell in battle with the giants at the gates of Norgorod- Kam. His son was crowned king of Norgorad Kam, Dagmar King, fourth of that line.

Daladon Lothian grieved at the death of Luther, his long time friend and comrade in arms. He saw then the suffering of the homeless, and the war-torn people of Aihrde. He took a great part of his wealth and established a monastic order in Kayomar. The war-weary hero made leaders out of the kindest and most charitable among them, and directed the order to build houses to aid the suffering of the people of that realm. Abbot Edmund established the Rules and Orders of the Monastery. Those who joined the fledgling order adopted the name of Lothians and in time, they became clerics and monks. The first Lothian Houses filled with a small host of orphans. The early success of the monastery encouraged Edmund to establish many more.

In the east, the eldritch goblin Uandlich took many of his kin from the service of Dolgan King and traveled into the deeps of ancient Ichlin-Yor. They retook the caverns, and for the first time in thousands of years, goblins strode the halls of their homeland. They sought then their queen, knowing not her fate nor whereabouts.

Assassins overtook the Ethlium emperor, Raymond, murdering him in his own bed. The leading families of the Old Empire gathered then in a senate to discuss what next should be done. Many argued that the imperial line failed the people, and so they elected two consuls to rule them. The emperor's paladins were disgraced, and the Senate reorganized the army, forming two legions of infantry with the eagle as the imperial insignia.

The city state of Tagea enfranchised over 5000 people who lived on the Isle called Lakonia, and made them citizens of the city state. The city, besieged by enemies on all sides, ordered their society so that all men served the city state. These hoplites came to rule all the folk of Tagea, and they chose two kings from their own numbers to lead them.

Daladon, Dolgan, and Aristobulus stole into the depths of Aufstrag and tore the Krummervole from the throne of Unklar. In a rage, the Horned God fell upon them, rent the dwarf in twain, and unmade the White Mage. Daladon escaped in a desperate bid to keep the Krummervole. Through the magic of Jaren Falkynjager, both the mage and Dolgan returned to Aihrde from the Arc of Time, brought back from the Halls of the Dead. In truth their lives were no longer their own, for many folk worshiped them as gods, and they were given greater roles than they themselves knew. For ever was it the law of creation that all things were born of belief.

Unklar sent Kain to find the Krummervole, but Kain cared little for the crown, and less for Unklar himself, and instead during the summer he crossed over the Olgdon River with two full legions of imperial troops to attack his enemies.

Unklar's rage did not cease, and he plundered the planes in search of the Half-Elven and the Krummervole. The chaos caused by the loss of the crown drove the remaining lords of the empire to guard themselves against the intrigues of Nulak-Kiz-Din. Civil war broke out in many places, particularly in the Punj.

In the planes, Unklar fell upon Daladon, and though he did not slay the March Lord, he broke his grip on the Krummervole so that it fell into the mists of time. Unklar continued to search anon, and was much distracted thereby.

Jaren's daughter, named Pryzmira, she who bore the Mark of Emperors, turned nine-years-old, and she called for a quest to reclaim the Cunae Mundus Usquam. Many enjoined with her, and word spread through Aihrde that the line of the emperors of old was revived. Many welcomed this, for they remembered the tales of the Last Emperor Sebastian and his attempt to slay Unklar. Many others, however, saw this as an evil thing, for it was the power of the emperor which brought forth the Horned God. The crown was at last retrieved, but only after the Council interceded. They found it in the crypt of Baron Harakon Petrovich, where too, lay the sword Discerpo.

Upon the fields of Augsberg, near the small village of Olensk, Albrecht met Duke Kain in battle.

THE BATTLE OF OLENSK

Upon the 4th of Trocken, 1029md, King Albrecht, the River King, marshaled the whole of the flower of Augsberg, with dwarves from Grundliche-Hohle and mercenaries from the north. They clashed with two of the dark god Unklar's imperial legions, commanded by Duke Kain, near the village of Olensk. The armies drew up upon the gently rolling snow covered downs in the early morning hours. Albrecht led 9000 footmen, 4500 horse, 3000 dwarves, and 4500 mercenaries, arraying them in a tight battle line, with the dwarves under the hero Oxleigh in reserve. Before him Kain commanded two legions, the 11th and 33rd, about 27,000 men. The imperial legions were set in two great squares with light troops of skirmishers on their flanks. In both armies countless heroes, lords, and chieftains stood to arms. They stood thus for several hours, neither one willing to commit, but by mid-morning Kain grew impatient, unleashing the fury of Unklar's folk upon Albrecht.

Kain hurled the orcs of the 33rd against Albrecht's right flank. They soon broke through and ran headlong into the dwarves. A gory contest of arms ensued. The dwarves refused to yield against the overwhelming numbers. Here the orcs and dwarves wrestled, and the bleeding of both armies began. Kain used the orcs ruthlessly, not sparring their numbers. Albrecht's royal levies were drawn from his center line and his mercenary horse was committed by day's end. These proved too few and too late, and the dwarves were at last driven back, and with them the royal levies were overwhelmed. By mid-afternoon, the right flank collapsed. The orcs slaughtered the dwarven wounded who lay behind their lines.

For the whole day the battle raged, the loss of life, immeasurable. On the left flank late in the day the whole of Augsberg's chivalry, the cavalry of his old legion, charged, striking the lines of the 11th. With a deafening impact the horse ground into the men, and in a very short while the 11th legion collapsed, and fell back. Their leader, the Sanjak

Hamid, fell, grievously wounded. But also, noble men died and Albrecht's youngest son, Frederick, was killed when an orc lance struck his breast. But by dusk the heavily armored knights broke through the shattered legion.

With the dwarves driven back and the royal levies slaughtered, and the whole command in doubt, the army teetered on the brink of destruction. Not until the dwarf lord, Oxleigh, chief lieutenant and heir of Dolgan fell did the tide turn. The dwarves were driven into a frenzy and counterattacked, some 800 grouping together and hurling themselves against the thousands of orcs who remained. The dwarves fell, but their blood and honor blunted the orc charge and laid that people to waste. Not far from this melee the king's first born, Albrecht II, cut off by the orcs, fell amidst a heap of bodies. About his corpse his guard gathered, a mass of blood and flesh waging a merciless war, but they too were overwhelmed and destroyed.

Into this fray came the greatest of Kain's captains, Korak. He shattered Albrecht's center and cut off the retreat of the dwarves and the others from the right. The battle raged insanely around the village of Olensk. Korak himself drew up in the confused melee, the dwarves in their lust to slay orcs, unknowingly cut him off, and the northmen under the young maid, Fyorgyn, brought over from the left, hammered him. They carried his head to the halls of the dead. So fell Kain's second in command. With this the Horned God's army became disheartened, and for a moment stood confused and in doubt. Then other of Kain's servants rallied them. There proved to be precious little time to regroup, for into the melee the knights from the left flank, with Albrecht at their head, came about and plunged into the rear of Kain's battle line. Here the orc leader Arcoz was cut down and killed.

Kain's host staggered about, thrown into consternation. Leaderless, they attacked in fitful groups about the field. Albrecht's knights rode to and fro crushing the foe until a chance blow from a great axe brought down Albrecht himself, who fell, wounded and bleeding. For a moment the battle hung in the balance, but the orc losses proved too great, and they were without leaders on the field. The orcs reeled and at last began to flee. Albrecht's knights regrouped once more and pressed the retreating orcs. Across the bloody fields and rivers, the orcs fled to their master, Kain.

In the waning hours of the afternoon, Kain rallied his orcs, organizing them in troops of several thousand. They were brought into line in time to hear the rising tumult of the River King's folk. Albrecht's horse charged, led by his third son, Franz Conrad, thrice wounded. There rode the flower of Augsberg, all that remained of Albrecht's army. Against this, Kain's legionnaires fell like wheat to the scythe, and the greater part of them were slaughtered in moments. Some unknown hero cut Kain's steed from under him and horribly wounded that grim captain. Kain rallied his guard and fled the field to haunt other pastures and other places. The grim business of slaughter carried on into the night and the following day.

Albrecht pardoned none, and ordered all the prisoners slain and thrown into the river, so that the death toll of Imperial Troops ranged well above 21,000 men and orc, the rest having fled into the hinter-lands. Two legions were extinguished in their entirety. The dwarves exacted a horrible revenge on all the orcs and goblins who lived as well, but their losses were great and their master dead. Fully 1,600 dwarves died and 'went to stone.' Throughout the night and following day their moans carried far and wide, and they tore at their beards. In their grief they vowed to clip their beards, to burn a bald spot on their chins, in memory of their fallen comrades, and they were called ever after the Bartigtot, the Deadbeards. Albrecht's losses were great too, along with two of his sons, including his heir, 3,400 of his troops died, a further 6000 were wounded, thus leaving the valiant king a bare 3000 able bodied warriors to guard his realm.

THE CLOSING DAYS OF THE LONG YEAR

Kain, leaving the battlefield of Olensk, began marauding through the lands. In the winter he attacked Avignon and slew the Bishop Sixtus I.

The Council of Light, fully reconstituted, sought to press the grieving god in Aufstrag and drive evil from the land. They explored the Twilight Wood, seeking the memory of Meltowg Lothian. There they uncovered the mysteries of Utomno, Daladon's son by Wenafar, and the paths of the twilight elves. the Council also discovered the Castle of Spires, and they entered that fell place. The bodies of the dead from the kin-slaying remained as they had fallen, and Daladon found his brother, dead after all those long years at the hands of a high elf of Shindolay. His grieving shook the world. The passing of Meltowg's spirit, so bound to Aihrde, caused a great shudder to pass through the land. The Aurefex Mutatio lay on the dais of Melius' making, stained in elven blood. Daladon took it up and cast its spell of brass, opening the gates to the worlds of the elves of the Seven Rivers and Fontenouq. Daladon took up his brother's blade, Noxmoros, and stood at the gates, for he sought to kill the elves as they came through. The elves did not come, taking council amongst themselves as to whether they should return to Aihrde or not.

Only the elves of Fontenouq came through the gate to at last return to the world, for when it opened they saw their long cherished desires fulfilled. They passed behind Daladon, neither knowing of the other's presence. Thus, some of the elves came back into the world and they were filled with a a lust for vengeance and sought to destroy the dark in his home, and they took up the war immediately.

Nulak entered the southern lands and there rallied support for the ongoing civil wars against those who would shirk his rule. By year's end, many lords swore their loyalty to him; these included the lands of Ihlsa, Undululiland, Rleuland, and the Hlobane. The men in the extreme south threw off his rule, granting the throne of Aenoch to young Pryzmira, daughter of Jaren the Falkynjager. She was crowned with the Cunae Mundus Usquam. The empire was born again amidst the flames of civil war. Pryzmira's realm she named New Aenoch, but others called it the Land-Over-Sea.

Dolgan's army, cleared of the threat of Kain, swept the Luneberg Plains free of the enemy, and besieged them in their castles in the Red Hills. After three long weeks of battle, Dolgan was forced from the field by armies from the Grossewald and the Punj.

1130MD

One thousand dwarves from Norgorod-Kam, as sent by Dagmar King the fourth of that name, arrived in the Flintlock to aid Dolgan King. The Folk celebrated for many weeks upon the union of the kin, for as is told, no dwarves of any kingdoms had aided one another for 3000 years. And it was a long time coming.

Nulak-Kiz-Din, fearing the coming light, cloaked himself in sorceries and vanished from the face of Aihrde.

About this time, Innocent, a noble-born warrior from the Red Hills, rose to prominence over the men of the lands south of Aufstrag. His origins are lost to history, but it is known that he quickly gained control of the imperial bureaucracy and with this, controlled the pay of the army. In a brutal campaign, he seized control of the sea town of Ihlsa.

He was made prince of those people and ruled them with an iron hand. Prince Innocent gained allies in Undululiland and Rleuland, and with them forged the Ring of the South, a network of alliances. By years' end he invaded the central province of Torrich and subjugated the local nobility. He declared his principate from that city, and called all his lands the Confederation of Torrich.

King Morgan I of Kayomar consecrated the Paladin's Grove and the mueren trees, Daladon's gift, they placed in the earth. Almost immediately they bloomed, their leaves turning a wonderful green. Soon the grove became a place of pilgrimage and worship to both Luther and Durendale. Luther was sainted by the rising clerics of Durendale for bearing the Holy Sword, this on the first day of spring, forever more called Saint Luther.

King Albrecht, hoping to replace his horrid losses of the previous two years, invited open colonization of the Luneberg plains, which he claimed for his own. In this Dolgan King gave his blessing, wishing for none of the land himself. Albrecht invited any and all to settle in those barren regions, promising them title to land and protection in return for feudal oaths. Many came and for a time, they held those plains against the east.

In the summer of that year, the Council of Light gathered together once more. There was much discord amongst the Lords, for Dolgan King and Jaren Falkynjager found themselves at odds, one with the other, as they often were. While they bickered and argued, the Lord Daladon returned to the Eldwood, called by the Great Tree, and there he learned of the return of Unklar to Aufstrag, so long absent in his quest for the Krummelvole.

In a wave of terrible fear, the Horned God came to his dark throne. He called for the only servant whom he trusted, the goblin Erix, and together they contemplated revenge. Of all the higher order of gods, only Wenafar and Tefnut stood openly against him. They were weak, he deemed, and he greater still. It came to pass that Unklar sought council on how best to destroy his enemies, for he saw in their demise the end of hope for all those who fought against him. Erix told him to gird himself for battle, call his mogrl to him, and go to war. And Unklar sent his mogrl into the wide world to hunt his enemies.

Aristobulus, following Daladon Lothian's lead, returned to Aihrde, and there they took council with one another. He came even to Sagramore, his old friend and member of the Council of Patrice, who now lived the horrible life of the undead. Sagramore lived in a castle at the height of the world, and there feasted on the luckless. Bent on an evil he could not control, he welcomed the visit of the archmage, for ever in the days of old had they been friends. Aristobulus talked long into the night, and Sagramore gave over to him one of the Books of Jaren, for it bore the words of prophecy.

As is told, Jaren Falkynjager knew nothing of the texts he wrote in the days of the waning of the world. A thousand years of torment on the walls of Aufstrag gave over to him a certain madness of memory, so that he could not recall things from the old world, but for his great love of Robert Luther. Aristobulus took the book Sagramore gave him, and he read it through. It took many weeks for the mage to untangle the manifold prophecies and dreams of the author, but at last he came to the forging of Discerpo, the emperor's own blade.

Aristobulus learned how it had been bathed in the Holy Flame, and how Sebastian remade it with incantations and spells. He knew then that the sword Discerpo could slay the dark god's mortal form and cast him back into the Void. The mage called his comrades and told them

of his findings. They resolved to seek out the sword, which they knew the elf Setiva possessed, for they had given it over to her when she joined them in recovering the Cradle of the World, the Cunae Mundus Usquam. Aristobulus called the council to conclude their personal war, which was done with no debate.

Setiva, late of Seven Rivers, had redeemed herself in the eyes of many of the Council, but for Daladon, who ever hated the high elves. The Council had given her that ancient blade in honor. Discerpo even then hung among her battle gear. They bid her take it up and redeem her people in the acts of war, and help them slay Unklar's mortal form.

On the last day of spring, the Council took the goblin, Agmaur, comrade and friend to Dolgan King as their guide, and stole away to Aufstrag to make a hindrance upon the dark lord. There they found him, sprawled upon his throne in contemplation. Wrapped in the cold dark of his own soul, they could see him plainly, great cloven hooves, long clawed hands, and his brow crowned by black horns that stretched above him like torrents of rage. He looked upon them and laughed.

Battle was met before the Throne of Unklar, and the Council made grievous war upon him. Long and hard they struggled in arms. Luther, ever in the forefront, cloaked in his Mantle; Aristobulus veiled in arcane power, Daladon with fierce Noxmoros. Morgeld too fought at Luther's side, the Gorgothorium spear in hand. Dolgan held the Hammer of Angrod, the weapon of his forefathers, and Setiva stood by him with Discerpo. Only Jaren Falkynjager held back, for he awaited the coming of Nulak-Kiz-Din. That mage arrived soon after the battle was joined, and Jaren fell upon him with the vengeance of a thousand years of suffering. Aristobulus, too, turned on the archmage, for he knew that no magic of his would slay Unklar, only Discerpo. The emperor, Sebastian, "Rapscallion," had forged Discerpo at the dawn of the Age of Winter Dark for it to be Unklar's Bane. The Council was crushed beneath the strength of Unklar and their power proved not against him, but in the

end Setiva, herself standing upon the brink of death, hewed one great blow and clove a horn of Darkness from Unklar's head, breaking the sword, and banishing him from the plane.

Unklar howled and saw the Emperor's hand in his death, and cursed his memory to no avail, for he thundered into the Void, hapless for a time. Light and a true warmth spread across Aihrde. Nulak fled to hidden places and others of his minions were for a time dismayed. The Shroud of Darkness hung over Aufstrag and the Grausumland only.

And so ended the Age of Winter Dark, and began the New Age, and the world knew a peace of sorts. The folk of Ore-Tsar, knowing full well the victory won in Aufstrag, proclaimed the seven days of battle fought between the Council and Unklar a holy time, so that those days were celebrated ever after as the Feast of the Unmaking.

But behold, Morgeld stole the broken horn of Unklar, and brought it to his island in the twilight of that age.

Other crimes followed. In the high summer, the mogrl gathered and made war upon the Council in dark revenge for their fallen god. They assailed Grundliche-Hohle and the Ranger's Knot, and tore the party apart. Luther, hard pressed by Eagorth, the first born of the mogrl, overcame him only with great effort and the aid of his allies. The battle ended his days as a mortal on Aihrde, and he returned to the Dreaming Sea. Dolgan took to retrieving his folk from Aufstrag, and he too fell to one of the mogrl, cast a broken king in the pits of Aufstrag once more. Setiva, with the broken shards of Discerpo, fell in the Eldwood, another victim of the mogrl. She fought at the side of Daladon, and in the end, was redeemed in his eyes. He took to the forest deeps once more, avoiding contact of man and elf.

In the end, Nulak took Aristobulus unaware, and bound him with enchantments. He lay for many years until at last, making his way to freedom, came back to a world much threatened by the hordes of Aufstrag, this time led by the Undying Lord Coburg, who had risen to power in dread Aufstrag.

Dolgan, broken beyond doubt, became ensorcelled by the power of Fantheous, the elf king's daughter, who kept him in the Eldwood for seven years. The Council was forever sundered.

In the wake of the Council's defeat, Paskevitch and his minions, one of which was a dark mogrl, overran all the Flintlock and made war on the Hohle. They took Havok castle and renamed it Unklarglich. The dwarves were besieged in their pits, and the 1,000 warriors sent over from Norgorod-Kam were driven into the high north. The gnomes scattered, and the halflings as well.

So the year ended in victory and defeat. The long Winter's Dark ended at last, but the gods and heroes of man and elf and dwarf fell to the machinations of the enemy.

1131-1136MD

The lands rejoiced at the news of the fall of Unklar, but war followed soon as the many diverse peoples, kingdoms, and realms took up arms against each other.

In the south, Prince Innocent marshaled the remnants of the empire under a sprawling Confederation of Kingdoms. A great civil war broke out between the remaining minions of Unklar in the environs of Aufstrag. In the north, Paskevitch declared himself king of the Punj, and the goblin lord, Erix, moved many of his folk and others besides to the Grossewald Forest.

In the south, the duchies and the city states of New Aenoch combined in a loose confederation and united under the imperial crown of Pryzmira. In Aufstrag itself, Lord Coburg poisoned the swamps and sealed the gates.

The lands of Augsberg, recovered some from the wars, began to rebuild in those days, fortifying their borders against the east. A heavy traffic in goods began between the River King's folk and the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle where Dolgan's seven year old son, Angrod II, ruled.

In the west, the lands of Ethrum settled into peace, from Anglamay to Kayomar. Only the Great Wall, built in earlier days by long forgotten kings, remained a stronghold of the enemy.

Daladon Lothian joined Queen Ephremere of Aachen in her war with the orcs of Iregaul. There, the orcs had built a great monolithic fortress upon the heights of the Detmold, near the lands of Eisenheim. From their high walls, they terrorized the surrounding lands. Their raiders burned, looted, and pillaged the valleys around. Daladon and Ephremere gathered a host and laid siege to the city for over a year, but in the end they failed to overcome it. As the folk of Aachen retreated, the orcs attacked their rear guard, and Daladon once more wielded Noxmoros in a bloody contest of arms. He was joined then by a barbarian priestess, sister of King Theodohad from the north, Fyorgyn of the Two Hammers, who would later be queen in Augsberg.

Twice again, Queen Ephremere attempted to take horrid Iergaul but failed. In the end its walls were thrown down, but the fortress deeps were never fully cleared. It has since become an evil scar in the Detmold that only the most foolhardy dare ente.r

The goblin lords under Uandlich used magic buried in the goblin hordes of Ichlin-Yor to secretly free their queen, Ogoltay. Nulak came to them, and bore with him the Pride of the Goblins, a magic needed to revive her and remake her in her role as mother of goblin kind. He let them use it for a time, only long enough to breath life back into the beastly woman, at which point she began to lay eggs once again.

When Nulak left the halls of Ichlin-Yor, he traveled south to unknown destinations. Upon the road, Erix the goblin ambushed him north of the Red Hills. Nulak discarded the iron bound chest, which held the Pride of the Goblins. Erix did not realize it as such, so that the Pride of the Goblins, that most ancient and powerful of artifacts, was once more lost in the wide world. Rumors abound that a mad gnome, who lives on the bones of fish alone, travels the rivers and ponds of the Red Hills, using the box as a foot stool.

Many disputes were fought between the new kingdoms of the world, even as they are today, but these were largely border disputes and the like. Only once more would the free peoples of the world unite under the tattered banners of the Council to battle the dark in the tree of Aufstrag. In the 1035th year as the dark reckoned time, a great power arose in Aufstrag. Coburg the Undying gathered a host of men, orc, and ungern. He brought the Punj, Hlobane, and the Confederation under his sway, and he made war on Augsberg. The Shroud of Darkness, never fully extinguished over Aufstrag, rose again and blanketed the land in cold snow and ice.

This so alarmed the gods and heroes of men and dwarf that they summoned Luther to the plane, who brought back many of the Council, including Dolgan the Forge God. The Confessor Knights rode forth from the Dreaming, proclaiming a Crusade against Aufstrag, and many flocked to their banners. Folk of all the free kingdoms, including many elves of Fontenouq, dwarves of both realms, the gnomes, and many

halflings, gathered in Augsberg for over a year. They numbered tens of thousands and were filled with the youth of a world reborn.

For months, men, dwarves, and elves gathered in the wilds of the Luneburg, and in the high summer of 1037md, the allied host crossed the Udunilay river to attack Aufstrag. But the Imperial forces had not been idle. They had gathered the flower of the empire and called on those dragons that still lived. Several of the foul mogrl joined them, as did many wizards. The Battle of the Tree, or the Ten Day Battle, shook the world.

When the two armies met in battle, the sound rang across the land. The great host of Aufstrag, marching forth under black banners, moved across the lands of Alpa where they met the combined might of the Kings and Lords of the Young Kingdoms. A great and terrible battle they fought there; for ten long days the forces of good and evil struck and repelled one another. The slaughter was without equal in the history of men, not since the Goblin-Dwarf Wars of old had so many died in so short a span of time.

Many old soldiers of the Winter Dark Wars fell there. Morgan I, king of Kayomar, who abdicated his throne for the right to press home the final battle, died when a horde of Ungern slew his horse, and he refused to leave its body. Albrecht, the River King, old beyond years, fought from the back of a horse to which he had to been tied. A spear took him down and he passed from the lands of the living. Queen Ephremere's daughter, Elisa, a battle lord tried and true from the countless sieges of Iergaul, stormed the very gates of Aufstrag, but there, Coburg tore her helm from her head and clove her golden locks with his axe. Four of Luther's Confessor Knights died, and countless other paladins.

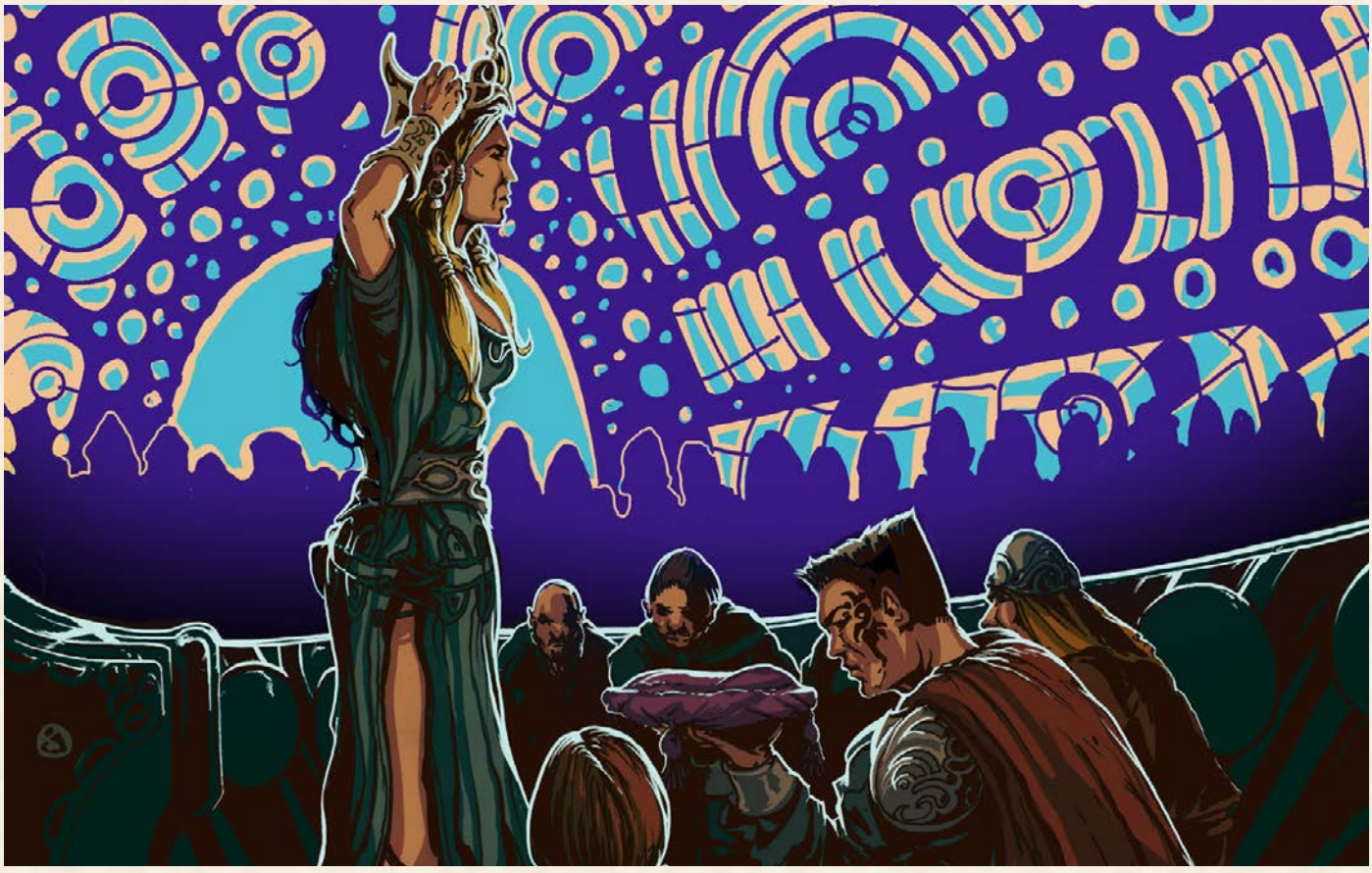
Aristobulus tore the enemy ranks apart with his spells, ever seeking the archmage Nulak. The troll lord never came to the field of battle, and for this reason the forces of Aufstrag could not in the end withstand the combined might of the Council and the Young Kingdoms. At the end of ten terrible days, the battle concluded with the route of the Lords of Aufstrag, and the death of Coburg. Though in truth, Coburg returned to the halls of darkness as a wraith to rebuild his armies and power. Only the Hlobane, the orcs of the Red Hills, retired in order, for their pride has always been their strength, and they could not be sundered except in death.

The lords and kings of the Young Kingdoms made some futile gestures against Aufstrag, burning the outer gates of the Wasting Way, but in truth their might and youth were spent, and they left the field carrying their wounded behind. In later days no family could claim to be free of loss from the Battle of the Tree.

The fields of Alpa never recovered from the scourge of war, and the whole land about Aufstrag remained a desolate wasteland. So great was the carnage that men left their brothers on the field, elven souls sank into the morass, and even the dwarves' stout hearts failed to pull the fallen from the calamity of what became the Toten Fields.

In time, the earth swallowed up the dead, and the land healed. As is written, the lands of the Toten Fields were ever after haunted places, plagued by the howls of the dead and damned. It is said that on warm days the goodly Princess Elisa can be seen calling for her lords, and her father, to come to her and find her, but it never comes to pass.

So the Winter Dark, the Sixth Rin of the World, ended.



The Almanac of Aihrde

THE WORLD OF AIHRDE CAME TO BE THROUGH THE LABORS OF THE ALL FATHER THAT WERE BUILT UPON THE BACK OF THE DRAGON GOD INZAE. FROM THE FIRST THOUGHT TO THE LAST THESE ARE THE REALMS OF MAKING AS THEY SIT UPON THE ARC OF TIME, THAT IS THE RIVER OF HIS THOUGHT. THUS IT IS, AND SHALL BE UNTIL THE GONFOD SHOULD COME.

First Narrative - The Ordering of the Cosmos

It was held a wonder when he crossed the Wall of Worlds and came to the Void and the uttermost end of all things. It was dark beyond all thought or conception, but it was not alone. There in the Undeeps he found the mote and called it to him."~Excerpts from the Histories

The cosmology of Aihrde consists of several complex, interwoven planes. Surrounding all is the Void. Within the Void spins the many planes of the Firmament, and where they collide lies the great cloud of matter, the Maelstrom. At the heart of the Maelstrom lies the Material Plane, Aihrde, itself surrounded by the Wall of Worlds. Within all this is the inner world of Inzae. Through all this flows the Arc of Time, which begins in the Void and ends in the Endless Pools, Stone Fields, the Shadow Realms and other lesser domains. Beyond the Pools lie the Wretched Planes and the Stone Fields. The Eahrtaut, the Living Tree, stands in the Material Plane, but its branches and roots grow into and through all the planes. The Net of Ea-Raena lies over all. Intersecting these many planes lie the multi-verse, both a part of and apart from them all. Lying over all, like a morning's fog, is the Dreaming.

Travel to and from the various planes is possible, though, in some instances, restricted.

The Void

The Void is an infinite expanse of space surrounding all things. It is called the Great Empty by men. The plane is a place of silent emptiness. There is no light or darkness; there is no color or form, nor sound. There is no distance, nor does time have any meaning. It is the Great Empty. It is the forge of the All Father's creation.

The name, however, belies its nature, for in truth the Void is a vibrant, if mysterious, plane. There, great currents move through the emptiness like winds across the sea, caused by the machinations of Erde and Inzaa. The Maelstrom, ever growing, pushes against the Great Empty, devouring it. Where the two collide lies the Gehirr, the Realm of Chaos (see below).

Here lies the Vesk and the Ea-Iaul, the Fortress of Wind where Corthain the Val Eahrakun dwells.

The Undeeps is that part of the Void where Unklar resided during first five Rin of the world. It is stained with his malice and as such one of the few places in the Void where land form has taken shape.

Encounters: The Void is home to a host of creatures, monsters both fair and foul. These early experiments of the All Father's labor, imperfect castaways, twisted or altogether evil, good or indifferent, haunt the Great Empty. Many are not the result of the All Father's active creation, but rather exist, for in his restless sleep he dreamed terrible nightmares or at times his raw emotions spilled out unknown into the Void. The resulting creations can be simple, or beyond the keen of mortal perception, and even to look on them can oft times drive the weak of will to madness. Dark and horrible, twisted coils of scales and slime, and pustulating wrecks of life, these beasts haunt the confines of the Void, drawn to any living thing with a hunger that defies com-prehension. Others exist as beauty personified, glory in all its design.

Most creatures in the Void are drawn to anything living. They hover on the edges of creation watching, in wonder or lust, the unfolding of life in the material planes. Only the remnants of the Wall of Worlds and the rune lords keep these creatures from coming to the material plane. When travelers from the planes or the material come to the Void, they tend to attract the inhabitants. Any number of things can occur, depending on the alignment, nature, disposition, etc., of the monster encountered.

Movement: Travel to and from the Void can be achieved through various spells or runes. Travel on the Void is easy. There is no set boundary or any real conception of direction. Mode of travel is as one wants it to be, by swimming, walking, flying, etc. Movement is achieved by willing oneself backwards, forwards, sideways, up or down. Movement does not occur at any defined rate or for any set distance. There is no real distance between two points, nor any time in the Void. If one, occupying space in the Great Empty, perceives a point in the expanse before him, he but has to will himself towards it. The relation of time and distance is entirely up to the strength of the character. Without needing the use of powerful magic or rune lore, movement is achieved by willing it alone.

To travel through the Void one must make a successful constitution check (CL 2-40, determined by the CK) each time the traveler enters the Void. If the traveler fails, then his body cannot maintain itself through the movement and passes into a state of limbo. The character is lost to the Void and drifts, a husk, until rescued.

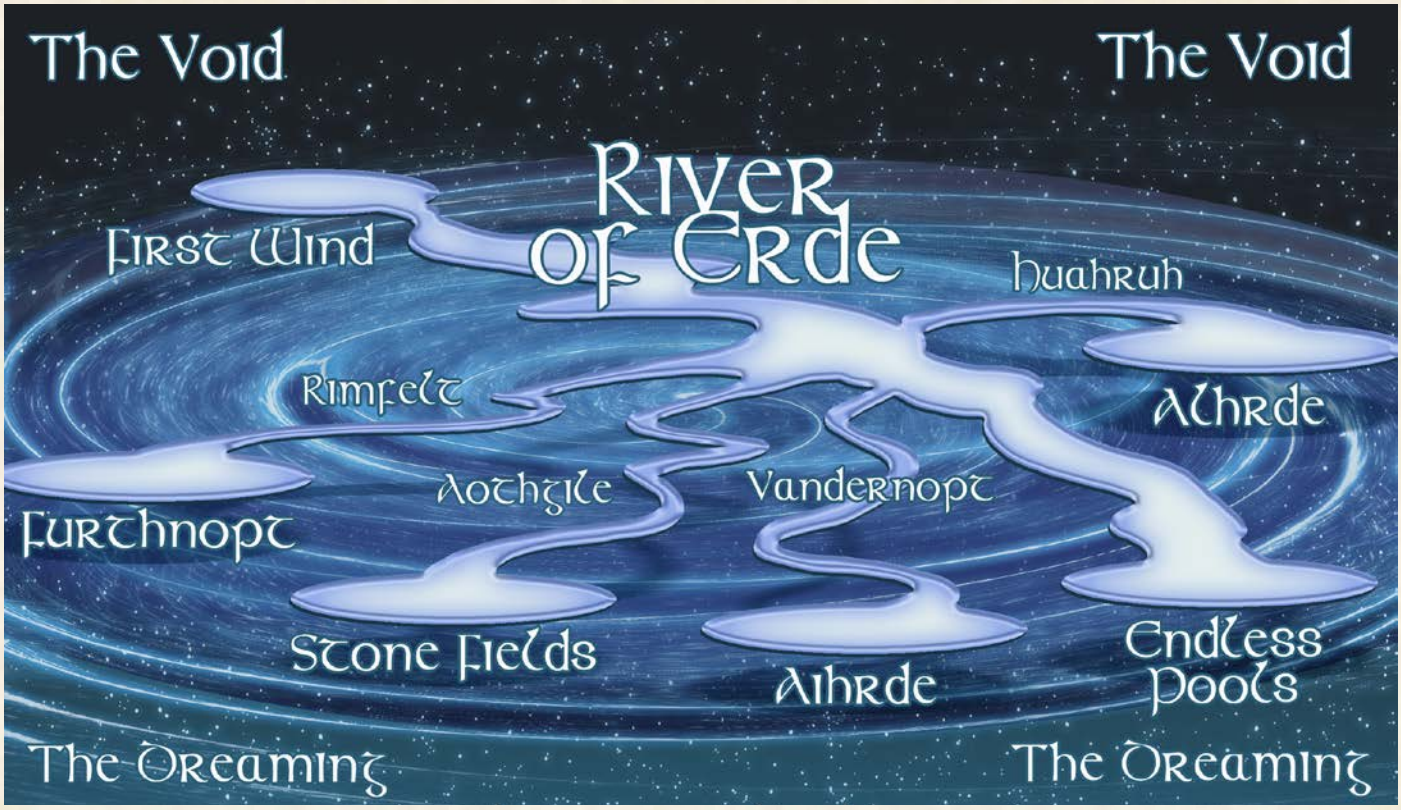
Time & Sustenance: There is no time in the Void, nor need for any sustenance or rest beyond the normal required to regain spells.

Magic: With the exception of use by those who worship Corthain, divine spells, attributes, or abilities do not work in the Void. Holy or unholy magic items do not function. Because of the sparsity of the Language of Creation in the Void, arcane spell casters must make a successful intelligence save (CL 15) for a spell to work. If successful, the spell's effects are reduced by half. Magic items work normally, unless they have spell-like effects. A +2 sword would still be a +2 sword and a rope of climbing would still act as a rope of climbing. If the item creates spell-like effects however, it suffers the same fate as spells. The wielder of a wand of wonder must make a successful intelligence save (CL 15) for the item to work, and if it does, its effects are reduced by half. All saves are made by the wielder or caster, the nature and power of the item is not factored in unless the CK determines otherwise.

The Arc of Time

Also called the River of Erde, or the River of Time. These are the thoughts of the All Father, that make up all that is or ever will be, even from the beginning to the uttermost End. The Arc of Time flows like a river through the Void. It touches all things but nothing. It is the upon the Arc of Time that the listless dead wander when they leave the multi-verse. It is upon the Arc of Time that the Gonfod shall play out.

The Arc appears as a road in the ether. It is dark, and appears to those who travel it as they wish it to appear. Generally as a dirt path, strewn with boulders. The dead wander it on their way to the Endless Pools the Stone Fields or the Wretched Plains. The dead are listless and are lost upon the road, but naturally drift toward the Endless Pools that lie at the end of the Arc of Time. These are not the truly dead however, for none are counted as truly dead until they enter one of the three



plains. The listless dead wander the Arc of Time for 9 days. Those on the Arc of Time can be brought back to life with a raise dead spell. Those who have passed onto one of the three plains must be resurrected to return to the world

THE ARC OF TIME IS BREACHED BY FOUR PATHS: The Rimfelt, the Vandernopt, Hule Rupt, and the Aothgile.

AOTHGILE: The Blue Way, or Stairs of Heaven, leads from the Arc of Time to the Stone Fields. This is the path that the noble dead follow to the Stone Fields, where the foul of Heth, eagles, crows and jays, come to collect the noble dead from the Arc of Time. It is perceived as a stair to some, to others a ladder that climbs a high cliff.

VANDERNOPT: When Ealor of the Green Halls attempted to pull the Arc of Time into the world he lanced it with a three pronged spear. The spear tore holes in the world and opened the Vandernopt, that is the Water Gates, to the Arc of Time. The Vandernopt lies at the bottom of the Ocean and is bound with sorceries. It is visible from the world, appearing as three large stone gates, closed and barred, at the bottom of the sea. They open onto the Arc of Time. It is hidden from those who travel the Arc of Time, unless some powerful magic reveals it. If it is revealed, then it appears on the right side of the road as three large gates. They open to the bottom of the sea.

RIMFELT: This road was devised by Ornduhl and leads from the Arc of Time to the Furthnopt and on to the Wretched Plains. It is the road taken by evil men and creatures. It is seen as a lonesome path cut into walls of stone. It ends in the Furthnopt.

HULE RUPT: This is the Road of Horror and it leads to the bowels of Aufstrag on Aihrde. Here all those who serve the Horned God or his purposes wander until they are lost in Aufstrag. The Hule Rupt appears as a tunnel, dark and rank. Black dirt and twisted roots mark one's passage.

ENCOUNTERS: There are many creatures that wander the Arc of Time: demons, devils, and servants of Toth and Heth. All the world's dead walk the Arc of Time but are only seen as hollow shades, if they are seen at all. Clerics can perceive those on the Arc, dead or living.

MOVEMENT: Movement is normal here.

Time and Sustenance: Time has no meaning here, nor do men need to eat or sleep, other than to gather themselves and rest from wounds or for other needs.

MAGIC: Magic works normally here.

THE MATERIAL PLANES

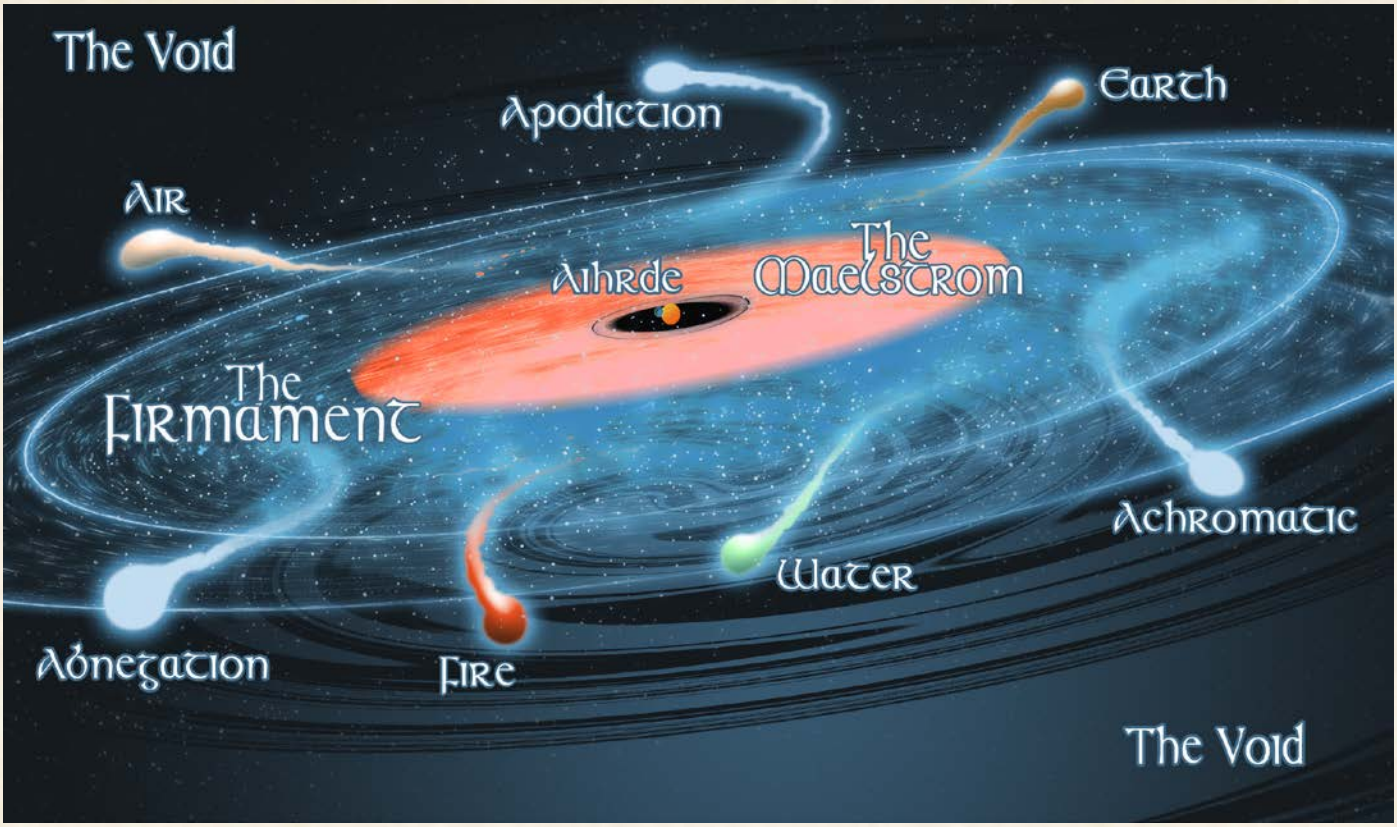
Called the Inner Planes, the material world consists of all the matter of the Firmament, the Maelstrom, Aihrde, and Inzae. Planes that one can touch or feel, or are bound by some form of structure, are considered the Inner Planes.

THE FIRMAMENT, THE ELEMENTAL PLANES

When Inzaa tore the fabric of the Void, she unleashed the Firmament, or the elemental planes. These planes exist separate from one another, whole and apart, even from the Void. Collectively these planes are called the elemental planes and are named thus: the planes of fire, earth, air, and water (these include a host of smaller, para-elemental planes), and the energy planes of Abnegation (negative energy), Apodiction (positive energy), and Achromatic (neutral energy). Where these planes intersect lies the Maelstrom.

ENCOUNTERS: Life within the Firmament is governed by each of the separate planes. Many creatures of the All Father's design came to reside upon the Firmament. These are the elementals and they dwell as part of the landscape, fire elementals in the plane of fire, water elementals in the plane of water, etc.

MOVEMENT: Each plane is governed by its own consistency. Ergo, the plane of fire has no air, water, earth, or any other substance, and so on. Travelers must use magic to travel to each plane and to move through it. There is no gravity in any of these planes, nor do any of the laws of motion apply. Entering a plane is to be a part of it, crossing through it as in a bubble.



TIME & SUSTENANCE: Time has no meaning anywhere within the Firmament, but mortal bodies do require sustenance, and they age in a manner similar to their normal bodily functions.

MAGIC: The Firmament stands apart from the Language of Creation, and as such does not obey the laws of magic. Anyone casting a magic spell or using a magic item must make a successful primary attribute check (CL 5) in order for that item or spell to work.

THE MAELSTROM

That great cloud of matter which spills from the Firmament creates the Maelstrom. The All Father cast himself upon the Maelstrom and, with the Language of Creation, created the world and set the sun and moon to racing through the heavens. This spiraling chaos slowly crosses the Void, creating an ever-expanding cloud, fed by the fuel of the Firmament.

Within the Maelstrom are a multitude of nebulae, stars, comets, and other cosmic bodies. These have formed both from the ever-spinning matter of Inzae and residual magic left from the All Father's Language of Creation, for it is known that he worked upon the foundations of the world for time without meaning.

MOVEMENT: Movement through the Maelstrom is possible through the use of magic or technology. The space between celestial bodies has no gravity. One cannot walk through or upon the Maelstrom. There is no air and it is bitterly cold. Travel is possible upon a craft or through magical spells such as the rune mystic orb.

ENCOUNTERS: Residual echoes of the original Language of Creation, as spoken by the All Father, linger within the Maelstrom. Certain powerful creatures created by him before time inhabit these deep places. They are generally creatures made of light or some other cosmic substance.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: These are normal..

MAGIC: Magic works normally here.

AIHRDE

The Material World consists of a number of celestial bodies; the most prominent are Aihrde, Illus, and Nuxus. These are bound to Ea-Vette, the sun, and circle her in an orbit as determined by the Urlnarch, the Chains of Darkness, which Unklar set upon them. Nuxus lies closest to the sun and is lifeless. Illus lies further away and is a world of clouds and water. Ea-Raena, the moon, was bound to Aihrde alone, but she drifts to Illus, a world of her own making, so at times she seems distant from Aihrde and at other times close.

Time is governed by the sun. Upon Aihrde it is divided into seasons, months, and days. Before the Winter Dark and the ordering of the world as set by Unklar, the number of days in a year and hours in a day was erratic, as these were governed by the passage of the sun and moon in their race through the heavens. After many ages, time settled into a pattern, but each of the peoples of the world governed time as it befit them. The dwarves and Engale used weathering stones, the Ethrum by the seasons, and so forth.

Unklar so ordered the world that there are 367 days in a year. Each day is divided into hours and so forth.

MOVEMENT: Movement here is normal.

ENCOUNTERS: Encounters here are normal.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: These are normal.

MAGIC: Magic works normally here.

INZAE

Within the world of Aihrde lies the Inner World of Inzae, shaped like a bowl. Inzae was formed by the dragon goddess, Inzaa, in the first Rin of the World. Inzae hung beneath Aihrde and created from both the Maelstrom and the Language of Creation. When Unklar attacked Inzaa he bound her and her world within Aihrde, in an infinite space so that they stood a part of, but wholly separate from, his own. Inzae,

a brutal place, is much akin to Aihrde in that it is peopled by dwarves, elves, orcs, men, and so on.

Travel to Inzae is difficult but can be achieved via the magical Rings of Brass which the dwarves fashioned during the Goblin-Dwarf Wars. The world is governed by its own gods and arc of history as set down by the dragon goddess.

MOVEMENT: Movement here is normal.

ENCOUNTERS: Encounters here are normal.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: These are normal.

MAGIC: Magic works normally here.

EAHRTAUT, THE GREAT TREE

The Great Tree was planted in Aihrde by the All Father in the Days before Days. The tree grew beyond the world, its roots breaking through the Wall of Worlds to tunnel throughout the Maelstrom and on into the Firmament and even into the Maelstrom. The tree is massive, several thousand feet high and close to 1500 feet wide. Her roots are unending, and her uppermost branches lie beyond the clouds. The whole of the tree is not visible at any time, for a perpetual mist hangs around her and the Green Pools, lakes that lie at her feet.

Eahrtaut sits in a deep valley on the western flank of the Marl. Travel there is possible. Travel through the valley and even climbing the tree is possible as well. Many creatures dwell in the boughs of the tree and around her roots. Most of these are birds or flying creatures of Wenafar. Mordius, the Val Eahrakun, set the greater store of herself into the tree and resides there still.

Some of the tree's roots have been hollowed into tunnels, and through the magic of the Rings of Brass, allow one to travel to other planes.

MOVEMENT: Movement here is normal.

ENCOUNTERS: Encounters here are normal.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: These are normal.

MAGIC: Magic works normally here.

THE RINGS OF BRASS

These are passages that link the world of Aihrde to all the planes. They are akin to staircases in towers that wind forever down or up to the respective planes. They were created when the trottigen giants, of the inner world of Inzae, tunneled into the roots of Eahrtaut while attempting to find Aihrde. They created an extensive network of tunnels by hollowing out the roots. They were eventually blocked by Inzae. They gave up their attempts to escape but turned to carving the runes of the Language of Destruction, that is the Language of Inzae, down onto the steps and walls of the tunnel. They also interspersed the Language of Creation upon the steps, so that both languages were written down in their entirety.

The trottigen then returned to Inzae, where they remained as slaves to the dragon goddess.

Later the dwarves of Norgorad Kam discovered the roots of Eahrtaut and the many hollowed tunnels of the trottigen giants. Through magical doors, the Rings of Brass, they entered and were able to use them to travel the plane.

Inside the Rings

The physical rings take many sizes, but are all circular and made of stone with inlaid brass reliefs. Some are built into walls, others into the floor. All are raised from the surface upon which they are constructed, much like a well. The stone work around the rings contain a host of magical runes laid in brass. Looking into the ring, or portal, one sees a dark tunnel, with steps leading down into the darkness. Each rune-enhanced ring creates a portal to the roots of the Eahrtaut. The tunnels are dominated by a wet, earthy smell, as if fresh dirt were just turned over. Inside, the tunnels consist of a thick, fibrous material; these are are the living roots of the Great Tree.

Once inside, its much like walking in any tunnel or set of stairs, with a slight downward angle. The tunnel and stairs are always going down; no matter in which direction one is walking, he will perceive himself going down. Even if two travelers leave the same point going opposite directions, they will each seem to be traveling downward. The tunnels are dark with no ambient light, and any traveler will require an outside source of light, unless he can see in darkness. There are many branches in the tunnels shooting off in many directions, some to other Rings of Brass, some to spill into other tunnels or double back, etc.

ENCOUNTERS: Though the tunnels are seldom used in these latter days, it is possible to encounter any number of creatures inside, from other travelers, to gods, and to monsters such as phase spiders.

MOVEMENT: Unless some of the runes upon the Ring were destroyed, it is active, and one has but to step through the ring, or portal, to enter the hollowed-out roots of the Eahrtaut. The traveler then must envision his destination, another Ring or a previously visited place in the tunnels, and travel to it, either magically, or by foot. Time and space are relative in the tunnels. There are no set distances between Rings, what may take a day's travel the first time, may take years the next. One could walk for a lifetime and never find an exit, or one could find one within a few minutes.

If travelers are walking through the tunnels and do not know their destination, they have a 1% chance of encountering another Ring of Brass for each 12 hours of travel. Though time does not exist here, travelers must eat and sleep; the CK should make the check each time they take a full rest. Whenever they encounter another Ring, roll randomly to determine to which plane it leads.

If travelers know their destination but are forced to walk there, the first Ring they encounter is always their destination Ring; however, it may take them a great long journey to get there. Every 12 hours, the traveler with the clearest vision of the destination must make a successful intelligence or wisdom check (CL 13) to arrive there.

If the traveler knows his destination Ring and has the ability to magically transport himself, he can do so through the use of a teleport or similar spell, fold space, one of the Winter Runes, or any other magical transporting spell or device. Movement is automatic from the point of the spell-casting to the destination Ring. However, propelling oneself through the tunnel with such speed places the traveler at risk of leaving part of himself behind. Travelers must each make a successful constitution save (CL 0) or suffer the loss of 10% of their corporal forms: hit points, experience points and the accompanying levels, and attributes. This loss is permanent unless a restoration spell is cast upon the traveler. Mystic orb gives the traveler a +5 bonus to his roll. Dwarves gain a +3 to their attribute checks.

The tunnels can only be cut or scarred with a +3 (or better) weapon or tool. It takes hours to make any progress on the root, as about eight hours of cutting digs only a foot or so.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: Travelers must eat and sleep in the tunnels. Though time has no meaning there, their bodies continue to suffer the needs of the physical form.

MAGIC: Magic works normally within the tunnels.

AUFSTRAG

Aufstrag serves as both a physical kingdom in Aihrde and spiritual realm where the evil dead reside. Unklar constructed Aufstrag upon the ruins of Al-Liosh, and there he created a hell on earth. The fortress mocked the Eahrtaut in size and shape, but as if the Great Tree were dead, hollowed and peopled with all the terror of his realm. Beneath it are many intersecting passages which were meant to mimic the roots of Eahrtaut, and span the planes. But most of these failed to do as Unklar desired and they exist as tunnels, snaking into the earth beneath Aufstrag. One however did cross the Wall of Worlds and broke through to the Arc of Time. This road is called the Hule Rupt, which is the "Road of Horrors."

Unklar sought to people Aufstrag with the restless dead that wandered the Arc of Time, but only those who had served his vile purpose. In this he had the aid of Heth and the messengers of Toth, who culled the dead for binding evil and guided these to Aufstrag, where they served as worms and insects in the filth of that place. Only time and service allowed them to rise to greatness. Many powerful tvungen settled in Aufstrag, first to serve the Horned God, but later to rule in his stead.

Aufstrag exists in Aihrde. To get to it, one must cross the Grausumland, the Gray Pools, either through the marsh or via the Wasting Way, the long causeway that spans the Grausumland. This brings one to the gates of Hell, the Ahargon Den. Within are the living passageways of Unklar's citadel and many creatures, great and small. The condemned haunt the halls, or serve in whatever capacity they may manage, wallowing in the ruin of their lives.

Time passes in Aufstrag as it does in the world of Aihrde, and those who dwell there or pass into the place must eat, drink, and rest as would any man.

MOVEMENT: Movement here is normal.

ENCOUNTERS: Encounters here are normal.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: These are normal.

MAGIC: Magic works normally here.

THE WALL OF WORLDS

The Wall of Worlds is not a plane in and of itself, but rather a magical barrier that lies between the Void and the Inner Planes. It is crafted of pure magic and its nature reflects this. It was created by the All Father, but Unklar devoured it and cast it back out again as the Shroud of Darkness. After the Horned God's fall, some of the wall remained, and Corthain refashioned it and placed within it the Rune Lords' care, to guard creation from the Void and to keep those in the Void from crossing into the Inner Planes.

Even in its diminished state, its size is stupefying, for the Void is infinite and surrounds all the Firmament and the Maelstrom. It can only be located through diverse magics and carefully crafted lore, the Winter Runes. When one does find it, he is greeted with its seemingly infinite nature, for the Wall rises from bottomless depths and reaches limitless heights. It stands as a giant wall of fog and mist. At times it is calm, with the white mists quiet and serene, but sometimes the Wall rages in mindless anger, hurling great bolts of electrical energy through the heart of its own wilderness.

There is no physical limit to the Wall, so it is impossible to determine where one is in relation to any other plane or reality. Once breached, the Wall yields to the cold horrors of the Void.

Entering the Wall of Worlds is difficult. Only one road is known to exist, Rirm ut Sul, and it crosses into the Wall, passes beneath the world, to come to the far side. Aside from this passage one can only enter the Wall from Aihrde through the magic of the runes, the Winter Runes specifically, or through the successful use of a teleport or similar spell,

if the caster possesses knowledge of the Wall. Barring these, entry into the Wall from the material plane is possible, but simply places the traveler in an endless fog and mist. Travel from the Void into or through the Wall of Worlds is impossible unless the powerful gate spells or rune magic are used.

When a traveler enters the Wall of Worlds, it immediately summons one or more of the Rune Lords. The Rune Lord attacks the travelers in an attempt to determine if they are able to cross over to the Void. If the Rune Lord is defeated, he allows the traveler to pass over, but not to remain in the Wall of Worlds. If victorious, he expels them back to the World of Aihrde.

MOVEMENT: Movement here is normal; however, there is no ground, only air, and because of this one may climb or walk up or down as his will dictates.

ENCOUNTERS: There are no encounters in the Wall, aside from the Rune Lords.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: Time has no meaning here and there is no need of sustenance.

MAGIC: No magic spells, abilities, or items work in the Wall of Worlds.

THE DIMENSIONAL MATRIX

The Dimensional Planes consist of the Realms of Chaos and Law, the Net of Ea-Raena, the Seven Rivers (the Land of Faerie), the Endless Pools (or Shadow Realms), the Stone Fields, and the Wretched Plains. These planes exist as one with that of the material plane (Maelstrom). Travel between the material plane and the dimensional planes is not easily done, but not impossible. Some are gifted and can see or walk between the planes. The archmagi Aristobulus and the Rune Lords are named thus, for 'tis said that Aristobulus can see into many planes at once, into the planes of Shadow and the Ethereal.'

Reaching any of these planes requires the use of powerful magics, or at the very least the Rings of Brass.

FORDEG OT RINCK (CHAOS)

The Maelstrom draws its substance from the Firmament, and where this substance meets the Void is the Fordeg ot Rinck, the Plane of Chaos. It is a realm of unadulterated chaos, where only the most powerful of creatures exist. This realm is called Gehirr, or Tartarus, Pandemonium, and other names besides. Structure and substance here defy definition; there is no time, nor any concept of distance.

THE RUEL (LAW)

It is known that the Net of Ea-raena, the Seven Rivers, Endless Pools, the Stone Fields, Wretched Plains and Aihrde exist in the same time and place, but in other worldly dimensions. Where the join is perfect balance where order is complete. This is called the Ruel, what men call Gehenna and other names. There is perfect order in Ruel; there are no structures, mental or otherwise, other than those set by the plane itself. Only the most powerful can cast themselves upon Ruel and remain whole and separate from the realm.

THE NET OF EA-RAENA

The All Father tore from his breast long stands of his tissue. Those shreds hung from the long rib like a curtain of light, and he made it to pass through the Void. This was the first of the Sisters, Ea- Raena, the Maiden of Night. In time she bound herself into form and cast off the remaining shreds of the All Father's tissue, and those shreds settled upon the Firmament, and unbeknownst to her, they wove together into a great net. So the ethereal plane was made. A plane of wild abandon, only the most hardy can live here for there is no air or light, only the unbridled Language of Creation. It continues to grow, being of the living substance of the All Father, but only the most learned have begun to unravel the mysteries of its origins or why it continues to spread.

Men call the Net the Ever Expanding or the Ethereal Plane.

Travel to the Net is achieved through magic spells, items, or devices. Once one enters the ethereal plane he can travel quickly to another point and then reenter the material plane. However, anyone who travels to the ethereal must first make a wisdom check (CL 10); failure draws the looker into the light and he is mesmerized for 1-4 days.

MOVEMENT: Movement is 10 times faster than on Aihrde.

ENCOUNTERS: A large number of creatures pass in and out of the ethereal and some even live here, such as the nightmare or phase spider. Encounters occur on a 5% chance for every "day" spent in the ethereal plane.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: Ethereal travelers do not need food or rest.

MAGIC: Magic is lessened here by 10% of its normal potency.

THE SEVEN RIVERS, LAND OF FAERIE

The Land of Seven Rivers, called Faerie by most, is a magical land of powerful enchantments and sorceries. Of all the All Father's dreams, Faerie was and remains the wildest and most unpredictable. It is constantly in flux and is much like a mortal's dream. It is ruled by a variety of creatures, the faerie queen being only one. Many of these creatures find great comfort in the material world of Aihrde and have transplanted themselves to that plane, for they found in Aihrde the true substance of the All Father's creation. The elves are but one example of these migrants. The vast expanse of Faerie has given birth to many of the world's most bizarre creatures - from the elves to sprites, manticore, and other creatures.

Time has little meaning in the Land of Seven Rivers; for this reason creatures here are immortal. Age has no meaning, nor do they have any understanding of it. There is no light or darkness here, only an enduring dusk, a world cast in half light. All the physical laws of the material world exist here; men must eat and sleep to survive. Though time has no place in the world, travelers to this plane do age, if a little slower than normal.

Wenefar of the Val Eahrakun dwells in Faerie, in the Winged Hall, though she loves Aihrde as no other and spends most of her time in the material world.

MOVEMENT: Movement here is normal.

ENCOUNTERS: Encounters here are normal.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: These are normal.

MAGIC: Magic works normally here.

ENDLESS POOLS

This is the realm where the Arc of Time settles. It is also called the Darkling, or "Where Memories Lie." It is a bog, dark and dismal, cast in shades of gray and ruled by a limitless pool of unmoving time. It is where the lonely dead come, whether man, humanoid, beast, demi-human, or god. Those creatures who are without gods or spiritual homes come to the plane to reside in this, their drab afterlife. Sailors fear

drowning and curse the Endless Pools, for it is believed that many of those lost at sea spend eternity in the Endless Pools.

Toth, the Shadow of Erde, dwells here in a tower made that overlooks the Arc and Pools. From its apex, he watches all that walk the road and sends messengers such as Heth to judge them; or he judges them himself, guiding them on to the Stone Fields or the Wretched Plains, or keeping them in the Pools as is his want.

Those who dwell here are burdened by the weight of time and are vacant and hollow, feeling nothing but a vague sense of loss. They wander slowly through the bog, lost and without purpose. The spirits of the elves come here, ever since the Winter Dark Wars and the Curse of the Elves.

Travel here is possible. There is no need for food, drink, or rest of any type (other than from wounds). The Endless Pools are shallow, gray bogs. The air is cross and rank. Crossing the Pools requires no magic, but one must become accustomed to the dead who forever wander, seeking meaning and purpose. Though they have no minds to acknowledge the living, they do see them as something other than hopeless, and follow them, calling out to them, if they may, for they are reminded of the world they left behind and seek to reach out to it. Their tormented cries reflect the tortured soul of one who stood for little in life and less in death. For this reason it is considered an act of tremendous cruelty to cross the Pools.his reason it is considered an act of tremendous cruelty to cross the Pools.

MOVEMENT: Movement here is normal.

ENCOUNTERS: Encounters here are most commonly with the dead or those trying to harvest them: angelic creatures, demons, devils, and similar creatures. Of them all, demons are the most common, for they are forever attempting to guide the restless dead to the Wretched Plains, whether they deserve it or not.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: Time moves very slowly here, gathering in the Endless Pools. It is not necessary to eat or sleep; however, those who don't at least occasionally feel a need to do so. If they don't, they suffer -1 to all attribute checks

MAGIC: Magic works normally here.

THE STONE FIELDS

These are the realms of the noble dead. They lie beyond the Endless Pools. Heth and other messengers gather those deserving dead from the Arc of Time and guide along the Aothgile, the Blue Way, to the Stone Fields. Here are wide open spaces; the air is always clean and clear water runs in babbling brooks and settles in lakes of blue. The plains are flanked by ancient forests whose trees are tall and crowned with leaves of all seasons. The majesty of her purple mountains fence the world in its glory. Throughout the plains are fields of grain, and sprinkled throughout are large columns of stone. Upon them are carved the names of the deserving dead who can say that their lives were spent in the service of what is right and good.

It is a paradise for the dead who fall with honor and dignity, or for those who live their lives without malice or hatred. Here the paladin, his sword dark with the blood of evil, may lay down his armaments and rest until the Gonfod, as does the mother who raises her children to be good and work hard. 'Tis said that each resident of the Stone Fields lives the life that would be his paradise, alone yet part of the world that they would love. Men call this Elysium, the Seven Heavens, and Twin Paradise.

MOVEMENT: Movement here is normal, as if walking through Aihrde.

ENCOUNTERS: Encounters here are primarily with gods who watch the noble dead, or the dead themselves. Few of those who dwell in the Stone Fields realize they are dead, but rather exist in a place of their own making. A noble soldier might be living on a farm with his family, free of worry or care.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: There is no time here, and no need for food or sleep.

MAGIC: Arcane magic does not work here. Divine magic as cast by a traveler with a good alignment is enhanced by +1 or 10%.

THE WRETCHED PLAINS

Also called the Gegelmesh, the Wretched Plains lie within and beyond the Endless Pools. Ornduhl carved five deep cavities in the Void, and he harnessed some small portions of the river of the Arc of Time to empty into them. This branch of the river, he called the Rimfelt. He filled the five cavities with darkness and terror, and these were named the Gegelmesh, the Wretched Plains, the nightmare of the Red God. The Gegelmesh grew, a mirror of the Stone Fields, and here all the evil dead gather, culled from those who travel the Arc of Time, by Ornduhl and his minions, or those who become lost and enter the Rimfelt. In time Ornduhl created five gates to the Wretched Plains and set the dragon to watch them, these gates are called the Furthnopt.

The plane consists of a twisted, barren landscape where jumbled rocks mingle with deserts of sand. Mountains, shorn of moisture or growth, are cut by deep ravines and gulches that spit fire and ash, burning with the tormented souls of those unfortunate enough to reside here.

A realm dominated by the tvungenos (the unfettered, demons) and the tvungen (the fettered, or devils) who, in the absence of the Red God, make constant war upon one another. In the 6th Rin of the world the tvungen bound themselves to Unklar; the tvungenos did not.

The dead gather in large groups, usually herded or tormented by lesser devils and demons. The collective moans of the dead carry on the dry winds of the Wretched Plains, mingled with the cries of torment from their captors. Throughout the Wretched Plains, the towers and bastions of the outnumbered tvungen stand in contrast to the madness and chaos of this ever-changing landscape.

Within this broad plane stands the Homeless House, where Ornduhl the Red God of the Val Eahrakun dwells. Agorl the orc god dwells here as well, gathering together the limitless legions of dead. The roots of Aufstrag breach the Wretched Plains as well.

MOVEMENT: Movement here is normal.

ENCOUNTERS: Encounters upon the Wretched Plains range from the simple undead to a wide host of demons and devils, demigods, Lords of Hell, Lords of the Abyss, and gods.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: As with many of the Dimensional Planes, time has no meaning here, nor do men need to eat or sleep, other than to gather themselves and rest from wounds or for other needs.

MAGIC: Magic works normally here.

THE MULTIVERSE

The multiverse refers to all the planes of Aihrde but for the lands of the dead and Void. The material plane, the Maelstrom, does not lie in the Void alone and singular, for other planes, bound to it but separate from it, lie there as well. These planes occupy the same space as the material plane but in different dimensions or even times. These are the outer planes.

When the All Father died, his mind splintered and all the knowledge he bore with him opened into the world, and a great host of planes and realities sprung to life, and these are called, in common usage, the multiverse. The planes of the multi-verse exist in many times and places including the material plane, dimensional planes, the intersecting (outer) planes and other spatial anomalies. The planes of the multi-verse breach each other in many places. These ruptures are commonly referred to as gates, but are just as likely to be rifts, pits, or holes, or something altogether different, beautiful or horrifying. These planes (the material, inner, and outer) have a wide host and variety of names and all intersect with each other.

Gates and portals abound throughout the multiverse, even on the world of Aihrde. Though Unklar closed most of these portals after the War of the Gods, when he fell, they reopened and are now, as before, used by the powerful, the lucky, or the foolish. Some are well-traveled, such as Faerie, but others are well-hidden from the curious. The gate that lies in the Castle of Spires is one such portal.

Many of the Val Austlich passed from Aihrde to these realms to build houses and towers. Realms such as Asgard, Olympus, and such places lie within the multi-verse.

MOVEMENT: Movement here varies by plane

ENCOUNTERS: Encounters here vary by plane.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: Time and travel on these planes is wholly dependent upon the plane upon which one is traveling. but usually differ from the material. A day in Asgard may be a year in Aihrde.

MAGIC: Magic varies by plane.

THE DREAMING SEA

The Dreaming Sea, known by men as the Ocean of Aust, the Sea of Dreams, or the Dreamscape, is a plane juxtaposing all there is. It came to be when Ondluche's sorcery destroyed the All Father's physical form in the Maelstrom. It is the All Father's final form, beyond the world of Aihrde, where he went when he died by the sorcery of Ondluche. The Dreaming is Erde and it is the beginning of the Gonfod.

Unlike the Void, the Sea has substance. It is a watery plane, each drop of water a physical manifestation of a dream or nightmare of creatures, alive or dead, both great and small; the dreams of creatures of the past, present, and future have accumulated over the millennia to form this great ocean. They are infinite in number. The Dreaming Sea has no bottom. Few know of it, fewer have traveled upon it, and fewer still have returned from the Dreaming with their sanity intact.

Finding the sea is extremely difficult, for though the roots of Eahrtaut cross through the realm, there are no portals or gates. There is no traditional night or day upon the Sea; regular time has no meaning. Storms upon the Sea darken the seascape and experience an extreme amount of magical lightning.

When the worlds of man, elf, dwarf, etc., are calm, so is the sea, and when the world of Aihrde suffers, the Sea becomes more tumultuous. These accumulated dreams are called the Dreamscape.

MOVEMENT: Regular travel upon the Dreaming Sea is impossible. Only two magical crafts are known to exist which can sail upon the Sea unimpeded. These are the ships Evening-Swan and Dream Horn. They are captained by the Dreaming Lords, St. Luther the Confessor, and Utumno the Horse Lord of Nightmares.

ENCOUNTERS: Powerful creatures have been known to summon the Dreaming Lords and bid them to port them onto the Sea, and the Confessor Knights of St. Luther come and go at their master's will. Aside from these, travel upon the sea is rare. The Dream Warriors of Unklar's fashioning, the nightmarish Genug Dragon, and Utumno's Knightmares may be encountered.

TIME & SUSTENANCE: Time has no meaning here, nor do men need to eat or sleep, other than to gather themselves and rest from wounds or for other needs.

MAGIC: Magic works normally here.

Second Narrative - The Divine Orders

There are three orders of gods, that is, beyond the All Father and Dragon. The first of these are the Val Eahrakun, and they are held to be the greatest. The second are the Val Austerlich, they are held to be the right hands of the gods. The last are the Val Tulmiph, and they are mortals who have mastered some aspect of the Alenerde-ut-Pilt.

Deities are divine beings of great power tied to the fabric of creation. Very few of the inhabitants, if any, worship a single deity. Instead, the people of Aihrde exhibit a healthy respect to most all powers aligned with their ethos. Some pray to those powers that can best aid them in time of need, and most invoke the names of various deities important to daily life in a hard world. Even priests and clerics of a specific deity might call upon a power similarly related to their own patron. For example, a cleric of St. Luther might call upon the light of Durendale if battling a vampire. Such situations are those that would generally unite followers of various deities against a single cause.

Of Gods & Peoples

In Aihrde, the idea of deities is a complex one. It refers to creatures that are greater than mortals and are able to intervene in the workings of the world. Some of these creatures derive their power from the All Father, others from the worship of their followers. The source of a deity's power does not define it as more or less powerful. There are some very insignificant creatures that the All Father made in the Void, creatures that could never stand up to even the weakest of the mortals, but they are special in that they do not derive their power from others, and are truly immortal and almost beyond destruction.

Beyond the All Father and Inzae, there are three orders of deities in Aihrde: Val Eahrakun, Val Austlich, and Val Tulmiph. Beyond the Three Orders, there are the peoples of Aihrde.

The All Father

His name is Erde, Al-Erde, the All Father. In the beginning there was the All Father. He fashioned Aihrde from the Void, and set life into motion, and created the Val Eahrakun, the trees, dwarves, man, giants, and many other creatures beside. He dwelt in Aihrde as a physical being for many rin of the world. When the spells of Ondluche opened the All Father's mind, he passed from the world and into the ether which surrounds all there is or ever will be; this is called the Dreaming by most.

Few, if any, actively worship the All Father, however the dwarves pay him homage and continue to pay their debt to him as called for by Hlothver, the first named of that people. The Engale, pay homage to the All Father, the Wanderer, by building temples to him occasionally, but generally satisfy their reverence through sacrifice.

There are no priests to the All Father, and calling on him has no effect on any attribute or combat check

Val Eahrakun

The Val Eahrakun are the creatures made of the All Father's labors in the Void. Many remained in the Great Empty, but some removed themselves to Aihrde and settled.

As is written, "Of the Val Eahrakun there are twelve named and are accounted the greatest. They are Corthain, Mordius, Ornduhl, Narrheit, Ealor, Tefnut, the Sisters Mailuhm and Mailahm, and Wenafar. Toth is the Shadow of the All Father and though accounted one of the Val Eahrakun, he is different, for he alone possesses all the knowledge of the All Father, and he was cast into shape before the Forge of Creation was made. To their number were added the dragon god Frafnog and Unklar the Horned God. These latter came to the world only after it was formed, and had little role in its making."

There are many who rank as gods but are of a lesser order than the Named. These include all the Og Aust, Burol of the Mountains, and so forth. Others still are small and weak, such as the coblynau. Many of the tvungen and the tvungenos are also accounted as the Val Eahrakun, as are some of the angelic creatures.

Val Austlich

The Val Austlich are creatures and magics forged from the Language of Creation by the Val Eahrakun. Many of these creatures owe their existence to the Judgment of Corthain as they were created by the Val Eahrakun to carry out those tasks the older deities could no longer perform. Durendale, Ogoltay, the Rune Lords, Aenouth, Athria, Burasil, Ore-Tsar, Glorianna, Grotvedt, Imbrisius, Urnus Gregaria, Wulfad, Amenexl, Angrim, Krateus, Adrius & Zernius, and Rhealth are the most obvious.

Some deities actually walk the plane, and, as in the case of Durendale, are active in shaping the history of the world. Churches and temples to these deities are the largest and most powerful as well. Unlike the Val Eahrakun, the power of the Val Austlich waxes and wanes with the number of worshipers and/or the type and amount of sacrifices given in their name.

They grow strong or weak depending upon who and what and how many worship them. In one age, a god like Burasil can be a powerful greater deity, worshiped by millions in temples all over the world (such was his role during the 5th Rin); in another, he is weak, worshiped by a few secret cult members (such was his role during the 6th Rin, the Winter Dark).

The mogrl, being forged from the stuff of Unklar, are Val Austlich.

Val Tulmiph

The Val Tulmiph are beings such as Agrol, Aristobulus, Augustus, Daladon, Dolgan, Falkenjagger, Nulak-Kiz-Din, St. Luther, Utumno, etc. These range from the simple hero to the very powerful demigod. They are much akin to the Val Austlich, but their deification has nothing to do with the Val Eahrakun, but rather their own deeds, destiny, and well-earned power. These demigods are generally associated with only a few specific provinces. The peoples of Aihrde call upon them in time of need as would be appropriate. Worship of the demigods varies from being widespread to very localized.

The power of a Val Tulmiph may be greatly increased by the collective worship of peoples; this ranges from case to case. Some, such as St. Luther, gain power through their followers and sacrifices; others such as Aristobulus have little need for the attentions of worshipers and gain little or nothing.

THE OG-AUST, THE OLD ONES

Before all else there was darkness and it was called the Void. The Void was peopled by creatures both great and small. These were of the All Father's devising. When the All Father created the world it shone in the limitless dark like a beacon. Some, overcome with terror, fled from it even into the deepest reaches of the Void. Others how-ever, drawn to the light, crossed the dark to the edges of the world and passed over into it. In later days men called these creatures the Val Eahrakun.

Newly-made and filled with the cataclysm of creation, Aihrde welcomed the Val Eahrakun, and they settled into the world wherever it suited them. Some had immense power, others were small and weak, but they were magical creatures one and all. In later ages, men worshiped the greater of these as gods, for they commanded powerful sorcery. They even paid homage to the less- er Val Eahrakun, the fey, and prayed to them or made small sac- rifices to them where they lived, in the streams and lakes, under hills, and in the roots of ancient trees.

The Og Aust were gods and fey who lived in the Ethvold. The ancient Ethrum first encountered them, and these humans fell to worshipping them, building many temples and holy places in their honor. The worship of the Og Aust is an animist religion, as the Ethrum found a spiritual connection between the world in which they lived and these magical creatures. The greatest of the Og Aust were Let, Amenut, Nunt, Heth, and Kekki. The religion, however, was not limited to these as men prayed to hosts of fey, both great and small, from dryads in their groves of trees, to water sprites in the rivers and creeks.

The religion and worship of the Og Aust died off centuries be- fore the Winter Dark as more powerful gods changed the scope of the world. The many ruins of old monasteries, temples, dungeons, and the like litter the Valley of Kayomar, and many of these have their origins in the worship of the old ones. Still the worship of the old ones continues, mostly by those few folk of the Darkenfold, the southern Rhodope Mountains, the Soup March, and other areas in the region. The lizard men, eschl, many of the humans, and even elves in those regions still pay homage to them, if a bit secretly, and though the power of the old ones waned, they want only for the return of the Ethvold to restore the religion and the gods to their former glory.

INTERACTING WITH THE GODS

Interaction with the gods is possible through prayer, sacrifice, donation, and similar actions; however, none of these actions guarantee a reaction from the deity. Priests and druids are an exception to this, for they are the direct conduits of their deities on Aihrde. They serve as both servants and tools for those deities with designs in the world.

A deity's power is sometimes related to its place in the multi- verse. Many of the Val Eahrakun and Val Austlich gave of themselves to Aihrde, fashioning the world as they desired. To so so, the spent their power and inadvertently bound themselves to the world and at times, its people, or to both. Their powers on Aihrde are entangled with the world itself. When their creations wane, so do they. The Og Aust labored in the Ethvold and spent much of themselves in building that great word, making it the Garden of the World. When the Ethvold was destroyed, the power of the Og Aust waned. If it were to return, their power would grow accordingly. This is often true for peoples as well. Those gods who gave of themselves to their peoples suffer when those people turn their backs upon them, and grow when they call upon them. At times, it lies within the faith of the believer to give power to the deity. For this reason, many deities thrive when they are worshiped by vast multitudes. This is particularly true for the Val Austlich.

Many of the Val Eahrakun blame the Judgment of Corthain for this, for it restricted them from interacting with the world. For this reason those who follow the Og Aust claim, the Ethvold died.

Some of course, notably the Named Val Eahrakun, are exceptions to this rule, as their power lies beyond the world.

It should be noted that at no point is a deity stripped of its god-head, or even its power, even if it has no followers. It is rather restricted in the use of those powers and its ability to manifest in Aihrde. Amenut, one of the Og Aust, reigned over a vast region and was worshiped by the Ethrum for many long years. When his worship fell off due to the destruction of the Ethvold, he retreated into his lair beneath Alice Ridge and there lived in squalor, immortal and weakened, for many long centuries for his fate was bound to the Ethvold.

The Judgment of Corthain

During the early years of man's rule, men were corrupted by Ornduhl, the Red God, and made war all across Aihrde. Corthain, the Judgment Maker, entered the fray and banished the Red God. He then went to the hosts of men and cast judgment upon them. "You are the Fulerde, the peoples of Aihrde, made of Erde's intent, but you have strayed from his purpose. From the Red God's hand you ate, like slaves, devouring the feast he set before you. You sought to master the gifts that are those of the Val Eahrakun, for they, and they alone were born of Erde's thoughts and not his deeds. From this came corruption, for it is not the role of the Fulerde to serve as slaves to the Val Eahrakun, but slaves you are. So I damn you to slavery. Ever and anon until your Master returns I bind you. I bind you to the Val Eahrakun. To them you must seek for warmth in the cold and water in the fire. You will seek their aid in your every endeavor and call to them for fear of the dark. This until the Shadow of the All Father releases you. This is my Judgment. Ask not for forgiveness, nor seek atonement, for there is none from me, nor ever shall be."

A demon might dwell in Aihrde but he can't interact as before, unless summoned or woken by sorcery.

The Judgment had a far greater effect, however, than Corthain intended, for in his rage he unleashed a greater power and bound many of the Val Eahrakun from directly interacting with men and the world itself. Where before, the Val Eahrakun gave of themselves and shaped the land and those who peopled it, they were now unable to do so. Their power was not lessoned, only their ability to display it.

This was true for the greater host of the Val Eahrakun, but not so for the Named Val Eahrakun. As much equals of Corthain, most chose to obey the Judgment. Ealor, sought to fight Corthain and reverse it, though he did not contest it for long. And Narrheit never suffered the yoke well.

There was a flaw in the judgment. It was not whole, for men soon learned that they could channel the power of the gods through divine magic and sorcery. For this reason, the Judgment gave birth to the priests, clerics, druids, shamans, and other holy men. These individuals were devoted to the worship of the Val Eahrakun, and served as intermediaries between men and the Val Eahrakun. Through prayer or sacrifice one could gain a god's attention and garner what aid the priest could channel through his divine magic. In short, the god could grant

the man power, and the man express that power through spells. The greater the sacrifice the greater the ability the god had to intervene.

The Val Eahrakun were not satisfied with this however, and to further counteract the Judgment, the greater of the Val Eahrakun made the Val Austlich, torn from the fabric of their own beings, and sent them forth to aid or contest the world of men.

The Val Austlich are the lesser gods and are not bound by the Judgment. Their powers, however, are limited and they are careful in their use, for they fear the wrath of Corthain and the broadening of the Judgment. They rarely come to the direct aid of men, though some, such as the Durendale Blade, do so. When they do, their powers are cloaked and never fully realized through the hand of man. Durendale, the god, is far more powerful than Durendale, the blade. They prefer, rather, to aid or hinder men through indirect means and avoid the wrath of Corthain; whether placing an item one may find through a quest, granting one a great chance at success or failure, alerting minions, and so forth.

Calling on the Gods

If a character calls upon a god, whether Val Eahrakun or Val Austlich, he may gain some measure of aid from that deity if he makes sacrifice. For instance, Burol is the god of the stone giants, mountains, rocks, high places, etc. Tolvar, a mage, finds himself in the Voralbergs. Snow is approaching, and he is seeking shelter. He calls out, "Burol aid me, and I'll lay coin for your halls in the high places of the world." Tolvar throws a 20gp gem off a cliff and hopes for the best. For this he gains a +1 on his attribute check while searching for shelter. Note that any bonus given is done entirely at the discretion of the CK. The All Father is an exception to this; calling on him does not gain one a bonus.

On rare occasions, gods are summoned to Aihrde and the Judgment overcome, the most notable example of this is Unklar the Horned God.

The Judgment of Corthain fell upon the world the moment Corthain drove his spear into the heart of Ornduhl, pinning him to his throne. When he broke off the spear's head, leaving the point in the Red God's heart, he imprisoned the Red God on this throne. Only the Red God possesses the power to contest the will of Corthain, and because of this, it is said that when the spear point is removed from the heart of Ornduhl, the Judgment shall end and the Val Eahrakun will return to the world in all their power and glory.

Man's Connection to Gods

Almost any man will call to a god in need. A merchant on the seas might pray to Ealor for safe passage, but a sailor knows that Ealor is a mirthful god and enjoys the sport of things and may send a heavy sea as opposed to a calm. In his case he may pray to Wenafar to send a wind to carry them to their destination faster. In any case, the gods are all alive and interact when and where they can (and choose).

The connection to the gods varies. The Aenochians are famous for worshiping no deities, but they are also known for being fooled by the gods and set on paths they may not otherwise have set out upon. The Ethrum, on the other hand, paid homage to Tefnut and many of her minions, the Og Aust, as they still do today. Whether this was to their benefit or ill, it is for the historians to judge.

Every region or locale in the world of Aihrde has house deities, racial deities, spirits, elemental powers, and infernal beings to which the populace pray or invoke. These may possess different names or be different powers whose stories do not enter the legends of Aihrde.

Spells

Spells are granted to paladins, clerics, shamans, holy men, priests, and druids by their deities. These are tools given over to the faithful for service and sacrifice. They can be as easily denied to those who transgress or even made more powerful to those who are more deserving. Spells are conduits to the world at large, and deities are not stingy with them, for the spells are nothing to them.

Sacrifices

In each description below are descriptions of what worshipers usually sacrifice to the various gods and what benefit they may hope to gain from it. The sacrifices are those given by common, every day occurrences, what one might do on the field of battle, or before attempting to swim a river, climb a mountain, lift a purse, etc. The boons granted by the deity are small affairs, befitting the sacrifice. The Castle Keeper should read over them carefully and make certain that the supplicant's request does not upset game play. The gods are arbitrary and, for this reason, whether a sacrifice is recognized or not is left entirely up tot he Castle Keeper. Larger sacrifices, more elaborate or designed by priests and clerics, are not listed below and are left to the imagination of the individual Castle Keeper.

Dwarves and the All Father

Dwarves do not worship any of the gods, though they recognize their power and place in the fabric of things. They pay homage to the All Father. Even though the All Father has passed from Aihrde, they honor his greater self that now gathers in the Dreaming Sea. A dwarven cleric does not pray for spells, but must rest to gather them. A dwarven paladin is born a paladin, his abilities innate.

Their actions in life are always geared toward paying the debt of life, however each individual deems fit. This debt they pay to the All Father and the fact that he has left the world of Aihrde for the Dreaming has no bearing on their obligations.

VAL EAHRAKUN

AMENUT, THE FROG GOD

ORDER: Val Eahrakun, Og-Aust
PROVINCE: Water, Earth, Knowledge
PLANE: Aihrde
ALIGNMENT: Good
TEMPLE: Rock pedestals built in cypress groves
SACRIFICES: Any wealth, magic
HOLY DAYS: Full and half moon
SUPERSTITIONS: Salt
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Mace
ADAGE: "Water Surrounds"

Amenut crossed into the world of Aihrde before the first light. In the darkness he found a river, deep and slow and he settled into its cool waters. There Tefnut found him, and granted him domain of the river and all the lands about. This was the Mistbane River that flowed through the Darkenfold. He was the first of the Og Aust to come to the lands that blossomed into the Ethvold, and he ruled there under her for many ages of the world. He grew wise and powerful in that wisdom, and ruled the hearts of men until the latter days of the world when the Ethvold failed and his power, long tied to the deep valleys and tall trees, waned. In time he faded from the minds of men so that only a few called to him and he became lost in the deep caverns beneath the world.

Amenut takes the form of a tall human with greenish skin, whose head is that of a frog. He wears no clothes but for his long, enveloping cloak. He once bore the Cloak of Amen, a powerful cloth that held much of his power, but it faded with his might and is lost; with it he held a golden scepter, a +5 mace, but it was stolen while he slumbered. The cloak acts as +7 chain mail and gives the wearer the powers of a knight.

Amenut lives on, and now dwells in the Caverns of Amenut, beneath the village of Alice in the Valley of the Frog.

He is benevolent if indifferent to the supplications of his followers. In the days when men worshiped him regularly, he answered prayers as the mood struck him, but great sacrifice was always rewarded with knowledge and boons. Now his reach is small, and he can reward only simple deeds and lesser spells to his clerics. He longs for a return to his days of glory.

Worship of the Frog God is simple and involves laying valuables at the feet of pedestals constructed at his holy sites. Sacrifices to Amenut earn the supplicant the benefits of an augury spell.

THE GULUP-THER: THE PEOPLE OF THE FROG

When men were young and lived in the deep wilderness they paid homage to creatures great and small, the Og Aust, the "Old Gods." For many long centuries the Og Aust ruled over the men of the Ethvold, but in time, their power waned and they vanished from the world, taking refuge where they could. Amenut was one of the greatest of these gods, called the Frog God by some, for he appeared in the guise of a creature with a man's body, but the head of a frog. As with the others he too fell from the minds of men and lost much power; eventually wandered the world alone. He took up residence in a network of caves under a long, low bluff. There he slumbered in buried caves beneath the ridge for countless eons. His worshipers are few and far between now, but those who do pay him homage are men call the Gulup-Ther, the People of the Frog God.

BUROL, STONE GOD

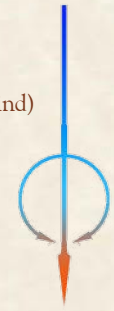
ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Stone, Mountains, High Places, Open Air
PLANE: Aihrde
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TEMPLE: The top of large rock pillars
SACRIFICES: Magic or gems
HOLY DAYS: None
SUPERSTITIONS: Hatred are unnatural
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Club
ADAGE: "The gift of stone."

In the early days, many creatures followed the works of the All Father, invisible armies living in his shadows, fearful yet adoring, curious yet arrogant in their own power. Burol was one such powerful spirit; he suffered not the arrogance of his fellows, but he listened to the All Father and watched his labors. He understood little of his language or the act of creation, excepting the nature of stone and rock. Whenever the All Father worked in stone, Burol could see it and grasped it readily. Burol harbored the knowledge and learned to master the stone. In time, the All Father set aside his labors and moved to other tasks, and the folk scattered far and wide. Burol remained, however, and he gathered a great host of the taonu muento, the giants, about him and taught them what he learned. He gave them the "gift of stone" and ever after they worshiped him as a god.

Burol has no shape that is humanoid, but can assume that of any he desires. He normally occupies rock, shaping it as he needs. He dwells in the far northern mountains of the Muenberg. There upon a flat-topped mountain he dwells, shaping the rock into a small lake surrounded by a wall, with a beach of pebbles and a long stone table upon it. He resided within the rock of the valley, taking shape only if he feels those who come to pay him homage must see him in some form or the other.

The stone giants worship Burol, but many others, particularly stone smiths, pay him homage. Sacrifices made to the stone god consist of gems, precious metals, coins, or magic, particularly anything that comes from the earth such as a periapt of wound closure. Sacrifices to Burol earn the supplicant 1d4 damage reduction for one blow.

CORTHAIN, THE JUSTICE MAKER, SLAYER OF GODS, AND SHATTERER OF WORLDS



ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Law, Good, The Wind, Prairies
PLANE: Void, The First Wind, Ea-Iul, Fortress of Iul (Wind)
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Good
TEMPLE: Remote, magically guarded complexes
SACRIFICES: The joy of the sacrifice
HOLY DAYS: None
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Spear, Sword
ADAGE: "Justice, all things come to one."

Corthain is the supreme deity of law, justice, goodness, and reason. But for the uttermost end, he alone of the gods has seen the Arc of Time and understands the end of things. For this reason it is his self-appointed task to follow the will of the All Father, and he serves that will in all things. He has carefully harbored his power, and continues to do so, for the Gonfod. Corthain deems it his role to captain an army and keep Ornduhl the Red God from halting the flow of time and the will of the All Father.

Corthain appears as a tall, well-built man. He is beautiful to behold. His hair is long and blond and his eyes are a deep blue. His face is

clean shaven, though his hair is wild. He is broad of chest, with huge hands and thickly muscled arms. He wears a type of ring mail in battle and carries the haft of his spear, Erahmindear (the "Righteous") with easy care and wields it as a staff. The point of the spear remains in the heart of Ornduhl in the Homeless House and shall a return to the haft only when removed from the Red God. His shield is more like a moon-shaped kite shield, with the arrow of law emblazoned upon it. He also carries a war hammer he calls Burgeon.

Few have ever worshiped Corthain, for he is a distant god and follows a self-imposed law to allow the will of the All Father to unfold. However, there are knights and priests who have served him in the past and still do so today. They are a secretive people, their temples located in remote regions of the world and their lives dedicated to the unswerving laws of order and good. His knights are called the Order of the Arc and his symbol is their own.

Sacrifices are made on the field of battle, always personal and often taxing. Nothing substantive is gained from the sacrifice, but failure to do so expels one from the Order of the Arc.

EALOR, Lord of Seas, the Deep Quiet, Guardian of Shadows, Master of the Green Halls

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Oceans, Salt-Water Bays, Seas
PLANE: Aihrde, the Green Halls
TEMPLE: Large columned temples near the sea
SACRIFICES: Gold, gems thrown into the sea.
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Good
HOLY DAYS: Spring Equinox
SUPERSTITIONS: Gates to the Shadow Realm
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Trident
ADAGE: "The Unconquered, Mirth, Laughter"

Ealor, whose name is the literal translation of "Deep Quiet," is the master of the oceans. He is worshiped by sailors and all who wish safe passage on the seas of Aihrde. He is the consort of Ea-Raena and they are often seen with one another. Together they spawned the merfolk. Ealor has taken little part in the latter struggles of Aihrde. He never fell to Unklar. He ruled the depths of the oceans where the Horned God feared to go.

Ealor is represented as a very personal deity, mirthful to the point of cruelty. He doesn't brook flattery and can be impatient. If cause raises him to anger, however, his wrath is unforgiving until sated. He has no stake in the Gonfod, but has an ancient grievance against the Red God and for that reason commands a fleet of those sailors who died at sea; the fleet is captained by Anderoth.

Ealor possesses the upper torso of a man but the lower of a ray. His hair is long and he sports a full beard. His eyebrows are bushy and reside over a full, broad, human face. He never wears armor and carries a trident in battle. He can take the shape of any sea creature he wishes. He dwells in the Green Halls beneath the deeps of the Oddine Ocean. There, he is attended by the merfolk, Anderoth, and other creatures of the deep. He is openly worshiped in Tagea, Brindisium, Eloria, and Ihlsa. His temples are large, columned affairs, dominated by statues of him in human form. Though rare, some high elves pay homage to Ealor. The dwarves always make sacrifice to him when they see the oceans for their old alliances are not forgotten.

The merfolk fetch any sacrifices made to Ealor. These can garner calm seas, good weather at sea, safe passage, etc.

EA-RAENA, The Moon, Ea-Raena, Dunareu, Mailahm; Sister of Ea-Vette

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: The Night Hunt, Light in Darkness
PLANE: Maelstrom
TEMPLE: Flat disk of marble built in an open
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
SACRIFICES: Silver
HOLY DAYS: Full Moon
SUPERSTITIONS: Fetters of all sorts
PREFERRED WEAPONS: A bow and arrows
ADAGE: "The light of the well worn path."

The All Father forged Ea-Raena from his own being; pulling flesh and bone from his body, he cast her into the heavens. Unbeknownst to him, she took some small measure of his heart. She brought light to the world in its infancy and ruled the heavens for an age, the silvery hue of her form resembled a curtain. Later she bound herself in a ball of light, and the moon came to be. She is the light of hidden places, and those who crawl far underground or hunt in the night call on her for clarity in the dark and lonely places of the world. She is the consort of Ealor and with him fashioned the merfolk, the females of which bear her light in their hands. She has little interest in the world beyond her joy in Ealor's company.

Ea-Raena is gentle and soft, and her hair a light auburn color, though it changes depending on which view one should take. Her expression is a sleepy one and she seems always to be drifting in and out of the moment she occupies. Her beauty is found in her innocence. She is fierce and powerful when roused to anger, for in her beats the heart of the All Father; she was the first of his willful creations, and he loved her most of all.

There are temples built to Ea-Raena in many cities. Thieves and rogues pay her homage for their dealings are often at night. Many in the wilds worship her as well, such as rangers and those who hunt at night. She is very dear to the dwarves as they were some of the first of the All Father's creations on Aihrde and she greeted the dwarves when they first walked the world.

She sends beautiful nymphs to fetch any silver laid out for her. Sacrifices can clear one's vision at night, bring better senses in the dark, dissipate fog, etc.

EA-VETTE, The Sun, Ea-Vette, Haydareu, Mailuhm

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Seasons, Rain, Weather
PLANE: Maelstrom
TEMPLE: Large complex of stone, open air
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
SACRIFICES: Gold
HOLY DAYS: 20th of Trocken
SUPERSTITIONS: Fetters of all sorts
PREFERRED WEAPONS: A quiver of javelins
ADAGE: "The light of the well worn path."

The All Father forged Ea-Vette from the lust of his desire and cast her into the heavens. There she hung as a great wave of fire until her sister Ea-Raena calmed her and taught her form. She brought a greater, hotter light to the world, and when she came to Aihrde the seasons first began. She abhors the dark in any fashion or place, driving it from her with a ferocity. She has no consort, nor does she desire the company of any creature but for her sister, not even the All Father. Ea-Vette pays

little heed to any and all but her sister as they race in the heavens. She bears a grievance against Ornduhl for that god's evil visited upon her sister, and to Unklar for his love of the dark. For this reason, she may offer aid to those who fight them.

Ea-Vette is taller than her sister, with long burnt-red hair. Her skin is pale and her countenance as fierce as it is beautiful. Long ago, she copied the dwarves in their armaments and ordered them to fashion her a breast plate of gold; with this they made a helm and greaves as well. She carries a golden shield and spear as well as an axe of gold. She is always filled with a lust to contest any and all.

Many worship her, especially those who struggle, whether in battle or in the fields. Many sailors call to her to calm storms. She is wanton and only occasionally answers prayers, and then usually only to those who have long since proven themselves.

Sacrifices are made in gold and taken by fire imps which she sends to collect. Sacrifices to Ea-Vette earn the supplicant a dry, warm/cool spot.

FIRTHNACH, Moridain, The Cobbler

ORDER: Val-Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Beginnings, Foundations, Adventure, Travel, Dangerous Journeys, Risky Endeavors, Chance
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
HOLY DAYS: The First Day of Spring
SUPERSTITIONS: The Fearful
SACRIFICES: Good food and Hard Drink or Tobacco
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Any Magic
ADAGE: "Guide my boots Oh Cobbler, to a life of glory and adventure!"

When the All Father fashioned the world of Aihrde he had no place in it for living creatures. It burned of the raw elements of the Maelstrom, and he moved through it alone. But into the world crept creatures great and small, for they peopled the Void and the warmth of Aihrde called to them. Many of the lesser of the Val Eahrakun would not walk upon the tumultuous ground, and they feared its chaos.

Moridain came to them and he spoke words of council, "It is with simple steps that your journey must begin, but it is fair to protect oneself against the dangers of the road, so allow me to fashion for you boots to wear. These will give you courage to travel and safety for your bodies."

All the beings welcomed his words and his offer so that in the early darkness of the world Moridain fashioned for the gods, and many of the Val Eahrakun, courage for the unknown. He wakened in them a lust for adventure and a desire to understand the world at large. He it was that unlocked those qualities inherited from the All Father and for this he was named Firthnach by his peers, that is Courage; who in After Ages the Dwarves called Moridain, the Cobbler, for from his courage all journeys begin.

"All those who brave the wilds of the world for adventure must begin their journey with a stout pair of boots!" So the Cobbler is want to say.

The Cobbler is a portly god who appears as an elderly man with defined features. He stands over six feet tall, with a well trimmed beard and long, gray hair always pulled back in a tight tail. His hair is thin, though all of one length; it is light on the top, where the hair line recedes. His eyes are wide, though heavy with age and laughter. His hands are broad, with thick fingers, sporting the grip of a man used to labor. He wears a simple, heavy shirt and pants with broad boots and a workman's smock. He smokes constantl.y

The Cobbler is worshiped by travelers, adventurers, explorers, and all those seeking a life less ordinary. He is kind to those who call upon him, less so to those who make sacrifice to him. When in his good graces he is free with advice, and even at times, with worldly goods. Sacrifices to Moridain earn the supplicant the path to glory. For those who do not call upon him he is indifferent, allowing them to suffer or succeed on their own. For those who curse him, he is unforgiving in his rage and may attempt to hinder their journey.

It is said by those who call upon the Cobbler that he is beneficent. The most common prayer is said over a newly purchased pair of boots, or boots that have been resoled or at the beginning of a journey: "Guide my boots, oh Cobbler, to a life of glory and adventure!"

FRAFNOG (Dragons), Lord of Dragons, the First, Earth Lord, the Great Wyrm

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Knowledge, Lore, Fire, Rage, Vengeance
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Small, private affairs: square, stone rooms with burning fires
ALIGNMENT: Neutral/Chaotic Evil
SACRIFICES: Burnt flesh
HOLY DAYS: None
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: None
ADAGE: "Upon the dragon's breath."

The Father of Dragons, the Great Wyrm, came into the world in the Days before Days. He alone of the first dragons listened to the speech of the All Father and thus speaks the Language of Creation. For this reason, though he was not created by the All Father, he is the doing of one of the Val Eahrakun. Other than the surviving sentients, he is perhaps the oldest living creature upon Aihrde.

He is believed to reside in the heart of the Kolkrab Mountains. He has fought Ornduhl the Red Duke, and so hot was his breath that it burned away the Cloak of Red from that dread god's shoulders. He fears few but the All Father and Corthain. It is Frafnog's rage and the destruc-tion that he visited upon the cities of man during the Age of the god-emperors, which led to man's fear of dragons.

Those who follow him can rely on little or no aid from him.

Frafnog is huge beyond description, his massive bulk and size are tales of legends. He is reputed to be over 400 feet long. He is red in color and has thick, broad scales along his back and flanks with overlapping plates upon his underside. His tail is long and coils about him with a mind of its own. His wings are broad and expansive. He is old and, as with all old dragons, whiskers hang down from his snout like, long, thick tendrils.

He is worshiped by dragon-kind, as well as by wizards, seers, dwarves, gnomes, and the wild elves. His holy symbol is a ring in the shape of a dragon.

Sacrifices to him consist of flesh burnt to an uneatable crisp, left on the fire until nothing remains. Many who follow him give up a portion of all that they eat. It is a symbol of knowledge. Sacrifices to Frafnog earn the supplicant automatic initiative when encountering a foe against whom you have a vendetta. Sacrifices at high level, gain the supplicant a temporary boost of 1 intelligent point.

GROTVEDT (GNOMES), CLAN LORD, BLACK EARTH GOD

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Earth, Gnomes, Farmers
PLANE: Elemental Plane of Earth
TEMPLE: None
ALIGNMENT: Neutral Good
SACRIFICES: Uncut gems, blood
HOLY DAYS: Fall Harvest
SUPERSTITIONS: Stone
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Hammer and crowbill
ADAGE: "May Grotvedt bless the Elders."

Grotvedt is a powerful creature who crossed into the Maelstrom long before Aihrde was made. He dwelt there, watching the All Father fashion the world and crossed over to it from his own realm. There, he settled in the deep places of the earth and breathed what life he could into it. He is the master of earth, dirt and soil. For this reason, farmers often call on Grotvedt for his blessings and spill a few drops of their blood into the fields to ensure a good harvest. He took no part in the various wars of Aihrde, having no interest in any of it. He comes and goes from his own realm as he sees fit. When the gnomes came to Aihrde he took a liking to them, for they dug in the earth and built homes there, and this gratified him.

Grotvedt takes the shape of a gnome, and bears their stature. He has a long, wispy white beard, thick arms, and long legs. He wears a shirt of magical ringmail and a crowbill always upon his hip. He has no true shape, as he occupies the earth and dirt, animating it into whatever shape or form he desires.

While there are no clerics of Grotvedt and thus no need of a holy symbol, his representation is found in gnomish currency. Gold coins minted by the gnomes bear a pick and shovel, representing the tools of economy and of defense of the clan, which are the foundation of gnome society.

Each of the 47 gnome clans in Aihrde worship a separate pantheon of clan elders that represent the valued traits of gnome culture. Grotvedt sits upon his throne and grants audience to the hundreds of gnome house deities of the clan pantheons, giving them counsel at need.

Sacrifices come in the guise of rocks taken from the earth and gain for those who are seen the ability to hear the soil's tale (what passed over or through it and so on).

HETH, THE CROW GOD

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Air, Afterlife
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: None
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
SACRIFICES: Casting seed to the four cardinal directions
HOLY DAYS: Prayers at sunset
SUPERSTITIONS: Noose
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Bows
ADAGE: None

Before the forests of the Ethvold grew in the Valley of Kayomar, Amenut settled in those lands. He lived in the Mistbane river, a servant of Tefnut. It was here that Heth found him. A creature of careful thought, Heth came to Amenut without form. He settled upon a rock and watched Amenut. The Frog God rose and spoke to him, and they were companions ever after. So it was that Heth, a servant of Toth, came to dwell in Aihrde. In later ages he took up the duty of guiding the dead upon the Arc of Time, of judging them, or passing them on to his master, but he always loved the Ethvold and in time took the guise of a great crow, and so he dwelt ever after.

He was worshiped as a powerful god of the underworld by the Ethrum. Men worshiped him far and wide, and almost everyone made sacrifice to the crow god before any task. His great temple they built in the Oak Stand in the Downs of the Darkenfold. From there Heth herded the souls of men and brought them to the nether planes or the stone fields as he deemed they deserved. Men called upon him whenever they went into battle, traveled dangerous roads, or did anything that might cost them their lives. His followers were many and they followed an intricate system of rites in his worship.

In time, as the Ethvold failed, so did Heth. Now he dwells in the upper reaches of the Darkenfold, powerful upon the Arc of Time, but a shadow of his former self upon Aihrde.

When he appears to his followers, it is always as a dark-skinned man with huge black crow wings. His face is dark as well with no shape, only the hint of eyes in the shadows. From the profile he sported a long, narrow beak. In battle, he carries a large magical +5 composite bow and a quiver filled with arrows of slaying. But such a form is taxing and Heth does not maintain it in these latter days. Now, reduced in power, Heth's spirit occupies the body of a huge crow that lives in the oaks of the Oak Stand. He longs for a return to greatness.

Men of the wilds and deep woods still pay homage to him and worship him as a patron, but far and wide he is still called upon and sacrifices are made to him by casting seed in the four cardinal directions, in hopes that the road of the dead shall be straight and true. Sacrifices to Heth also earn the supplicant the effects of a speak with dead spell.

HROTH, THE EARTH MOTHER, ROOTED MAIDEN

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Earth, Soil, Roots
PLANE: Aihrde
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TEMPLE: An area cleared of all stones and vegetation
SACRIFICES: Burnt vegetation
HOLY DAYS: The first 4 days of Regnerisch
SUPERSTITIONS: Waves
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Mace, club, flail
ADAGE: "Blackened feet are wisdom's teeth."

In the Days before Days the Ethvold grew wild and free. The first and greatest of the world's forests was a strange place, forbidding and avoided by many because of it. But some few of the Val Eahrakun were unafraid and entered the Ethvold and made it their home. Hroth was one such.

Even before Tefnut made that forest her own realm, Hroth came to the wood and passed beneath its dark eves. She passed through the wood as a wind and spied the whole of it from north to south and east to west. At last she grew weary of weaving through the branches of the new grown trees, and she alighted upon the ground. Her bare feet sank into the cool, dark earth. The love of it came over her so that never again did she take flight or enter the water, but always remained where the soil was rich and full of life.

So it was that Hroth was one of the first of the Og Aust. Her domain was the earth, the soils, dirts, and roots of the world. She wandered bare foot through all the soils of that place and the wide world beyond

and people came to call on her when they broke ground for any reason. Hroth, however, proved a capricious god for at times she was full of mirth and laughter and at others she was hard and cold. In this she reflected the soils of the world.

Hroth is a full-breasted woman, though short and lithe, whose form is decorated in long mosses of many hues. Her skin is dark and her eyes darker still. Her hair is a matted tangle and weaves into the mosses of her dresses such that none know where the one begins and the other ends. Her feet are always bare and the black earth of the soil clings to them as she walks or runs. Many call to her and clean a patch of earth for her to stand in when they are in need of her aid.

IMBRISIUS, The Mistress of Our Pain, She Who Wears the World

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Chaos, Evil, Torture, Slavery
PLANE: Gehirr
TEMPLE: Three circular rooms
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil
SACRIFICES: Hair, Scalp
HOLY DAYS: Full Moon
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Knife
ADAGE: "The knife's ecstasy."

Imbrisius is the consort of Narrheit. She is the goddess of pain and death, and she is wholly evil. She takes joy in creating vile monsters and casting them into Aihrde to wreak havoc.

She dwells in the swirling madness of Fordeg ot Rinck, however she loves the feel of cold stone beneath her feet so that wherever she walks the chaos forms to evenly-spaced flagstones. As she passes, they dissipate and join the chaos. Though on an occasion the stones remain behind and on Aihrde they are prized by her followers, and those that can, are salvaged and made part of her temples.

Imbrisius is slight of build with subtle curves and an inherent beauty. She enjoys soft silks for clothing that enhance her beauty and leave one wanting for more. Her light colored hair rests upon bare shoulders as a wisp of fog, and simple waves. Her eyes are deep and dark, reflecting pools of charm. Her charms are immense and to look upon her is to be smitten with an overriding lust to be near her. All this belies the idea that Imbrisius appears as one wishes to see her, and drives the lusts of men and women and the envy of all who see her.

She is well-known as the instrument of Narrheit's designs among the Aenochians and is both reviled and worshiped by those peoples. It should be noted, however, that Imbrisius choses her own path more often than not. She is willful and loves to cause suffering and pain to any and all she encounters.

Her worship involves dark rituals under the cloak of night. Her holy symbol is a tear drop, and for every level gained, the cleric adds another tear drop to his necklace, bracelet, armor, or staff. The ringing of their passage is a presage of terrible things to come. High priests wear leather masks.

Their sacrifices of hair and scalps, placed upon her alters, summon spirits of fire that consume them for the realms of chaos. Sacrifices to Imbrisius earn the supplicant to share one's pain with one's enemy. Such sacrifices might work, however, Imbrisius may find it more enjoyable to watch her supplicant suffer and redouble whatever afflicts them.

Most of all she loves to trouble the followers of Narrheit, for their suffering causes her consort much annoyance.

KAMAT, The Wolf God

ORDER: Val Eahrakun (Og-Aust)
PROVINCE: Age, Disease, Death
PLANE: The Net of Ea-Raena
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral
TEMPLE: A round wooden chamber
SACRIFICES: Food and Drink
HOLY DAYS: Last day of each season
SUPERSTITIONS: Daylight
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Sword
ADAGE: "Without mercy or malice."

In the world's youth, Kamat became enamored with Ea-Raena, that is the moon, when her light first shone on the world. He called to her, for he loved her, though she did not hear him. So it was, and so it remains. Kamat came to the Ethvold, for the forest was dark and quiet, and he could not always see Ea-Raena. There he found some measure of peace. He created the wolves there and set them loose in the world. In time, they spread throughout the wide world, but always they echoed his calls when they saw the moon. He spends much of his time in the Net of Ea-Raena in the hopes that he might find her there.

Kamat remained in the Ethvold, and when the Ethrum came he watched over them, but when he saw some fail he came to them and slew them, quickly and without malice. He stalked the tribes of men, seeking any who might not be able to carry their own water, and slew them. For this reason Kamat is the bane of the weak, the infirm, and the old, for he seeks them and slays them. He culls the herd. Kamat has no mercy, nor forgiveness. It is beyond his understanding to spare for mercy or emotion.

Kamat appears as a large black wolf, 8 feet tall at the shoulder. His eyes are white, reflecting the light of the moon and the power of Ea-Raena.

He is associated with disease, old age, and death. For this reason men fear him and pay homage to him to keep him away, and they fear his children, the wolves, as well. Men sacrifice food and drink to Kamat in hopes that they might sate his hunger and keep him from their kin folk who might be old or infirm.

KEKKI, The Snake God

ORDER: Val Eahrakun (Og-Aust)
PROVINCE: Evil, Time, Wasting Away
PLANE: Maelstrom
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil
TEMPLE: Pyramid
SACRIFICES: Feasting on raw red meat using a ceremonial, crooked dagger
HOLY DAYS: Harvest Moon
SUPERSTITIONS: Circles
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Dagger
ADAGE: "Where time's waste, Kekki lies."

Kekki came to the Ethvold after its first flowering, but before the Ethrum. There he found the gardens of Tefnut and seeing them, he desired them. But his mind was not bent toward their beauty, but rather the desire to devour them. Only the wasting away of things caught his eye.

Where the water grinds down riverstone lies Kekki, where the rain shapes the hill, or the root breaks the earth, or time wastes all, Kekki lies. It is with an eye toward the sorrow and evil of loss that Kekki's mind is bent, not the nobility of spirit that comes with the passing of years. He lords over the waste of time and loves the ruin of it. Kekki is altogether without emotion. He is not evil. He is not good. He just is. Tefnut never warmed to him, and he took the guise of a long, legless creature, and from him all snakes came into the world.

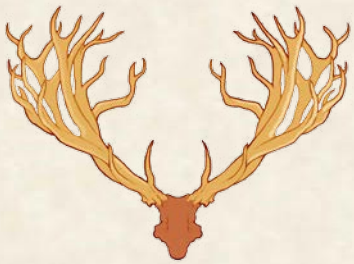
Throughout the ages the slow wastage of time would fail to satisfy him; then he would appear among men as a force of chaos and destruction. Often summoned from distant realms of delight, he would return and vie with Amenut for dominance of the Ethvold and its people. Once in a great while, his priests would gain the upper hand and he lorded over the forest in a horrible reign of death and madness. For this reason all men hated him and his worship was punishable by death. When the Ethvold diminished so did he, so that he took his favorite form and sank into the morass of that timeless forest.

He always appears as a great serpent, with the head and upper torso of a man. Twice armored in his own scales and rings of +3 chain mail, he wields his long twisted +5 dagger of venom, as skilled as any warrior.

The early Ethrum feared Kekki as he ruled the worlds of evil and darkness. Few worshiped him openly, but those seeking power beyond that of mortal men paid homage, gathering in small cults and making sacrifice to him. Sacrifices earn the supplicant the ability to age one object, once, reducing its effective by -1 (magic items are excluded).

The lizard men of the forest still worship Kekki, and for that reason he possesses some power and can grant clerics spells and their abilities. He does not dwell in the forest but rather lives on distant planes, coming only when summoned.

LET, The Hart



ORDER: Val Eahrakun (Og-Aust)
PROVINCE: Hope, Last Gasp, New Beginnings
PLANE: Aihrde
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TEMPLE: Open glade or meadow
SACRIFICES: Something dear
HOLY DAYS: Sunrise
SUPERSTITIONS: Fork in the road
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Bow
ADAGE: "From all endings there are new beginnings."

When the first light fell upon the eves of the Valley of Kayomar, Let spied the river Ardeen. He crossed from the Void and came to the river to sate his thirst. The water was pure and clear, and he saw in it the end of things and knew of the Arc of Time. He took himself to Toth and there called on him for answers to what must come. Toth told him only that "from all endings, there are beginnings." For this reason Let became hope to all living creatures. For a great long while he wandered the world, watching it unfold, but he at last returned to the waters where first he drank of the river of Ardeen, for it was more refreshing than all others. So he dwelt in the Ethvold, for by those days, Tefnut had grown her garden far and wide.

Let always appears as a large stag with antlers like a crown. He stands 12 feet tall at the shoulder and is rusty brown with a white underbelly. He calls in a deep voice every time he sees the sun rise above the horizon, for this heralds a new day.

Though the Ethvold is long gone, worship of Let continued for many years. Only during the Winter Dark did it wane, for his calls fell off when the sun never rose and many assumed he fell to the Horned God, but recent years have seen the god's return. Though he dwells in the Net of Ea-Raena, he comes to Aihrde to drink of the river Ardeen and other rivers of the broad valleys. He is still actively worshiped in the Darkenfold and Eldwood, as well as regions of the Valley of Kayomar.

Sacrifices made to Let consist of items of value to the supplicant; they may have a monetary value or a personal one. Let gathers them at the close of each day. Sacrifices to Let earn the supplicant the ability to redo one action.

LYTHE, the Farsighted Handmaiden of Mordius

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Noon, Quiet, Stillness
PLANE: Aihrde
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TEMPLE: Upon a hill open to the sun
SACRIFICES: A bull
HOLY DAYS: First day of summer
SUPERSTITIONS: Shadows
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Poleaxe
ADAGE: "The quiet of the light."

Lythe crossed over from the Void with her sisters Tuatheal and Ynul. In the darkness of those early days she was separated from them and wandered alone for a great while. When the moon came to Aihrde she marveled at it and climbed a high mountain to watch the curtain unfold. When the light changed, she lusted it for it and called on Ea-Raena to teach her. But that goddess was bent on the All Father's many tasks and did not heed the call, and Ynul's fire calmed and she slept upon the mountain peak. It was the light of the sun that woke her and she rose in wonder at it and all the wonderful world unfolded at her feet and she learned then that there was no cor- ner of the world into which she could not see.

She spied her sister Tuatheal and called out to her and they were rejoined. She came into the presence of Mordius and despite all her power and strength, Lythe found herself joining Tuatheal and the Green Mother's Handmaiden. She watched over both and took the role of guardian, and she became the eyes of Mordius. But she failed to see the treachery of Ornduhl, for he was the Red God and no power but for Erde himself, ever saw into his mind. When he slew Mordius, Lythe was taken by despair. She fled into the wilds and wreaked such havoc on the servants of Ornduhl as she could. Later, she rejoined her sisters and removed herself to the tower of Perinlast.

Lythe is shorter than her sister and thin, so that her features are angular and sharp. Her hair is dark and she wears it in a braid in battle or otherwise. The color blue is holy to her and Lythe always wears a tabard of purest blue over her hauberk. She disdains the ruin of all living things but the light of the moon and sun, and for this reason she wields a poleaxe when at war.

MORDIUS, Mordius the Green, Our Lady of the Lake

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Wisdom, Patience, Plants, Animals
PLANE: Aihrde, Eahrtaut
TEMPLE: A grove that surrounds the mouth of a spring, in the wilderness or in cities, stone alters
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
SACRIFICES: Wine, prepared food
HOLY DAYS: First day of spring, last day of summer
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: None
ADAGE: "Life begets Life."

Mordius is the sister of Corthain and Ornduhl. Mordius embodies humanity and nature, the balance and beauty, and enlightenment and journey. She guided many of the sentients in the early days of the world, and her gardens were set throughout all of Aihrde and gave birth to many great and noble trees. She set the greater store of her powers in

the Great Tree, Eahrtaut, of the All Father's crafting. Ornduhl became so envious of his sister's enlightened beauty that it drove him mad, and he murdered her, so that her physical form died on Aihrde and she resides only in the Great Tree. She understands the All Father's lust for creation more than any other and as such understands that labor alone completes the circle.

She is tall and beautiful, with long golden-red hair. Her skin is alabaster and her eyes green. She enjoys long, flowing clothes when she is seen; however, her form now is only incorporeal.

Worship of her is rare as she fell long ago. However, her essence remains throughout much of the world of Aihrde and gives birth to the animistic religions of the druids and many of the tribes of men. Those who do call to her, build groves in forests and worship her through sac- rificing drinks and foods. She may or may not grace them with bountiful harvests, depending on the effort they set forth, for without effort, their can be no beauty.

Sacrifices are set at the roots of trees; they dissolve into the earth. Sacrifices to Moridus can break the spell of a drya

NARRHEIT, The Abyssal Lord, Lord of Chaos, The All Seeing, Unburdened One

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Chaos, Destruction, Misery, Deception, Carelessness
PLANE: Gehirr
TEMPLE: Always in a tower, usually in the top, open to the sky
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil
SACRIFICES: The designs of other men
HOLY DAYS: The Long Day (4th of Trocken, longest day of the year)
SUPERSTITIONS: Straight Roads
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Scythe, ever-changing sword
ADAGE: "Seeds of discord."

Narrheit's mind is always alive with dark plots. He is incapable of hate, loathing, or any real emotion. The histories of the world and all its peoples are riddled with his deceptions. Many of his plots have born horrible fruit, from the Aenochians to the war between the Red God and the dwarves of old. Narrheit gains little or nothing from these machinations, aside from the joy of the chaos they sow, but because of this he is seen by many as an ally against other forces, and thus Aristobulus allied with him in his war against Unklar. He dwells in that land of chaos where the Maelstrom devours the Void, called Gehirr. There he drifts upon the currents of madness, never assuming any form or shape.

Narrheit takes great joy in the madness of the Wretched Plains, where dwell the host of tvungenos, the unfettered. These lesser creatures of the Val Eahrakun are kindred spirits of Narrheit and turn to him for inspiration, lusting for the clever wit of his power and the pure chaos of his intent. He does not lead them, for no one leads the creatures of chaos, but he is able to rouse them to action when he desires. In truth, this is as dangerous as it is helpful, as they do as they please. In the end Narrheit does not care one way or the other.

His only ally is Imbrisius, for her mind is like his. Though it is known that Ealor finds great joy in Narrheit's company.

On Aihrde he appears as a tall, waif-like human or elven male or female, dressed in gowns of wondrous color. His hair is long and dark and ever moving. He carries a straight-edged scythe in battle. The blade he calls Werlick, and it is sown with all the emotions of all creatures: hate, love, joy, sorrow, and so on. Whenever he wields the blade these emotions plague any with whom it comes into contact. He enjoys wearing chain and plate and a cloak sewn of doubt. Any who look upon his cloak forget themselves.

While his followers are dubbed foolhardy, many call upon their dark master for power and revenge. Some twilight elves and denizens of the deeps pay homage to Narrheit. Wizards seek out his knowledge, but understand the dangers. Those who actively worship him build temples in high towers, open to the sky.

His symbol mocks Mordius and the Earth, for chaos is all things and nothing escapes the Maelstrom. Sacrifices made to Narrheit are always the intent of other men, to wreck another's plans or designs. He as often appears to lowly parishioners as to the lordly. Calling on him may bring any number of effects as the whim of things rules his mind.

NUNT, The Fish God

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Underworld, Water, Lakes
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Caverns with water
ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil
SACRIFICES: Food given to the fish
HOLY DAYS: Crescent Moon
SUPERSTITIONS: Flowering trees
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Axe
ADAGE: "The gift of the Fallen."

Nunt dwells in the deeps of the Endless pools. There he harvests the souls that Heth finds lacking. As they slip into the Pools, he devours them. These are misspent souls who deserve more than the oblivion of the Endless Pools but are found unworthy of the Stone Fields, and after a time of his own choosing he returns the spirits to the world to begin again. He was widely worshiped in the Ethvold and found solace in the company of Heth, who dwelt in those deep forests for many rin of the world. His worship has fallen off so that few know of him, but those who do, seek to make sacrifices for the good of their own afterlives.

Nunt always appears in the guise of a thin humanoid creature with a long face that much resembles a fish's head. He has scales all over his body, fins on his legs and arms, and gills along his neck. He rarely leaves the water and is able to move from one body of water to the next, no matter its size.

All feared Nunt, for his domain was that of the dead held between worlds. His temples were, as the few that remain are, all underground, in caves or dungeons where water was prevalent. His main temple complex stood in the Barrel Hills near the Barrel Wood. In battle he carries a vorpal axe and a +4 shield and dons +4 scale armor.

Nunt vanished from the world many centuries ago, but he dwells still in the deep waters beneath the Lake of Nunt in the low river country of the Darkenfold. He has taken the guise of a large albino salamander.

His totems, all of the moon, were common and most everyone carried one as a sign of respect for the deity and as a symbol to keep them out of Nunt's realm. To gain his good will, a portion of food is always tossed into the water so that the fish there might eat. Sacrifices to Nunt earn the supplicant the ability to find someone on the Arc of Time.

ORNDUHL, The Red God, the Bull-Hound, the Red Duke, Lord of Chaos, the Bull, Rot of the Dwarves

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Chaos, Command, Death, Destruction, Evil, Magic, Trickery
PLANE: Homeless House on the Wretched Plains
TEMPLE: Long stone hall, iron alter
ALIGNMENT: Evil
SACRIFICES: Blood, living sacrifice
HOLY DAYS: Third day of every third month
SUPERSTITIONS: Trees
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Two-handed sword, hmmer
ADAGE: "What is now, must have been."

Ornduhl is Lord of the Wretched Plains and Master of the Homeless House. He was the first to rise against the All Father. He struck the first flame and took up the Sword of Embers. He snared the Arc of Time. He is the father of the race of goblins and architect of the fall of the dwarves. His malevolence knows no bounds. To Ornduhl, all living creatures are but tools for his ultimate end, which is to stop the flow of the Arc of Time so that he may order all the worlds as he believes the All Father desired.

Long ago Corthain pinned him to his throne in the Homeless House, breaking off the point of his mighty spear and leaving it in Ornduhl's chest. In the Homeless House he resides, both spiritually and physically. When the spear point is removed from his chest, he shall know freedom and return to the world. Some say that this shall be the first act of the Gonfod, others that it shall reverse the Judgment and shall release the Val Eahrakun so that they may order the world as it was intended.

Ornduhl is a tall human in form. He is thin, but muscular with narrow features. His frame is powerful, but there is the air of exhaustion about him, a deep-seated weariness that mars his face and hands. He wraps himself in the remnants of his Cloak of Red and leans upon his huge two-handed sword named Gruthfael, the Sword of Embers. His eyes are sharp, and he misses nothing that is within his vision. To look upon him is to know despair. Any who fail to overcome him, which is almost impossible (wisdom save, CL 100), become his willing slaves.

Evil beings offer prayer to Ornduhl. Though his worship has waned over the past centuries, there are still secret cults and hidden temples that pay him homage. These decadent courts are filled with the Red God's madness. Worship of Ornduhl is more like a drug than a spiritual path. It is more common in the east and with the Aenochians than any else.

Sacrifices to Ornduhl must be in blood and earn the supplicant his favor, which usually translates into a protection from alignment/good spell for a few rounds.

PE-BESAT, The Boar God

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Contest, War
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Large stone building
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Good
SACRIFICES: The blood and sweat of any contest
HOLY DAYS: First day of the month
SUPERSTITIONS: Dice and games of chance
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Mace or hammer
ADAGE: "With your own will."

Of all the Val Eahrakun who came to the world, Pe-Besat possessed the greatest strength. Mighty in stature, quick to anger, and hard to calm, Pe-Besat wandered the wild paths, ever in search of a contest of strength or arms. He met challenges of one-on-one combat with an urgency which belied his race. Filled with mirth he laughed off defeats as easily as victories. He was, however, quick to anger when met with treachery or cheating. At such times, he turned to unforgiving violence. He served Tefnut and bore her a great affection, as a brother would a sister, and for this reason more than any other he settled in the Ethvold. In time his power became entangled with that of the wood, though he never cared for any of the struggles of the gods.

Pe-Besat took the form of a tall, well-muscled man with the head and shoulders of a boar. He wore a breast plate with Tefnut's own symbol upon it and carried a massive four-bladed mace in hand. Four large tusks crowned his snout and these he favored with gold and platinum and gems. Worship of the Boar God, as he is most commonly called, has largely fallen off, with few paying him homage, but in the deeps of the Darkenfold and the Eldwood, and in many wild places of the world, men and elves call upon him to aid them when and where he can. At times he appears among them, and through his form, they know him.

Sacrifices to the boar god consist of the blood which soaks the ground in physical contests and earn the supplicant a +1 on attack rolls for 1 round.

TEFNUT, Hand Maiden of the All Father, the Lady of Pain

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Rivers, Lakes, Ponds, Ethvold, Deltas, Estuaries, Earth
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Post and lintel construction, open air, pool in the center
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Neutral
SACRIFICES: Burying the dead by water, and personal blood
HOLY DAYS: River Fest, the first day of spring
SUPERSTITIONS: Flies and filth
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Kopesh sword
ADAGE: "Before all, the Waters of Life run before and after."

Tefnut came to Aihrde in the Days before Days and found a home in the deep waters of the lakes and rives of the Ethvold. Her home lies in the waters of the Tarvish. She joined with Ealor in the ordering of water, coming to see all the rivers, lakes, and fresh water of the world as her domain.

Tefnut is worshiped far and wide, by many names, throughout the world. She has no consort and follows her own path, though the Og Aust are her closest brethren. She dwells now throughout the rivers, but appears rarely, for the worship of her has fallen off in the lands of her home, Kayomar, and has since been replaced by that of her own creation, Durendale, of the Val Austlich.

Tefnut is slight of build, smaller than her kindred. Her hair is long and green, tangled with flowers and river grasses. Her eyes are empty and colorless, without pupil or iris. Her beauty is such that few can look upon her, and those that do are bound to her. In ancient Ethrum, this was the test of the true kings; those who failed to look upon the goddess could not sit the throne of their people. She abhors raiment of any kind, preferring the foam of the water.

Tefnut is still worshiped in some Kayomar locales, and also in regions near fresh waters. She is primarily worshiped in Brindisium, where the people pay homage to the triumvirate of Tefnut, Toth, and his servant Falkenjagger.

Sacrifices to Tefnut are always in the form of the dead. Good or evil are laid upon the banks of rivers, where the water might take them. This is the circle of life for Tefnut and feeds her desires. Also children are given to her. Those so sacrificed are taken by the goddess, healed of all ailments, and made to serve her beneath the river's flow. In time, they shall rise with her and aid her in the Gonfod and the wars with the Red God.

She sends water nymphs to collect children, the dead, or blood. Clerics generally sacrifice abilities (spells) for a time, in exchange for power.

TOTH, Master of the Path, Death, Shadow of the All Father

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Death, Knowledge, Magic
PLANE: The Endless Pools
TEMPLE: Buildings are always round with round alters, often libraries
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
SACRIFICES: Written words, donated to temple
HOLY DAYS: Last day/first day, 28th of Arist, 1st of Erstdain
SUPERSTITIONS: Riddles
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Kopesh sword, spear
ADAGE: "He who writes in stone."

Toth is the Shadow of the All Father. He has many servants who aid him in this. He knows the River of Time, its origins and its endings. He watches over the Endless Pools where the Arc of Time gathers. There he marshals the dead and guides them to their final resting place. As such he has the knowledge of the All Father. Because of this supreme knowledge, Toth has perfect command of the Language of Creation and thus, magic. His understanding of the universe, and therefore his place within it, has resulted in his steadfast refusal to use the Language of Creation.

His knowledge is incomplete however for he does not know the minds of the Val Eahrakun such as Ornduhl. Therefore he is in doubt about the outcome of the Gonfod. Toth interacts rarely with mortals or gods.

Toth is tall, with three faces. He wears a high crown upon his brow and carefully crafted clothes woven of the souls of the lost, those who have no place in the afterlife but are deserving of more than the Endless Pools. He rides in a golden chariot pulled by two huge lammasu. His staff is tall and ornate and he carries it at all times. It is the Staff of Judgment and with it he may know all the makings of one's soul, but for the exception of the Red God.

Toth's worship is typically individualized. Sages, wizards, lammasu, sphinx, seekers of knowledge, and those involved with the dead all pay homage to him in some way. The devotees of the Falkenjagger always pay homage to Toth, for Toth is that god's patron. Toth's holy symbol represents the two worlds of man and god bound together.

Sacrifices to Toth are given at his temple and usually consist of the written word. If one wishes to sacrifice to Toth away from the Temple, the parchment (or whatever it is written on) is generally laid beneath a round stone. His minions take the parchment by secret ways, depositing it in the nearest temple. He may grant knowledge or insight for such a gift.

> Legend holds that the Book of Toth exists in a city on the edge of time, and any who finds it may ask any three questions they desire, which the book must truthfully answer.

TUATHEAL, The Voice, Handmaiden of Mordius, Sword Maiden

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Song, Youth, Morning
PLANE: Aihrde
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TEMPLE: Open air at the mouth of a spring
SACRIFICES: Honey and breads
HOLY DAYS: First day of spring
SUPERSTITIONS: Any who refuse to sing
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Longsword
ADAGE: "To waken with the voice."

Tuatheal came to Aihrde in the darkness of the Days before Days. She crossed over from the Void with her sisters, Lythe and Ynul. In the chaos of those days she lost sight of her sisters and wandered in the shadows of the deep valleys. She called to them and her voice carried a beauty like no other sound, such that the All Father paused, if only for a moment, to look upon her. But her song brought Mordius the Green and she took up Tuatheal as a handmaiden and taught her to speak to all things and through her she wakened many plants and animals to life. Tuatheal served her ever after.

When Mordius fell at Ornduhl's machinations and passed from the world, Tuatheal was driven by grief to assault the walls of the Homeless House. She girded herself in a hauberk of chain, helm and shield and took up the sword. But to breach those walls was not in her power and she battered at them in vain. After she joined her sisters and, together, they built a tower of stone and wood, Perinlast, and set such sorceries upon it as they could.

Tuatheal is a tall, beautiful woman with long golden hair. Her eyes are bright, but change color from green to blue and back again. Her features are soft, though her poise and gaze are hard, for she has worn the hauberk of chain since Mordius's fall, waiting for the Red God's return. Her voice is her true weapon however, for it is clear and clean of all doubt, and when she speaks it holds the power of the morning's sun.

UNKLAR, The Horned One, the Dark God, Darkness, the Marsh Lord, Lord of the Winter Dark

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Command, Evil, Law, Darkness, Winter, Unchanging, Undeeps
PLANE: The Void, Aihrde
TEMPLE: Large temples, alters of obsidian
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil
SACRIFICES: Any pure creature
HOLY DAYS: Winter's Night (14th of Winter Dark, the longest night of the year)
SUPERSTITIONS: Circles
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Utriel maul, morningstar
ADAGE: "Look in yon mirror and the Lord Darkness."

First created as a nightmare of the All Father, Unklar dwelt in the Undeeps of the Void for many long ages. He was driven there by a host of the Val Eahrakun. He had no knowledge of the world until Nulak-Kiz-Din enlightened him, and then he lusted for it. Powerful beyond imagining, he came to the world summoned by the Winter Rune. There, he reigned upon a temporal throne for a thousand years. He spent of himself and ordered all things as he saw fit, changing the shape and nature of the world.

He was at last banished to the Void, where he remains an ever-present force and memory, seeking to return to his throne. Unklar's power has waned, but he is still of an order of magnitude that few could combat.

Those who strive to resist change, and who worship the dark and evil follow Unklar the Horned God.

Unklar appears as a gigantic beast-like creature, with the upper torso of a man and the lower torso of a goat, with cloven feat. He sports massive bull-like horns. His goat legs are segmented and covered in thick, coarse black hair. Otherwise his skin is red, face broad, and his eyes are filled with an abiding hate. He carries a massive mace in hand called Utriel, the Mace of Judgment.

Unklar's dark priests roam the world, seeking to summon him anew to return the Winter Dark to the world. Large, Gothic cathedrals to Unklar still tower over the kingdom of Punj and the United Kingdoms, for the people there revel in the memory of the Age of Winter Dark. In other parts of the world, Unklar's temples are hidden, and his worship kept secret. The sorcerers and wizards in the Paths of Umbra worship Unklar, and the ungern continue to do their master's bidding. While most humanoids pay Unklar sacrifice, the goblins loathe his name because of the years of slavery and torture they suffered at Unklar's hand, and the orcs, aside from the Hlobane orcs, have taken to the worship of Helg.

Unklar's holy symbol is the crescent moon, typically displayed on a black field. It represents his bending of the flat world created by the All Father. The Judiciaries of Aihrde, Unklar's clerics, indicate their station by the orientation of the holy symbol pointed downward. Those warriors who are, or were, legionnaires in Unklar's army, point the moon toward the left, while those in the Paths of Umbra point it right. Common worshipers point the moon upward, thus doubly representing that they worship the Horned God.

To slay any creature, pure of heart, noble and good in the name of Unklar may capture his attention and earn for the supplicant a bonus one on his next action.

WENAFAR, The Faerie Queen, Mother

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Stars, Elements, Fey, Wilderness, Halflings, Animals, Birds
PLANE: The Land of Seven Rivers, Aihrde
TEMPLE: Any wilderness
ALIGNMENT: Good
SACRIFICES: Grove
HOLY DAYS: Full moon & morning after first spring rain
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Staff
ADAGE: None

Wenafar first concerned herself with the birds, flowers, vines, and other things that walked and crawled and grew. She is the mother of all birds, making them of herself. She had little concourse with the other gods but for Mordius and Frafnog, who loved her. She set the stars in motion in the heavens and Frafnog lit them. Many called to her on long roads and difficult journeys, for she was the light in the darkness. When the All Father's mind split and the Land of Seven, Rivers came to be, Wenafar chose that realm as her home; there she guided the elves and other fey in their journeys and thus earned the title of Faerie Queen. In Aihrde she rose to true prominence through her struggles with Unklar. Wenafar commands the elements and the fey, and watches over the animals and peoples of the forests.

Wenafar's worshipers are numerous and varied. All who live in Faerie call her queen, and elves (whether high, wood, wild, or twilight) pay her homage. Forest dwellers, rangers, and many druids worship her, and the common folk of Aihrde who live away from civilization often offer her prayer. Gnomes and halflings typically incorporate worship of Wenafar into their religious ceremonies. She is also queen of the elemental lords and those native to the elemental planes.

Wenafar appears as a beautiful maiden, young but with the air of age about her. Her hair is long and usually drawn back and pinned. Birds follow her wherever she goes and there is always an orange oriole upon her shoulder. She prefers long single-piece gowns with wide, deep sleeves. She hides twin gates in these sleeves, one to the land of Seven Rivers and the other to the Shadow Realm.

Other than her holy symbol, a lily, worship of Wenafar incorporates no recurring raiment, ceremony, or organized prayer. Typical display of the holy symbol is done with a wand or rod, with a bulbous "seed" bottom leading toward a lily in full bloom. Wenafar excepts no sacrifices, however, those who aid birds in distress, feed them, house them or those who set seed to ground may call upon her to light the path in the darkness and show them the way.

YNUL, Handmaiden of Mordius

ORDER: Val Eahrakun
PROVINCE: Early Evening
PLANE: Aihrde
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TEMPLE: Upon flat rocky outcrops
SACRIFICES: Silver
HOLY DAYS: Last day of winter
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Spear
ADAGE: "To this end."

Ynul watched her sister's cross from the Void and followed only slowly. The world in its infancy seemed unpredictable and the rage of the All Father's creation consumed all it touched. For this reason, when she crossed, she lost sight of both Tuatheal and Lythe. She left the surface then and passed beneath the world into the dark of Ornduhl's world. There she took up with the Red God and sought to learn what he would teach her. In those days he did not guard his power as he did in after ages and he spoke to her willingly like a father to a daughter. But his speech was heavy and filled with innuendo and hidden meanings. Ynul listened to him for long in the dark places of the world and in time she mastered his language and in this, ever after, was she able to discern the true thoughts of any living creature who spoke with voice or body.

In time she grew weary of his company and longed for that of her sisters so she left him for the world above. She came to a world greatly changed for the sun had come to the world and the green life of spring was exploding across the land. She marveled at it and wandered far and wide until at last she found her sisters in the company of Mordius. She joined them and they worked together to fashion many things and the world blossomed. But Ynul understood more than her sisters and even more than Mordius herself for Ornduhl was her first teacher and he was mighty in his craft. She heard the true meaning of things and the echo of death lay in all things. Ynul would not willingly leave her sisters then, and they dwelt in company ever after.

Ynul is slender though shapely and her long, brown hair hangs below her waist. She wears it loose and it flows around her like silk in the wind. She enjoys the early evenings most of all and is often seen wandering the glades and hills basking in the dying embers of the setting sun. In battle she wears no armament, shield or helm but wields a spear with deadly intent for whomsoever it strikes it draws out their life.

VAL AUSTLICH

AENOUTH (High Elves), Mistbane, Willow Wind

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: Air, Wind, Knowledge, Magic, Open Spaces
PLANE: The Seven Rivers
TEMPLE: Elaborate marble and stone, open
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Good
SACRIFICES: Earth
HOLY DAYS: First sunrise of summer every 40th year
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Long bow
ADAGE: "The ever-walking."

Wenafar fashioned Aenouth of her wild abandon and she gifted him with powers over the air and wind. He built his abode in the Seven Rivers and was there paid homage by the elves. It is said that Aenouth harvests the spirits of the fallen elves, as the curses of Unklar have kept them from following the Arc of Time. Aenouth keeps them until such time as the curse is lifted and they can walk the long walk unimpeded.

Aenouth appears as a tall, thin, beautiful, winged elf lord. His hair is long and light in color. His eyes are green. He despises clothing of any sort, carrying only a long golden sash. He carries a staff of hewn wood that depicts an eagle upon its crown in honor of Wenafar.

Aenouth's holy symbol is an elven rune which relates to unyielding wind. As this symbol is not displayed outside of elven ceremonies dedicated to Aenouth, clerics of the deity utilize a glass vial containing air, or if possible a wisp of mist or fog, as their holy symbol to combat undead and cast spells.

Sacrifices to Aenouth consist of earth, the richer the soil the better. It symbolizes one's desire to leave the earth of stone and dirt behind. Aenouth sends air elementals to take in the sacrifice, which they carry on high and scatter in the wind. Sacrifices to Aenouth earn the supplicant a favorable wind, whether at sea to move a ship or on land to carry off one's scent.

AMENEXL (Dark Fey), The Red Thorn

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: Trickery
PLANE: The Endless Pools
TEMPLE: Mushroom circles
ALIGNMENT: Evil
SACRIFICES: Hanging birds (and kind)
HOLY DAYS: Third day of each week
SUPERSTITIONS: Birds
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Rope
ADAGE: None

This minor god originates in the Wretched Plains and was once a servant of Ornduhl. His domain lies in trickery and deception. Many of the fey call him lord and serve his purpose. Amenexl possesses an abiding hate for Wenafar and acts against her purpose whenever he may. He is the favored patron of witches, war- locks, werewolves, and other denizens of the night, and many of those fey call upon him to aid them in the weaving of dark spells. Amenexl is especially interested in gaining possession of the Blood Runes.

Amenexl typically appears as a stunted, pale-skinned brownie, but like all faeries he changes form upon whim or as needed. He carries a bow with poisoned arrows wherever he goes. His quiver is called the Bag of Foul Deeds for those struck with his arrows turn to evil, and unless cured of it, spend out their days causing what harm they may.

His holy symbol is unknown, though his followers bear tattoos of briers on their arms or carry small articles woven from briers.

Sacrifices consist of birds, of any type, hung on tree branches. The bird is a favored creature of Wenafar, and such disrespect shows Amenexl and the worshiper's contempt for her. Any bird slain in such a manner, and sacrificed to Amenexl, draws his attention and he takes it. Any supplicant who sees their sacrifice vanish knows that Amenexl has hard their prayer; however, this does not mean the god will answer, for Amenexl's heart is black as pitch, and none may say what his answer might be. When he does answer he usually does so with curses to a foe of the supplicant. For instance, a foe may fumble in combat but instead of dropping the blade strike his own ally or friend.

ATHRIA, The Birth Mother, the Fates

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: Rivers, Birth, Death, Fate, Gardens, Foretelling
PLANE: The Arc of Time
TEMPLE: Built of stone in the midst of running water
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Neutral
SACRIFICES: Rope or Twine
HOLY DAYS: 1st of Erstdain
SUPERSTITIONS: Hanging
PREFERRED WEAPONS: None
ADAGE: "Upon this we live and die."

Athria is a child of Tefnut and is the goddess of maternity and continuation. Her domain is the river, and she dwells upon the Arc of Time, though she has no capacity to see its beginning or its end. She does however guide people's fates and may pull individual strands out if she desires to know what came before, and see what might be in the future. Whenever she desires to pass into Aihrde she does so through the world's water. It is said that Athria ap- pears to one as he dies and removes all pain associated with the death, allowing him to pass to the Arc of Time unburdened, to be judged by Heth or others.

She appears as a maiden with one of three faces, one for birth, one for life, and one for death. The first is beautiful and innocent, the second is worn but caring, and the third is old and benevolent.

Her holy symbol represents the cycle of life from birth to death.

Most all peoples, except elves, pay her homage, especially during spring ceremonies and at the birth of a child. Her worship is thus widespread. Sacrifices are made by burning a small piece of rope or twine. Sacrifices to Athria relieves the suffering and pain of the supplicant or one of their choosing.

BURASIL

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: Fire, Strength, War
PLANE: The Seven Rivers
TEMPLE: Temples are stone, with fire prevalent
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Good
SACRIFICES: Anything of value burnt on an alter
HOLY DAYS: 1st of Uthdain
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Bastard sword and dagger
ADAGE: "The fire of wrath."

Burasil came of the wrath of Wenafar, driven by the hate of the Fontenouq. For many centuries they hid in that realm between worlds, unable

to go home or return to Aihrde. In that cauldron of rage Wenafar came to abide and gave it shape and form. Burasil is held a god of war by the elves, and is paid homage by all the elves of the Fontenouq and many of the high elves as well.

He dwells in the Seven Rivers, behind walls of fire. He aids those in Aihrde who fight evil in all its forms. He has a particular hatred for the Horned God Unklar.

Burasil is thin, though powerfully built. He decks himself in silver chain and a tall breached helm with a long, if narrow, shield. He carries a longsword in battle named Arthenous which means the wrath of fire. Any mortal struck with the blade and fails that save is incinerated.

Worship of Burasil always involves fire. Upon achieving priesthood, his clerics receive their holy symbol, a gold ring, within which an actual flame always burns. Most non-elves avoid touching such a ring, and thieves do not covet it for the curses it might bring them. If a cleric of Burasil loses his ring, however, he must atone by successfully drinking from Durendale's Holy Flame in Kayomar. These rings have small covers and can be closed or opened as the priest desires. When open, they offer a faint light that shines about 2-3 feet out from the priest.

Sacrifices made to Burasil are burnt upon an alter of iron. He sends fire elementals, little more than shades of fire, to consume the sacrifice and bring it to him in the Seven Rivers. Sacrifices to Burasil earn the supplicant the ability to light a fire on wet fuel.

KRATEUS, The Sword Ruler, Beast God

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: Chaos, Destruction, Murder
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Dark windowless rooms
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil
SACRIFICES: The Innocent
HOLY DAYS: None
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: A broadsword
ADAGE: None

Narrheit caused great mischief in the world, and not least among his seed was the beast Krateus. Born of Narrheit's hate, Krateus strode the world during the early ages of man. He hunted the Ethrum in the wilds of the Ethvold and haunted the cities and towns of the Aenochians. He preyed upon the innocent, slaying and devouring them. Those who called to him for aid found a less than sympathetic god, risking their own lives to his wrath. Many fell to his wanton cruelty. It was another servant of Narrheit's, the wizard Zoas, who captured the god and bound him in his sword. There Krateus remains.

When released from the sword, Krateus takes one of two forms. He may appear as a beautiful man with long red hair, dark eyes and pale skin, baring a broadsword. However, he may also appear as man with the head of a leaf-nosed bat, also carrying the broadsword. In this latter form he reeks of death. The cursed sword still remains in Aihrde, and Krateus is ever seeking escape from his prison. Those who wield it release him from time to time, but he always returns to the blade.

The worship of Krateus is kept alive by those who deal in treachery and chaos. Murders done in his name serve as sacrifices, and may summon the god's pleasure. This may be a good thing in that the god grants them a +1 on any hide check, particularly for an assassin. It may go ill for Krateus is an evil creature and hates all things, so he may reveal them to the grieved.

DURENDALE, The Avenger

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: Good, Law, Strength, War, Iron Mongers
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Grove of trees, stone buildings
ALIGNMENT: Lawful good
SACRIFICES: Gold, gems, silver, wealth
HOLY DAYS: 1st of Uthdain
SUPERSTITIONS: Omens brought through nightmares
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Longsword, chain and plate armor, shield
ADAGE: "A just vengeance is the true path."

Tefnut fashioned Durendale of her ire. He first took the form of a blade, hard and cold. He is seen as the brother of Glorianna.

He served Tefnut in many capacities but not until the Wint er Dark Wars was he brought to the wider world. There he was born in battle time and again, fighting the forces of law and evil and chaos. Many call upon him for luck and aid when facing dark times and he is not stingy in his assistance if those who call are pure and innocent. He is the chosen foe of Krateus, and the two are often at odds.

Durendale appears as a knight in chain and plate. He carries a kite shield and uses a longsword in battle. He always rides a large warhorse, Grind Earth by name.

Though his followers and temples do not number as many as those of the other deities, many call upon Durendale to combat evil, for in him is the power of pure good. Durendale is actively worshiped in the kingdom of Kayomar at the shrine of the Holy Flame and the tomb of St. Luther. He is served by the Confessor Knights led by the Val Tulmiph St. Luther. The Avenger has found no one new to bear his blade and so he remains hidden, waiting for one worthy.

Durendale's holy symbol is a downward pointing representation of the sword with an upturned crossguard. The crossguard represents the chalice into which all matters are poured, and the blade represents the straight arrow of law and justice that funnels out.

Sacrifices to Durendale are always made at a forge, be it active or not, or in his temples. Once placed, a priest or smith takes the sacrifice. If there is no one to take the sacrifice, he sends ghost riders to fetch the payment via the Net of Ea-Raena. Sacrifices to Durendale earn the supplicant a bonus 1d4 temporary hit points for battle purposes only.

GLORIANNA, Mistress of War and Battle, Lady of the Stone Fields

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: War, Honor, Nobility of Spirit, Sacrifice
PLANE: The Stone Fields
TEMPLE: Large stone buildings with statues and gardens
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Neutral
SACRIFICES: Blue linen, used for bandages
HOLY DAYS: 5th of Lothian, as a day of sacrifice
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Longsword
ADAGE: "Peace is found on the far side of battle."

Corthain forged Glorianna from a sliver of his heart, making her in the image of Durendale; for this reason she is called the sister of Durendale.

Created for the war against Ornduhl, she is militant in her quest to destroy chaos, Glorianna is the lesser deity of war. She holds honor upon the field of battle as the highest order one may reach, even to the point of death. She is the final judge for a knight's entry into the Stone Fields. If she deems his life was not spent well, or his honor was tarnished, she drives him forth into the world as a lost spirit, or if she deems him worthy, he is reborn to remove the stain upon his honor. These last are called the Knights of the Blue Veil.

Glorianna takes the form of a beautiful woman. In battle she wears full plate and chain armor. Her helm hides her long red hair and the armor belies her inhuman strength, otherwise she wears cloaks and gowns of many hues of blue. She is cunning in battle as well. She wields an ex- quisite magical sword of holy power that rivals Durendale itself, called Luthieal.

The worship of Glorianna is far and wide, particularly among the nobles of the Aenochians, many of whom have reacted violently to their people's association with Unklar. She is also beloved in Anglamay and all the surrounding counties. Her temples, large stone affairs with elaborate gardens, have spread in all the knightly realms. Knights often gather in tourneys to celebrate her.

Sacrifices of blue linen are made in both temples and on the battle fields. Any wound bound with blue linen and sacrificed to Glorianna heals 1 HP for each level of the one who made the sacrifice.

THE HOLY TWINS, Adrius/Zernius, Toda/Virda

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: Law (Toda) and Good (Virda)
PLANE: Wall of Worlds
TEMPLE: An open flat stage
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Good
SACRIFICES: Meat (any type)
HOLY DAYS: None
SUPERSTITIONS: Knots
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Any sword
ADAGE: "Reflections."

The twin wolves came to Aihrde from the Inner World of Inzae when the Dragon slew Todavirda, whose body fell to earth and split mountains. From the ruin of her were born the wolves. The mirror of them came to Aihrde and so they hunted the wilds of the Days before Days. They found man in his early wanderings upon the Sea of Erun and there they taught them of what was law and what was good. Many took up their beliefs and prayed to the wolves as they desired. Even after many rin of the world had passed and the worship of the Twins faded, the wolves continued to hunt the wilds for evil and chaos. They bring strength to the weak and offer protection to those in need.

Both the Twins are large wolves, roughly 5 feet tall at the shoulder. They sport thick coats, gray, white, and black, and long tails. Large chests and paws, long legs, and fangs of ivory mark them as larger than almost any other wolf. Their eyes are passionless and impersonal.

Their worship is rare but they are revered by paladins, knights, monks, and many common folk of noble and good heart. Their holy symbol is a representation of two wolves.

Sacrifices are made in the guise of the flesh of a wild animal, which is set out for wolves to eat. Sacrifices to the Holy Twins earn the supplicant protection from being attacked or eaten by wolves if they should fall in battle

OGOLTAY (Goblins), The Fat One, Our Mother, the Mouther

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: Goblins, Hatred
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Underground, water and stone
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil
SACRIFICES: Precious metals, gems, jewels
HOLY DAYS: Birth Right (11th of Lexlicht)
SUPERSTITIONS: The Color Red
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Spiked ball and chain
ADAGE: None

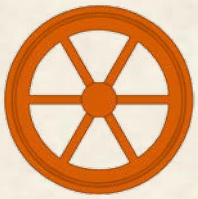
Ogoltay is the Mother of Goblins and was the creation of Ornduhl the Red God. Ogoltay resides in Ngorondoro and lays many eggs from which goblin warriors and drones, and once in a great while, an eldritch goblin, are born into the world. She is filth personified, whose only purpose is to spawn goblins that hound the dwarves underground. She has no deeper understanding of the world, the Arc of Time, Gonfod, or anything beyond hate.

Ogoltay appears as a beastly goblin woman, monstrously fat, so much so that she cannot move of her own accord and must rely upon a retinue of slaves to cart her around on the seldom occasions she wishes to move. She wears a dress of her own filth and writhes in an unspeakable morass of nightmarish fluids. She can speak only the goblin tongue and even then only a few may understand her. She communicates her evil thoughts via the goblin priests.

Her holy symbol is a representation of herself.

All goblins pray to her as their primary deity. Very few other creatures offer her sacrifices on a regular basis for she is corruption incarnate. Sacrifices to Ogoltay earn the supplicant her eye, once revealed a supplicant is known to any goblins in the area, who may or may not aid them as their mood deems.

ORE-TSAR, The Horse Lord, Daimatar



ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Peace, Nature, Agriculture, Home, and Revelry
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Large columned buildings
ALIGNMENT: Neutral or Neutral Good
SACRIFICES: Gold and silver
HOLY DAYS: Feast of the Unmaking
SUPERSTITIONS: Sand is symbolic of death
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Club, staff, anything wooden
ADAGE: "Ore-Tsar."

The most pervasive deity of the day is that of Ore-Tsar, who was born of a Thought from Toth of the Val Eahrakun. At first Toth sought to fashion his Thought into a creature, but then set the Thought aside as far from his purpose as the Shadow of the All Father. The Thought took on a life of its own and stole into Aihrde through the Three Gates, with the sole purpose of bringing aid to the beleaguered children of the All Father. He took the guise of a horse, for this was the first living creature he saw. Knowledge of him spread far and wide, for wherever he rode, the grief of those whom he touched passed into memory. Ore- Tsar made his abode upon the eastern wind and from there he watches over his many worshipers and gives them aid if he deems them fit.

Ore-Tsar often takes the shape of a giant roan colored horse and his followers pay great respect to that noble animal. When he appears in

human form, he is as a perfectly formed giant, 10 feet tall, muscular, and clean shaven with short, curly hair. He wears no clothing, nor carries any weapon aside from the trunk of a tree.

He is worshiped largely by the common folk of Aihrde, but also by gnomes and halflings. Ore-Tsar's followers trace their heritage to the town of Haven at the foot of the dwarven realm of Roheisen Hohle. Phillip the Guileless arose there, speaking the praises of Ore-Tsar and converting the folk of the land.

His worship spread rapidly from village to town, from town to city. Churches and monasteries sprang up and people flocked to Ore-Tsar's banner. Many of the current monarchs of the world worship Ore-Tsar. His church has thus grown powerful and wealthy. The church's bishops, prelates, and abbots are always prominent figures in their local communities, and regularly engage in local politics.

While the priests in the upper echelons of the Church of Ore-Tsar display wealth in their dress, the warrior-priests and traveling priests wear more practical and common clothing.

Sacrifices of gold and silver are taken to the temples and there left to be given to those in need. Sacrifices to Ore-Tsar earn the supplicant a trouble free sleep, allowing one to heal a hit point in a single eight hour period.

RHEALTH, Blackheart, Scourge of the Dead

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: Thieves, Rogues, Pirates
PLANE: None
TEMPLE: None
ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil
SACRIFICES: Another man's possessions
HOLY DAYS: Dawn of the Dead (6th of each of month)
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Scythe
ADAGE: None

Rhealth came to the world by the designs of Imbrisius. She forged him of her spite and took him as a lover, but he stole her tears and escaped into the world of Aihrde to hide them from her. He then fled her and her consort and settled upon the Endless Pools, where he robbed the dead of all they possessed or sought to carry into the afterlife. His theft earned him the emnity of Imbrisius and she hounded him whereever she found him, but the Endless Pools were Toth's domain and few, if any, could withstand his gaze so she left off her war with him.

During the Winter Dark, Toth grew tired of his machinations and bid him leave his domain, so that Rhealth fled again to Aihrde where he traveled the world beneath the shield of the Winter Dark. There he hunted the good and causd suffering where he could, but when the Horned God was cast out and his realm ended Rhealth found that Imbrisius had not forgotten their old grudge and she and hers hounded him and his once more.

Rhealth takes on many guises, having no true form, and appears as a human, elf, dwarf, orc, woman, or man. He always carries a pendant, however, with a clawed hand.

Thieves and rogues pay him heed, as do pirates and other people of foul means. Sacrifices are made to him by taking another man's property and casting it off, unused. The greater the sacrifice, the greater chance that the god might take note. Sacrifices to Realth earn the supplicant a bonus on their next thieving check.

WULFAD (Halflings), First Walker

ORDER: Val Austlich
PROVINCE: Trails, The Hunt, Pursuit
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Flat rocks, in the open
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Good
SACRIFICES: A portion of a hunt's take
HOLY DAYS: First and last day of any hunt
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Short bow, shortsword, and knife
ADAGE: "No faith in double speak."

Wenafar fashioned her lust for the hunt and set it loose upon the world as a great hound. The Hound followed her at first but in time she set it free and it roamed the wide world, hunting prey of all types. Always his hunts were set to please Wenafar, so that he took care in what and how he killed - always with mercy, so that none suffered. Thus Wulfad became the greatest hunter the world had ever seen. No creature could escape him, no scent could be hidden, no place lay from his sight. During the Winter Dark he took a particular liking to the halflings for they were hunted by the lords of Aufstrag to the ends of the earth. He aided them where he could so that their people would not be erased from the earth.

In his natural form, Wulfad appears as a huge dog, long of leg with a short coat of black hair. His eyes are blue and altogether human. When he appears to the halflings he often appears as one them, with light brown curly hair. His feet are bare as are his hairy arms. He fights with a sword, but wears little armor beside a hide-covered wooden shield which is emblazoned with his holy symbol, a rising sun.

While halflings, like gnomes, worship family deities, they all recognize Wulfad as the father of the halflings, and first among their people. Even those halflings touched by human civilization pay homage to Wulfad, although their ceremonies typically reflect a desire to return to life in the wilds. Beyond the halflings, many hunters, trackers, rangers, and the like pay homage to Wulfad.

Any hunter that sets aside a portion of his catch and offers it as a sacrifice to Wulfad may gain his attention. To collect the offered goods, Wulfad sends ghost dogs. Sacrifices to Wulfad earn the supplicant a bonus on their next track check, or increase the amount of game they can catch if a ranger.

VAL TULMIPH

ANGRIM the Black (Dwarves), The Black Dwarf, Keeper of the Keys

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Chaos, War, Secrets, Locks, Hidden Places
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: None
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil
SACRIFICES: Keys
HOLY DAYS: None
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Battle axe
ADAGE: None

Angrim the Black is one of those ancient dwarves corrupted by Narrheit. That god's influence drove Angrim to madness, so that he now wanders the planes making war and spreading chaos. He sleeps in the

shadows of ruins. Any unfortunate enough to stumble upon him or camp near him are usually murdered, strangled to death. Thus any who choke in their sleep are seen as victims of Angrim the Black.

He is small with dark hair and a curly dark beard. He wears scale mail and wields a long dirk and ax in battle. His face, long and worn with time and hardship, is marked by deep scars and pocks. He travels in an ancient flying ship. Evil dwarves, and those who dwell in the deeps, pay him homage.

Assassins, murderers, and thieves set store by him as well. His holy symbol is four black swords upon a beaten shield, their pommels touching and radiating out to represent the many directions of war and chaos.

To sacrifice to Angrim, one simply takes a key and sets it beneath the shadow of ruins of any wall or building. He collects them every night and it is with these that he passes through all the doors of the world. Sacrifices to Angrim earn the supplicant one use of a knock spell.pell.

ARISTOBULUS, The Counselor, the White Mage, Ar-drauk (dwarf for the White Dragon)

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Magic, Power, Chaos
PLANE: Endless Pools
TEMPLE: None
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral
SACRIFICES: Magic
HOLY DAYS: None
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Staff, dagger
ADAGE: None

The patron deity of arcane magic, Aristobulus commands powerful and destructive sorcery, and like his patron Ealor, he is quick to wrath but finds humor in most things. He is accounted one of, if not the, greatest magi of all time.

His old abode lies in the Rhodope Mountains, but it is juxtaposed with a similar tower that stands in the Endless Pools, not far from the Furthnopt where Huadun wallows in a sea of filth. There Aristobulus watches for movement upon the Arc of Time, ever seeking greater power and knowledge.

In most all cases, he appears as an old wizard, long of beard, with pale skin and an eye-patch over his left eye. He is quiet, contemplative and rarely shows his hand, except with great force and conviction. he keeps his own council. Aristobulus and his followers constantly work and war against Nulak Kiz Din.

Aristobulus is mostly worshiped by sorcerers, wizards, and other arcane spell-casters, including a number of humanoids and intelligent beasts.

Various demi-human races also incorporate his worship into their pantheons. The wild elves pay homage to him in the form of a white eagle.

The halflings see him as a great white wolf, watching and protecting them from Nulak-Kiz-Din. He typically appears in each of the panthe-ons of the gnome clans as a wizened old sage.

Sacrifices made to Aristobulus must be of a unique or powerful nature to garner his attention, in which case, invisible servants come and remove what is set down for him. Smaller or lesser magics, bring nothing but the smell of wizardry and burnt air. Sacrifices to Aristobulus earn the supplicant a task that needs completed, the end of which may bring wealth or power or nothing at all.

AUGUSTUS, The Warlord

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: War, Strength, Contest, Battle
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Open field inside wall
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Neutral
SACRIFICES: None
HOLY DAYS: None
SUPERSTITIONS: Treachery
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Any sword
ADAGE: "War is not the foulest of things. Far more foul are cowards."

Augustus rose to prominence during the rise of the god-emperors. Unbeatable on the field of arms, he rose in the estimation of all men, be they warriors or kings.

He fell at the hands of a horde of enemies, the last of his people, but he created such havoc on the enemy that their losses were uncountable. Their lamentations woke him upon the Stone Fields, and he set about building himself a stronghold. There he gathers a band of warriors, those worthy of standing at his side. These shall serve him during the Gonfod, fighting whosoever he desires. They are called the Crucible of Iron.

Augustus wears a red tunic and arm and leg grieves, with shaped leather armor. He bears a broad shield, wears a Romanesque helm, and prefers a pilum and gladius in battle.

Augustus is a god of strength, personal battle, and war as well as warriors of all creeds, especially mercenaries. All members of the Cult of the Sword pay him homage. Almost all the various armies of the nations of Aihrde pray to him, especially before battle. His worshipers also include the wild halflings and wild elves.

He is a master of all weapons, and his clerics often outfit themselves in heavy armors. Augustus' clerics tattoo his symbol upon their body, and often incorporate it into their armor, helms, and shields.

He will not tolerate any sycophant or creatures that would bribe or otherwise flatter him; his respect and attention is given only to the brave and stalwart men and women of action.

He accepts no sacrifices, though he may pay out a boon or two for those found worthy.

DALADON LOTHIAN, Lord Protector of the Forest, Keeper of the Great Oak

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Forests, Wilderness, The Lost, Homeless, Hapless
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Grove of Trees
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Good
SACRIFICES: Wealth of any kind
HOLY DAYS: First day of each month
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Two-handed sword, battle axe
ADAGE: "From the wood, nourishment."

Daladon Lothian walks the forests of Aihrde meeting evil with contempt, but always seeking to maintain a balance in the natural order of things. He maintains some command of all the elements, but particularly earth and air. Daladon is the consort of Wenafar and father of Utumno, and worship of those deities incorporates some prayer to Daladon as well. He always wields a great two-handed sword.

Because the high elves fled at the sound of Unklar's coming, this god has no love for them. He cursed them with the need to sleep, and thus dream, forever more. His followers are often the same, only tolerating the high elves' presence. Daladon is beloved by most commoners, as his priesthood, the Lothians, is one of the most active in the world, building refuges, orphanages and the like throughout Aihrde.

Daladon is worshiped by rangers and druids, particularly those members of the Watchers in the Wood and the Order of the Oak, as well as by all denizens of the forests. To them, he appears as a stern elf with flowing copper hair, encased in plate armor and a living cloak of leaves. While high elves pay him no heed as expected, most all wood elves, wild elves, and half-elves call upon him.

Their image of Daladon is more rustic and wild, generally conforming to the typical dress of their culture. In some instances, he appears fully bearded. Many halflings incorporate Daladon into their family pantheons in the form of a wild halfling with a flaming red mohawk, covered in tattoos, who slays giants with a single swing of his sword.

Daladon's holy symbol is a representation of the Great Oak with branches representing the two Val Eharakn, Mordius and Wenafar. His clerics typically display the symbol on the end of a staff.

Sacrifices made to Daladon appear throughout the forests of the world. The sacrifice, be it gold, food, furs, magic, or other, is piled upon the feet of a tree with roots large enough to break the surface of the ground. Wood sprites come and take the offering away, generally after the donor has left. Sacrifices to Daladon earn the supplicant a safe path to follow through the forest, usually in the guise of an animal trail, lost road, etc.

Daladon once carried the blade Noxmurus, "Night of the Dead" in battle. It belonged to his brother, Meltowg, who bound the spirit of his rage within it. The rage takes the form of an imp, Bodach, by name, and gives the blade extraordinary powers. It can exert its will casting a glamour of fear about it, and allow the wielder to become invisible amongst other powers. It is a +5 two-handed claymore. For more see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde.**

DOLGAN (Dwarves), The Forge King, the Undaunted, First Born

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Forge, Iron Working, Unbending Strength
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: A forge
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral
SACRIFICES: Any type of ore
HOLY DAYS: 4th of Frostig (Battle of Gotzenburg)
SUPERSTITIONS: Broken weapons
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Battle axe
ADAGE: "By the mountain's roots."

In Dolgan the dwarves see the pinnacle of what they strive to be: a master of stone and metal and a mighty warrior strong of spirit, hearty of fortitude, and quick to action. For this, he is sometimes called Dolgan First-born. He commands the realms of iron and battle, of conquered fatigue. It is to Dolgan that the weary on the field of battle turn, for in him is the unstoppable strength of the mountains. Though he spent time as a slave in the pits of Unklar, dwarves do not look down upon him for this, for it is known that such was his desire to repay the All Father his debt that he turned to Darkness to learn greater skills of his craft. He is the Undaunted. He travels the world of Aihrde a solitary dwarf, offering his skills for the trade of a tale. Travelers know him for his love of storytelling.

He is stout, even for a dwarf, and wears a full beard that is speckled with gray. His face is weathered and beaten from years bent over the flames of his burning forge. His hands are thick, gnarled roots of muscle and bone. He is often grinning and filled with mirth. He disdains armor unless in battle, wearing little more than a chain shirt. He wields Havoc, a great axe and weapon of revenge that he forged in the pits of Aufstrag while a slave to Unklar.

Dolgan's other followers include gnomes, halflings, warriors, and those who work with stone or metal.

Sacrifices are made upon a forge, raw metals given to a smith or left upon it. No payment is asked from the smith, only that the iron be blessed and worked into a tool worthy of Dolgan. Sacrifices to Dolgan earn the dwarf lord's attention and strengthen their weapon, gaining them a +1 to damage rolls.

FALKENJAGGER, The Hanging God

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Revenge, Justice, Knowledge
PLANE: The Net of Ea-Raena
TEMPLE: Small blank, plastered, rooms, kopesh sword on the wall
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Good
SACRIFICES: Weapons
HOLY DAYS: 7th of Winter Dark
SUPERSTITIONS: Spikes
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Hand to hand combat
ADAGE: "The Cult of the Hanging God."

The foundations of his worship lies in Toth, who is the patron master of the Falkenjagger. Toth however, is not his patron for his stewardship, but rather the knowledge possessed in his role as the Shadow of the All Father. The Falkenjagger is the spirit of vengeance on Aihrde, and many call on him, though he visits only those found worthy.

An enmity exists between Falkenjagger and Dolgan, but it is not one of open hostility. He bears the open hatred of the deity, Nulak-Kiz- Din, who bound and tortured him for a thousand years. It was also there that the worship of Jaren Falkenjagger began, in the form of the Cult of the Hanging God. He is the father of Pryzmira and the line of emperors who rule in New Aenochia.

Falkenjagger appears as a human, often dressed as a monk. Tattoos litter his body, and within his chest burns a glowing palm-sized jewel. In combat, he wears a great helm shaped like a hawk's head, and he com- mands gigantic hawk wings which spring from his back at will. Legend holds that Falkenjagger guards the Books of Toth in a floating city on the edge of Time.

His worshipers include all seeking revenge, those interested in planar travel, and paladins, warriors, and monks. His clerics prefer loose fitting raiment, but are not slow to don armor and wield mighty weapons in combat.

A weapon is set on the floor before the kopesh sword of any temple. It is instantly consumed in flame and sent to arm the undead armies that the Falkenjagger gathers in the Endless Pools. These are gathered, not for the Gonfod, but to serve Toth in his time of doubt. Sacrifices to Falkenjagger earn the supplicant some secret knowledge of their enemy or whomsoever they are hunting.

KAIN, The Abyssal Duke, the Red Duke, Duke of Altengrund

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: War, Chaos
PLANE: Maelstrom
TEMPLE: Red stone, open air
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil
SACRIFICES: Blood
HOLY DAYS: None
SUPERSTITIONS: Sleeping
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Broadsword, battle axe
ADAGE: None

Duke Kain is an oddity in Aihrde. His origins are unknown, presumably coming somewhere from the multi-verse. Kain came to Aihrde in the service of Unklar, and has been known to travel the lands of After Winter Dark for plunder and war.

For centuries Kain has struggled to carve himself a kingdom in the Wretched Plains. In that respect, he rules a vast sprawling realm upon the abyssal planes from his great fortress-city of Altengrund. Kain is merciless, having no love for family, friend, or foe. He may come to the aid of one, only to slay him later. He is always at arms with Narrheit.

He is tall and stout, with a full beard and black hair, though his hair is now sprinkled with gray. His face is chiseled with a distinctive scar upon his cheek and chin. His eyes are deep blue and always alert. He wears no mail but a chain skirt, and carries his black-hearted vorpal sword, Omdurman, in hand with a winged helm upon his head. Kain rides a nightmare, Sadowa, and in battle.

Those that lust for war and chaos sometimes call him patron. It is believed that demons in the abyss actively worship him. It is said that he can only be killed while sleeping.

Blood sacrifices must be made on the field of battle to gain his attention. Sometimes these work, sometimes they do not and sometimes when they do, it is worse for the worshiper than anyone else. In either case their supplicant's weapon acts as a dancing sword for one round, attacking foes or the supplicant.

NULAK KIZ DIN, Mongroul, the Troll Lord, the Walker

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Magic, Power, Evil, Mastery, Law
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: Five-roomed complex (like a paw)
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil
SACRIFICES: Magic, wealth
HOLY DAYS: 17th of Trocken (date of his passage on the Paths of Umbra)
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Staff
ADAGE: "These Paths of Umbra, of power."

Nulak-Kiz-Din's history lies buried in the past. He first graced the chronicles during the rise of the Aenochian Empire, serving the emperors and founding the White Order. Over the centuries he harvested power of many kinds but not until he mastered the runes of old did his power leave the realm of mortals.

He rose to prominence when he summoned Unklar to Aihrde via the Paths of Umbra and the Winter Rune staff. After he was called Mongroul, the Troll Lord, and other names besides. That dark god's fall proved the fall of Nulak as well, and he bound himself in magics to avoid the judgment of other gods. His whereabouts are unknown for he has bound himself in powerful sorcery. He comes to those who call, in the form of a huge black cat or a vulture.

Nulak is tall and stygian colored. His balding pate is adorned with a thin beaten wire of woven platinum. His voluminous cloaks cover his frame and trail the ground behind him. He carries a staff, which he uses as both weapon and comfort. Within the folds of his cloaks are many illusions and gates to other planes. By shifting the cloak he can change appearance or travel to distant realms.

There are few followers of this dread deity. Most who do pay him homage are, in fact, adherents of Unklar who wish to bring the Horned God back to the plane through Nulak's sorcery. Their greatest strongholds are in the Confederation of Torrich, those lands where the wizard-priests of Unklar were long established. The exceptions to this are the Crna Ruk assassins who pay only Nulak worship, and the trolls and other fell beasts of the Gottland and Moravan plains. Some wizards and sorcerers worship Nulak for they find Aristobulus a distant deity. Nulak lost the Winter Rune Staff long ago.

Nulak is sometimes called the Troll Lord by those who wish not to speak his name. His holy symbol is the crescent moon of Unklar pointed downward, with five chimes hanging from it in the position of a cat's paw pad. The dreaded tingling of the chimes heralds the coming of the Troll Lord.

Sacrifices made to Nulak are set upon the alters of his temples, where they fold into themselves until they vanish. Sacrifices to Nulak earn the supplicant some secret knowledge revealed, that always binds them in some way to Nulak, either through desire, lust, greed for understanding etc.

SETIVA

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Redemption
PLANE: Aihrde
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
TEMPLE: Large colonnaded hall
SACRIFICES: Valuables
HOLY DAYS: None
SUPERSTITIONS: Broken swords
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Any sword
ADAGE: "By this action I redeem."

Setiva became legend by striking the blow banishing Unklar from Aihrde with the sword Discerpo. This blow was unexpected and delivered by the hand of an elf and for this reason it is seen by many as an act of redemption for that people. And thus Setiva is called upon when one seeks redemption for past deeds or actions. The elves in particular look to her and call out her name for that people seeks forgiveness more than most.

Setiva passed from the world after her battle with Unklar and settled in the Land of Seven Rivers, but she could find little peace there and the openness of the Void haunted her for her enemy dwelt there now, spent of his desire and will, but always hungry for what he had. To avoid the haunting of it she passed back to the earth and vanished beneath the forests of the north where she built a home of stout wooden walls. People came to her for redemption, but she would not give it to them freely so she set many traps and happenstances on the journey to her abode and those who overcame them found redemption and those who did not went home in regret or died.

Setiva is a tall elven woman. She wears commoner's clothes, though made of the finest linen and cotton. She welcomes all to her home that arrive and feeds them well. In battle she carries a heavy iron shield, sport a helm and chain and plate mail. She loves the long sword above all weapons and uses it with deadly skill.

ST. LUTHER, The Gallant, the Confessor, Dreaming Paladin, Lord of Dreams

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Confession, The Dreaming
PLANE: The Dreaming
TEMPLE: Round, columned complex, domed roof
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Good
SACRIFICES: Coin or blue cloth
HOLY DAYS: The Seven Days of Unmaking
SUPERSTITIONS: Wooden clubs
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Longsword
ADAGE: "Upon My Arm."

In Luther burns the magic of Corthain and the power of the Holy Flame. He wielded the blade Durendale with impunity and strength of will against evil in all its forms. When the blade broke in the long battle with Nectenbo, Luther fell, only to return a god upon the Dreaming, born there by the power of Corthain. He cloaks himself in the righteousness of Corthain and became Luther the Confessor. In Kayomar, he is worshiped as a saint.

As the Confessor, St. Luther does service to Corthain, showing a side of justice that the supreme deity lost long ago - redemption. As the Gallant, St. Luther is a beacon of law and good for knights and paladins to follow. He lords over the Dreaming Sea with Utumno, the Lord of Nightmares, as one of the Dreaming Lords. There Luther sails the water's of the All Father in the ship the Swan May.

He is tall and wears chain mail, with a kite shield. His hair is short, kept beneath his helm. St. Luther's holy symbol represents Corthain's rules of law. The three swords stand for retribution, confession, and judgment, all intersecting upon the plane of goodness. he is known for his ambivalence to many of the conerns of men, but for where there is an injustice.

In battle he wears the Cloak of Confession and wields a +5 sword of sharpness. His chain is magical as well and teh great helm that sports the power of his being.

The Confessor Knights serve St. Luther upon the Dreaming Sea. More, they travel the land seeking to bring forgiveness through confession to the wanting. It is in dreams that all who pray to St. Luther can most easily reach their patron. All races incorporate this incarnation of Luther into their pantheon in some form.

Sacrifices are made by individuals who place a silver coin or silver cloth beneath their heads during sleep; those found worthy are brought to the Dreaming and granted a benefice (a bonus on next attribute roll, or similar effect).

Passage on the Dreaming is impossible without first purchasing a ride, or acquiring one, from Saint Luther or Utumno. When the payment is made, the Dreaming Lord called upon, lets the passenger onto the ship they command. Either god places a geas of service upon the passenger as payment, what the service is, only the adventurers road can say.

UTUMNO (Twilight Elves), Horse Lord of Nightmares

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Nightmare, Twisted Paths, Trickery
PLANE: The Dreaming
TEMPLE: Hollowed out space beneath a tree
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
SACRIFICES: A piece of unworked copper
HOLY DAYS: Night time, False Dawn
SUPERSTITIONS: Sunrise is prayed against as it reveals all
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Long bow
ADAGE: "Shades of cold, like fire, burn."

Utumno is the son of Wenafar the Faerie Queen and Daladon Lothian. He is the darker shade of St. Luther, and together they lord over the Sea of Dreams as the Dreaming Lords. The twilight elves revere him, as do all night stalkers and many magi. All people throughout Aihrde make prayer to him to keep nightmares away.

Utumno is dark, thin, and tall. His lithe form, more like to a shadow than a body, is crowned with a shock of short silver white hair. His eyes belie his dark nature as they are black, with no pupil or iris of which to speak. He can see into all planes at any time he wishes.

He moves through the night in a misty form, and he wears an alien armor. He rides an other-worldly horse across the planes, and sails the ship the Dream Horn upon the Dreaming Sea. His holy symbol is a square pegged between two crescents, representing the two faces of the Dreaming Sea and the two ships that sail upon it unimpeded, the Dream Horn and the Evening Swan. He is seen by some as cruel, but he is not so, though he is uncaring.

Unworked copper is thrown into any body of still water: a lake, pond, well, etc. as sacrifice. Prayers are answered during sleep where some hidden knowledge of an enemy is revealed.

URNUS GREGARIA, The Minstrel

ORDER: Val Tulmiph
PROVINCE: Music, Poetry, Yarns
PLANE: Aihrde
TEMPLE: A tavern
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Neutral
SACRIFICES: Song, poetry
HOLY DAYS: Feast of the Unmaking, Coronation Day (11th of Erstfhroe)
SUPERSTITIONS: None
PREFERRED WEAPONS: Longsword, spear
ADAGE: None

Urnus Gregaria was once a mortal who achieved god status through a life of adventuring. He was a bard of the highest repute and specialized in string instruments. His journey through life carried him to many foreign lands and into contact with druids and wizards. He was renowned for his ability to craft magical staves. Through heroism in service to the empire, he was granted a noble title by the emperor in the city of Gaxmoor. Urnus therefore has a special connection to that city, and he considered it his home despite his preference to be on the move.

He is tall and gaily dressed in courtly clothes. He is handsome as well, and clever in all that he says. His stories are numberless and he can recount tales of the Days before Days as if he lived them. Concentrated worship of Urnus outside of Gaxmoor is uncommon. Bards and other travelers often pay him homage. Song or poetry is offered in his name and he often returns the favor with increasing the song-smith's ability to relate his tale or achieve his desired effect.

Third Narrative - Peoples of Aihrde

nd it seemed to Erde that the world stood still and his labors incomplete. So he thought then to make a race of creatures to fill the silence of the world, if not with noise, but with Creation. In the end he returned to his labors, shaping the greatest and most fell of his creations. Thus the Faulerde came to be and if after days the Truvl and lastly the Unklaregern.

The Faulerde (People of the All Father)

A whole different classification is given to those mortal creatures, created upon the forge of the All Father. These are called the Faulerde, the people of the All Father: dwarves, goblins, humans, sentients, giants, trolls, and other such creatures. They are wholly different the Three Orders of the gods. Many of them consider themselves greater than (not more powerful than) any of the Three Orders. This is why, in the Days before Days, dwarven kings stood up to any number of the Val Eahrakun, demanding they leave their halls, and so forth. They knew they could not destroy these creatures of the Void, but they instinctively knew the All Father had made the creatures and set them aside as flawed.

Dwarves

Language: Mountain Dwarf, Oceanic Dwarf, Vulgate

Religion: They worship the All Father, their own ancesters, and various heroes. When they die they 'return to stone.' Various heroes and house gods are called upon to gain strength, wisdom, etc.

Lands: Grundliche Hohle, Norgorad Kam, Roheisen Hohle and some few scattered kingdoms about the world. There are many who wander without hearth or home, living in human realms, or in smaller communities on their own.

Longevity: Dwarves have a 600 year average life span. Some dwarves live to very old ages, ranging upwards to 900 years. Dwarves before the Judgment of Corthain lived 900 to 1500 years.

The dwarves were created from the All Father's rage and frustration. He tried to create the creatures of his mind's eye and could not and he destroyed his hammer upon the anvil in the attempt. In rage he shaped the raw stuff of creation with his hands and thus the first dwarves came to be. They were called the Earegorth, "The First Born" for they were the first peoples of the All Father and for that were cast in his image. They scattered across the world and, unlike all those who had come before, they set to mimicking the All Father and shaping the world to their own desires. In time they grew numerous and built kingdoms far and wide across Aihrde. There were 14 great kingdoms and these spawned a host of lesser kingdoms. They mostly settled in the far western lands, but also in the greater Aenochina landmass to the east. Some settled the island kingdoms of Alanti. Their greatest kingdoms were Gorthurag (First Home) and Grausumhart (Grimjaw). Since the end of the Age of Dwarves the dwarves have become scattered. Only a few of the great kingdoms of old remain and fewer still of the lesser. They are found most anywhere but are not common to most lands, living rather in small enclaves, towns, and villages. Only in the kingdoms of Grundliche-Hohle and Norgorad Kam are there dwarves in great numbers.

The dwarves hold one overriding religious belief, and that is they owe a debt to their creator. Only through action and deeds can that debt be repaid. It is for this reason that there are few evil dwarves and many of their people, if not all, are very skilled craftsmen. It is important to note that a dwarven paladin's deeds speak as loudly as a smith's creations, so that one may repay his debt on the battlefield while another repays it on the forge.

Dwarves were many and varied in the Days before Days, though generally, as a people, they are short of stature, stout, and strong. Their skin is thick and tough, built for extreme temperatures. They sport thick beards, smaller eyes, and full, round faces. They are thick-limbed and have large hands and feet. They favor deep, full colors such as reds, blues, greens, or yellows. They are skilled craftsmen, even in these latter days of the world. They live in patriarchal societies, but the women (beardless) are not subservient, rather often playing commanding roles as warriors, clerics, and smiths. Dwarves believe that their race's collective memory is contained in the minds of dwarven women, and these are consulted often on deeds great and small.

Giants

Language: Mountain Dwarf, Giant (their own species), Vulgate

Religion: Individual giants pay homage to the gods they will. They recognize the All Father as their creator.

Lands: Everywhere

Longevity: Different giants have different life spans, but most live 400-800 years.

There are a wide variety of giants, but generally the average giant is referred to as a hill giant. They stand about 10 to 12 feet tall and are heavier than their size denotes. Their physical features range as much as humans'.

When the All Father breathed life into the dwarves upon God's Forge, his breath spilled out upon the discarded giants, so life came to them. They were many and varied, some taller than others, some wider, and so on. Many wandered away into the wilds and these spread far and wide and they were the first of the Faulerde to see the world. Some, though, stayed and listened to the All Father teach the dwarves the Language of Creation. Others turned to others of the Val Eahrakun and from them learned different skills.

There are many types of giants, the better known are listed here.

Cloud Giants: Of all the Faulerde the cloud giants are the strangest. After the breath of life touched them, they found themselves rooted to the ground and unable to move. They heard all that was said about many things. They listened to Erde and the teaching of Burol. They listened to the dwarves and understood the debt of life. It is said they learned much of many things, but little of any one thing. For this reason they are filled with clever wisdom, but not understanding. Most importantly they learned that wherever they walked, the earth followed. Their footfalls created earth and so they learned to walk on the air, for beneath their feet the air turned to stone, and they could walk on fire and water for the same reason. Only on the cold ground did they fail, for their bodies fused with the earth and they could not easily move about, so they ascended to the skies and built homes in the heavens.

The cloud giants are clever and cruel. They love to sport with all creatures, challenging them to games of wit that they themselves are not

able to win, unless the opponent is simple. When a cloud giant loses, as they often do, they tend to go beserk and attack and eat the winner.

They worship no gods, nor pay homage to any. They are envious of men, and hate them more than all others.

Fire Giants: The fire giants were the first of the Faulerde, first made and first set aside. When the All Father first cast them from stone, the spirit of fire remained with them so they took no shape, but burned and twisted in his hands as molten rock. He set them aside and thought no more of them. When he breathed the breath of life and it fell upon them, their fire cooled and they took his shape for themselves, but the fire never left them, and it burns through cracks in their flesh, so that it is plain for all to see. Their flaws lay deeper than the fire, for they were malicious and loved no things but burnt metal and black stone. They loved molten rock most of all and relished that it killed all it touched. They possessed an understanding of the burning stone that others did not and they heard the speech of Burol as he taught the stone giants how to work stone. In after days they applied these skills to metal and became masters of iron.

In time the fire giants spread throughout the world, living in volcanoes or as near to fire as they could. When the Horned God came to Aihrde, they joined him not for love or servitude (for they have always held themselves to be the first and greatest of all the Faulerde), but for want of power. He granted them dominion over many realms, but their greatest lay in the north. The Winter Dark wars left that in ruin. Their king, Nurrich, fell and many of their people beside. And now they are scattered far and wide.

The fire giants generally live in dungeons near the surface, for they love to raid, but always where the earth is cracked and the fire from beneath the earth, or from the planes of fire, spills in. The greater giants can cross over into the Firmament and into the elemental plane of fire, and some even bring back creatures with them. They adorn themselves in heavy armor and prefer maces and cudgels to bladed weapons, but more than this, they prefer to pummel flesh with their fists, for they love the feel of its destruction.

They worship no gods and serve only those who they feel might further their own ends.

Frost Giants: Frost giants are the children of Imbrisius and the giant Aurglemir who rose with the breath of life but fled from the All Father, for his words pained Aurglemir. He wandered the wilds for ages, causing mischief, until Narrheit found him and hounded him to madness. Narrheit left Aurglemir to his mistress, Imbrisius, who took the giant and bedded him. Their children were the frost giants. She gave them a home beyond the northern wind and they dwelt there until they learned that they could ride the backs of storms and plunder the wealth of others. So it was that blizzards and snow storms that brought ruin to many a home, often brought the frost giants and their own brand of terror. They dwell upon the Edge of Winter, where they have built houses of ice and snow and where they store all the plunder and booty of their raids.

The frost giants are utterly fearless, incapable of knowing when they are defeated, and always die fighting, usually laughing. They love plundering and visiting horrors upon people of all stripes, be it dwarves, men, elves, giants or any others that walk or crawl. Frost giants are proud and record their deeds upon bands of silver and gold which they wear on their arms. These bands are magical and tell the story of any one giant. Anyone who takes one and wears it realizes that it automatically shapes to his arm and grants him a bonus +1 to AC (this armor class bonus is not stacked with other frost giant bands). They keep the company of winter wolves. Frost giants pay heed to no gods or powers other than themselves and Imbrisius.

Stone Giants: These Faulerde listened to the All Father as he taught the Language of Creation, but though they did not understand it all, they did understand the language of stone. Thus when Burol, the Val Eahrakun, came to them and spoke to them, they followed him into the wilderness. They grew to be a great people and chose one of their number as king and gave him a crown of stone. The stone giants spread far and wide but their kings settled in the lands of Gottland-Ne, where they dwelt for many ages. At times they fought alongside the dwarves, and men of Ehtrum, against the evil in the world, and for this there is some friendship between the peoples. Their greater struggle came with the trolls, and those long, bitter fights played out in the wilds, far from man and their deeds and struggles remain unwritten. In the end their crown was lost, the king was slain, and their people wasted away, until now they live in small groups spread far and wide.

The stone giants do not seek battle, but never shy away from it. They are contemplative, living most of their lives in the out doors, perched upon tall pedestals of stone, their homes little more than open ledges. They are very uncomfortable going inside any structure, and do so only reluctantly. Their wealth they fuse with the rock of their pillar homes, decorating them in that manner. They are not a religious people but they do pay homage to Burol.

Storm Giants: The greatest of all the giants stood apart from all the rest, upon the shores of the ocean, watching the All Father work from a distance. There Ealor found them and wondered at them for they were like nothing he had seen before. Their wildness appealed to him, so he sat with them and taught them many things, but all that he taught them was wild, driven by his own carelessness. Ea-Raena, his companion, saw this and joined them. From her they learned of the heavens, the sun and moon, and the traffic of time. They soaked up all the gods offered and turned to the skies. There they harvested the rains and winds and made such a storm of madness that it pulled earth into it, as well as fire, whenever it could. In this it resembled the Maelstrom, and upon it the giants built their homes. In time they split into many factions, until at last they traveled singly or in pairs, living in their storms. Thus the storm giants earned their names.

They are the tallest and most powerful of all the giants and most resemble the All Father in their shape and form. They are a temperamental people, like the storms they call home. They are fast to anger but faster to forgive. They have no affinities for any people, nor hatreds either. They pay homage to Ealor, but more to Ea-Raena.

GNOMES

LANGUAGE: Vulgate, Gnome, Halfling, Dwarf, Elf, Fey, Ancient Aenochian (amongst the older gnomes)

RELIGION: Aihrdian

LANDS: Mostly found in the Grundliche Mountains and Flintlock, but also scattered throughout Aihrde.

LONGEVITY: Average 400-500 years

Gnomes are an offshoot of the dwarven family tree. They are the third oldest of the peoples of Aihrde, coming after the dwarves and goblins. Somewhere in their history, the gnomes became distinctly different from their dwarven cousins. They lived largely above ground, and became smaller in stature. They are very adaptive to new terrains and environments.

The gnomish population suffered greatly during the Age of Winter Dark. Tolerated, they lived on the fringes of society and established a soon-to-be thriving trade with the powers of the dark. This adaptation led to gnomish society evolving into tight knit clans. Eventually, the strongest clans settled in the Grundliche Mountains and the Flintlock, and made war upon the dark. The gnomish clans now number 47, and they are spreading to other regions.

They range from three and a half to a little over four and a half feet in height, and weigh 70-90 pounds on the average. They wear a wide variety of dress but favor bright colors. They are a fierce people when roused, but their weapons and armor are always a hodge podge of what they own or can acquire. They have a predilection for tobacco, whether smoked or chewed.

GOBLINS

LANGUAGE: Vulgate, Goblin and most Dwarf tongues

RELIGION: Queen Mother, Ogoltay

LANDS: Ngondoro, Anywhere, generally underground

LONGEVITY: Eldritch goblins are immortal. Common goblins live about 50-60 years.

The goblins came to Aihrde early in the world's history. As is told, the dwarves were plentiful and tunneled beneath the world. They scattered far and wide, so much so that many lost contact with their fellows, living out their days in solitude far from their kingdom's halls. They became removed from the discoveries of other dwarves, lingering in the past as their cousins moved into the future. Ornduhl found them thus, and made easy prey of them. He twisted them and breathed words of sorcery into them, so that they changed and evolved. In time they too became plentiful and they spread beneath the world. They chose a king and queen and their queen became a horrible beast of corrupted evil that laid living eggs by the hundreds. In short order, the goblins spread across Aihrde.

Goblins live in underground caverns, only rarely building above ground. They take great pleasure in all things to do with water, often building channels and underground aqueducts to move water to fountains, waterfalls, and the like. In fact, flowing water is the one thing that goblins of all stripes value and take pleasure in. They are rarely satisfied with the natural flow of water, and guide it by building elaborate channels, slides, and chutes to manipulate it. Their dungeons and caves are filled with these networks, frequently sprinkled with sunken cages where they drown their prisoners. They rarely horde treasure, or if they do, it is more by accident, looting only what they can use to cause more destruction.

There are two notable breeds of goblins, the eldritch goblins and the common goblins. The former are rare, immortal, powerful creatures possessed of tremendous magic. The latter are more like drones, plentiful and simple creatures.

Eldritch Goblins: The goblin queen lays many eggs in the course of her pregnancies. Some few of these are powerful, immortal goblins possessed of great magic. They cannot be killed but through some peculiar circumstance. Each eldritch goblin's fatal weakness is different from the next; where one may only be killed with the broken end of a cherry tree branch, another may die if he inhales smoke. They also each possess some particular, magical ability such as seeing through stone, binding the spirits of those they kill to them, etc. They are wise, cautious, and possessed of great philosophy and understanding. Though evil, they do not act upon their desires unless it is to their benefit. Some

of the oldest are upwards of 9000 years old, outlived only by some of the ancient drakes, trolls, and sentients. They always command the instant obedience of common goblins. These creatures are rare, but found in almost every clime and corner of the world.

They stand taller than other goblins, and have proportional bodies, more akin to dwarves than humanoids. Their skin is generally dark green or blue, with black hair and dark eyes, they sport outlandish armors designed by themselves for their own purposes. They prefer bows and blow guns and other missile weapons. They are immortal and suffer little bodily harm, though they can be knocked unconscious or similarly wounde

Common Goblins: The great horde of common goblins exists throughout Aihrde. Short, generally hairless, these goblins have skin color far more diverse than humans, ranging from green, blue, red, and yellow, and on rare occasions orange. They are crafty creatures, able craftsmen, and possessed of some metallurgy. Goblins are evil, vicious, and always filled with some rage. They hate dwarves of any stripe and almost always attack them.

HUMANS

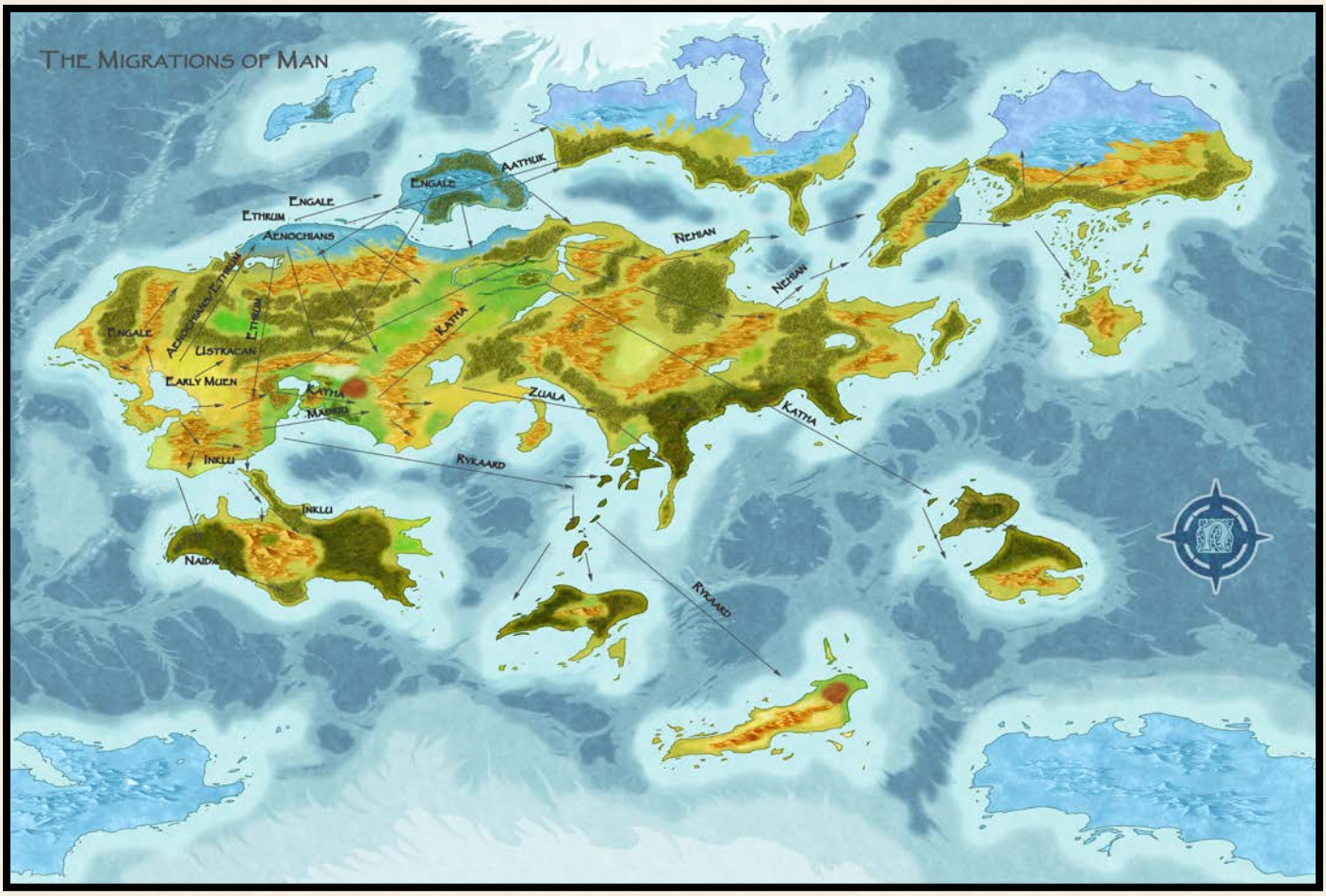
LANGUAGE: Vulgate, Ethnic

RELIGION: Any and all gods

LANDS: Everywhere

LONGEVITY: The average life span is 70 years, though some tribes may have longer life spans (see below).

In the early days of the dwarves, when that diverse people began to build kingdoms underground, a great part of Faulerde remained beneath the open skies: some dwarves, some giants, but the greater



part of them neither dwarf nor giant. These peoples, called Men, did not take to the teaching of the All Father, but rather divested themselves in the worship of Mordius. They were generally taller, though not as great as their giant kin, nor as stout as their dwarven cousins. They migrated to all corners of the world. Eventually these peoples became numerous and distant from their ancestors, and few, if any, realize their origins.

The humans settled in far more climes than the dwarves, almost as many as the giants. They are hearty and versatile, adapting to their new homes where ever they lay. Early in their history they divided, moving to different locales, and have ever since been associated with 13 tribes, or divisions: six greater and seven lesser, each very different from the other. They all speak their own languages and worship a diverse number of local deities. It should be noted that many worship the same deities, but the names, faces, and religious symbols are different. Further, humans have walked the world longer than many of the dwarves, the greater part of whom remained at the feet of the All Father. Each of the Divisions of Men listed below, except the Katha, has had a long history, replete with a variety of different civilizations that have risen and fallen, and multiple numbers of political entities that have warred with each other and others. Of all the humans, only the Aenochians have created an empire so great that it consumed much of the world, but even that empire never touched all the tribes.

These are the 13 Divisions of Men as classified by their race, but this does not mean that those people of a racial group refer to themselves as such. In fact, it would be uncommon for most Aenochians to call themselves such. Rather they would refer to themselves from their political or religious entities, such as Rhunelander. A native of the Inklu race would call himself by his tribal name or that of his kingdom, not as an Inklu. These classifications, though generally known, are left to the scholars, lord and nobles. All the Divisions of Men should be treated this way.

GREATER DIVISIONS: The six Greater Divisions of Men are Aenoch, Ethrum, Inklu, Naida, Rykaard, and Aathuk. They adopted many of the practices of the dwarves in craftsmanship, society, and language.

Aenoch: The Aenochians migrated to the far north with their sister tribes the Ethrum and the Engale, where they paid homage to Mordius. They became a great and powerful people. After her fall at the hands of Ornduhl they migrated south with the Ethrum until they came to the Holmgrad Mountains. There they split with their fellows and moved into the east and south. Some wandered to the shores of the Chanel Lakes, but the greater part of them moved south, settling in the wide country that lay between the Red River and the Udunilay. They were a powerful people, the most populous, and were led by powerful chiefs.

The greatest of their chiefs became ensnared in the machinations of Narrheit and Imbrisius and through their pride set aside worship of all the gods. Instead they turned to their own ancestors, worshiping heroes and house gods. For this reason they became a proud, self-reliant people, but suffered from the designs of creatures greater than themselves.

Their history is long and varied (see "The Andanuth") but they have waxed and waned in power, at one point lording over much of the world. They conquered the Inklu and Naida to the south, the Madriu to the east, and the Ethrum to the west. They served Unklar during the Winter Dark.

They are a pale-skinned people, on average six feet tall, with sturdy builds. Their hair ranges from dark to light brown, though there has been enough interbreeding with other tribes (most notably the Ethrum and Engale) that strands of red and blonde hair occur, though they are rare. They are generally a contemplative people, not given to loud outbursts, laughter, or other emotional reactions. They are quiet and studied, watching and listening more than explaining. They are arrogant and guarded of their heritage as the greatest of all the peoples of the world.

Ethrum: The Ethrum were close kin to the Aenochians, taking the breath of life from the All Father at the feet of God's Forge. Of all the peoples they moved from his shadow first and came to the Sea of Erun, where they lived until they joined the Aenochians on their journey to the north lands. There they joined in the worship of Mordius and became enamored of her wisdom and beauty. When she fell, they joined the Aenochians and moved parallel to them as they migrated south. When they came to the Holmgrad Mountains the Ethrum turned west and traveled to the Kleberock Pass where they split, some going south along the Rhodope Mountains, others moving through the pass and into the western Lands of Ursal. There they wandered until some settled upon the dwarven Lands of Ursal by the Inner Sea (modern day Anglamay), but the greater part of them moved south down the Ardeen River, guided by the goddess Tefnut, into the Valleys of Kayomar. There they settled and prospered.

The Ethrum embraced the worship of Tefnut and a host of the Val Eahrakun (the Og Aust). They dwelt beneath the eaves of the massive Ethvold forest, and though their numbers never matched those of the Aenochians, their power grew tremendously. They became Tefnut's children, and she ruled on their throne with the early kings for many long years. Much of what is good in the world of men has come from the Ethrum and their close connection with the Val Eahrakun. Their suffering however, has been greater than any of the other tribes of men, but for the Engale, for they have earned the wrath of both Ornduhl and Unklar.

They are a tall people, averaging just under six feet in height, with stocky builds and dusky white skin. Their hair ranges from the very dark to the dirty blond; it tends to turn white as opposed to gray when age creeps upon them. They are a happy people, open and at times boisterous. The wisdom of the gods lies upon them, so they approach life with a certain confidence, as if possessed of a secret knowledge that they would willingly share. They are open and generous, but they are quick to anger as well, and little given to forgiveness when wronged as a people. Many of the Ethrum look to the Aenochians as the source of the world's evil.

Inklu: The Inklu were the greatest of the southern tribes. They crossed the Sea of Erun and the Damnefauk in the early days and settled in the lands along the coasts. They copied the dwarves in building sea craft and as a people crossed the Straight of Win and entered the vast, largely unexplored lands of Inklu-Naid. There they separated into two sub-tribes, the Inklu and the Naid, slowly spreading throughout the vast continent. There they have lived and died for many generations, societies growing and collapsing as is the rule of things. Much of the northern continent was conquered by Aenochia during the long wars of the god-emperors, but their rule did not survive and left almost no traces when it collapsed. During the Winter Dark, worship of the Snake God (the Snake God was a manifestation of the Val Tulmiph Aristobulus) prevailed and the Inklu defied the worship of Unklar, but as a result much of their civilization was destroyed and their populations greatly reduced.

A scarcity of natural resources, combined with little interaction with the dwarves has left the Inklu without the skills to create iron weapons. They craft most of their items from bronze or lesser metals. They have highly sophisticated societies, built largely around the worship of local deities, monsters, and animals.

They are a tall people with dusky red skin and broad faces and noses. Their hair is generally dark and they sport little facial hair. The Inklu are numerous, dwelling in the jungles and mountains of their native lands. They are warlike. In fact, hunting and war characterizes much of their society and culture. However, they are also an open and happy people, generally accepting others as their own. They laugh a great deal and have complete confidence that in the end they must pass into their own heavens (the Stone Fields).

Naida: The Naida dwell in the southern reaches of the continent Inklu-Naid; they crossed there during the period of migrations with the Inklu. The Naida are numerous and their history is replete with kingdoms that have risen and fallen without notice in the northern realms. They are a primitive people, with little metallurgy, but they are spiritual and well connected to the gods, namely the spirit of Mordius, Wenafar, and other druidic deities. During the Winter Dark they worshiped the Snake God (Aristobulus) but were much wasted by the wars that followed. They have since recovered some and dwell, as they always have beneath the eves of the southern jungle.

They are shorter than the Inklu, with darker red skin, black hair and dark eyes. They have wide faces and large eyes and as high cheek bones. Their society is primitive, working more in stone and wood than any metals. What they have in that regard they gain through trade. They are secretive and keep to themselves as a people, having little trust for any outside their own wide tribal groups. They do respect power.

Rykaard: Deep in the world's history a great host of dwarves set themselves to conquering the seas. They eventually settled in the southern climes. They took with them a hearty race of men, the Rykaard, and these settled not far from the dwarf realms of Alanti, upon the great island of Aroya, and later explored and built some settlements on the land of Elis.

At one time the Rykaard were the world's greatest seaman and their vessels were seen in many if not all the harbors of the world. They served their friends of Alanti in the great Goblin-Dwarf Wars with distinction, but suffered grievous losses. When the oceans consumed Alanti many of Rykaard's lords and wizards were in the dwarven megalopolis and were drowned with their allies. After that they dwindled as a people. They left behind a host of ruins, strange cities of red stone, lost now in the islands of the south. Though some of the Rykaard survived, few retained the knowledge of their forebearers.

They did little to resist the coming of the Winter Dark and they served their appointed overlord with little love or violence. Since those days some of them, particularly in the far south, have gained some strength of arms and even now have begun to uncover the magic and power of their forefathers. They are a people with great love for the dwarves. The Rykaard pay particular homage to Ealor and Ea-Raena and all the gods of the sea.

The Rykaard are tall and thin of limb, with dark brown or black hair. They have narrow features with wide eyes. They are fearless and take risks easily, as is the wont of any sailor. They tend to be open to strangers and unforgiving to enemies. They dwell in broad-knit clans and family groups scattered about the islands of Alanti, Elis, and Aroya.

Aathuk: The Aathians were early wanderers, leaving God's Forge even before the dwarves built their first kingdoms. They settled upon the Sea of Erun, with the Ethrum, but left them and followed the trails of the giants until they came to the uttermost end of the continent. There they built craft and embarked on a voyage across the wind-swept northern seas to Gal-Land and beyond. Alone in the wilderness they became a hearty people, whom the gods became kindly disposed toward. They settled in the lands that bare their name, building cities upon the ice and in the deep frozen country. There they stopped their wandering and turned to the contemplative arts of study and understanding. In their long lives they studied the heavens and the All Father. They plotted points in the Void and charted the planes of the Maelstrom and beyond. Their sages mastered all manner of travel long before the Wall of Worlds.

They built cities of alabaster in the high mountains, often capping the clouds. They used sky ships to travel, but learned in time to tame the dragons and became known as Dragon Riders. They rose to prominence in the latter days of the Goblin Dwarf Wars and ruled a vast Empire for many hundreds of years, but they grew disinterested in their realm and it fell away. They dwindled then in numbers and their cities fell to ruin. Some few still thrive, hidden with magics and sorceries at the top of the world, and some fewer still tame and ride the dragons, seeking the knowledge now lost to them.

They are tall and limber folk with long arms and legs. They are generally quite thin, with elongated faces, narrow, thin, noses, and shallow cheeks. Their eyes are deep pools of calm, and belie a hidden wisdom, all this decked in long silver, white, copper, or golden hair. They dress in ornate clothing and armaments. They are kin to the Oanthuil.

LESSER DIVISIONS OF MEN: The seven lesser, or least numerous, divisions of men are the Nehian, Madriu, Engale, Zuala, Katha, Oanthuil and Ustracan..

Nehian: The Nia are a numerous people who followed the paths of Wenafar into the distant east. They crossed the turbulent waters of the sea to settle upon the lands of Ianuk, where they lived for several thousand years, undisturbed by the troubles in the far west. They spread further, settling in the archipelago of Surne as far south as the land of Dur.

They are skilled craftsmen in their own right. The Nia thrived for many years, building kingdoms, warring with one another and battling the forces of the minor gods and demons of Surne who ever taunted them with war and conquest. They alone of all the peoples of the world have had almost no traffic with the dwarves and therefore their customs and practices are wholly different than the rest of the world's. The Winter Dark took them utterly by surprise, and when Unklar lent his strength to the demons of Surne, the Nia were overwhelmed and enslaved to the master of Aufstrag. Many fought on into the deeps of the Millennial Dark, and their heroes are recounted in song and poem. At the end of the war, when Unklar's hold began to break, the Nia threw off their masters and plundered much of southern Surne. They are somewhat recovered now, but their peoples are diminished.

They are small of stature, with a light tint or tan to the skin and narrow eyes and high cheeks. They have dark hair and brown eyes. They are a quiet people who cherish honor and sacrifice above all things. They do not shy away from hardship and have little fear of dea

Madriu: The Madriu have dwelt in the plains and deserts of southern Aenochia for days without count. They are a shorter people, with dark hair and thick beards. Their skin is darker but they are built more like the Aenochians than all other peoples. The Madruin are fiercely independent and war with each other constantly. They are largely tribal and dwell in large semi-permanent settlements, rarely building cities or towns, though some have, from time to time, settled and built cities in the deserts. They were conquered by the Aenochians for many long years, and passed into the services of the horned god during the Winter Dark. They served as foot soldiers and cavalry, largely horse archers, a skill for which they are famed, in many western battle fields. They have since thrown off that yoke and have returned to their old ways.

Engale: These folk moved into the far north in the wake of the Ethrum and Aenochians. They dwelt upon the northern seas and worshiped Mordius as their cousins did, but they proved more hearty. They crossed the sea to Gal-Land and there built towns and villages, fished the waters, and hunted the wilds. When the goddess fell, many despaired and returned to the southern lands where they dwelt near Gorthurag and the dwarves, with whom they renewed their ancient friendships. Some few stayed behind in the Gal-Land, and in time prospered, but those that returned were welcomed by the dwarves as kinsmen and they became allies of Gorthurag. In the long kinship disputes and dwarf wars that followed, they joined the dwarves of First Home and fought by their side until they were ruined and their numbers wasted. Those that survived took to the wilderness and became a wild people.

So by the strange circumstance of war and fate, the Engale of the north became the stronger of the two branches of that people, and they grew in numbers. Too, they became fierce and enured to struggle and suffering. They worshiped the All Father, calling him Odin One Eye. During the long Winter Dark they never fell to the Horned God and call those years "The Long Winter without Light". Eventually a part of them migrated to the Lands of Ursal, settling upon the Inner Sea, where they founded the kingdoms of Trondheim, Holmgald, and Haltland.

They are tall and fair skinned with blond, red, or light brown hair. They are a hardy folk and dwell in the harsh climes like no other. The Engale are skilled sailors, accomplished warriors and hunters. They are a people where man and women share an equal footing in all the councils.

Zuala: The Zuala have dwelt in the deep forests of their lands for eons. They are the most diverse of the human tribes. They are a widely divided people, scattered in many different tribal areas or small kingdoms. Throughout their long history the Zuala have had contact with almost all the peoples of the world, from the dwarves of Alanti, to the elves of fey. They have trafficked with most of the other human tribes at one time or the other and their lands reflect this. Some of their folk are very primitive, others mastering metallurgy and stone craft. All manner of new and old towns and cities dot the landscape, many of them long abandoned and left to ruin, lost now in the jungles or forests or in ruins upon the slopes of mountains.

Some kingdoms still thrive, however, especially in the forest deeps of the eastern lands. They dealt with Unklar's folk with suspicion and later war. The bulk of them fighting long wars against the Horned God's minions. These are wars largely forgotten now by most of the western scholars, which were both brutal and ruinous. Collectively they call this the Cloud War, and it is one of the few times in recorded Zuala history that inter-tribal warfare was set aside and the tribes fought against a common foe. They were defeated in the Cloud War and their peoples scattered. They have made some recovery since those distant days, but the lands are filled with ancient ruins, dungeons and the like. They pay homage to animistic gods, Mordius, and other such divine creatures.

They are a numerous people and range in height from about four to six feet or more. They are dark skinned with curly black hair and dark eyes. They are a powerful, indulgent people, quick to anger but quicker to forgive. They can turn on a dime, beating an enemy one moment, and drinking with him the next.

Katha: The Katha are the smallest of all the tribes of men. They began their long trek from the Sea of Erun in the very early days, crossing into the Lands of Ursal long before the arrival of the Aenochians and Ethrum. They dwelt there for some time, but eventually were displaced by the dwarves and forced to move south through the great deserts. They built settlements there, even before the Madriu made those lands their homes, but grew weary of that place as well. In the deep forests south of the Channel Lakes they built new homes, and then took the patronage of the goddess Wenafar and they worshiped her. In turn she taught them many things about the world's magic and the Language of Creation as she understood it. The Kaath became a wise people, though their numbers remained small. When the goblins came, the rumor of war preceded them and the Val Eahrakun Athria gave them visions of wondrous lands across the seas, where the Waters of Life flowed.

They built ships and set sail across the Oddine Ocean and came at last to two great islands and there they made their homes. They settled and built wondrous cities and towns along the coasts. They discovered the Waters of Life in pools and fountains and by many long, fresh droughts they gained immortality. But on this they were split, for those who controlled the waters kept it guarded so that in time there were those with the waters of life, the High Katha, and others who had only limited access, the Low Katha. They built temples to Athria and worshiped her many aspects. All manner of magics and wondrous things they constructed; they learned the secrets of the deeps of the world and they traded with the dwarves of Alanti and the men of Aathuk. At their height they built colonies on the Aenochian mainland (even as the Aenochians themselves rose to power) and in the islands of the Rykaard. The world spoke of them in hushed tones as legendary men of great power and wealth. The Katha lived in peace and contentment, or so it was said.

The Katha, though, were never a numerous people and their long decline accelerated in the latter years of the world's turning. The High Katha became lusted for the sacred water and drank of it often, until they were addicted to it, and needed it just to sustain life; they fell to worshiping a Dragon God and many turned to dark sorceries. In time they faded and became shadows of themselves, only visible in the brightest parts of the day. When the Winter Dark came the Katha were almost driven to extinction by great armies of orcs and ungern that invaded their homeland. Some of the High Katha were enslaved to the Dark and the Low Katha took to the mountains and hills of the island kingdoms.

They never recovered from the Winter Dark. Some few live in their high towers, shadows from a forgotten world, wise but empty. Some few have fled to the wider world, and with dark sorcery spread the rage of the Dragon Cult. Some of the Low Katha have come forth and dwell now in the open in the wilderness of their lands.

The Kaath are divided into the High Kaath and the Low Kaath. The High Kaath are thin, tall, almost long people, stygian colored with little hair, small mouths, and deep eyes. Long association with the Waters of Life has left many of them almost translucent. The Low Kaath are shorter, robust people and have for ages supplied the Kaath with their muscle, warriors, and the like. Few of these chose to take of the Waters of Life and they did not suffer the affects.

Oanthuil (Doppelgangers): The strangest of all the tribes of men are the Oanthuil. As a young people they took up the worship of Ornduhl and followed the path set for them by his dark sorceries. These consumed them utterly. They were neither wise enough, nor possessed of the strengths that later forged the goblins, and they were corrupted. Most of their women died out and they bred only with a few. Eventually they forgot themselves and evolved into shape-shifters, possessed only of a great hunger for memories and identity.

They hid themselves in the high mountains and in time came to worship their own women as gods, for these creatures carried an unearthly beauty given to them by the Red God. From time to time they come into the lands of men and dwarf and take the shapes of those they see and live hollow lives without meaning. They are found throughout Aihrde as their lonely wandering brings them on long paths. The Oanthuil are the longest lived of all the Men, living upwards to a thousand years before their bodies give out and die. They were unknown to the Lords of the Winter Dark.

The Oanthuil are blue of skin with long fingers and toes, thin ungainly legs and arms, and without noses. They are hairless but have wide brows and narrow craniums. Their eyes are yellow. They have few trappings, using their sorcery to cloth themselves in warmth or bathe themselves in cool air.

Ustracan: The Ustracan are cavemen, wild and close to the beasts they hunt. Usually the women and children live separately from the men. They are found in most any clime or terrain in Aihrde, but never close to civilization, be it man, dwarf, elf, orc, or other. They worship the Sisters generally and have no written languages, possessing only a simple language to communicate with each other.

The largest of all men, the Ustracan average about six and a half feet in height, and have massive barrel chests, thick arms, and muscular, if short, legs. They are hairy and primitive, living in tribal groups of not more than a hundred.

THE TRUVL, THE SPLINTERED

Those creatures who came of the splintered mind of the All Father, after the sorceries of Ondluche, are called the Truvl, or the "splintered." These include all the creatures of the Seven Rivers, some of the fey and elementals, the elves, gnomes, halflings, and orcs.

ELVES

LANGUAGE: Vulgate, Elf, Fey

RELIGION: Wenafar, Aihrdian deities

LANDS: They are spread throughout the world. Few live in organized kingdoms, preferring small holdings and castles.

LONGEVITY: Though naturally immortal, if slain the spirits are denied access to the Stone Fields, and are presently harvested by Athria of the Val Eahrakun.

Long after the dwarven kingdoms were founded, the physical form of the All Father ceased to be, and his mind opened upon the world of Aihrde. And gates to other realms were laid bare. Thus it was with the Land of Seven Rivers, Shindolay, where dwelt the elves. A realm born of his dreams, Shindolay had long housed the elven folk. They came of the same thoughts and design that had created Wenafar in the deeps of the Void, long before the world came to be. So, when they came to Aihrde, Wenafar knew of them and sought them out. She took the fledgling people under her wing and nurtured them. For many long years, in the hidden vales of the great forests of the distant east, the elves thrived. Their people grew in numbers, and their wisdom too, as the goddess taught them all they would need to know. The developed a deep understanding of the world and befriended many of the sentients who still remained. They took other deities too, and in those forgotten lands lay the foundations of a great people.

In those days they had little dealings with men and only met those dwarves that dwelt in the mountains east of the Channel Lakes. Through these dwarves they learned metallurgy and the skills needed to shape things of wondrous beauty. They built gardens of power and planted the Great Oaks, nurtured by Wenafar. They bent themselves toward making their dwellings of these trees and constructing wondrous towns in their high branches. In these latter days, 900 years after their coming to Aihrde, they wandered into the west. Some became embroiled in the Stone Wars and saw the brutality of the hatred of goblins and dwarves. They armed themselves with weapons of steel and iron.

The Stone Wars marked the first involvement of the elves in the affairs of other people and they found themselves, as often as not, pulled into the wars of men, orcs, goblins, and dwarves. Their affinity for the ancient trees earned them the hatred of the trolls so they were hunted and slain at the trolls' pleasure. In turn, elves learned to hate the troll kin, and in the lost years of their youth they waged a number of wars against those tusked monsters. In these years Wenafar removed herself from them, for she was bound by the Judgment of Corthain, so they chose for themselves a queen, and she ruled over a wide kingdom for many years.

In time the elves grew numerous and fractured, and small bands settled throughout the wide world and became involved in local affairs. Their greatest colony settled upon the feet of the Rhodope Mountains and were there when the Ethrum began to build their kingdoms. As wars embroiled the Lands of Ursal and the greatest tribes of men fought over those lands, the elves were drawn in and more of them left the ancient homelands to travel to Ursal and aid their kin. With them came the court and the queen. The years passed, and the Queen's power waned, until there were no longer great kingdom of elves, only scattered princedoms, tribes, and bands.

Thus it was when the Winter Dark began. The elves foresaw the coming of the Horned God and they dreaded the evil that it would bring. The trolls were grown mighty in dread anticipation of the coming darkness and hunted elves in many quarters. The dwarves had waned and men were bound to their strange codes and bent on unleashing the evil upon the world. Some refused to believe that others would do this, and sought to talk to men and dissuade them, but the elves knew that to talk with madness is folly, so they gathered in a great council to decide the fate of their people.

They resolved to gather as many of their own as possible and leave Aihrde, and travel back into the wilds of the multi-verse to the undying lands of the Seven Rivers, Shindolay. After many years of council and debate, a call was sent out and the elves who both heard and chose to heed it left Aihrde by magical paths to the Land of Seven Rivers. As such, a vast number of elves were not there to strengthen the armies of men who stood against the Horned God, although many remained behind, some lost in the hidden wood and others having vowed to stay and fight on. Londea, daughter of the queen, was one such elf.

From the Seven Rivers the elves watched the world fall into darkness and many recanted, calling upon their lords to take up arms and defend the world that was their home for 3000 years, but the lords would not and the queen forbade it. In defiance many took up their weapons and with powerful magics opened the paths that led to Aihrde. They left then and walked the Void to the gates of Aihrde. At this time, Unklar was young and filled with the mirth of his youth and closed the gate to them. They raged against his sorcery but could not break it. Too proud to return home, they set themselves the task of passing back to Aihrde, no matter the cost. They waited and struggled in the poverty of their power for a thousand years. They called themselves the Fontenouq, meaning "the abandoned." Their hatred was aimed at Unklar, but not reserved solely for him, and in time the Fontenouq came to hate their kindred in Shindolay.

Soon thereafter, as is recorded by the Elven Scrolls, the folk of Shindolay found an entrance to Aihrde and sent out the Quest Knights. These lords had two purposes: first to find the queen's daughter Londea, and second to locate the elves of Fontenouq. Though they hunted for many centuries, they failed in both tasks as many suffered death and many suffered far worse fates. Only one returned, and he brought reports of a despondent evil and of a world in strictest order.

In despair, Melius the Wise, their greatest wizard, barred the gates of the Seven Rivers to all, forever eliminating the possibility of any Fontenouq elves returning. He bound the gates in a ring fashioned after one of the Brass Rings. Within it stood the gates to the Seven Rivers, Aihrde, and unknown to Melius, Fontenouq. He placed the ring in a stone and set many knights and magic to guard it in the Castle of Spires, buried in the planes, but linked to Aihrde in the Twilight Wood.

Many centuries later, Daladon Half-Elven came upon the Castle of Spires and found its guardians slain by his own half-brother, Meltowg. That elf, long a servant of Londea, raged upon his kin for he hated them all, driven by the curse of Daladon, but it was the half- elven that opened the gates and allowed the armies of the elves to return. They scattered after the long Winter Dark Wars, ever seeking their lost kin and the places of ancient legend where they lived in the youth of the world before the Long Centuries.

In general, elves worship Wenafar and the deities of the fey. They are a strange people, for their immortality allows them a different understanding of the world. They cherish beautiful things, and strive to create their sense of beauty (which ranges from elf to elf) wherever they are. Whether in gardens of trees, or buildings of marble. They do not normally move quickly, but at times seem hasty for immortal people, but this is because they know that the beauty they create shall fade, and they long to enjoy while they may. It is for this reason that elves are often melancholy people and strive to make all things last longer than their natural spans.

There are several types of elves as noted below.

High Elves: The high elves of Aihrde are a melancholy race whose past is clouded by guilt for abandoning the world in its darkest hour. Unlike their ancient ancestors and kin, the high elves have turned from carefree spirits into brooding philosophers, content to indulge themselves in the pursuit of music, poetry, and other arts. Their independent lives have led to a slowly declining population, with little concern among the young for propagation.

High elves average five and a half to six feet in height. They weigh between 160 to 185 pounds. Their skin is fair, their hair light, and their eyes bright. They have no facial or body hair. They move with grace and purpose, no motion being wasted.

There are two branches of high elves: Shindolay and Fontenouq.

Shindolay Elves: High elves descending from Shindolay tend to be more colorful in dress. Shindolay elves live in communities of a dozen or so families, of 2-3 generations. They dwell on the edge of civilization and traffic with their neighbors more frequently than any other of the elven people. Shindolay elves are learned people in gen- eral, steeped in the history of their own families, people and the world. They most closely resemble their ancient forefathers, high and proud, and some

see them as arrogant. Still, good remains in their hearts, and they will stand back-to-back with any that would eradicate evil.

They prefer to employ spells in conjunction with blades, and when arming themselves, they utilize light to medium armors, shields, bows, pole axes and swords.

Fontenouq: High elves of Fontenouq dwell largely in the Gelderland, though are also found in wilderness environs. They prefer high towers, built in high defensible castles. They live in small family groups of 2-3 generations, of close family. They are devoted to ancestry and take pride in recounting their kin that dwelt in the "between realms" during the Winter Dark.

Though they collect books, art and music, they abandon all of this when war or the need for war is upon them. And they are not lost in the fine arts. Instead of talking philosophy and debating the sins of history, they seek to live in the present and honor the memory of their ancient forefathers, those proud elven warriors that combated evil before their descendants fled the world. They are efficient, quick to decided and quick to act, short of patience, and have little need for explanations or long winded discussions. They are very warlike and always ready for battle. Eradicating evil is their greatest desire.

In general they wear heavy mails, chain and plate with long, oval shields. They prefer the long axe, sword and lance to other weapons. They rarely use bows, preferring the heavy crossbow or spear if missile weapons are needed.

Mist Elves: Mist elves are found only in the lands that comprise the Shelves of the Mist, those broken hills to the west of Kayomar and upon the slopes of the Rhodope Mountains. They do not refer to the Shelves by this name, calling them rather the Forest of Ohd, after the ancient elven name for those regions. The mist elves are the survivors of the long Winter's Dark and the horrible wars that Unklar's minions waged upon the high elves of those hills. Only those who could adapt to the cold wastes survived. They remained behind during the Winter Dark and there fought Unklar beneath the banners of Prince Meltowg and Princess Londea. In the end they were defeated and scattered, their princess slain, and the prince set upon a path of long wandering.

They dwell in the wild, beneath the skies, when they can, dwelling in tents and the like. However they have carved wonderful homes in many hidden caves in their homelands and dwell there during the long winter months and when need arises.

They are shorter than their high elven kin, with stouter arms and legs, their faces are wider too, with oval eyes. They have pale skin, blue and gray eyes and silver or white colored hair. They are related to the high elves, and the tell tale signs of that ancestry is apparent in their proud bearing. They never look down, always looking friend and foe full on, and they stand straight, appearing taller than they actually are.

They adorn themselves in raiment suited for living in the wild, gray, brown and green cloaks and tunics. They favor the bow over all weapons as they learned to use it so efficiently during the Winter Dark.

Twilight Elves: The twilight elves are the offspring of a band of high elves who chose to remain in the world rather than leave with the coming of Unklar. They dwelt in the deeps of the Twilight Wood and there remained isolated from all their kin. Their lives were short and brutal for they were hounded during the Winter Dark. To hide themselves from the Horned God's minions, they cloaked themselves in shadow and thus became the dark elves of legend.

Twilight elves are the smallest of all the elves, standing between four and five feet tall on average. Their skin tends to be a deep, dark blue, with hair being almost any color. Most compelling are their eyes, which are typically violet, blue, or orange. They tend to be serious, with mirth reserved for holidays among their own kind and for intimate relations.

They dress in shadows and dark cloaks, carrying all manner of weaponry. They hunt at night and avoid contact with all the peoples of the world. They worship Utumno, who came amongst them and offered them aid in the latter years of the Winter Dark.

Wood Elves: Wood elves originate in the realm of the Seven Rivers. They came to like the deep woods of that realm and there wandered wild and free for many ages. In time Wenafar came to them and blessed them. She made it so that they might travel to Aihrde, passing into the world without call to gates or portals. They came to haunt the forests of the world, taking particular love of the Ethvold in the Valley of Kayomar. Many dwelt there for long years, hidden from the eyes of men and gods. There many remained, even during the long Winter Dark, ruled by King Nigold, who has sat at the head of their table since the beginning. Their greatest home lies now in the Eldwood where he rules a people diminished but powerful.

Wood elves are the largest elven race, with some equaling humans in proportion. Their skin ranges from brown to a dark green bordering on black, and their hair are shades of dark. Their eyes are rarely anything other than deep green or blue. They wear leather armors, shields and carry axes, swords and short bows in battle.

Wild Elves: Wild elves are descended from the high elves. They chose to remain when their kin fled to the Seven Rivers and they spread across the lands during the Age of Winter Dark , fighting Unklar's forces whenever and wherever they could. They broke into small bands and family groups, discarding all the trappings of their people. They lived with and fought alongside many of the other resisting peoples. In doing so, they developed trust with the other peoples of the world, especially the halflings and Engale living at the fringes of civilization. Aspects of halfling and barbarian culture help form the foundation of wild elf tribal society. Very few remnants of high elven culture remains among the wild elves. Even the language they speak is filled with loan words from the other races.

Wild elves stand and weigh as typical among elves, but their skin tends toward deep tan to light brown. They are dark-haired, with eyes ranging from deep green to hazel. Their ears are shorter than most of their kindred. They prefer all manner of weapons, but light armors. Many husband horses and use them in the hunt and at war. These are highly sought after for their speed and endurance.

HALFLINGS

LANGUAGE: Vulgate, Halfling, Tribal Tongues, Cant

RELIGION: Aihrdian, Animistic

LANDS: Having no organized kingdoms, they live in small villages, townships, etc.

LONGEVITY: Average 150 years

The first record of the halflings comes in the year 614 AE when they were hired to work wagons for the city fathers of Avignon, but it is known that they have dwelt in Aihrde for many centuries before that. When the All Father fell they came to Aihrde by the many gates that opened up upon his splintered mind. Where they came from even they could not say, but they took to the wilds with ease. Living in small family groups and clans, they traveled to the far reaches of Aenochia

and Ethrum. They settled in mostly temperate zones where the weather was mild, wet and the ground good for a variety of crops. By and large halflings have always kept to themselves and avoided all traffic with the other peoples. They quickly mastered many crafts including animal husbandry, carpentry, metal smithy and others. Thus they lived without history, avoiding almost all the folk of the world until the domination of man.

By that time, their clans had become more numerous and they took their rightful place at the table of the free peoples of the world, settling in cities and towns and creating their own. Soon halflings were as common as any of the other peoples. They never founded their own kingdoms, however, but lived in the midst of others, or dwelt in small towns and communities on the edges of human lands.

During the Winter Dark they were hunted mercilessly by the agents of the Horned God, mostly for sport. So great was the genocide that few survived into the new era and they became an oddity, fierce and battle-hardened. They have since recovered and some few have settled again in the cities of man, reverting to their old habits of comfort and ease, but many have taken a suspicious stance to the other peoples and interact only when they must.

The settled halflings are much like their neighbors, but the nomadic halflings travel in large bands of several hundred, usually with wagons which they call home. They migrate from spot to spot as the seasons and conditions allow. They are a burly people, tough and honest and not given to extravagant boasting.

Larger than their civilized cousins, nomadic halflings average three and a half to four and a half feet tall and weigh 50 to 70 pounds. Their skin is tanned, and their eyes are typically brown or black, but sometimes green. They wear their dark hair long, sometimes in braids or tails. Facial hair is very rare. They tend toward light dress of simple and practical design, and prefer not to wear footwear.

ORCS

LANGUAGE: Orc, Vulgate

RELIGION: Unklar, Agrol

LANDS: They are mostly found in the Marl, Red Hills, Gelderland, and scattered throughout Aihrde.

LONGEVITY: Average 60 years

The orcs came to the world in a rush of chaos. They were many, confused and without leaders, and so they fled into the shadows upon their arrival. They lay hidden from the world, tunneling deep into the earth and watched it for many years until at last one of their number, Agrol, took courage and ventured forth. He was a huge beast and slew some men with a rock and took their plows. These he battered into shapes more usable and returned to his people. They flocked to him and he guided them into the wilds of the far east, beyond the Channel Lakes. In the deep mountains that men call the Marl, he settled into a wild and broken country.

The orcs scattered over the wide empty land and built crude houses and forts, and they lived thus for many centuries, coming into contact only rarely with others. Their songs speak of wars with giants and other creatures but little of them are reported in the histories of the dwarves or men. For a time Agrol and his descendants ruled over a large kingdom of orcs, called Agrol after its founder. They built cities and roads of stone and conducted commerce, but they never left their roots where small family groups held the dominate sway. Eventually the kingdom dissolved and the small family groups divided into tribes and they began to outgrow their land. Constant internecine wars led them to migrate into the west and north. In time they came to the lands of the Empire of Aenoch and made war upon their eastern frontiers. They scattered beyond when the empire fell, so that in time of years they were found far and wide in Aihrde. They flocked to the banners of the Horned God and served him as faithful servants for the whole of the Winter Dark. Since his fall they have lamented his demise and long for the years when they ruled Aihrde at his behest.

Aside from the kingdom of Agrol the orcs have only organized once in their long history, under the banners of the Hlobane, a fierce and young tribe of orcs from Aufstrag who served the Horned God in his personal legions. The Hlobane kingdom lies upon the northern borders of the Confederation of Torrich in the Lands of Ursal. They serve the prince of that land in some capacities but are ruled by the Warlord Iurs. Iurs lords over them from the town of Ruk, that rests at the feet of the Kolkrab Mountains.

Beyond this there are many tribes through Ethrum and Aenochia and they vary in size from several dozen to many thousands. The orcs are fierce, predatory people who have no love for men or elves, dwarves, or goblins. They worship their own ancestors, Agrol most of all, but pay heed to Unklar as well. The afterlife is given to those who are mighty in battle and they are blessed with a chair at the feet of their first king in the Endless Pools, where they plot their return and the overthrow of the world.

Orcs range in size from small to tall, thin to thick, and so on. Their skin is covered in dark, mottled browns and blacks. Their bones are sharp, protruding from their cheeks, elbows, knees, and shoulders; this gives them an armored look even when they wear none. Their eyes are wide and yellow, bloodshot, and offer the orc poor vision. They are clever creatures, cruel and wicked. They are possessed of a powerful hate for most things.

OTHERS (Bugbears, Hobgoblins, etc.)

Many creatures have found their way to Aihrde; some came with the demise of the All Father. Others from the splintered thoughts of the All Father.

Hobgoblins traveled the length of the Rings of Brass and came to Aihrde from the world of Inzae. They settled in the lands of Burnevise.

Bugbears evolved from wild bovines, guided all the while by the hand of Narrheit.

The kobolds were a mindless people that dwelt beneath the earth, lizards with wide eyes and long tails. Narrheit took them under his wing and gave them minds of their own. In time they bred and grew in numbers to haunt the dwarves and goblins in all that they did.

The gods and happenstance have created many creatures, but whatever their origins or endings, there are many great and small that thrive throughout all the lands of the wide world.

OF THE TROLLS

Of all the peoples of the world the Trolls are the most unique for they came of the first peoples of the world, but are not of the All Father's making. They hold the Wil-Eloth, the sentient trees of old, as their forefathers. From that people they rose and to that people they return upon their deaths. But they are an evil folk, and find comfort in little but the silence of their own lust.

TROLLS

LANGUAGE: Vulgate; Speak with Animals/Nature, Language of Creation (very old and powerful trolls only)

RELIGION: They have no gods but call upon Nuluk-kiz-din, their long time master, from time to time.

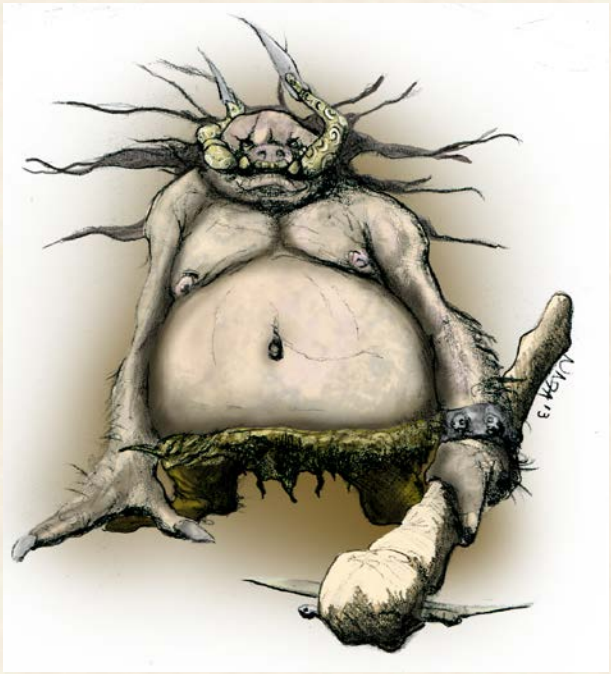
LANDS: From many diverse small tribal lands and a few scattered kingdoms, they are found on almost all continents and in all climes. Their greatest kingdom lies on the edge of the Gottland in the Kleberock Pass.

LONGEVITY: Immortal

The trolls of Aihrde evolved from the sentients of old and were the first peoples to walk the world. Trees, bent and evil, whose hearts were twisted long ago, were driven from their forests and into the wilds by their kin. These trees evolved over the millennia and were common enough when the first of the Faulerde walked the world. In time they became creatures altogether different than their ancestors and they bred and built lands of their own and many forgot their ancestry and cared not for what came before. The first of their kind, Ineng, is worshiped by other trolls as a god.

All trolls share a common longing for the quiets of the deep woods. The gentle sounds of brooks and creeks linger in their minds and can, at times, charm them. When trolls die they return to stone, though some who are very old root to the world, retuning to the tree-like forms of their ancestors. These latter are called Gottland trees.

Trolls are huge hulking beasts. Fat and ungainly, their legs seem too small to bear their weight. They have long arms, thick muscles, and giant, wide fingers. They have large tusks sprouting from their maws, two shorter ones on the top, and two larger on the bottoms of their wide mouths. The tusks on the lower jaw continue to grow as a troll gets older and often grow into the creature's face. They are shaped, cut, and sometimes decorated with carvings. Very old trolls have very large, often bent, and chipped tusks. They use these tusks in battles against one another, roaring at each other with mouths agape. Though they occasionally try to gore each other, battles are usually awarded to the troll with the larger tusks and wider yawn. They are ferocious creatures, bent upon destruction.



UNKLAREGERN

These are the peoples fashioned by Unklar and are of his make. The are the ungern, the black spawn of Unklar.

UNGERN

LANGUAGE: Lawful Evil, Vulgate

RELIGION: Unklar

LANDS: The ungern have no official lands, ranging across the wide world.

LONGEVITY: Average 120 years

Before the forges of Klarglich were made, before the hounds of darkness issued forth from Aufstrag, and long before the mogrl were crafted in the Pits of Woe, Unklar fashioned the ungern. When first he came through the portal, Unklar slew the high priest Nectanebo. After that, he fell upon the emperor's guard and the god-emperor himself. All fell to the Horned God with an ease that made that beastly creature forever after hold great disdain for the folk of the All Father's fashion-ing. Immediately he gathered to him the substance of the Void and with the language of his Father, he crafted the ungern, the "black spawn." Some say that they were born of a union between the dark fey and wild evil men enslaved in Unklar's service, but this is not so; they are of the Val Austlich, those creatures forged from the Language of Creation and the Val Eahrakun, of which Unklar was one of the Named. The Judgment of Corthain does not bind them and the ungern move freely about the planes as few other creatures can.

The ungern served Unklar as soldiers and captains, and spread his evil throughout the lands. They were the battle lords that destroyed Kayomar, drove the elves of the Shelves of the Mist into ruin, and plundered the dwarf halls. Their numbers were great and they led the armies in countless battles, ever in the service of their dark master. They filled the holds of Aufstrag with their evil and their numbers grew beyond all scope.

During the Winter Dark Wars they suffered greatly. In the great battle of Logn-Kor, where the Lord of Sorrow led over 90,000 of his folk (many of them ungern) into the Valley of the Sun, they met their first great calamity. The floods destroyed them all, with only the Lord of Sorrow and a few servants escaping the water's wrath. Later that year, at Gokstead Deep, several tens of thousands more were destroyed by the ravages of the Northmen. In a myriad number of battles thereafter, their numbers were wasted away. When at last Unklar was driven from the plane, they fell into disarray and fled to distant parts.

Since those days, they have recovered some. They live now in scattered holds all about the world of Aihrde, but most frequently in the east near the Grundliche Mountains, Aufstrag, and the Grausumland. In the west, they are found in the Darkenfold and the wilds north of Kayomar and south of the Gottland, where they contend with the fierce hobgoblins of those lands.

The ungern have dark brown or black skin and are largely hairless but for short manes that stretch the lengths of their spines and grow around their cloven feet. Their hands are clawed, their feet cloven, and their legs have triple joints. They have wolf-like heads with long, tooth-filled snouts. They stand about six feet tall, and though they are rather thin, they are powerfully built creatures. Massive horns sprout from each creature's backside and are a mark of honor: the greater and more ornate the horn, the more powerful the ungern. For more on the ungern refer to the book Castles and Crusades **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde.**

Fourth Narrative - The Kingdoms of Ursal

All the free peoples spread far and wide, building new realms on old foundations. The dwarves, those that remained, opened their realms. The elves forged bastions in the wilderness. The other folk followed and did as they would. And men built their own houses in the ruins of the Empire of Winter's Dark.

The history of the people of Aihrde begins in the Arnhul Mountains, upon Mount Austerien, where the All Father cast the dwarves, giants, and men to form. In the Days before Days those mountains, and those to the north, were the epicenter of the world, where the great rose and fell. They moved to the north, in the Crusp Mountains and fol- lowed that chain along the northern rim of the world and the Muen- berg and beyond. From Arnhul they spread into the east, setting upon the shores of the Inner Sea in three mighty Kingdoms. These lands were divided by narrow straights that connected the Inner Sea with the Sea of Shenal and the Amber Sea beyond. Here upon the straights the dwarves built a mighty bridge, connecting the east and west. The bridge was named the Ursal Bridge and all the country between the Rhodope Mountains in the west and the Marlgul Mines in the east, the Amber Sea in the south and the Holmgrad Mountains in the north, be- came known as the Enursalankg, or in the Vulgate, the Lands of Ursal.

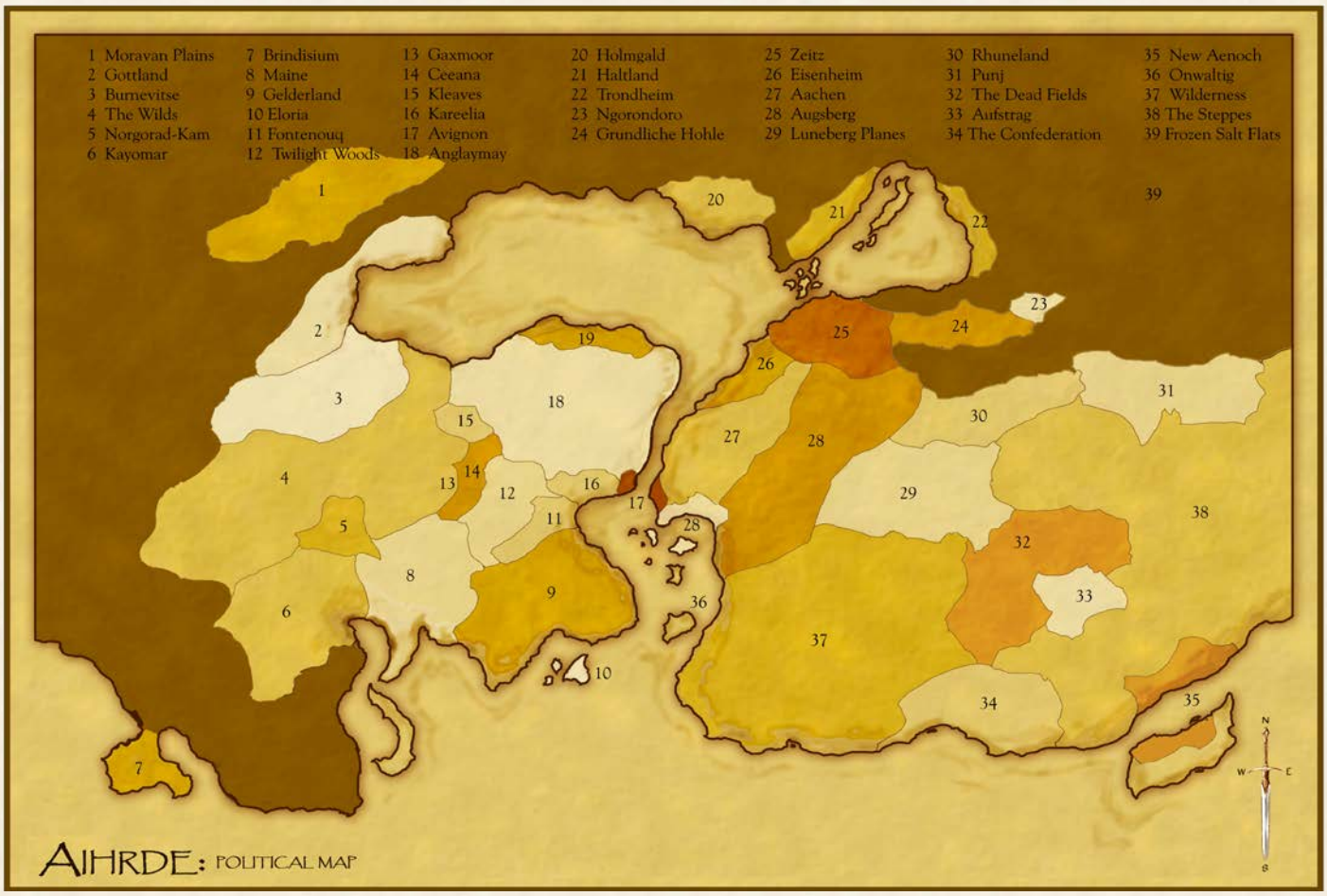
The Goblin-Dwarf Wars changed all that, as both those mighty peo- ples were wasted, their realms destroyed, and their people scattered. From the ashes men rose to prominence, and of them all, the tribes of Etrhum and Aenoch were the greatest.

These two tribes left Mount Austein in the early days of their history and settled in the far north. There, they were befriended by Mordius of the Val Eahrakun and they lived contented lives, warmed by the grace of her power. Upon her demise, they were stricken with madness and they wandered reckless in the wild for many years, until at last they came to the southern lands upon the Inner Sea, the Enursalankg.

When the Ethrum and Aenochians arrived in the Lands of Ursal, they found a land that was empty and wild; the dwarf kingdoms were wast-ed away and the country between their realms was a wilderness. Here, the two tribes parted. The Ethrum passed into the south and west of the In- ner Sea, and settled in the Valleys of Kayomar. The Aenochians moved west of the Inner Sea, and settled in the Land of Many Lakes. There the peoples found peace of sorts and they grew and became numerous. But none so numerous, nor as powerful, as the Aenochians.

Upon the confluence of the Udunilay and Uphrates Rivers, the Aeno- chians gathered and built a mighty city, Al-Liosh, and from there they conquered the world. Their power spread beyond the Lands of Ursal and into all the land east and west and beyond the sea. They ruled as god-emperors and Al-Liosh became the center of the world, as all peo- ples came to it and paid homage to the Imperial throne. In time it was called by men the Cradle of the World. And so it remained for many Rin of the world, for from here Unklar ruled during the Winter Dark.

So the lands are thrice named, the Enursalankg, the Lands of Ursal and the Cradle of the World.



AACHEN

"Where the Good Kings Reign." Upon the Edle River, deep in the Harz Foothills, King Baldwin III sits upon the high

backed chair of his fathers in Castle Aachen. It is said of him that he is a good king and good man, as it was said of his father and his father before him.

Geographical Location

The lands of Aachen begin at the Sea of Shenal in the south and the Straights of Ursal in the west. The gently-rolling, sparsely-wooded hills and meadows of the Harz and Heristat stretch for many leagues, until at last they slip into the warm embrace of the Detmold. The Detmold is a young wood, where conifer trees grow in abundance. It is cut by many small breaks, where the sun and soil conspire to conjure a thick loamy grass. At the heart of the Detmold lies an old stand of oak trees. The Stand, called thus by the locals, has been there for as long as men have memory. It has become a holy place for druids and rangers. It is the heart of the forest, containing Ephremere's Glade. The deep gulches and tumbled hills of the forest blanket the land to the feet of the Voralberg Mountains, which mark the eastern boundary of the kingdom.

In Aachen, fresh water abounds in the many streams, lakes, and small rivers that cross the land before they tumble into the sea. The sparsely populated lands of Aachen are abundant in game and fish.

Travel in Aachen

Travel here is relatively easy when in the plains; the country is gentle, and there are plenty of tracks. The remains of the ancient Ursal Road comes down from Canult Pass and cuts through the country. It is a dark and miserable road when it passes beneath the Detmold. There it splits, one branch going north, the other south. Few use this road anymore, most cutting around the forest if they can.

The Heraldry

The ruling house of Aachen is recognized by its banner: two white and gold manned unicorns facing each other across a red war-board. Upon the shield are a single Winter Rose and two trees. The trees are representative of Ephremere's Glade and the rose of the Winter Rose that grew at her feet. The unicorns were sacred to the land.

Of That Land & Governance

Baldwin III rules with a benevolent hand. He is a man in the prime of his life. A Knight of the Unicorn, he spent the better part of his youth questing for a glimpse of the creature. Though he has not seen the beast, he longs for it still, often wondering about what could have been. Castle Aachen, the realm's capitol, is a large, powerful fortress filled with wonder and wealth, yet Baldwin spends little time there. He travels a great deal, dragging his royal household from one end of the kingdom to the other, meting out justice as he goes. Recently, Baldwin brought in a score of dwarven coinsmiths and began minting his own coin. They craft silver pieces only, but they are well worth their weight.

It is a feudal kingdom in every sense of the word. The barons are given their lands in fief for their allegiance and services rendered; they in turn offer their lands in fief to knights and farmers. Much of the land is farmed out to peasants for a fee, a payment due in kind or service. The king possesses the greatest number of feudal holdings and retains the same power his grand-sires did before him. The lords are held accountable for their actions; abuse of farmers or travelers is not tolerated, or so it is said of the Good Kings of Aachen.

The first day of each month Baldwin holds court. Any, great or small, who wish redress, need but apply at the court and he hears them out.

Several castles of the Knights of Haven have recently been constructed here, the land given as a fief for which the knights must pay homage.

Many castles dot the landscape of Aachen, houses for the barons and knights and their families. Occasionally there are villages nearby, but for the most part the castles stand alone, overlooking a valley or along a river bank.

Economic Rating: 3

The Army

In time of need, the king calls upon a stout force of knights and men-at-arms, a force augmented by barbarian levies, usually volunteers promised booty upon campaign. He augments this with his feudal levy that includes his barons, their knights, and men-at-arms. All this mixture of knights and barbarians enables Baldwin to field a formidable army. The cornerstone of their military lies in the heavy cavalry of the knights and the barons. They have precious few archers.

Of the Gods

The lords of Aachen pay homage to Wenafar, though some few are followers of Ore-Tsar. Aachen is the only human land where worship of the goddess Wenafar is sanctified by the crown. For this reason many believe the tales of Ephremere's Glade and the Winter Rose. Adventurers come from far and wide seeking that hidden place and the power the rose petals are reputed to imbue.

Of Her People

There is a proud tradition of warfare among the nobility and they frequently call for tournaments which the king or local lords invariably provide. It is rare that a month passes without some form of tourney somewhere in the realm.

The close ties established with the barbarian lands of Eisenhiem are the source of continual migrations of Northmen into Aachen. The proud and warlike traditions of those people intermingle with the subdued personality of the local populace. Disputes invariably break out, but for the most part the peasants and freedmen accept the newcomers with little argument.

Aachen produces medicines, ivory from the Inner Sea, wood products from the Detmold, and horses. The tax on pilgrims of Ore-Tsar makes up a large portion of local incomes. Wool production, however, provides the greatest source of revenue. The wool produced by the farmers finds its way to the small textile factories which pepper the towns and some of the villages. From there, merchants carry the finished product to the markets of Avignon, Anglamay, the Hanse Cities, and so on. The wealth generated due to the trade has brought general happiness and prosperity to the folk of Aachen. Of course, this wealth has also brought bandits, orcs, and other undesirables to the countryside. The

raiders are aided by the often great distances between castles. Despite this, the people tend to be friendly and welcome travelers of all sorts into their local taverns.

How Aachen Came To Be

In the waning days of Unklar's rule there rose to the fore a mercenary captain, Baldwin of Klun. Baldwin served Lord Pius in the west where he fought against the Holy Defenders of the Flame and hunted the elves of the Darkenfold and Eldwood Forests. Though not a cruel man, upon the field of war he showed little mercy. In the civil war between Pius and Orkhan (see "the Andanuth or "Kingdom of Maine"), Baldwin led Pius' troops at the battle of Redhill in 1124 md, and was instrumental in Orkhan's defeat. After the battle, Pius entreated Baldwin to hunt down the fleeing Orkhan and kill him.

This Baldwin set out to do. He gathered his troops and crossed the river Saline and shortly overtook the hapless general. A short but brutal fight ensued. Orkhan's guard either fell or fled, and the general cast himself upon Baldwin's mercy. Baldwin showed none, but rather returned to Pius with the general's head in a sack. Pius rewarded him with land and title in the newly forming kingdom of Maine. Baldwin accepted these with no reservations (some claim that Baldwin's descendants still have rights to these properties) and settled into a life of retirement, far from the wages of war. He took a wife, a beautiful woman of the northern people, and soon he got her with child.

In those days, men said that the Lord Knight Baldwin lived a life twice blessed. His wife, with her last breath, gave birth to his daughter, Ephremere, the Wonder of the World. Into this child the world surrendered all its strength, its wisdom, and its beauty. People marveled at her. Then Baldwin saw the unicorn.

Some few years passed and Pius called upon his service again and it was upon a field of deep green where men strove in mortal arms that Baldwin saw the noble beast. The knight's iron will, caste in bloody gore, crumbled at the sight of the wonderful creature, and in the pale blue eyes of the one-horned stallion, Baldwin's life changed forever. He looked about the field of carnage, where armored men slew one the other; before his very eyes laid a calamity, a swirling mass of shattered lances, bright hued plates of steal, broken shields, and riven helms. Men stood awash in the black of dirt-mixed blood, while about their feet lay the churning earth, embracing the fallen and the dead. The pitiful cries of wounded men mingled with screams of rage and pain as those still able waged war without respite upon the field of green. Amidst all this, both a part of and apart from the world, stood the unicorn. The noble beast looked upon Baldwin, its eyes wild, nostrils flaring, great steam blasting forth; a moment only it stood thus, and then, turning, it galloped away, passing with ethereal speed into the deep blue horizon.

Baldwin believed it a gift from the realm of Faerie sent to lead him away from the dark paths of war and slaughter. He lusted for a sight of the beast again, and he swore an oath to that effect. Though already an old man, Baldwin forsook his lands and deserted Lord Pius, taking with him his daughter, a small army of like minded men and their families. He wandered the lands of Ethrum and Aenoch in search of the legendary beast, but to no avail. In time, he and his folk settled in the Harz,

a fertile land of rolling hills and deep forests. There he built the castle Aachen, upon a hill overlooking the Edle River.

All about him were wide-open spaces, hillocks and grasslands where only a few small villages and farmsteads, mainly sheep farmers, were the norm. Northmen had settled along the coasts. Though they plundered some, most of these migrants seemed bent on settling the country and farming it. A few imperial posts held order in the land, though these rarely left the safety of their compounds.

In a surprisingly short time, Baldwin seized the old imperial provinces of the Harz, Detmold and Heristat. The imperial forces fled and in the dwindling days of 1127 md, he proclaimed himself king of the lands of Aachen. The local peasants did not seem to care and the Northmen respected the king's prowess in battle and did not challenge his rule.

In Baldwin's failing years he was befriended by the Forest Lord, the Val Tulmiph Daladon, who himself waged a bitter war against the Dark. Daladon visited Baldwin often, for he loved the old man greatly, and too, he knew of the unicorn. He promised the old king that he would lend aid and guide his daughter, Ephremere, as much as he could.

Ephremere, innocent in those days, failed to see the signs of her father's death. She became enamored with the ranger lord and flattered herself that he loved her as well. Theirs is a strange tale, but suffice it to say another held Daladon's heart, and he could not see Ephremere in any light but as the daughter of his friend. Seeing the danger that lay ahead for the young land of Aachen, whose king lay dying with no heir but a woman-born, Daladon sought council in the wood. At last he understood why the unicorn presented himself before Baldwin, for through his daughter, the fey might rise in the world after Winter's Dark.

Many years ago, Unklar slew the unicorn's mare and the stallion alone had remained. In Ephremere was placed a trove of the ancient world's magic, its power, and with her the worlds of Fairie and Aihrde hung entwined. It had never been Baldwin's fate to see the unicorn again, but his daughter's alone. Daladon brought the young woman to the forest deeps and summoned the unicorn. Through his ensorcellements the stallion bound itself to her line and the two lines lived on in her son, Baldwin II, and a new breed of unicorn. On the forest floor where the two bound there grew an abundance of winter roses, those flowers of magical yore (see "Appendix: New Magic").

As the union came to completion, Baldwin the king breathed his last. The tales relate how many a man and woman saw Baldwin on the day of his passing, how he passed through the castle gates, looking younger than ever he had before, and riding upon the back of a great stallion that moved like the wind. The king laughed, they said. Whether these tales hold any truth, none may now say.

With Baldwin's passing, Ephremere became queen. She relied much on Daladon, for almost immediately her throne came under attack. The orc lords and ungern chieftains of Iergaul (see "March of Zeitz") came south, plundering with much slaughter. They rolled over much of King Theodahad's realm of Eisenheim and into Aachen. King Theodahad raised his armies, and uniting with Ephremere, drove back the enemy, eventually laying siege to Iergaul but failing to break its walls.

The next decade played witness to the continued struggle between that powerful city-state, the two kingdoms, and others besides. Ephremere sent men to the Battle of Olensk (see "Kingdom of Augsberg") and after-ward to the battles of the Luneberg Plains and the Great Tree where her only daughter, Elisa, fell at the hands of Coburg the Undying, and where her spirit wanders the Toten Fields (See "Totem Fields").

Eventually Ephremere became a warrior queen of great renown and often led her knights and many barbarians from Eisenhiem into battle.

Ephremere ruled a land of independent peasants, Northmen, and knights. She followed her father's example and doled out much of the land to her loyal knights, anointing them with titles of baron and lord, but she admonished them all to treat the people kindly and to molest them as little as possible. She passed several ordinances giving the peasants the right to move where they would and to buy land if they possessed the money. She also sanctified the worship of Wenefar and Daladon, much to the joy of her nobles, for all but a few worshiped the unicorn that is sacred to both those Val Eahrakun.

After her long reign ended, she was laid to rest next to her father in the crypts below Aachen. A druid of the Order of the Oak (see "Guilds & Orders") crowned her son King Baldwin II. Already 50 years old, Baldwin did not rule for long, but in the short time he sat on the throne, he exempted all woven articles from taxes for five years. In so doing, he bolstered the textile industry in Aachen, which found ready markets for the finished products in the western kingdoms of Ursal and lay the foundations for his own kingdom's wealth.

John, Baldwin's son, sat on the throne for only a few years and reigned over Aachen during a time of plenty and peace. He claimed that the unicorn came to him in a dream and told him to seek the patch of winter roses where his grandmother had last seen the unicorn, and so he passed into the Detmold forests on a cold wintery night, seeking the ancient oak trees of the forest's center. He vanished in the wood, never to be seen again. All attempts to find his father failing, the druids crowned his infant son King Baldwin III.

Of Her Kings

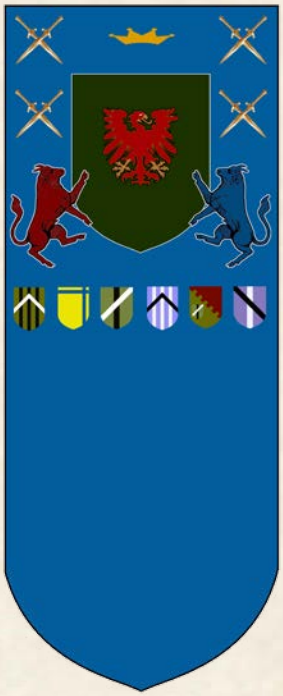
Baldwin I (1127-1128 md)
Ephremere (1128-1170 md)
Baldwin II (1170-1179 md)
John (1179-1183 md)
Baldwin III (1183 md-present)

AENOCH (New Aenoch, Outremere, The Crusader Kingdoms, The Seven Realms)

In wondrous Ascalon, her Imperial Highness the Empress of Aenoch, First of Al-Lios, the lady Pryzmira, sits upon the throne of her ancestors.

We have thrown off the yoke of one autocrat, we will not accept the yoke of another. Know that we Free Cities of New Aenoch have signed a pact to elect the empress to her throne. She has been in contact with us, as you very well know, for several years and we had some inclination of you coming from her.

Desmond of Ascalon to Jaren Falkhynjager of the Council



Geographical Location

New Aenoch, a name given to the empire by those coming and going from the west, is small in compari- son to the greater kingdoms elsewhere. On maps, the lands of the empress encompass all the country from the Gulf of Barachia to the Blacktooth Ridge, and east from the Aratok Mountains to the banks of the Udunilay, but the reality is different. Much of that country is wild and home to small enclaves of crusaders trying to carve a land out of the wilderness. Some have survived, the northern most in the Estang Forest; others have thrived, such as Ludenshiem, but the country in between is only sprinkled with these small holdings, carved out of a dangerous and violent region. Aenoch sits upon the golden waters of the Amber Sea and from her many sea ports comes wealth and a never-ending flood of immigrants, travelers, and those seeking a fresh start in the new world.

New Aenoch is a land of many promises and was once the heart of a great and thriving people. It does not hurt that the empress herself offers the promise of land for service. In New Aenoch lies the hope of wealth and power, influence and prestige; these drive those thirsty for such drinks, into the reckless abandon of adventure.

The country is productive, no matter who owns it. The rolling hills and plains are rich in black earth, and where the land is not cultivated, a deep prairie grass grows. The land is wet, with plenty of rivers, lakes, pools, and ponds; rain fall is steady and gives good seasons for farming and livestock. Beyond the rolling plains lies the Kellerwald, a forest pregnant with time, where strange creatures abound. Too close to the Grausumland to be safe, it is more wild than civilized. Beyond to the east lie the sprawling, seemingly endless Plains of Achrothos, and to the north, dread Aufstrag, seat of the felled Horned God Unklar.

Travel in New Aenoch

Once the heart of the empire's trade network, with well cut and maintained roads, New Aenoch now poses several challenges for the traveler. In the south travel is conducted by ships moving smoothly up and down the coast. Many small roads connect the southern towns as well, but beyond Lakes Goudy and Autumn the roads vanish into the wilderness. Though there are some, few are usable for anything other than foot traffic. There are multiple paths, carved through the forests by crusaders and rangers, but any goods and large bodies of men usually use the riverways.

The Heraldry

The heraldry of the empire reflects its complexity. The hawk harkens to the ancient heraldry of the House Golden. In its claws are the red and white roses of the old realms of Aenoch and Ethrum. The sword he bears is holy Discepro, the blade forged by Sebastian in the days of old. The bulls flank and support the golden hawk with their backs, even as the followers of Ore-Tsar and the church in New Aenoch support the empress. Five heraldic shields represent the duchies of the realm, and two banners represent each of the city states. Woven throughout the background are snaking daggers, the birthright of the house, the mark of Emperor Marcus IV. Above it all is the Cunae Mundus Usquam, the Cradle of the World with the jewel of god, the Eye of Ornduhl set within.

Of That Land & Governance

In 1197md, Pryzmira celebrated her 57th year as Empress of New Aenoch. She is old, 87, and the last of the rulers who emerged from the Winter Dark Wars. She has seen the world born in war and saw it remake itself in the aftermath. The venerable old woman is much beloved by her people. Whole generations have grown to maturity while she has sat upon the throne of Aenoch. Many view her person as the empire, dreading the day of her demise. For her part, Pryzmira has long since laid aside the heavy hand of rule and takes a less than active role in the administration of her realm. She struggles with increasing her commercial power in the markets owned by the electors. Her military power is vast, due to the frontier conquests of so many Crusader Knights. They swear fealty to her alone, which she gladly accepts.

In truth, her one great goal is to see her daughter Neratite crowned empress, but to do this she must gain at least four votes from the seven electors (see below). To increase her bargaining position, in 1195 md she called for another crusade, bringing fresh blood in from the west.

The seven Electors of New Aenoch elect the empress to the throne. These electors are lords of the towns and provinces of the region and are the Dukes of Aesperdi, Barachia, Dundador, Kourland, and Meteira, the Magistrate of the city of Vilshofen, and the Bishop of Heimstat. These are the lords that the Empress Pryzmira must influence, garnering their votes for her daughter's dignity.

The electors gather once a year to confirm their bonds with the empress and discuss the business of the day. Each year the meeting is held in a different portion of the realm, hosted by one lord or another. Many consider hosting the council a great privilege. The council convenes with the empress' introduction, followed by the introduction of each of the seven electors, who swear their oath to the throne. The empress in turn swears oaths to recognize the electors and to defend them. Business follows the introductions and carries on for days if not weeks. The council is open to the attendance of all the greater and lesser lords of the land and many come to watch, though they are not allowed to participate. The electors and empress conduct much of the business in private, where the political battles between factions and individuals dominate the floor.

From time to time, the electors go to war with one another, or with some of the Crusader States, though the latter is rare, for the empress owns these states.

The Crusader States constitute a host of small and large holdings sprinkled throughout the land. Those lands not directly held by one of the electors are open to colonization. Anyone who can take land and hold it is entitled to owning it, once they have sworn an oath of loyalty to the empress. She in turns grants that crusader the land, with the right to remove the grant at her discretion. These states in turn are required to outfit her army and pay a small tax. They erect their own banners and govern their own halls as petty lords. These lords do not gain a voice in the land and for the most part owe their allegiance to the empress; some turn to one of the electors for support and aid when they quarrel with the Imperial Court, but such quarrels are dangerous, for the empress may retract a grant when she deems it necessary. Only a few have managed to wrangle rights of inheritance, thus owning the land outright, from the court. The host of heraldry is massive, as each of these states and many of the freebooters and adventurers claim a right to recognition.

By and large the crusaders are loyal to the empress.

Economic Rating: 3 x 5

The Army

The standing army of New Aenoch is small, consisting of the Imperial Guard and several troops of mercenaries. Each of the dukes fields his own army, a portion of which he is required to send to the empress' aid if she needs them. The Bishop of Heimstat and Magistrate of Vilshofen have the same commitments. Otherwise the empress is able to call upon her vassals, the Crusader States, for they are required to fill out the ranks of her army. It consists of several thousands of knights, men at arms, and archers.

The navy of New Aenoch is small, a few ships only. Vilshofen has a powerful mercenary fleet of ships but the real naval power comes from scattered Crusader Knights who have taken hold of ships and ply the waters, attacking pirates. The empress usually awards them with the bounty they seize.

Of the Gods

The worship of Ore-Tsar is strong here; churches and monasteries abound. In general the people are devout. It is not the religion of the court, however, and the empress struggles with maintaining the worship of the elder gods in the face of the church of Ore-Tsar. The Bishop of Heimstat is a prelate of that church and has tremendous influence over the Crusader Knights that pay the Horse God homage.

Of Her People

The people of New Aenoch live in small towns or one of the few cities in the area, such as Vilshofen, Ratsdorf, and Gunz. The lands about are dangerous due to the proximity to Aufstrag, and most of the towns are walled. Castles, mostly small affairs, are built on riverbanks, hilltops, and along the roads here and there, mingled with fortified farmsteads. The farms themselves are usually heavily fortified and defensible, built of stout timber and slate shingles, when available.

The people are very independent and many settle here for they consider it a frontier. Being a vassal to the empress requires only a small tax and service from time to time, but few remember the last time she sent forth a call to arms. A stout minded and purposeful people settle the land, people who strive to carve a life out of the wilderness.

There are scores of estates throughout the kingdom owned by petty knights, wizards, rangers, and the like. People who paid their dues carved out land and called for the recognition of the empress. Once given, they settled in their roles as landed knights. Often their estates do not touch one another, but cover geographic areas that the knight and crown deem they can hold. For the most part they are small, for the owners cannot safely defend more. Some have villages they support and defend, others have little, or nothing, earning their keep from plundering the north.

Together, great and small, poor and wealthy, these are the lands of the Crusader Knights, and their small realms are referred to as the Crusader States.

Several roads and paths link the various communities, but these are dangerous to travel alone. Though many taverns and inns exist along the roads, they are often nestled in defensible positions and frequently fortified. Bandits, landless knights, vagabonds, travelers, thieves, and all manner of ruffians ply their trades here, extracting money from the crusaders who are always en route from one campaign to the next. Orcs are plentiful, ranging down from the Blighted Screed and the tribal areas just south of the Grausumland; also found are goblins, ogres, some giants, and many strange creatures both evil and good which dwell in the Barren Wood.

The Crusader States yield a nominal wealth to the empress, a tax of their unmovable goods being assessed by the imperial court every few years. This tax flows south, though is often paid for by plunder taken from others, extracted from dungeons or on raids deep in to the northern country. The monies are fickle and the court does not rely upon them.

The true wealth of the empire lies on the sea, derived from the silk trade and from several spices culled from the sea. The silk trade is slowly slipping from their hands as new routes, over land or via the southern oceans, are cropping up; this is largely because the waters of the Bay of Barachia are becoming increasingly more dangerous due to pirates from the Confederation of Torrich and Eloria. They still control the sea spices and sell at ever higher prices in the far west. New Aeonoch is also well known for their luxury items, silver work, and statuary. Another and more recent source of wealth has been the church. Taxation on pilgrims and protection services are growing by leaps and bounds. In turn, great quantities of food and livestock are imported, for the land around is often too dangerous to farm.

The Crusade

The empress has recently called for a crusade (the second such endeavor). Her call attracts hosts of young hopefuls to the empire on every boat. The docks and quays of the towns of Dundador, Barachia, Oeaita, and Ascalon overflow with men and women seeking glory and fortune. What they conquer is theirs; they have but to swear fealty to the old empress and she will grant them title to the land. This attracts all manner of people to the cities and towns, making them dangerous, wild places where thieves and rogues mingle with the high born, the affluent with the poor, and evil with good. Throughout the western lands the church of Ore-Tsar supports the empress in her crusade, continually calling for the brave to travel to the New Empire to war upon the enemy.

After flooding the ports, they wander north in search of gold and glory. Many never return, but some carve out homes for themselves, and live or die on the frontiers.

Crusader conquests bring mixed blessings to the electors. On the one hand they enjoy an increase in trade of goods to the crusaders and the newly conquered frontiers, not to mention the wealth that has poured into the realm from the arrival of the crusaders themselves. On the

other hand these conquerors swear fealty to the empress and she gains their dues in monies, kind, and service (see below). This increases the might and bargaining power of the Imperial House, so the electors bend their wits and fortunes to restrict the acquisition of new land and hold back the crusaders.

New Aenoch promises high adventure and quick wealth. The political and religious unrest cause constant feuds between the seven electors and the empress, between the old and new gods. The added threat of pirates from the confederation only stirs the tumultuous waters. A continuous call for crusaders to rid the lands to the north of wild orcs and remnants of the horrors of Aufstrag make New Aenoch a beacon for would-be glory hunters, and of course the imperial promise that "what one conquers, one keeps; what one keeps, one swears homage for" only draws more adventurers, for land, after all, is power.

How New Aenoch Came to Be

Any child born of the line of Emperors bears a birthmark of a snaking vine with a needled point. In the year 1110 md, during the early years of the Winter Dark Wars, a slave of Aufstrag gave birth to such a child.

~From the Historical Annals of Aenoch

The Empire of Aenoch's history is mired in the depths of time and predates much of the world's struggles. During the long years of the Age of Men, the empire existed and flourished. Like the tide, her power rose and fell with time, but the lords and ladies of her realm suffered the grief of decadence as wealth and power tend to cause. Many of her lords dabbled in the eldritch sorceries of the goblin lords and brought that practice into the households of men. The greatest of all these practitioners was the Emperor Sebastian Oliver Finwe and it was he that used the wizard Nulak, to summon the dark god Unklar to aid him in his lustful desires to restore Aenoch to her past glories. The god proved no slave and turned on him, slaying him with iron and fire. He took up the mantle of his crown, the Cunae Mundus Usquam, to place upon his brow. From that moment the world changed and the thousand year empire of Winter's Dark began. Unklar renamed Al-Liosh "Aufstrag" and ruled from his throne, eventually conquering all the spaces of mortal man.

The tales relate how Jaren, a Lord of the Order of the Scintillant Dawn, fought the Horned God for many years and proved one of the last to stand against him. When he fell the Horned God paid him particular attention and set him to anguish in Aufstrag. He gave him over to Nulak-Kiz-Din, a wizard of great renown. Nulak treated Jaren as a plaything so that at times he lay at rest in dark dungeons; at others he slaved in the pits, or suffered on the rack.

Nulak worried, lest the object of his torment be destroyed, and he pondered his plight long and hard. At last he took the monk to the gates of Aufstrag and nailed him to the wall. There he hung wracked in pain and suffering. All who passed beneath the gate saw the creature that had been Jaren and they cast stones at him or shot him with arrows. At night the monk healed, his flesh returning to normal so that on the morrow he suffered another day of torment. Once in a great while, Nulak ordered Jaren pulled from the wall and made comfortable in the halls of his master so that he forgot who he was. The wizard plied him with food and drink and women of great beauty, only to pull them away and force Jaren once more to the torment of the wall.

It was during one of these interludes that a slave woman in the pits served Jaren and fell in love with him. She secreted food to him on the wall and relieved his torment when she could. In time Jaren became enamored of her and made her with child, a girl. They named her after the old Ethrumanian goddess, Pryzmira. Jaren entreated his paramour to flee the pits during the chaos of the Trench Wars in the early days of the Winter Dark Wars, knowing that Nulak, if ever he got wind of the child, would make them all suffer. She traveled into the Kellerwald where she joined a group of halflings.

In time Jaren escaped dark Aufstrag and joined the dwarf lords and others in the Winter Dark Wars. He sought out the halflings and brought his love and his daughter to safety upon the Isle of Dreams where she lived under the protection of Saint Luther, Lord of Dreams. There, while not at war, he raised Pryzmira as a priestess of Toth. When he shaved her head for the induction he found the mark of the House Golden, that ancient brand which the Emperor Marcus IV gave over to his descendants. Pryzmira stood as heir to the Imperial Throne of Aenoch. In a few short years she came of age and when she learned of her heritage, she declared she would seek her throne.

The Winter Dark Wars raged across Aihrde for two decades. Everywhere men waited to see which way the wars would go, but after the Battle of Olensk it seemed obvious. Pryzmira knew she had but to find the right allies to support her claim. She soon found them, or they her, in the lands south and east of Aufstrag in the Kellerwald. The provinces and cities of Heimstat, Barachia, Dundador, Ascalon, Aesperdi, Kourland, Vilshofen, and Meteira had lived under the shadow of Aufstrag for a thousand years. These Seven Realms grew wealthy through control of the overseas trade routes and they suffered little from the hand of Unklar. In consequence, a powerful, educated merchant class came to rule these cities. Despite their success, or perhaps because of it, when war came to the empire, these lords and burghers banded together in a loose confederation and prepared to rebel.

In those days, much as it is today, the merchants of that region employed a small host of house wizards, sages, and the like. They did this mostly to learn of weather and bandits, but on occasion one would surface with the true powers of a magi. Such a one came to the lords of the seven cities and claimed that a new empress waited upon the Dreaming Sea for a call from her people, to come to Aenoch and rule again. They sent their prayers to the Lord of Dreams and bid him bring her to them. At her own request Saint Luther delivered her into their keeping.

Pryzmira, last daughter of the House of the Old Empire of Aenoch, came to the lords of the Seven Realms and promised them wealth and the power of the Council of Light if they would support her claim to the ancient lineage. She bore the mark and they believed her. They agreed to league with Pryzmira under the stipulation that each of the seven lands enjoy the rights to elect the empress and her heirs to the throne. In turn, she demanded that their borders be permanently fixed, that they give her the city of Ascalon to rule from, and that they grant her wide privileges of taxation and expansion. This the electors did, for they saw their wealth lay not in the ruined lands to the north and Aufstrag, but upon the sea. In this there was some truth, but afterward they regretted giving up the right of expansion.

In 1130 md, the provinces and cities declared themselves against Aufstrag and welcomed Pryzmira as their new empress. Aufstrag had no strength left to combat this final blow to her prestige; her armies were drawn into conflict everywhere and they had not recovered from the catastrophic defeat at the Battle of Olensk. The rebellion went unchallenged by the powers in the north.

Pryzmira arrived in great pomp, upon a ship riding high into the port of Ascalon, but for her part she refused to be crowned without the Cunae Mundus Usquam, the crown of the emperors of old Aenoch. Her father, Jaren Falkhynjager, gathered the Council of Light, and after great hardship and toil they tore the crown from the undead hands of the

Lich Baron Harakon Petrovich, that servant of the Emperor Sebastian who had held it in safe keeping lo these many years.

At last in 1140md, the electors crowned the 30 year old Pryzmira Empress of New Aenoch by placing the Cunae Mundus Usquam, the "Cradle of the World," upon her brow.

The electors and empress set pen to paper and drew up constitutions for the governance of the realm. The military and mercantile alliance of the cities and provinces of New Aenoch granted their support and elected Pryzmira empress after she conceded the following: 1) Pryzmira recognized the territorial rights of the league members and agreed to the investiture of ducal authority to the Seven Realms,which included the Bishop of Heimstat, and the Magistrate of the City of Vilshofen, for each territory with subsequent rights given to the lord, including justice, maintenance of troops, and taxation, 2) Pryzmira recognized the rights of the city burghers, bishops, and lords to choose the successor from their own number to each ducal throne, 3) Pryzmira agreed to support the league militarily, maintaining the league's mercantile rights, 4) Pryzmira agreed to support general free trade throughout the league, 5) Pryzmira agreed to maintain an army from her own expenses to act as protection of the Seven Realms and empire. She agreed that the imperial army would not be used in the territories of the Seven Realms unless called upon by one of the seven lords. However the members each independently agreed to supply 500 well equipped men-at-arms in support of the imperial army for a period of 40 days each year, or in the advent of no troops being available, to supply monies to hire mercenaries.

In turn the Seven Realms bestowed the crown of Aenoch upon Pryzmira's brow and installed her as their new empress. They gave her lands surrounding the city of Ascalon to support her household. In Ascalon a castle and tower were built for her at the league's expense. Furthermore, she was given all rights of taxation upon the roads and rivers and sea ports (this last only upon those other than the Seven Realms). The imperial house gained sole rights to the minting of coins, and the status and conquest of territory they left to the empress' judgment.

In this manner Pryzmira came to rule New Aenoch, though in truth hers was but a shadow of her ancestor's power, though for many years she strove to combat the Seven Realms and gain leverage over them. This led to many internal conflicts and the slow evolution of a complicated feudal system. Pryzmira introduced the cult of Toth to the realm to vie for the souls of the common men. Only a few converted, mostly those possessed of great wealth.

As she grew older, the empress mollified her demands and rarely struggled with the Seven Realms. She turned instead to conquering new land and in this vein called to the west for a crusade, promising land and wealth. The summons generated wide enthusiasm in the west and hosts of men came to carve out holdings from the wilds north of the Seven Realms. Though the coming years saw many victories and some expansion, the empire failed to expand much beyond its original borders. The worship of Ore-Tsar, however, came with the crusaders, as many of these young knights came from the kingdom of Anglamay. Before lon the Seven Realms became powerful supporters of the new religion, only adding to the complexity of the highly charged politics of the realm.

The Empress Pryzmira rules in New Aenoch. She is old now, but her wits remain and she struggles to make certain that her daughter, Ner- atite, is crowned and assumes the throne of Aenoch. Neratite is young and beautiful. She thinks much like her mother, but longs for conquests beyond the Seven Realms and seeks to bring ever more power under her sway so that she might grow the might of her mother's heritage.

THE LORDS OF NEW AENOCH

Heimstadt, City State
Bishop Isak IV, Elector

Vilshofen, City State
Magistrate Geoffrey of Whitsmith, Elector

Dundador, Duchy
Duke Dafydd II of Lacharn, Elector

Capitol: Castle Dundador

Aesperdi, Duchy
Duke Huw XIV Bengrisse, Elector

Capitol: Walled town of Aesperdi

Barachia, Duchy
Duke Jarnu IV, of Nieminen, Elector

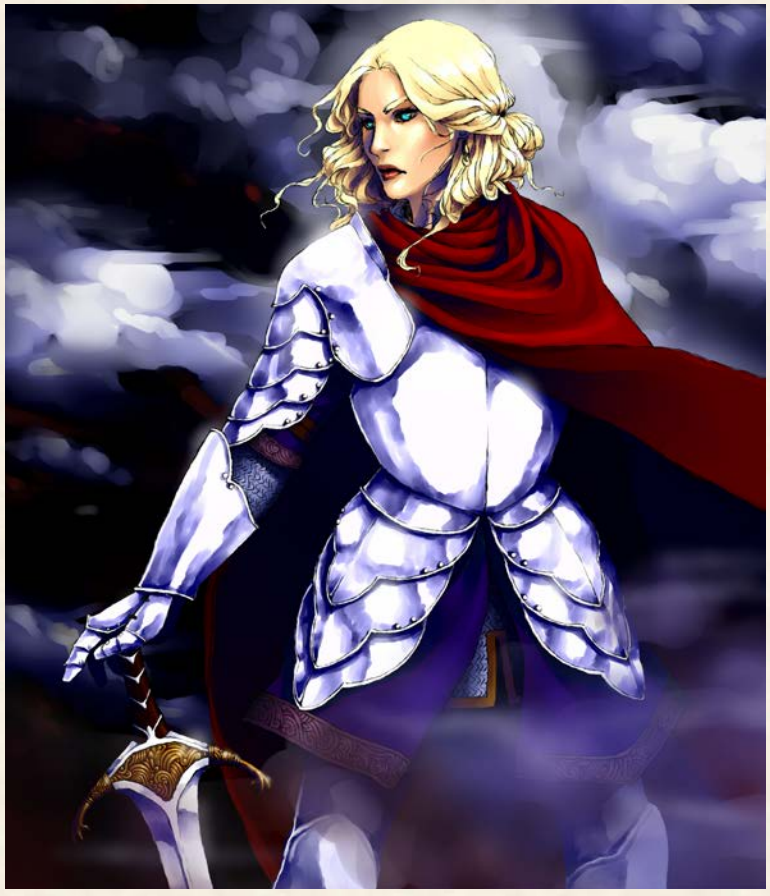
Capitol: Barachia

Kourland, Duchy
Duke Erich the Red, Elector

Capitol: Castle Ratsdorf

Meteira, Duchy
Duke Stephan Larz IX, of Utz, Elector

Capitol: Methric



ANGLAMAY (KINGDOM OF)

From the towers and halls of Anglamay-ot-Neider, King William III in rules in glory and might as his fathers have since the fall of Unklar.

Geographical Location

Anglamay is a large land which extends from the gates of Avignon to the Tot River and Green Forest. The northern border lies upon the Hanse River but in the south the border is more fluid, with the king claiming much of the Elithian Wood for his own. There are towns, several large cities and many castles across the wide kingdom, offering the weary traveler warm drink, good food, and refuge from the weather

Travel in Anglamay

The land is gentle on the traveler, generally flat, where small rivers and streams abound. In the western regions, small forests, outgrowths of the greater ones to the north and south, dot the landscape. Roads, dating from the imperial era are still in fair shape. The Ursal Road remains the main thoroughfare upon which east-west traffic moves. It is cobbled and in good shape.

The Heraldry

The red banner with a rearing crowned ram draws all eyes to the power of the king. The plants of green holly reveal the monarch's love of peace. By divine right he rules both lords and church, hence the wheel of Ore-Tsar, and the knightly horse.

Of that Land & Governance

William III "the Good" rules Anglamay, as he has for many years. His bulk, age, and many old wounds allow him to sit a horse only with difficulty, and he rarely takes up arms. Despairing the religious conflicts of his father (see below), he attempts to rule in an equitable fashion. Despite this he has thrice been drawn into wars with his dukes and once with the Holy See at Avignon. To this effect he maintains a host of knights and men-at-arms. These occupy the many royal castles and forts throughout the realm. He energetically enforces the realm's feudal dues; requiring the dukes, barons, clergy and other various lords to pay in a mixture of coin and service, the coin being used to keep his own knights housed and equipped. Despite his impairments he frequently travels throughout the realm, mostly during the spring, arriving unannounced at various estates and monasteries. In this way some of his feudal dues are taken in kind, foodstuffs, lodging, and the like, and he is enabled to keep a close and careful watch upon the realm.

The dukes, ensconced in their own lands, rule separate from the king. The duchies named are Tildune, Ogden, Beiuel, Thrace, and Limnule. These powerful lords rule scattered, but large domains, and command armies of knights and men-at-arms. Though sworn to the service of the king, they possess many rights and guard and protect them from any threats from on high.

Beiuel, Limnule and Tildune, all centrally located, are wealthy in foodstuffs. There, the traditions of the tournament are strong. The feudal culture dominates the central duchies like no other. The lords, great and small, sport their wealth upon the backs of their great horses, with lance and shield, sword and mace. They call for and hold tournaments frequently and it is rare that somewhere in the duch- ies there is not a tourney occurring. These events draw knights from all the surrounding lands, from Kleaves, Ceeana, and Kareelia and even further south, sometimes drawing Fontenouq elves of the Twilight or even wandering Knights of Kayomar and ronins moving across the sprawling expanse of the Lands of Ursal. They come to the central duchies, for here is the heart of feudalism, and these lords stand apart like few others. From these regions also come the greatest calls for war and crusade. Many of their younger sons have gone on the crusades called by the empress of New Aenoch.

The Duchy of Ogden in the Greenwood is the furthest west of the dukedoms. The duke commands the valleys between the Hanse City States and Kleaves. His are the gates of Anglamay and frequently the duke must make war upon the creatures that come from the ruins of the Great Wall further west. For that reason Ogden is filled with experienced soldiery and battle hardened warriors. Though some of their younger sons enjoy the fruits of the tourney, most who live in this western march focus on the very real dangers posed by hobgoblins, orcs, and that ilk. Ogden's is a stark life, most of their wealth spent on fortifications and armaments and perhaps for this reason they have attracted a sect of religious zealots who have broken off the church of Ore-Tsar. The Katherines espouse that clerics and priests should carry no wealth in the world other than what they need to survive.

They believe the church and temples should not possess wealth either. Considered by most of the realm to be heretics, many in Ogden welcome their preachings of austerity. Their master is one Conrad, Lord of Capes and his group has caused a wide schism in the church of Ore-Tsar. Many younger knights and nobles have begun to attach themselves to the heretics, widening the religious dispute into a political one.

Rumors of a crusade against the heretics abound, for it is known that William III opposes them, but no such calls have yet come from the church or its leaders.

Thrace, braced as she is against the city state of Avignon, is a hotbed of rebellion and discontent. It is the duke there who continually calls for the rights of the Bishop of Avignon over the kingdom's clergy and even for King William to recognize the place of the Bishop of Avignon. Here wealth abounds for the merchants and rogues flood the lower plains with traffic. This adds to the political discontent, for many of those in the service of the duke are also on the payroll of the Bishop of Avignon.

Economic Rating: 3

The Army

Anglamay can field and impressive army, one of the largest in the world, from the king's house knights to the freeman, they range from heavy horse to footpads.

King William commands an impressive array of knights, all in his own service drawn from his own lands. These consist largely of heavy and light horse. Some are under permanent arms, other rotate out of his service when their dues are paid. He also can call up large contingents of men-at-arms and crossbowmen. Doing so requires him to strip many castles of their garrisons. He also employs a small rump of a mercenary force, largely foot soldiers and archers. These are augmented in time of war by his very large purse which allows him to hire more as needed.

The dukes and barons of Anglamay owe him feudal levies. These range from knights to footmen and archers. Their armies can be large but pay homage to their own lords. For every ten freemen, one must be sent to the king's service in times of need, or money to hire one mercenary in his place.

Of the Gods

The church of Ore-Tsar is very powerful in Anglamay. Its clergy and temples dwell in most towns, all the cities, and almost all the castles and bergs. Few do not pay the God of the Wheel homage, but the bishops vie for power with the head of the Church of Ore-Tsar in nearby Avignon. Here dwells the second greatest seat of that god's worship. The bishop lays great claims upon the kingdom; claiming for one to be the only prelate able to crown the king. These ceremonial disputes are compounded by the growing schism with the Katherines who, originating in Ogden, have spread throughout the realm.

Of Her People

Due to the efficient union of imperial bureaucracy, powerful merchant families, and a wealthy peasantry, Anglamay prospers. A great deal of trade passes through the kingdom. Many of the towns, though frequently walled, are well off and able to field their own small armies. Merchants travel in large caravans, trading the local textile goods, sheep, cattle, horses, wood products, pottery, and grain for foreign iron, coal, and worked steel. Anglamay is well known for the production of finely crafted armor. The merchant guilds are struggling to assert their power in the towns, and to do so they are attempting to control the trade routes, paying for road and bridge improvements in exchange for the rights to charge tolls. Thus, tensions grow between the noble and mercantile classes.

In the west, the realm commands a deciding voice in the young kingdoms and is the major pillar of the Church of Ore-Tsar. The Bishop of Anglamay vies for control of the church with the Bishop of Avignon.

The greatest threat to travelers are robber barons and lordless knights who prey on the weak. The king attempts to quell these brigands, but his realm is large, and though Anglamay fields an impressive array of mounted knights in battle, often supported by a large peasant levy, it is difficult for the king to bring these to bear on wandering knights and bandits. Such lawlessness makes for great sport amongst the landed knights, who challenge themselves by attempting to serve the king by bringing these rogues to heel.

The greatest threat to the realm's stability is not the struggle of church prelates, or landless knights, it lies rather with the king himself. King William has no heir, and this worries him greatly, for there are many would-be adherents, including Count Eurich of Kleaves who rules the lands west of the kingdom of Anglamay. His is the most dangerous claim, for the Duke of Ogden is very close to the Count through his wife. Rumors abound that he recently sent three emissaries to Kleaves in order to encourage the young count to press his claims to the throne, for the duke hopes that Count Eurich, who pays homage to St. Luther and not Ore-Tsar, will not press him so hard, if the Coutn is made king, to crush the religious Katherines.

How Anglamay Came To Be

During the age of Winter Dark the lands of the whole of the Ethrum and Aenoch were divided into provinces which reflected the realms as they existed in the days before the Dark Lord's reign. The lands from the Hanse River to the Massif and the Twilight Wood were divided into nine provinces; Anglamay, Olgdon, Tildune, Limnule, Beiuel, Thrace, Kareelia, Kleaves, and Ceeana. The folk who lived there, a proud people, traced their lineage to the ancient Ethrum, and as with their ancestors, they reveled in war and tournament. To bring these folk to heel, Unklar appointed governors to rule them and garrisoned cohorts within town and country.

Despite this, these warriors proved difficult to govern and they rebelled continually. To overcome this, the governors appointed them to administrative offices and gave them the title of knights. They exempted these newly minted knights from taxes and allowed them to employ small troops of retainers. To control these men further, a noble, usually the most influential, was appointed as count of that particular province. The counts, though locally powerful, ruled in name only, answering to the dictates of the governor. In this way, the governors pacified the region by creating an aristocratic cast of bureaucrats who made their wealth through controlling the whole of the region's commerce.

When the Winter Dark Wars began, Unklar's generals, hard pressed in other regions, stripped the central lands of Ethrum, from the Great Wall to the Straits of Ursal, of their garrisons. The lords of Aufstrag desperately needed experienced soldiers for the battles in the south and east. The central lands they deemed safe from rebellion, and they did not fear the consequences of withdrawing so many soldiers. They did not count, however, on the raids of the Northmen and the ambitions of William, the Count of Anglamay.

William, an older man, bore three titles, given to him by the Lords of Aufstrag. A younger son of a minor bureaucrat, William joined the legions in around 1105 md. He eventually attained the position of Horse Commander, at which point he retired to his home in Anglamay. There he married the only daughter of Philip, the count of that province. Recognized for his loyal service, he soon attained the post of Governor of Anglamay and, when Count Philip and his only son died in one of the many plagues that haunted the Winter Dark, William attained the title of count from his father in law. By the outset of the Winter Dark Wars, William served both posts as Governor and Count of Anglamay. This powerful position, unrivaled in the region by vassals of Aufstrag soon attracted him a following of warriors, adventurers and soldiers, many of the knightly class.

When the Winter Dark Wars began, William took a decidedly neutral stance. The imperial defeats in the Flintlock and in Kayomar coupled with the civil war in Maine cast him in the firm belief that the age of the Horned God would soon be over. In 1123 md he called his knights to arms and drove out the few imperial garrisons left in the area and established himself within the halls of his castle of Anglamay-ot-Neider.

His revolt spread rapidly to the other provinces. The imperial governors tried to rally the garrisons but those troops who remained could not be relied upon. With the empire helpless in the provinces, the imperial bureaucracy joined the revolt and the peasants shortly thereafter. William asserted himself over the other lords from the beginning. He commanded an impressive array of knights, ex-soldiers, lords, and bureaucrats. Within a few short years, the provincial counts, some reluctantly, recognized William as their king, giving him rights over them for his protection, guidance, and leadership. In turn he invested each of the great lords with property and privilege. All joined but for Kareelia, Kleaves, and Ceeana.

As is elsewhere written, Philip the Guileless came to Anglamay during these days, bringing with him the worship of Ore-Tsar. The peasants and town burghers embraced this new religion of hard work and reward so much so that almost the whole realm converted. William, a shrewd

man, did not let this opportunity pass. He openly converted, embracing Philip upon the steps of his own Great Hall.

By as early as 1125 md, William ruled a vast and extremely wealthy region of the Lands of Ursal. He attempted for a time to conquer the Hanse river basin, though this ended in failure when those peoples formed the league of Hanse City States. The free city of Avignon avoided his conquest as well, being ruled by the bishop and several powerful guilds; however, the bishop proved a valuable ally and friend to the king.

William proved a benevolent ruler, sitting on the throne for nigh on 15 years. He strongly supported the creation of churches and monasteries. When he died his young son was crowned by the powerful Bishop of Avignon as William II, king of Anglamay. William II ruled much as his father did. He enjoyed his pleasures in the quiet of his castle on the Neider.

William II allowed the various lords of his kingdom to exercise an impressive amount of control and rules. For monied payments, he exchanged rights and privileges. Under his tender rule localism became the norm and the nobility grew in power, more so than before. The local rule of the churches of Ore-Tsar waxed powerful as well, organizing into parishes and bishoprics. In truth William cared little for all of this, for they too paid dues in coin, which he used on horse races, prostitutes, and gambling houses in Avignon. There, in the free city, the king died of a curse, it is said, laid upon an ancient dwarven coin which he had won in a game of cards.

Philip William, his son, crowned once more by the Bishop of Avignon, stood in stark contrast to his father. A devout monk for much of his life, he left the cloth when he saw his father's kingdom slipping into ruin. As king he ruled far more firmly and the first true struggles between the king and dukes began. Philip appointed his old master, the monk Jared, as Bishop of Anglamay, installing him in the town of Allis. He assumed the power of appointing prelates throughout the kingdom, taking it away from Avignon; this privilege he gave to his friend. In time, this proved a powerful tool used against the dukes and barons and the Bish- op of Avignon.

He granted those churches who supported him tax exempt status, freeing them of feudal dues. They waxed in wealth and proved loyal servants of the crown, bending their own powers over the burghers and peasants in the kingdom to force the hands of the nobility to follow the king's will. Also during those days, various religious sects sprang up across the kingdom, most particularly in the Duchy of Ogden. There the Katherines shirked the rule of bishops and monastic lords, calling for a simpler life for the clerics of Ore-Tsar. The Duke of Ogden, a benevolent ruler, did little to quell the unrest so that in time most of his duchy had converted to the new creed and developed a fierce loyalty to their duke.

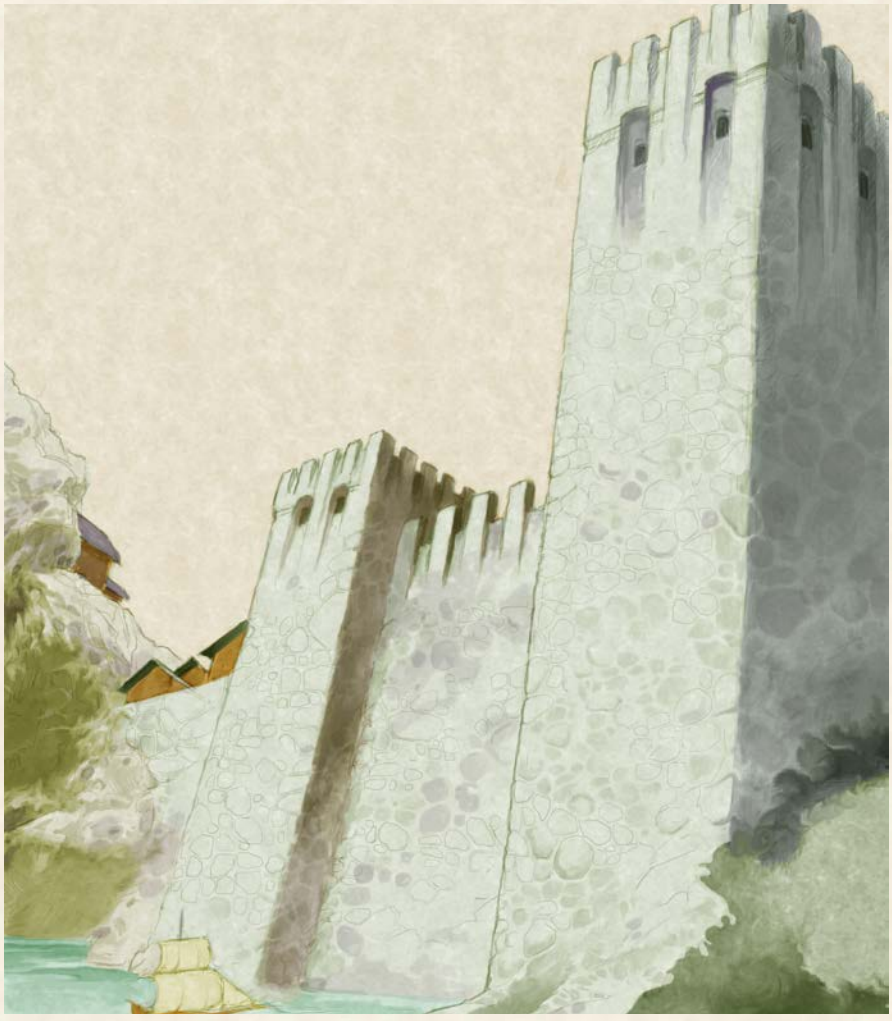
The religious/secular disputes erupted in war in 1160 md when the dukes rebelled and called to the Bishop of Avignon to grant the kingdom to William, Philip's son. The bishop acquiesced, having suffered at the hands of the monk he had crowned, and threw his own loyal guard into the fray, but William Philip commanded a powerful force of knights from his own realm and relied on many lesser nobles to aid him. The war lasted for two years, during which time many sieges and small engagements took place. Much of the land was ravaged and the wars ended only with Philip William's death at the Battle of Hardon.

The Bishop of Anglamay preempted any action from his fellow cleric in Avignon when he crowned William III, king of Anglamay, in 1172 md. This act ended the war in an uneasy truce. The affront left strained relations between the two bishoprics, for the Bishop of Avignon sought to assert his traditional right of crowning the Kings of Anglamay. So great was his ire, that the Bishop of Avignon offered some support to the Katherines, an act that caused strains within his own very wealthy and powerful house.

William III has ruled for two decades, now sitting upon the throne as an old, seasoned campaigner. He is wise and benevolent, though hard on those who work against him. Loved by his people, his loss is greatly feared for he has no heir to follow him. A gaggle of nephews, the Count of Kleaves, and an adopted son whose lineage is not known are among those who would take the throne. This last, Enre, serves as his Captain of Horse, and is a knight of great worth, but whose right to assume the throne is doubtful at best.

Of Her Kings

William I (1127-1142)
William II (1142-1161)
Philip William (1161-1172)
William III (1172-present)

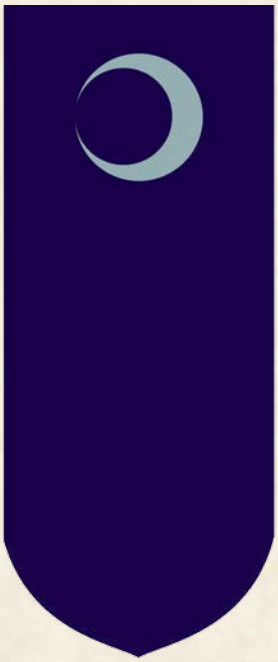


Aufstrag (Festung Aufstrag, the Citadel of Command)

Coburg the Undying, Lord of the Tower, sits upon the throne of the Horned God. Behind him, though he rules a land divided, upon standards of samnite and violet silk, rides the silver crescent moon of the fallen god.

Fell Unklar, brooding in fear, roused himself and fortified his keep. Rending the earth with his great axe he cleaved huge rifts about the imperial castle of old Aenoch, and with sorceries created great pools of water and pestilence to cover the rent lands. All of Aenoch between the rivers Udunilay and Uphrates was made a swamp of fell death. Lifting the ground on high, a mountain of slag was built amidst the marshes and his high citadel set atop, surrounded by mighty buttresses and fell towers, and his new abode was named Festung Aufstrag, the citadel of Command.

~Leopold of Passou



Geographical Location

The city of Aufstrag consists of one large tower complex. It is 3,260 feet tall and roughly 2,000 feet in diameter. The city is shaped like a great tree, shorn of all its branches but three. These three crown its roof, hanging out and over the marsh.

Her cliffs are unwittingly guarded by flocks of wyverns. Fogs cling to her flanks making visibility difficult. The ichor of the swamp clings to its rough-hewn edges, making climbing a perilous task. Those who seek entry upon the high terraces must climb the slick walls for hundreds of feet before ever they find an opening. A dozen or more entrances lie around the fortress's mighty girth, but many of these are hidden, others flooded by the swamps, some are collapsed and accessible to only the most skilled of cave crawlers, and still others, though visible, open only to those who have the proper keys.

Aufstrag stands near the center of the Grausumland, a massive marshland where the great rivers Udunilay and Ondavar meet. Surrounded by hundreds of miles of swamp, the fortress city is almost impossible to enter. Shaped by the hand of Unklar to mock the Great Tree of the west, Aufstrag stands several thousand feet high. It looms upon the horizon like a mountain; filled with the reek of evil, its echo carries far and wide across the mist shrouded desolate landscape. To arrive at Aufstrag one must cross the vast swamp either overland or upon the Wasting Way.

A causeway, called the Wasting Way, connects the dry land to the north with Aufstrag. The Causeway passes over the swamps of the Grausumland for many miles before it encounters the dike that lie before the city. In those days the stone dike held the swamp at bay. The dike stood six miles out from the main gate and looped to the east and west around Aufstrag for a good fifteen miles in either direction, before it curved back to the city, holding back the swamp and creating dry land all around the gates of Aufstrag. The area within the dike was called the Ebudeth Lich, the Feasting Pit, an amphitheater of sorts. In his day the Horned God set loose horrors unimaginable in the Ebudeth Lich, allowing them to feed upon all who fell from the causeway, ramp, portico, or even the dike's walls, as well as those who were thrown from the high terraces above.

The Wasting Way passed through the outer gate and over the Ebudeth Lich, where it ended in a ramp. The ramp lifted the road higher to the portico, a broad porch a quarter mile wide that played home to the many supplicants who came to Aufstrag to cast themselves upon the mercy of the Horned God. The portico housed the Gossera, the kennel that stood as home to the mogrl lords who watched the gate with their master's eyes. Upon the portico stood the landing, and the gates themselves, the Ahargon Den.

The Ahargon Den, the Maw of Darkness, gave entrance to Aufstrag. Upon these mighty gates the following words are carved:

Suffer Not the Tyranny of Fear
Embrace the Dominion of Law
The Yoke Shall Set You Free

NOTE: Aufstrag is the plane of hell; for more on Aufstrag's place in the cosmos of Aihrde refer to that section.

Travel in Aufstrag

Moving about Aufstrag is easy enough. Hundreds of ramps, stairs, and corridors serve as roads and paths. These bring one from one floor to the next, or higher up depending on the nature of the path. The real danger lies in what haunts those paths: monsters, evil, and the like. The chimneys serve as tunnels too. There are hundreds of them of a wide variety of sizes, some as large as great halls. These serve the knowledgeable as lateral paths up and down the mighty edifice. Here too creatures dwell, carving out their own domains in the stacks of Aufstrag. At times someone fires up a hearth and chimneys come alive with boiling air, smoke, and soot.

The Heraldry

There are many powers that rule in Aufstrag and these each carry their own symbols of power. The most prominent is held by Coburg the Undying, one time Captain of the Gate and now Lord of Three Domains, the Crimson Halls, the Horned God's Halls, and God's Cusp. His colors are those of his fallen master, a silver moon set upon a black cloth.

Of That Land & Governance

There is no government in Aufstrag. Coburg the Undying controls and rules the top three domains. Other devils rule in portions of other domains, but countless creatures walk and crawl about the mighty edifice, claiming dominion over areas they can hold through strength of arms.

The fortress is in fact a city with tunnels, halls, winding staircases, and ramps all serving as roads. Rooms serve as houses, mansions for the lordly, garrisons, depots, stables, taverns, and inns. It is powered by heat from the Klarglich pits and the huge network of chimneys that run throughout the city. It is watered by a network of fountains and water-ways designed and built by the hands of dwarven slaves. The towering complex is girded in parapets, walls, and battlements. Long causeways wind around its interior, allowing defenders to rush to any beleaguered section of the tower. Near the apex lies the Throne of Unklar in the Horned God's Halls. It is surrounded by walls of stone, with columns resembling shackled gods holding up a vaulted ceiling. From this high backed chair Unklar sat, ruling the world for a thousand years.

In ages past the gates stood strong, fashioned by dwarven slaves and cast with magic by the Horned God. Coburg the Undying, Captain of the Gate, kept watch over the entrance to that hellish place, and hell it was for all those who fell beneath the lash of the dark god within.

Here, upon Hell's Doorstep, the supplicants of Unklar waited. They gathered upon the portico, waiting for the Captain of the Gates to grant them entry, and he watched over all from the Tower of the Horn, that building which climbed the flank of Aufstrag for several hundred feet. Beneath the tower stood the massive doors to Aufstrag - the Ahargon Den, the Maw of Darkness.

The gate's facade has dimmed over the ages. Neglect in the waning days of the Winter's Dark and the ravages of the wars that overwhelmed her took their toll years ago, but mostly the ravages of the swamp have battered the mighty edifice and left the portico, in particular, a hazardous ruin.

Though the dike remained in place, the marsh reclaimed the dry lands, and the Ebudeth Lich filled with the stink of the swamps. Worse, a beast of foul design broke the bondage of Aufstrag, settled in the enclosed area, and poisoned the waters with its filth, so that men came to know it as the Fetid Morass. This beast haunts the Fetid Morass from the dike to where it laps the edges of the ramp. The waters that filled the Ebudeth rose to cover the causeway as well. The ramp that leads to the portico is itself scrawled with the graffiti of a mad man, and the kennel, though the dread mogrl are long gone, houses a pack of hellish creatures that lust for the joy of terror. The Tower of the Horn stands still, abandoned now that her master has claimed the upper domains of Aufstrag as his own, though it looms over the portico as a shadow of an ill-spent memory.

All this ruin stands before the great gates and entry to Aufstrag.

Around all of these layers stand fortifications. Though the heights of Aufstrag are almost unassailable, they are guarded nonetheless. Walls and towers were built into the bastion so that the defenders could rain death upon any who dared lay siege. Along the length of the Tree are windows and walkways, and these too are guarded by walls and battlements. Many of these entrances are now abandoned, though they remain as dark apertures to the Tree's interior.

Economic Rating: 1

The Wards and Domains of Aufstrag

Trenches

These comprise 8 interconnected Domains, unnamed and unmapped.

First Ward: Klarglich "The Pits of Woe"

The Nine Domains, these are:

1 The Bone Pit: The Ahargon Den gives entry to the bone pit through the Forgingen. The Still Lake, called by the occupants the Dwimmelere, touches a huge entry hall that gives the level its name.

2 The Horned God's Acre: Here lie the temples of Unklar. All creatures came to God's Acre to pay homage to the Dark God in the Halls above.

3 Gallery of Souls: The dungeons served as a prison for all the lesser creatures found wanting in the reign of Unklar. These included good and evil, all hauled here and chained to walls, bound in cages, thrown into pits or holes.

4 The Red Fort: The Red Fort housed the main garrison of Aufstrag. It was named in copy of the Val Eahrakun Ornduhl's mighty fortress upon the Wretched Plains.

5 Hall of Chains: The Hall of Chains served as both prison to those who were in the eye of Darkness and as quarters to the many creatures who served Aufstrag as torturer.

6 The Torture Gardens: Here stood the heart of all suffering in Aufstrag. The whole level devoted to suffering and pain. Every room housed a particular device, or devices, designed to draw out the agony of creatures. These were called Unklar's Gardens.

7 The Pit of Woe: Here stood Unklar's forge, where he mastered the ungern, mogrl and other fell creatures. It was here that he made his might mace, Utriel, the Mace of Judgment, and other monstrosities. This was his domain and it housed an army of slaves to serve his whim, many of whom perished in the labors of the Horned God.

8 Hollows (Den of the Mogrl): Here lie 24 Halls that housed the greater and lesser Mogrl, the creatures of Unklar's design. Devils of nightmare and terror who served their Master with unquestioning obedience.

9 The Deadpans (pits/slaves): Dominated by a wide-open central room with a large lake and many tributaries that watered the lower levels, the Deadpans served as home to the slaves of Aufstrag.

Second Ward: The Halls

There are Seven Domains, these are:

10 The Long Walk: To enter the Second Ward one must follow the ramps of the Long Walk. Here are a multitude of ramps that rise and alternately low or high angles, going up to the 3rd District or beyond.

11 3rd District (merchants, craftsman): The 3rd District was the Merchants district. It is dominated by large market squares or bazaars. Here merchants set up shop by renting or buying space, or set up stalls in the open - much as any city anywhere in the world.

12 2nd District (Lords, priests): The Second District housed craftsmen of all stripes. Those who worked in metals, leather, wood, clay and more dwelt here. They fed all the desires of Aufstrag, from some high lady that desired a long cloak to some orc who sought a leather apron to work out his daily tasks in the Gardens below.

13 1st District (High Lords, High Priests): The First District housed the nobles of Aufstrag, indeed of the whole realm of Winter Dark. Here dwelt man high men and ladies, of many different peoples as well as the bulk of the greater clergy of Unklar.

14 Granaries: Much of the tribute paid to Aufstrag was in foodstuffs. Whether crops or livestock, it was carted here and housed in huge granaries, barns, stables and pens.

15 Armories: The armories of Aufstrag were vast and include almost all weapons, great and small. Armors, helms, shields decked the walls, weapons in racks, all designated to one troop or the other. Here dwelt armorers that served the armies, their families, slaves and others besides.

16 Devil's Mess (kitchens): Here the devil's meals were mad. In the kitchens a host of cooks and slaves labored upon the torment of the living to make food for the undead and the Val Eahrakun Lord who ruled them all.

Third Ward: The Citadel

There are five Domains, these are;

17 Mansions of the Thrall: Unklar bound many creatures, great and small, to his service. Some were surrendered of themselves willingly, others less so. The greatest of them were the Val Eahrakun, but others rose to greatness through their own actions, such as Dolgan the dwarf lord. These were not of his servants, but rather, slaves, and they bore no love for him and in time he feared them, for his power waned in during the Long Centuries.

He sought to keep them close and content, so he ordered that they dwell here, in the Mansions of the Thrall. The Penitent's Domicile:

Here were a sprawling set of halls and chambers where those of worth came to pay homage to the Horned God and other Lords of Aufstrag.

18 The Crimson Walls (garrison for dwarves/orcs): The level housed Unklar's personal guard. It consisted of the Crimson Guard, masters of the Paths of Umbra, Crna Ruk assassins, the Nebians, and troops of ungern.

19 The Horned God's Halls (throne room, treasuries): Here stands the throne room of Unklar, from where he ruled for asll the Long Centuries. The throne itself is massive, built of wood carved from the Eahrtaut, the Great Tree, its roots are buried in the floor and its limbs rise to hold up a massive mirror that rides the wall behind the throne.

20 God's Cusp: The Cusp lies beneath the Barajin, the Nest of Scales, and it consists of only a few rooms, Unklar's Chambers. Hidden from prying eyes few have ever entered the Cusp and those that do often go mad for it.

The Aeries

Aufstrag is crowned by three large, branch-like appendages. Built to resemble dead limbs shorn of leaves, these avenues are huge, jutting hundreds of feet out over the swamp, and are dozens of feet thick.

Of Her People

There are four recognizable wards within Aufstrag: the Trenches, Klarglich, the Halls, and the Citadel. The wards themselves are divided up into 21 domains. Each domain is distinctive from the others in its overall purpose in Aufstrag. Each domain is roughly 100 to 200 feet high, consisting of several floors or levels. These levels are connected through a variety of halls, stairs, ramps, elevators, dumb waiters, chimneys, shafts, and ladders.

The Trenches

Deep beneath the fortress tree of Aufstrag are the Trenches. They earned their name during the Winter Dark Wars after the dwarf lord, Dolgan, and the eldritch goblin Agmour led the slaves of both their peoples in rebellion; others joined them, humans, orcs, whoever felt the weight of the mace of Unklar on his back. For six long years these tunnels (originally mines) served as a battleground for both sides. In the Trenches various tunnels, caverns, caves, and rooms were fortified against each other, with one side frequently living within earshot of the other. The wicked nature of the war led to an infinite number of secret doors and passageways crisscrossing the already jumbled underground complex. A river flows underneath Aufstrag, and the combatants used it to flood or guard certain areas by digging canals and channeling water. These waterways and pools remain throughout the maze of tunnels.

The brutal war fought in the dark left thousands dead and it is not uncommon to find all manner of equipment and riches left in some forgotten hole. The complex is inviting to those who live under the earth, and a number of monsters have come to live in the Trenches. Adventurers frequently seek out the Trenches, but few return home. On occasion, old dwarves can be found, returned after all these years to mourn their fallen and forgotten comrades.

Klarglich, "The Pit of Woe"

From the Trenches, or the Arghon Den, one can gain entrance to the First Ward, Klarglich, the Pit of Woe, through any number of dozens of ramps, stairs, and causeways. The Klarglich is huge, encompassing nine full floors and thousands of square feet. Travel in the Pit is easier than in the Trenches, for despite the structural damage done to the fortress during the Winter Dark Wars, many passageways, stairs, ramps, and rooms remain. Many creatures have come to roost here. They come over the battlements and through long unguarded windows, and many a bold thief finds his way into Aufstrag in this way. Rumors fly that a mogrl has returned to the Pit, seeking memories of his horned father.

The first domain, the Bone Pit, served as the entrance to Aufstrag. Here were great halls and corridors, quarters for merchants and a number of market places. Above the Pit stood God's Acre, which housed a host of the armies of Aufstrag, watching over the gate and all who might enter. These first domains, the Dungeons and the Red Fort, were the granaries of Aufstrag, the supply depots where all the raw material required by the lords of the forge was stored.

Beyond the Red Fort stood the Torture Gardens; here the lords housed prisons of the damned. It stood as a chamber of horror where men were tested with fire and iron. The Gardens were frequented by pit fiends and other devils of terror.

The Pit of Woe housed the mountainous forge of Unklar, a massive work upon which the god labored at his designs. Two score minor forges surround the great forge. There was forged the ungern, the hounds of darkness, armaments, and weapons, but must dread of all, the mogrl. The Pit of Woe devoured the victims of the Torture Gardens and echoed the lamentations of the good.

The Halls

The Third Ward served as the heart of city in the days of the Winter Dark, and contained markets, inns, taverns, garrisons, craftsman, liveries and living quarters for all those who worked and dwelt there. Here men tended to the day to day functions of Aufstrag, supplying those who dwelt there, repairing the fortifications and so on. However, war came hard to the Halls and as the government of Unklar crumbled the denizens fought one another and these halls, undefended, were sacked time and again.

The Halls are now a wrecked ruin. From the Long Walk, a domain riddled with halls and corridors that led to all places in Aufstrag through the three districts of merchants and craftsmen (3rd District), lords, priests (2nd District) and high lords and high priests (1st District) to the granaries of Aufstrag, the war ravaged all. It spilled into the 15th domain, the armories and the Devil's Mess where stood the great kitchens. Everything was left in ruin.

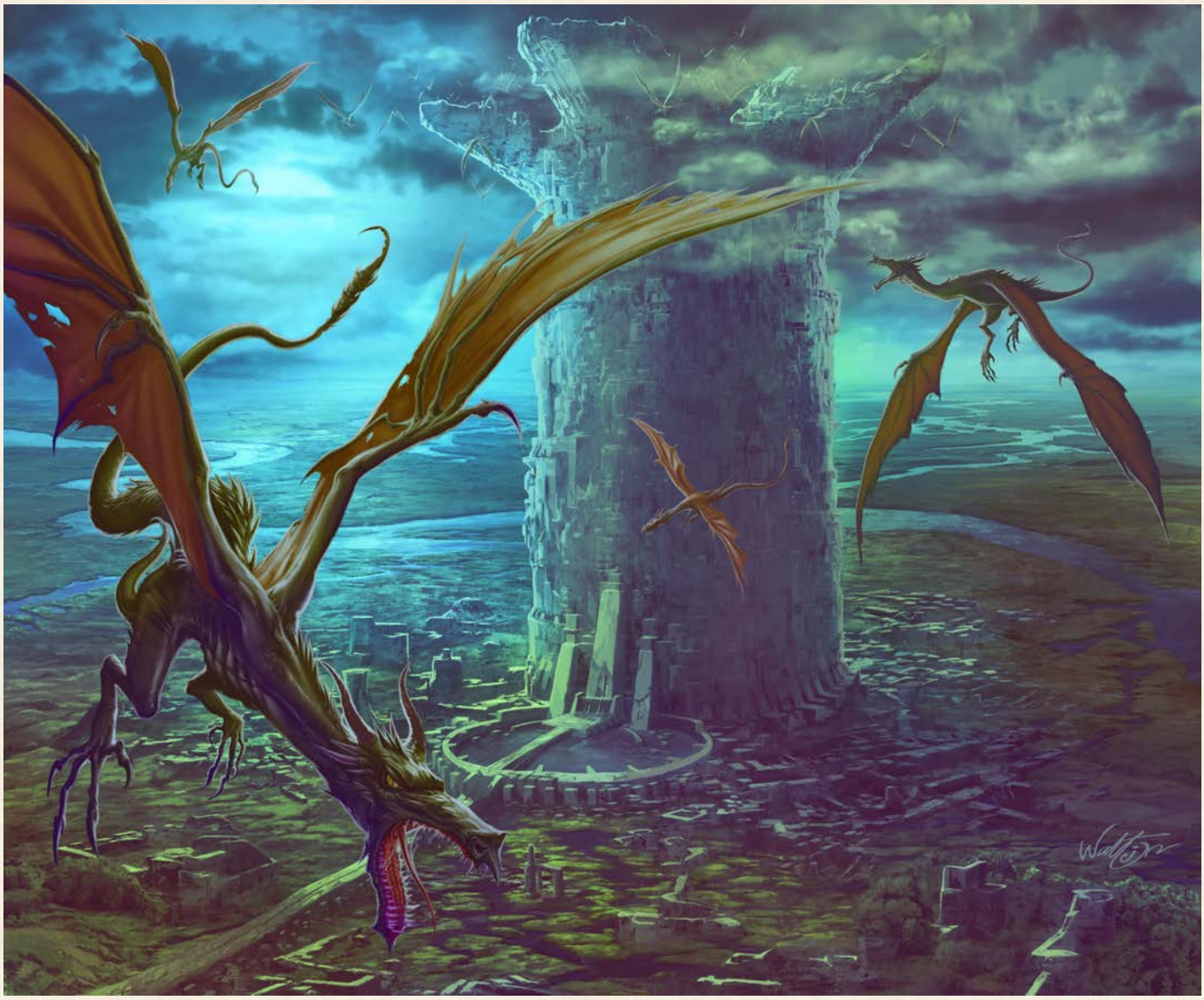
The most notable structural damage, and one never repaired, stood upon the north face of Aufstrag; here a huge hole exists, spanning 300 feet across and some 90 feet tall. Some say a dragon tore the hole in the wall of the tree, while others say that Narrheit, the God of Chaos, entered Aufstrag there.

Recently some of the lords and wizards of the Paths of Umbra have taken up residence in the Halls, carving out small kingdoms.

The Citadel

Upon the Fourth Ward stood the government of Aufstrag and the wide world beyond. Here on the 17th domain, the Mansions of the Thrall, lay houses for all the Lords of Hell, the High Priestess, and Nulak-Kiz-Din, as well as pits for the mogrl. Above that stood the Penitent's Domicile, where creatures came to call upon the aid of Unklar; here was great suffering and horror and the floors of this domain proved nightmarish for all. Above that stood the Crimson Walls, which housed chambers for the Crimson Guard, those dwarves who served the dark god as guards.

All the halls of governance, chambers of the exchequer, the heart of the imperial bureaucracy, and Unklar's throne room and his throne



stood in the Horned God's Halls. Above all, upon the 21st domain, there was God's Cusp, where Unklar watched the world in silence, free of the bonds of company.

Of late Coburg the Undying, long time lieutenant of Unklar and Captain of the Gate, has risen from the depths of Aufstrag and conquered the upper domains. His folk cleaned out much of the debris and are re- building his domains quickly. Old tapestries hang again upon walls, car- pets line the floors, and lanterns light the halls. Though much wealth has been lost, little of the mystique has, and Coburg uses it to cow any would be usurpers.

Travel in the Citadel is difficult even if one uses one of the many secret doors that wind upwards through the fortress. Within the halls of the Citadel live orcs, many of them from the Hlobane (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**) that are fiercely loyal to Coburg. They strive for the return of the Horned God. Coburg also commands a host of ungern and a large dragon, the latter of which he uses as a mount. It is said that a mogrl (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**) made alliance with Coburg and resides in the throne room with him.

Coburg the Undying: Once Unklar's lieutenant and Commander of the House Guard, Coburg outlived his contemporaries. He rose to power sometime in the 8th century of Unklar's rule and has remained there ever since. He has died at least twice, the second time being at the Battle of the Tree, where he fell to St. Luther's sword. Both times Coburg rose from the dead in some unknown fashion. Coburg is a clever warrior with some ability at magic, but his greatest gifts are his charms, with which he has wooed friend and foe alike. Coburg can be very cruel, but never so when it interferes with the business at hand. He rules from the throne room, though he never sits upon the Throne of the Horned God. He shares the space with one of the mogrl. Coburg dreams of greater conquests and of bringing those who worship the Horned God back into the fold. To this end, he regularly sends emissaries to the Punj, Confederation of Torrich, and Onwaltig.

How Aufstrag Came to Be

When Unklar came to Aihrde he came to the great halls of Al- Liosh the capital of Aenoch. From there he delivered evil into the world. As is written, the Horned God was not satisfied with the city of the god-emperors, and he set to remaking it. In his fear he roused himself and fortified the Keep of Al-Liosh anew. Rending the earth with a great axe he clove huge rifts about the imperial castle, destroying the city of Al-Liosh He churned the earth around the mountain of slag into great heaps and let the waters of the twin rivers Udunilay and Uphrates poor

into the mangled ground. With sorceries he created great pools of water and pestilence to cover the rent lands, and all of Aenoch between the rivers Udunilay and Uphrates was made a swamp of fell death, the Grey Pools, the Grausumland. Then, lifting the ground on high, he made a true mountain of slag amidst tumbled buildings and set his high citadel atop. The fortress itself he fashioned in the shape of a tree, thousands of feet high, a grim mockery of Wenafar and the Great Tree in the west. He created a massive gate for entrance and carved halls deep into the abode. All this he surrounded with mighty buttresses and fell towers, and this abode he named anew, calling it Festung Aufstrag, the Citadel of Command. The ruins of Al-Liosh sprawled underneath Aufstrag and into the countryside far around.

Upon the great gate he carved the words of welcome and there Nulak-Kiz-Din bound Jaren, Master of the Order of the Scintillant Dawn. Jaren's hands were nailed to the stone and his thighs as well. Nulak wove a mist of time around him so that he could not age, but would hang there, suffering, for all the long years of the world.

In time of years the place became a cesspool of all things vile. Tunnels, great and small, fanned out beneath the Tree into the rock of the world. More towers and more buttresses rose into the sky, and the city grew within the edifice. Unklar filled Aufstrag with his legions and, in time, with tens of thousands of slaves. These were dwarves and goblins carted off from the mountains to the north and elsewhere, not the least of which was Dolgan, a dwarf who would go on to become king of Grundliche-Hohle. Unklar bid them to make his fortress stronger and to forge his armies weapons of war. He knew the power of old possessed by dwarf and goblin alike, and he bent them to his will.

Unklar moved the throne of the god-emperors to the heart of his own citadel and there remade it from the bones of the All Father. This throne he called the Throne of Unklar and from it he ruled Aihrde for a thousand years. From there he gave and he took.

In the pits of Aufstrag Unklar carved a huge forge. The size of it defied comprehension. Its halls were filled to overflowing with raw materi-als stolen from all across the world. He built a huge bellows so that he could forge the greatest of metals, and in time of years he did so. The forge became a place of wicked experiments, tortures, and craftings. Many creatures found themselves carried into the deeps, never to return. It was a black place of evil and death. The folk of Aufstrag named it Klarglich, that is "The Pit of Woe," for the suffering screams of the damned filled the place. Unklar first used Klarglich to create the Hounds of Darkness. These sulking beasts, birthed from the tortured bodies of faerie kin, possessed but one purpose, to root out the elves upon whatever plane they existed. Though the creatures failed, many dying in the process, they served as signals of things to come.

The pit doubly earned its name of woe when Unklar bid Dolgan to serve him in a new creation. With Dolgan bound at his side, he forged with sorcery and magic and spells crafted in a time before time, great beasts of the pit. He made them from his own twisted soul and from the stuff of dark places, and he gifted them with life. His face tore as if in childbirth, and his pain-filled cries brought forth an evil dark never seen before and never to be seen again. His agony was their life, and they were pure in malice with no thought but those of evil and madness and destruction. These beasts were terrible to behold, and Dolgan knew fear only as when he wrestled with the Horned God himself. Their coming was a weighty thing in the world, and Unklar named them mogrl, and they were demons of horror, and the mogrl rose one by one and lifted themselves from the halls and strode forth into the world.

There were other things forged as well. The ungern (see Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde) came from the Pits of Woe, along with all manner of armaments, huge cumbersome canons, muskets, and hand bombs too. Also magic of indescribable power, the Krummelvole, Havoc, the axe of Dolgan King, and Nulak-kiz-din's Ring of Iron were crafted. For a thousand years the chutes of Aufstrag belched black soot into the air, and it hung there ever after.

The halls of Aufstrag grew in strength and size for hundreds of years. Minions came and died under the long rule of the Horned God. When he slept, as at times he did, exhausted from his labors, his servants kept the fortress from falling into ruin. Four of the mogrl were always with him and Nulak-Kiz-Din as well. In those days Coburg, Master of the Gate, rose to the post of House Guard Commander, keeping the strongest and best trained of the soldiers of the world. Coburg's ruthless efficiency and cruelty stood him well in the council of the dark.

In 1112 md a slave rebellion commenced in the lower halls. From whence it came few could say, but it is known that Dolgan and the goblin Agmour led it. They made war on the dark, raising the slaves of the pit against their masters. They gathered goblins and dwarves, men and orcs, and fought the troops of Unklar in the bowels of the earth. Untold was the suffering of the Trench Wars. The wicked battles were fought in dark holes, down darker corridors against an implacable enemy. Knives and hatchets ruled the day, and primitive powder weapons left tunnels filled with mutilated corpses, smoke, and ash. Kin fought kin for Unklar's most loyal guard were the Blood Dwarves, the Crimson Guard, and they sought ever to kill those who sought freedom. Goblins too fought one another, for many loved Unklar and believed his was the only world in which they could live. The combatants dug trenches and tunnels in the deep places of the earth, holding them against one another until at last they would rush upon their foes, trying to drive them out and back. The brutal warfare left thousands dead in the open holes and ditches between the various fortifications. At last, after six brutal years of warfare, in 1118 md, the dwarves and other slaves broke free, fleeing to the mountains in the north. The desolation of this rebellion was such that the fortress never fully recovered for the greater part of her people were dead or gone.

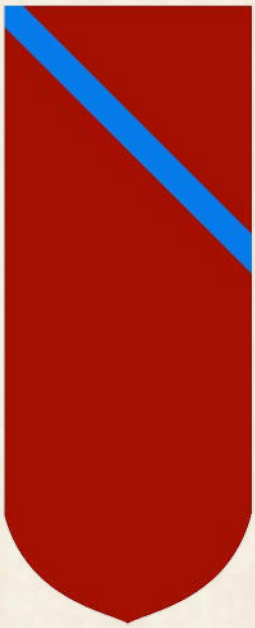
When St. Luther began the Winter Dark Wars he allowed the gods, those who survived, both good and evil, to rise again. Wenafar, Narrheit, Durendale and others came to Aihrde and assailed Unklar in all his vast domains until slowly his power upon the world eroded. During the long years of his reign he had passed much of himself into the making of the world and its fences, so that he stood a lesser creature than before, though still of greater power than all else but the highest order of the Val Eahrakun. The war spread across all the world of Aihrde.

As is told elsewhere, the Council of Light at last came to Unklar's great hall and made war upon him. St. Luther, Aristobulus, Daladon, Dolgan and others of the Val Tulmiph stood and fought the Horned God for many hours. Not until Setiva, with the enchanted blade Discerpo, fell upon him was he defeated and cast from the plane. So great was the god's anguish at his defeat that his bellowing shook the whole of Aufstrag, bringing much of it to ruin. The echoes of the Horned God's death cries carry there still, in the high places, nigh on upon the divine throne of the Horned God.

When the wars ended with Unklar driven from Aihrde, the halls of Aufstrag fell into decay. The Great Battle of the Tree, which saw Coburg's first defeat, did not see the armies of the west and north sack the grim fortress, but they slew most of its guard and left it empty for a great many years. It became a grim testament to a bygone age. Some imperial generals ruled from Aufstrag for awhile without success. The foul place slowly sank into the mire of its own stench, until at last Coburg the Undying came again to its many storied walls and made himself Lord of the Halls, if only a few.

AUGSBERG

Good King Æthelred II, of the Cedric line, rules all of the river country from his mighty castle of Eichstatt.



Geographical Location

The kingdom of Augsberg stretches from the deep woods of the Aenochian Forest in the south to the rugged highlands of the Flintlock in the north, from the feet of the white capped Voralberg Mountains across the great river and into the Luneberg Plains. It encompasses most of the Olgdon River's length and many of her tributaries. The river is the lifeblood of the realm. Around the river, be-tween the mountains, lie the wide, fertile valleys of the realm.

Travel in Augsberg

This land nestled between mighty mountains offers the traveler many easy paths. The country consists of rolling hills and shallow, grassy valleys. Movement is swift. Two roads cut into the kingdom. The great Ursal Road winds down through the Vale of Fund to the Brjag Bridge which it passes over on its way into the Luneberg Plains. The East Road from the Punj juts into the realm in the far north. Both roads are well tended within the borders, but are beginning to show signs of decay as the skill to maintain them passes into a thing of the past.

Heraldy

The coat of arms of this house is well known to any and all of the whole of Aenochia. The simple green background is cut hard with a single diagonal blue strip.

Of That Land & Governance

In general, Augsberg is a rural society. The great city of Eichstatt is an only exception to the many smaller towns, villages, and farmsteads. The people are a contented lot, many of them ex-soldiers, or the children of refugees from the despoilment of Kain (see below). The soldiers till land they call their own, but the peasants live at the king's will. There is no aristocratic class in Augsberg, only the king, the soldiers of his garrisons, the merchants, and the farmers. Its captains run cities and regions and collect taxes for the king, who in turn pays and equips them. Some are paid in land, though how much land is dolled out by the king is strictly regulated, and but for a very few, the land rights revert back to the crown upon death.

The people are free to come and go as they may, some enjoying benefits given to them by the crown, others not. Most rent the land they work, paying the captains for it. Some few own it, having bought the land or earned it through service. They meet frequently with the captains to discuss problems, needs, etc.

King Æthelred II is robust with a keen eye for women and horses. Unlike his father, he rebels at the administrative tasks of his realm, seeking to enjoy sport and food more than all else. The king excels at mounted combat while professing to being poorly trained when on foot. He rules through his ministers, attending to the business of state only when pressed. For this reason, under Æthelred's hand, the kingdom of Augsberg is more loosely governed now than at any time in its history.

Economic Rating: 2

The Army

The kingdom was founded by troops of horseman who had long served in the imperial army; despite this, the knightly ideal never materialized as it did further west in Anglamay. Warfare in the neighboring Luneburg Plains is a deadly business and there is little room for chivalry, particularly when hostility crosses the river into Augsberg. A heightened state of military preparedness exists, allowing King Æthelred II command of an impressive force of heavy and light cavalry with some auxiliary infantry. These are spread in small garrisons throughout the kingdom and owe their loyalty and pay to the king alone. They are paid in coin as well as land and are generally loyal to the Cedric Kings.

Because the kingdom consists of so many freeman, the king is able to rely upon a large force of light, untrained, soldiers. These serve with pay and are only called when the needs are dire.

Of the Gods

There are no particular religious groups in Augsberg; all the gods, but for Unklar, are given homage. The king pays homage to Ore-Tsar.

Of Her People

The merchants, always a powerful segment of society, work to influence crown councilors through their powerful guilds. They control tariffs, trade, and the amount of traffic in and through the kingdom. Their influence over the well-sought-for armaments from Grundliche-Hohle is particularly telling, as fees and bribes were necessary to gain a glance at the equipment. The dwarves there are treated well, for their long association with Augsberg is well known, and though aware of the price fixing by the merchants, do not seem to care. In general, the towns of Augsberg are controlled by these guilds and like-minded associations.

This wealth has, of course, brought many a would-be thief. Muddles Inc. is well established throughout the Olgdon River Valley as are other thieves guilds. They ply their trade well, with an almost willful abandon, and when caught lose little more than a finger or hand.

Augsberg farmers are an independent free lot, producing a variety of goods or services and paying rents to the captains. Some own the land they work, having paid for it with service or monies. The kingdom is wealthy in horse flesh and fish from the many rivers. Small villages and steads abound throughout the realm where people farm the rich black earth and cut wood in the numerous forests. There are also many grape farms in the Voralberg Mountains, producing a locally famous wine. All these goods are traded for textiles from Aachen, armaments from Grundliche-Hohle, and other such wares. Augsberg is best known for her horses, however. Men pay as much as double the normal cost if they know the steed is from Augsberg.

Much wealth is derived from the taxing of merchant caravans passing through the kingdom as it controls all the northern passes over the Voralberg Mountains.

Because of all this, Augsberg is a land of great opportunity. Much of the region is uninhabited, particularly in the Voralberg Mountains and south in the Aenochian Forest. The stains of war are only glossed over, and many an adventurer has carted in great stores of wealth uncovered in this greatest of lands.

How Augsberg Came to Be

During the latter days of Unklar's rule, discontent spread through the ranks of his armies. The troll lord, Nulak-Kiz-Din ruled in the Horned God's absence, and many resented his harsh and altogether evil ways. At the outset of the Winter Dark Wars, Albrecht, Commander of the 67th Legion, the flower of the imperial cavalry, fomented rebellion. In secret he joined the Council of Light, pledging to break with Aufstrag and bring his men over. In turn, the Council promised him a kingdom for himself and his heirs. Soon thereafter, Albrecht openly broke with Aufstrag and during the battles with Grundliche-Hohle, he left Paskevitch, the commander of all Unklar's northern forces, to fight the war alone. Paskevitch's armies, stripped of their cavalry, fell back before the dwarves and their allies so that Albrecht's desertion allowed the dwarves and the Council to conquer the whole of the Flintlock.

In the subsequent wars with Aufstrag, he soon established himself along the length of the Olgdon River. He fortified the various fjords and bridges and built castles to guard them. He settled his own house- hold in the valley of Eichen and there constructed a great fortified castle, Eichenberg. At the age of 61, in 1126md, Albrecht Cedric de- clared himself king. In these early years, his kingdom forged a fast friendship with the dwarf king, Dolgan, and his folk of Grundliche-Hohle. The dwarves sent engineers and architects to aid the men in the construction of their castles and city. It proved a good beginning to an everlasting friendship.

For the next several years, Unklar's minions struggled to regain mastery of the battlefields of Aihrde. To aid them they summoned the demon lord, Kain, Duke of Altengrund, and gave him command of their armies. Kain led three legions across the Luneberg Plains, threatening the west. In battle after battle the men of Augsberg, dwarves from the Hohle, and men from Aachen and Eisenheim fell to his conquest. Kain fought a brutal war, burning all the country he passed through. Any who opposed him, he put to death.

In 1129 md, Albrecht marshaled a great host of men and dwarves. He met Kain at the village of Olensk and there, as told in the Andanuth, King Albrecht fought and won the most decisive battle in the war against Unklar. With him stood three thousand dwarves from the Hohle and several thousand men from Aachen and Eisenheim. The battle raged all the long day and into the night. The bloody struggle left thousands dead or maimed. In the end, all three imperial legions were destroyed, and Kain was forced to flee the field. Albrecht's troops, however, did not suffer lightly. Albrecht II died while trying to rescue the beleaguered dwarf lord Oxleigh, who also died. Frederick, Albrecht's third son, died leading a cavalry charge. Franz Conrad, fourth born, lost an arm, but despite the wound drove Kain and his personal guard from the field of battle. A further nine thousand men were wounded or killed. The dwarves suffered greatest of all. One thousand six hundred beards died on the field, one in two that had fought there. Those that lived shaved a part of their beard in grief and were ever after known as the Bartigtot. The friendship between the dwarves and the men of Augsberg grew all the greater.

In the meantime Alfred, Albrecht's second born, led a troop of cavalry across the Olgdon River into the Luneberg to drive to heel all of Kain's people there. He led the flying column south to harry the retreating armies of Kain to the dark forests beyond and even to the sea. He burned Kain's fleet and slaughtered the greater part of the refugees. Only Kain and a few of his soldiers escaped the boy.

The old king, broken by his losses, would not leave the stricken Franz Conrad's side. Albrecht brought his wounded son back to Eichenberg, hoping for a miracle. In truth, to look upon Kain is an evil thing and no cure exists for the terror of it.

Alfred ruled by his father's side for the next decade. In 1132 md, he converted to the worship of Ore-Tsar and took the cloak of a Knight of Haven. The religion gained a firm foothold in the kingdom. Slowly the people of Augsberg recovered, but still they were forced to battle Northmen, orcs and ungern from Iergaul, goblins from the Flintlock, and the horrors from the Luneberg Plains. As Albrecht grew in years, he divested power into his son.

Eventually Alfred married the sister of King Theodahad of Eisenheim, Thiodann Fjörgyn, heroine and companion of Daladon. Together they had a son, Æthelred. In 1146 md, Franz Conrad died of his malady and King Albrecht slipped into a waking slumber; a madness of sorts. Franz was buried in a hilltop cemetery deep in the Voralberg Mountains. St. Luther attended the funeral and blessed the grave. He planted a tree there from the Paladin's Grove. Folk flocked to the grave, for they believed that the spirit of Franz lived on in the tree and could heal any ailment. The truth of this is unknown, for the tomb of Franz Conrad has been lost these many years.

Soon thereafter Alfred's men crowned him king. The dwarves sent many gifts of gold and canon as did other monarchs besides. In 1151 md, the River King, Albrecht I, died at age 88. The world groaned at his passing, for he truly had been the greatest monarch of his era and through his actions had saved much of the middle of Aenoch.

Alfred ruled for many long years with Fjörgyn at his side. He aided her in the management of Eisenhiem when their second born son became king there (see "Eisenheim"). The ties between the two peoples were strengthened thereby. They had many children and governed the land in peace. Trade between the kingdoms of Grundliche- Hohle and Augsberg flourished in those days. Wood, grains, beer, and livestock moved north across the Flintlock and finished goods, armor, and weaponry came from the Hohle. Trade with the distant Punj picked up as it did with the people further west.

Alfred maintained a great store of wealth, garnered, it is said, from Kain's abandoned treasure and loot. With this he paid his men out in gold, keeping the legions of his father intact. He placed them in garrisons along the length of the river. By supporting and taxing a strong merchant class, he paid for his army. A city grew up around Eichenberg during his long tenure, which the folk called Eichstatt.

After Alfred's demise, his son Æthelred was crowned in the old fortress of Eichenberg. He ruled for a long while and changed little of his father's policy. What he did change affected the army. He could no longer afford to pay them out of pocket, as the upkeep in horse and gear was simply too much. In order to waylay this, he cut the wages of the army and offered soldiers land for service in 1179 md. Those who served in the garrisons were given land, both in Augsberg and beyond. He gave it to them in full right of ownership to make of it what they will; they had but to pay a tax, and but for a few the land reverted back to the crown upon death. Æthelred also began taxing the churches of Ore-Tsar for they had grown in wealth and power. He exempted the Lothian monks, however, out of respect for the memory of Daladon.

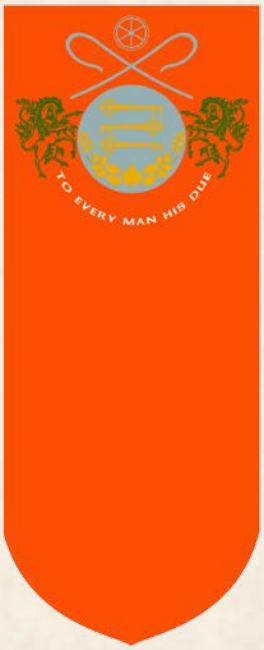
Æthelred died peacefully in his bed, his young son already confirmed as King Æthelred II.

Her Kings

King Albrecht I "the River King" (1126-1151)
King Alfred (1146-1172)
King Æthelred I (1172-1189)
King Æthelred II (1189-present)

AVIGNON THE FREE CITY

There are many powers in Avignon, but two stand above the rest: His Imminence, Bishop Honorius II, and the governor of the town, Milo Urner.



Geographical Location

Avignon is a huge town that stands upon the western shores of the straits of Ursal, just north of the Lithanian River. Three separate sets of walls guard the city and divide it into distinct districts. The harbor houses so many vessels that it is called "the forest of Avignon." It, too, is guarded by fortifications. Heavy chains reside just under the surface, attached to underwater pylons. They create channels through which only experienced captains can bring their ships. Almost every vessel requires some type of guide to get them to port.

Travel in Avignon

Travel to Avignon usually comes from the Spotters Way or the Avignon Road or via ship. Within the town, the roads are cobbled, though in many areas time and lack of proper care have left these cobbles uneven, broken, or missing. Traveling by buggy in such areas can be jarring at best.

Heraldry

The city has long been a pillar in Ore-Tsar's church, and her heraldry reveals this. Upon an orange background stands forth a six-spoked wheel at the top, beneath which are two crossed miters. These symbols harken to the city's loyalty to the church. Below and center is a round stylized shield framed in floral (peace), with two rearing green horses (strength and beauty) facing the shield. The city's motto is also there: "To every man his due." On the shield are three equally spaced gold keys representing the city itself

Of That Land & Its Governance

This city of all cities is the central crux of the commercial world. Everything travels though Avignon. The tremendous wealth of the city is derived from its status rather than any strategic or military or economic power. It is the trade center between east and west, north and south. Avignon is one of the few places in the world where magic can be bought. Eldritch spells and incantations, weapons and armor, and so forth are available, if at a high price.

The present Bishop of Avignon, Honorius II, shares his rule with the city Governor Milo Urner. The two are often at odds. The governor remembers the days, under Honorius I, when his office held power. He commands a vast bureaucracy which controls much of the city taxes and expenditures. The bishop struggles to maintain the religious fervor which fed new life into the old city. His priests serve the masses, and he commands the ussars, four troops of religious soldiery. The two squabble continually and seek to outmaneuver each other in a paper war of rights. In general, the foreign population (which is very large), the merchants, and the guilds support the governor. The bulk of the working populace and the sailors support the bishop.

Recently, the Captain of the Guard, Castus, a Brindisium gladiator and mercenary and noted member of the Cult of the Sword, has risen to great popularity and causes both Bishop Honorius II and Governor Milo to look nervously in his direction. He commands respect in all four ussar troops and has vast sources of outside income.

Honorius II also struggles to elevate the prelacy of Avignon to that of the highest in the church. He is opposed by the king of Anglamay, and various nobles and bishops in Anglamay.

Economic Rating: 5

The Army

Avignon fields an array of colorful troops. The city guard falls out in scale mail, with helms and shields. There is a contingent of crossbowmen with them. The governor commands a troop of heavy infantry and some light cavalry. Each of the three districts must contribute men or gold to hire men in times of need. Often the ranks of these contingents are filled with all manner of brigands, freebooters, and other mercenaries. The most colorful of all the troops are the bishop's ussars, four large troops of mounted lancers. Each troop adorns itself in a different color, red, blue, green, or yellow. They are well armed and highly competitive for various honors and dignities. Their helms bear feathers of various creatures.

Of the Gods

The Free City is dominated by the bishop, his prelacy and the worship of Ore-Tsar. Many of the aristocracy attend the church and are friends of the bishop. Much of the city's wealth is supplied by the bishop, though beyond the 1st District, it is as it is in much of the world. The sailors pay homage to Ealor, the masons to Burol and so on..

Of Her People

The city is organized into three districts and several sprawling interconnected communities. Each district is called the 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Two of the other communities are loosely referred to as districts but are not recognized by the mayor and city, the port quarter, also called the 4th District, and the River District, also called the 5th District.

In the 1st District, that located in the south-eastern part of the town, overlooking the river, are the nobles, wealthy merchants, knights, priests, and the bishop. Here the streets are cobbled, the houses made of stone and marble. It is clean and well patrolled by the city guard.

In the 2nd District, located along the coast, north of the 1st, are the merchants, guild houses, and a host of houses where tradesmen and craftsmen dwell. It is far more crowded here. The houses are a mixture of old and new, jumbled together on narrow streets, some of which are cobbled, but most are not. The captain of the guard, Castus, lives in the 2nd District and pays heed to the calls of his neighbors.

In the 3rd District, which surrounds the other two like a hedge, are the vast hordes of commoners and freemen. They live as their means dictate, working as hard as they desire. The streets are made of dirt and the houses are remnants of the old city. Many of the houses there, indeed whole neighborhoods, are still abandoned, giving testament to the size of Avignon in years past. They serve as refuges for desperate folk and are dangerous hives of bars, brothels, opium dens, etc.

There are outlying communities as well. The port quarter of Avignon is larger than any in the world, being home to hundreds of ships great and small. The River District, along the north bank of the Lithanian, offers merchants easier access to markets than they would find in the city itself. There has recently been a petition from those permanent residents of the River District to be incorporated into the town. Upon the

pylons of the ancient Ursal Bridge are small towns, built up around the barge way points (see "Ursal Tal") and sprawled around the inner city's 3 districts are hosts of neighborhoods, shanty towns and communities.

The city itself is a thriving community where anything is possible. Passing from district to district can be achieved with a few coins. Carriage services offer weary travelers transport to anywhere in town. The thieves guild, Muddles Inc., has its main den hall in the 2nd District, as do other groups and cults. Merchants sell wares of any description: armor, weaponry, clothes, wine, food, and so on. Exotic monsters can be found in the slave pits as can human servants. The jumbled streets and tall thin houses make for a strange otherworldly setting for the uninitiated. Within the walls of Avignon lies a world within a world.

How Avignon Came to Be

Avignon is perhaps the greatest city in all of Aihrde, its history stretching back to the dawn of the early Aenochians and Ethrum. In the Days Before Days, the dwarves built a great bridge across the Straits of Ursal. They called this bridge Andstein. There, upon the great span, the two tribes of men came together to make peace, though as is told elsewhere, this did not last. In later years, after many wars, the Aenochian Emperors built a fortress on the western end of the bridge to safeguard their lands in Ethrum. Soon thereafter, the city began to grow around the fortress. They named the fortress Avignon after the emperor's wife.

During the Wars of Liberation, the Tarvish, emperor-king of Ethrum, took the town and drove the Aenochians back across the straits. He ordered that the bridge be cast down and the city fortified against the east. The city expanded rapidly after that. During its early years it became the hub through which all commerce flowed. The port expanded, the city grew beyond its walls, and the governors built new ones. Untold wealth poured into the city. Men of all kinds swelled the ranks of citizens, so in time the city became a metropolis, a vast mixing pot of peoples and cultures, where anything was possible.

All this prosperity ended Aufstrag lay siege to the city. They broke the walls asunder and lay waste to much of the inner city. During the Winter Dark, Avignon became a sprawling fortress complex. Concentric walls sprang up around the landward side of the city and sea walls on the bays of the Straits. Prosperity of sorts returned and the city thrived for a while, though it was only a shadow of its former self.

The city fell on hard times almost from the beginning of the Winter Dark Wars. The disasters which the imperial fleet suffered at the hands of Morgeld (1120md) and at Gokstead (1123md) left the commercial shipping lanes open to the ravages of the Northmen. They raided everywhere, sinking ships at sea and in harbor. From Avignon to the Gottland trade came to standstill. The impact on Avignon proved disastrous. With no land to rely upon even for meager foodstuffs, the city fell victim to starvation. Riots followed in which many were killed and much of the city burned. In the waning days of the Horned God's rule, the city fell into ruin once more, many citizens deserting to the west.

Philip the Guileless, the prophet of Ore-Tsar, passed through Avignon in 112md, and stayed for many months spreading the word of the Horse God to high and low. Those who remained were a pitiful sight, poor and bedraggled; deserted by all, they leapt at the new faith and the new hope. When Philip spoke, people flocked from all quarters of the city and they followed his word. They built churches and a monastery, dedicating both to the name of Philip. In turn, Philip appointed one of his disciples, Sixtus, to remain in Avignon and rebuild it.

Sixtus busied himself with organizing the merchants, gathering a small fleet of ships to begin fishing and rebuilding the inner city. He also established way points on the ancient pylons of the Ursal Bridge which served as hauling junctures for barges to cross the straits. This brought a wealth of goods from Aachen. All this activity encouraged com- merce to some degree. In 1127md, William of Anglamay contacted to Sixtus seeking legitimacy for his claim as king. William knew that many of his folk had fallen under the spell of Philip and hoped that by securing the blessings of the high priest that his seizure of power would be all the easier. Sixtus, with much fanfare, came to Anglamay-ot-Neider and crowned William king of that realm. The grateful lord sent several caravans laden with foods and wine to the city and granted them a wide stretch of territory surrounding the walls. In a very short while, the city recovered enough to attract some few immigrants.

In 1128md, Phillip returned and with Ore-Tsar's disciples began the construction of a magnificent church in Old Avignon. They built it upon the foundations of the governor's palace. They founded a prelacy and named Sixtus its first bishop. Sixtus used the position of the city to enrich the church by tithing barges and caravans that passed through. He rebuilt the city's walls and towers, and soon thereafter, Avignon flourished as merchants, traders, and all manner of people came to live within the safety of its impregnable walls.

Avignon saw the face of war only once during the Winter Dark Wars. In 1129md, smarting from his defeat at Olensk (see "Augsberg") Kain, Duke of Altengrund, came to the great city. He saw that much of it remained in ruins and that it was not worth attacking. He called upon the city fathers to pay him coin for his kindness in mercy. Sixtus came forward to speak with Kain, for he had it in his mind that he could lay enchantments on the fell creature and induce him to leave, but Kain saw through his spells and laughed. He slew Sixtus, leaving his headless body upon the ground. Kain left without his coin, but he took the head in its place.

The people of Avignon were horrified at the tragedy and took Sixtus' remains and lay them in the Church of Philip. His tomb became a holy place where pilgrims came to lay sacrifice in foodstuffs at his feet. More than one has claimed to be healed by the spirit of Sixtus. The clerics and monks of Avignon elected Pius I to the bishopric in Avignon. Pius ruled for many years and brought more wealth and prestige to the city. He crowned William II, king in Anglamay, introduced grape farming in the land, and granted tax relief to all those who owned a boat and brought trade into the city. This last spurred a host of ship captains to land cargo and sell it, cheaply, to caravans and by 1159md the city was well on its way to mirroring its past glory.

Pius II, once elected to the bishopric, ruled the church in a far more careful manner. He maneuvered himself in various church councils to be recognized as the preeminent cleric of Ore-Tsar. This touched off a series of religious conflicts throughout the world of Ore-Tsar, which only ended with Pius' death. Pius II crowned William Philip, king of Anglamay, the last time a bishop of Avignon did this. He also instituted a draft which called for four troops of city guard to be established. The call went out, far and wide, for men of skill in the art of war, to come to Avignon and join the well paid ussars, as the troops were dubbed. To allow people to distinguish each ussar, one from the other, the various troops took on distinctive coloring in their uniforms.

Honorius I followed Pius in the bishopric in 1176md. A very religious man, he disdained from worldly politics. He appointed a governor to aid him in running the commercial affairs of the city, and he rarely interfered unless the tithing dropped off. Avignon prospered again, trade flowed into her harbors and out, and a contented people grew larger than life. In 1190md, Honorius I died and his successor, Honorius II, took the miter of Avignon.

BRINDISIUM

The Consulate and Senate of Families rule in the city-empire of Brindisium.

Geographical Location

The Brindisium peninsula is a featureless plain of sparse forest. It is surrounded in the east by the Bay of Brand and in the west by the Silt Bay; in the south the Amber Sea washes her shores. The soil here is not rich, but is home to a variety of wild grasses. Rainfall is light, and the area is always warm as southerly trade winds blow inland from the Amber Sea. The Darkenfold lies to the immediate north, separated from Brindisium by the Isthmus of Cor. Near the isthmus the country breaks up, with hills and gulches covered in scraggly trees being the norm. In the western part of the country the land is characterized by rolling hills, whereas the east breaks into wide plateaus that step down to the sea.

Travel in Brindisium

Travel through this dry county can be difficult. Much of the peninsula is split into small plateaus which must be navigated. There are several tracks and trails that wind about, allowing people to get to and from the capital city. The Brindisi have begun constructing roads but have precious few resources to do so and for that reason no real cobbled roads as of yet.

Heraldry

The coat-of-arms is inlaid upon a large rectangular shield. The shield is green, a blue stud dominating the center where eight straight black spokes fan out to the frame. Each corner has a small inset where the background is red, and within each inset is a graven image.

Of That Land & Governance

The city of Brindisium is ruled by the Senate, which is in turn presided over by the Consulate. Only men and women who trace their heritage to the days before the Dark are given citizenship, and these are given voting rights and the right to be elected. Recently, exceptions have been made for the voting population has dwindled markedly. The city controls the whole of the peninsula and isthmus. Only the borders of the Darkenfold stopped their expansion. Those towns and villages conquered by Brindisium are little more than client states who have no rights to govern, but must answer to the dictates of the Consulate and Senate. They have spread to the west, establishing colonies beyond the Rhodope Mountains in the land they call Eramia.

The city itself has been carefully laid out. The streets are all cobbled, and most of the houses are stone or, in some cases, marble. The populace is relatively well educated. A system of private and public education joins a variety of other novelties, such as running water, warm bath houses, roads, and gutters in the streets, making Brindisium uniquely civilized. Most citizens, and even many slaves, speak more than one language and are able to write as well.laves, speak more than one language and are able to write as well.

Economic Rating: 2

The Army

The republic fields four legions of 4,000 men apiece and can call upon many auxiliary troops. These legions are made up of citizen soldiers and are led by senators and the consull.

Of the Gods

The people pay homage to the Og Aust, Tefnut, and others, but also they pay homage to a variety of family deities..

Of Her People

The most organized of all the Young Kingdoms, Brindisium sports good roads, large towns where citizens live in relative comfort, and a large merchant class. Her people traffic in all manner of commerce and possess a sizable merchant fleet which trades with lands far and wide. Most of the traffic is diverted to the ports of the kingdom of Maine, as the two kingdoms have come to equitable commercial arrangements.

The republic exports a great quantity of goods, but mostly wine, fish, and marble from the quarries in the west. The marble and wine products are prized worldwide and can be found in markets as far away as Avignon. Even the northmen kingdom of Trondheim is known to have imported Brindisium wine, though in truth whether this meant they looted it or paid for it none can say. Perhaps the most sophisticated of merchant peoples, they have outposts and trading stations throughout the world. They are a tightly knit people in their enclaves. Their fleet is powerful, due to the expertise of her captains and nature of their craft.

The city is rife with corruption and intrigue. Families feud, and senators conduct secret wars against the paladins who are forever trying to regain dominance. There, the magic of clerics is common, but sorcery far less so. A small school for this craft has recently been established in the capital. The imperial paladins are only a shadow of their for- mer selves. Once the bodyguards of the emperors, they now are outcast citizens who make a living the best they can. Holy men who follow Durendale, they are often hermits or mendicant knights who help the downtrodden as well as they know how.

How Brindisium Came to Be

Brindisium traces her roots to the Age of Heroes. During the final days of the Catalyst Wars (771 oy-800 oy), as Kayomar faced defeat and Unklar stood triumphant, the victory of Prince Erik Aristobulus Euryiance over Unklar's navy in 789 oy left the command of the sea to the folk of Kayomar. Mourilee Lothian Pendegrantz and a small host of paladins gathered as many of her people as they could, and these refugees flocked to the city of Smythe in southern Kayomar. They assembled a ragtag fleet of ships, and in the company of Luther's bastard son, Morgeld, set sail for the Wall of the Worlds. For years they sailed, the journey a legendary trek fraught with countless horrors.

In the end they came to a land in the utmost west, where the world ended, and there, they found a deep-water bay, surrounded by high cliffs. Beyond the bay lay a well watered land of deep soil and green grass and they named these the Ethlium Lands, that is "Man's End", but later they called them the Greenling Fields, for even in the Winter Dark the light of the sun fell upon the land and the grasses grew. A broad escarpment of jagged cliffs hemmed in all the Greenling Fields on the landward side, breached only by singular valley which itself was guarded by a wide river. The Valley they called the Valley of Mur, that is the "Light" in the dwarven tongue, for when first the morning's sun rose, it cast its rays down the long cleft of the valley and shone in the Greenling Fields and it was accounted a thing of marvelous beauty. The fortified it, building gates upon the western shores of the river and blocking the only pass to the Greenling Fields.

They built a city for themselves, Faurenost, and there constructed temples to Tefnut and the Og Aust and the Dreaming Paladin, Saint Luther. It is said that Tefnut herself dwelt near the river in the Valley of Mur and guarded the realm. Rumor of Faurenost came to the west and men believed that it was a realm where the sun never set and the Winter Dark did not reign.

Mourilee passed her days amongst these people and died soon after the colony's founding. However, her line lived for many generations until at last the seed of it died out. These were the last of Luther's true descendants. Even now though, it is rumored that some lived on, trekking across the great wildernesses of Aihrde in search of the unknown.

The folk of that proud land resisted Unklar in their exile. Eventually the paladins established a Holy Council, and with the High Priestess of Tefnut they set one of their number in governance over all Faurenost. He was master of the Holy Defenders, but in time, the master of the Order took the crown as emperor and adopted the eagle as his standard. They took the imperial dignity for order, and tradition, for the Tarvish emperors of the past withstood the might of Aenoch and eventually won out their freedom. So the empire of the Ethrum was reborn, though in truth it was but a shadow of its former self.

The emperors continued to rule and to war against Unklar for a thousand years. Faurenost became powerful in wealth and magic, and it used this knowledge to fell intent. Unklar's minions broke the wall of the pass but once.

The year 1120 in the reign of the Horned God saw the opening of the Gate of Thonor, a magical portal between Gottland and Faurenost. The minions of Unklar managed the gate by using the ancient Rings of Brass of dwarven make. In this manner the dark host issued forth into the Great Waste before the gates of the Valley of Mur. The black hosts filled the flooded plain with refuse and hurled themselves across the river against the high crenelated battlements within the pass itself. These walls stood boldly in defiance of the dark host so that siege was laid against it and war brought to the far west.

They were held back by the heroics of a small company of men. They lived, drank, ate, and slept within earshot of the walls and gates. When the hordes came, throwing grapnels and ladders against the heights, this company of men, led by Captain Tagea, threw them off time and again. The horrific slaughter lasted for many days until at last the orcs could take it no more and retreated. The whole realm celebrated the victory. They took to calling the company of men the Tageans. The emperor ordered all the dead entombed upon the planes so that the people beyond the walls could not see the fallen men.

The dark host regrouped, and in fear of their master's rage, they drove against the walls once more. They dammed the river and battered the walls, breaking them apart, but when they made to move through the pass, the high priestess of Tefnut, who had for many days lay hidden in the river, broke the dam and the pent waters spilled forth and across the host of Aufstrag. Despite this setback many came over the mountains and lay siege with great desolation to the city, towns, and keeps beyond. The Tageans and all those defending the wall found themselves cut off from the city and coast.

The Tageans rallied. After a bitter march, they cut their way across the valley to the great city itself. There the captain admonished the imperial paladins as cowards, "Why did you not come to aid us in our hour of need? It is true that the blood of the old world flows not in your veins!" This act forever set the Tageans and the paladins at odds. In the end, the host was defeated and they fell back and beyond the walls which were fortified anew.

The destruction proved devastating, however, for the enemy had poisoned the very land, and little would grow. So the emperor, in 1125md, deemed their lands unlivable and that he would lead his people back to into the east, and find their ancients homes in Kayomar. The greater part of them departed for the east in ships and galleys. Some few however, remained behind, living on in the city and the ruins.

It took them only a year to return to their ancient homes, but they soon learned they were not welcome, for much had changed in the thousand years of Unklar's rule. The men and women of the Faurenost had changed, and now imperious and commanding, aggravated the king in Kayomar and he denied them port. They sailed on, searching for a land to call their own. Captain Tagea at last grew tired of the paladins, their laws, and their never ending order of rules, and broke with them.

They split into two bitterly opposed groups (see "Tagea"), one moving on into the east, while the other sailed back to the south. They settled upon the Iatia Peninusla, where they built the city of Brindisium.

There were many folk who lived in Iatia at the time, and they paid homage to the Horned God. Emperor Moridain ordered their keeps stormed and towns burned. His knights and men-at-arms reduced the lands and put many to death. He declared a crusade against all those who served the Dark, and they began clearing out all vestiges of the Horned God's religion. In the winter, late in the year, while raiding one of the enemies' strongholds, Moridain, stricken with a poisoned arrow, died. His inheritance, the crown, went to his son, Raymond. Raymond was not a knight, nor did he hold his father's love of the ancient world.

A great deal of squabbling commenced and before long assassins struck the Emperor Raymond down, murdering him in his own bed. The leading families of Old Faurenost gathered then in a Senate to discuss what next should be done. Many argued that the imperial line failed the people and so they elected two consuls, each chosen from the leading families, to rule them. The emperor's paladins fell into disgrace, as did his religion. They bore the Eagle Standard still but retreated from public life, taking to the hills in the north around the Ius River.

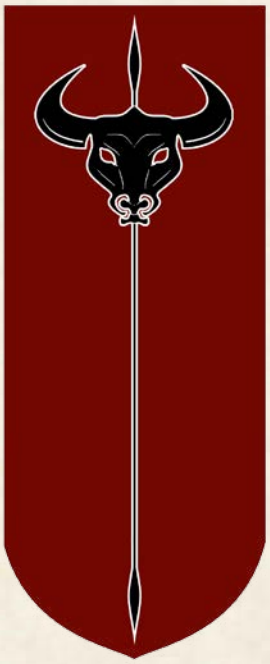
In one of their first acts, the Senate reorganized the army. They formed two legions of infantry and adopted the iron shield, borne aloft on a staff, as the imperial insignia. Some of the paladins drifted back into service, where they served as knights and cavalry.

Brindisium began to thrive soon after the coup. Those folk, long used to suffering the torments of war and confinement, spread out. They enslaved the local populace, who went to work on the farms or in the mills of the Brindisi. Crops of wheat and rye became staples of the small land holders, but the peninsula proved far more adaptable to livestock, and in the northern hill country to grape and wine production. In the west they quarried marble. All of these industries brought a great deal of wealth to the region. In 1187md, a host of commercial treaties with the kingdom of Maine were agreed upon by the Consulate. With newly opened trade routes, both kingdoms flourished. This in turn attracted many pirates to the area, a problem which plagues Brindisium far more than Maine for the king's ships are better equipped for war.

In 1195md, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, Master of the 4th Legion and once an imperial paladin, made a bid for the imperial title. The whole of the 4th Legion marched on the capital. In the ensuing battle, Agrippa was defeated by the Senate at the battle of Iliumagus. Agrippa was put to death along with his immediate family (though some rumors abound that he escaped) and many of his relations were sold into slavery. The Legion was disbanded and its Eagle Standard taken from it. The legionnaires were given the choice of recanting or suffering a similar fate. Many died out of loyalty to their master.

BURNEVITSE

The fiercely independent hobgoblins pay homage to Vistenodge the Mad, who rules them from the squalid halls of Luxor, claiming to be a god-king.



Geographical Location

The stark rocky precipices of the Bleached Hills give way, in the north and east, to a series of broad shallow valleys. The valleys are rich in soil, and a deep grass covers the ground almost everywhere. The valleys tumble on to the Great Wall in the east. In places this grass is shoulder high. Wild game and other animals abound, for water is plentiful and human and humanoid settlements few. Travel is difficult but not impossible. Though the old roads have washed away or been carted away and the countryside steep and largely uninhabited (but for nomadic bands of hobgoblins), the hardy adventurer will never want for food or water.

Travel in Burnevitse

Travel here is exceedingly dangerous; the hobgoblins patrol the northern country constantly, usually in small mounted bands. The Ursal Road passes through the Great Wall, cutting south of Burnevitse, to Ash Flat and on to Kayomar, but in the flats west of the wall there are nothing but game trails. The mountains are worse, the hobgoblins traveling on hidden paths and trails. Travel in the Bleached Hills is extremely difficult.

The Heraldry

Their heraldry is a simple one that strikes terror into the hearts of men in the wilds. Upon a red curved shield lies the black bull's head spitted on a stake. The bull, the symbol of the Red God, is a memory of dread for all the world of Aihrde.

Of That Land & Governance

Vistenodge the god-king rules the hobgoblin kells very loosely. Decades of warfare and centuries of tradition have lent that people a fierce tradition of tribal independence and they bend to his rule most reluctantly. The god-king, however is very wealthy, a wealth he says is derived from what he calls the "bountiful harvest of Inzae." The "bountiful harvest" which Vistenodge claims to own is in fact nothing more than a huge horde of stolen goods. In his younger years he stumbled upon an imperial treasure trove where some malcontent had stored tens of thousands of diamonds.

Vistenodge is a giant of a hobgoblin and very cunning. Though cruel, he makes deals in a heartbeat if it serves to increase his power.

The god-king is reputed to be from the world of Inzae. The stories relate that a dwarven Ring of Brass lies buried in the Bleached Hills, and while in Inzae Vistenodge discovered that portal's secret entrance to Aihrde and took advantage of it. Whatever the rumors, the god-king is indeed an unnatural hobgoblin.

Economic Rating: 1

The Army

There is no real army, but when called by the god-king they can field an impressive host of heavy, highly organized infantry. They prize horses as well, treating them well and always using screens of light skirmishers for their eyes and ears. Hobgoblins have no fear of death and rarely if ever flee a battle.

Of the Gods

The hobgoblins worship the Great Dragon, Inzae or the Red God, Ornduhl.

Of Her People

Burnevitse is a conglomeration of independent kells of hobgoblins, loosely associated with the god-king. The area in which the hobgoblins live is broken and the many isolated valleys offer easy defense. Each valley or series of valleys has its own ruler, a king. These too, rule loosely. Hobgoblins are nomadic in nature, moving from one encampment to the next seeking fresh pastures for their cattle and sheep.

Culturally, the hobgoblins live in a very martial society with definite, inescapable class boundaries. The class system consists of the vouts (the elite warriors), the u-vouts (the common soldiery and the kells of workers), and the slaves. Women are separate and highly prized, for they are very rare. Only the vouts breed, and they spawn hundreds of children. Slavery of all races, including their own, is very common.

They mainly farm dairy products (sheep and cattle), mine for ores, and work wood and stone. The kells are actively involved in the ore trade throughout the lands and they guard their merchants with great care. Hobgoblin engineers are known to ply their trade in surrounding kingdoms, particularly the Hanse City States and in the trading posts of Gottland. Hob stonework, highly skilled, has recently become a fashionable item in the Hanse.

This last is causing an ever increasing amount of friction with the troll bands of Gottland. Varucks, the troll lord, desiring to rebuild his land's ancient glory (see Gottland), claims the lands from the mountains to the sea to the Teifsich River. He continually threatens the trading posts and caravans which cross the river into his territory. This of course leads to reprisals from the god-king, who sends troops over the river to harry the giant trolls, even so far as attacking their fortress of Nacht within the Kleberock pass. In turn, trolls cross back over, carting off cattle, slaying hobgoblins, and scattering encampments.

In fact, Vistenodge is looking for brave adventurers to go to Castle Nacht and slay the foul troll. In payment, he promises a coffer of diamonds, all cut, and worth a fortune. As yet, none have been brave enough, nor foolhardy enough, to take the god-king up on his offer, though the Lady Lissza in Fiume pushes the offer to any and all who will listen to her.

Relations with the Hanse City States are very good. Trade goods move via caravan to the coast where they are sold or traded for manufactured goods. They are then shipped on to the markets of the east. The diary products of the hobs are highly prized in the markets of Avignon and Aachen. Most of the caravans are small affairs, three and four wagons apiece, and guarded by a dozen or so hobgoblins. The trading posts are all human establishments walled with wooden palisades to protect them from the occasionally marauding hobgoblin kell.

It is the knights of Anglamay, Ceeana, Kleaves, and Kareelia who give them the most trouble, for young knights, anxious to make a name for themselves, often cross over the Great Wall and come to Burnevitse

to slay and hunt hobs. For this reason many of the northern entrances through the wall are held by the hobgoblins.

How Burnvitse Came to Be

In this far distant corner of the Lands of Ursal, beyond the Great Wall of Ethrum, the frontier legions of hobgoblins and orcs found themselves isolated when war came. Kayomar to the south rose in arms, and Anglamay and the other provinces to the east beyond the wall threw off the yoke of imperial rule. The legion commanders turned to Nulak for guidance for they were largely cut off. The archmagi, however, could not give them security, for Aristobulus pressed him at every turn.

In 1121md, the Falkhynjager slew the dragon Malikor and the beast fell to earth, crashing against the slopes of Mount Eedlemere. Even in far off Burnevitse the earth shook so violently that houses collapsed. The hobgoblins grew restless and some mutinied and moved into the Bleached Hills. Loyal orcs pursued them into that broken country. They hunted down the mutineers and killed them. This quelled the mutiny only for a short while. When word came of Kayomar's victory over Aziz at Eadore in 1124md, the hobgoblins grew even more restless and more slipped away into the hills. Soon after the most loyal orcs were sent to the south to occupy the ring of forts and castles surrounding the massive burg of Ox (see "Kayomar") leaving few reliable troops in the whole of Burnevitse and the Bleached Hills region.

Discipline began to break down further amongst the Hobgoblin troops. With few officers capable of keeping them sufficiently cowed, they began to break apart into separate tribal units, their traditional kells. No aid came from any quarter. The rebellions spread and the hob legions all but disintegrated. In 1128md, the fortress of Ox fell with much loss of life and the orcs were broken. This shattered the thin veneer of discipline remaining in the north and the whole region collapsed into anarchy. Despairing for their lives, the human officers fled, leaving their soldiery to their own devices.

The wars passed them by and the empire forgot them. The legions developed into a broken patchwork of tribal units and kells. They broke off from each other, fanning out into the wilderness areas, looking for food and land. The new age frightened them. The sun shone brighter than it ever had before and the hobs, for many long years, hid themselves from the light of day.

When at last they came out of hiding, the world was not the one their fathers knew. The proud towns and fortresses had fallen into ruin and the roads were crumbling vestiges of their former selves. Food proved scarce in those early years and the hobs competed fiercely for it. Too, knights from Kayomar and Anglamay came to the lands of the hobs to hunt them out. All this brought further chaos. Their proud status as imperial legionnaires was forgotten by all but a few, and the hobgoblin kells began warring sporadically with one another.

Burnevitse, the wilds to the south, and the Bleached Hills became dan- gerous places. The hobgoblins, becoming fiercely territorial, fought any and all who entered their country. Orcs too, descendants of the shat-tered combatants of Ox, wandered the forests in small tribal groups. Strange beasts, monsters, and others besides came to the region to prey upon the weak or settle in deep quiet places, far from the blades and lances of heroes.

Kayomar to the south, along with Anglamay and the Counties, encouraged the continuation of inter tribal warfare between the humanoids. A great deal of money flowed north or west, paying one group off against another.

This state of chaos remained until 1181md. The hobgoblin Vistenodge, of unnatural size and intelligence, unearthed a cache of treasure (the famed "bountiful harvest" of the Bleached Hills) and his standing in the tribe changed overnight. He used his wealth and cunning to overwhelm some of his neighbors and with the combined might of several kells began subjugating others. Those who followed him were given stores of booty and loot; those who didn't were destroyed. As his power increased, more kells came to him to offer their allegiance.

In this way, Vistenodge forcibly united many of the hobgoblins. Within a very short while he sent the first armed forays into the surrounding lands, mostly into the settlements of the great Massif.

In 1185md, Vistenodge stumbled upon a great opportunity. A raiding party, lately returned from the Hanse Cities, bore with them a merchant's daughter, whom they intended to ransom. He ordered that she be brought before him. Cast at the feet of grim Vistenodge, the woman rose and holding her head high she spoke in the Vulgate, "What company is this?" And he ordered her to kneel at his feet and the woman laughed and the sound of it carried through the hall.

Vistenodge wondered at this, and resisted the urge to kill her, asking her where her foolish bravery came from. She smiled, and it was both hard and beautiful. "When one such as I fall into the hands of such fools, then I deserve whatever death fate delivers me."

The woman, Lissza Forth, the only child of a foundering merchant, was no fool. She saw the wealth of that squalid encampment. She spied their cattle, grains, mounds of booty, and in the chieftain's tent were diamonds and riches beyond anything she had ever seen. The two soon struck up a friendship, for Vistenodge, a clever beast, respected her boldness and intelligence. The land overflowed with wealth, she told him, in diamonds from the Bleached Hills as well as minerals and other ores. All these could be traded for finished goods and coin. The hob's love of cattle produced a great plenitude of dairy products. This too, could be sold in markets upon the Hanse.

Vistenodge took Lissza up on her offer, for far more clever than any of his race, he knew that true wealth lay in the kingdoms of men where industry and hard work ever drove the fountains of wealth, and through trade alone he could expand his power throughout the whole region.

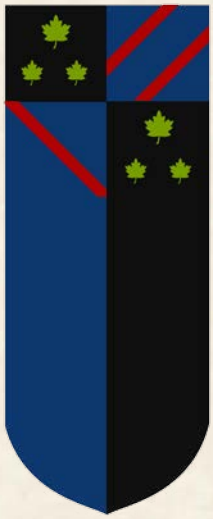
Vistenodge sent agents to the Hanse Cities to open trade negotiations. The Hanse, whose shipping industry suffered for a host of reasons (see "Hanse City States"), jumped at the opportunity. Within a few short months caravans began crossing the plains and the Great Wall, while ships began plying the waves of the inner sea. Small frontier ports sprang up all along the coasts of Gottland as merchants took full advantage of the new produce. The league quickly cornered the market of goods from Burnevitse and wealth once more flowed through the river valley.

For her part, Lissza returned to Fiume and her father's house. Their wealth and power grew tremendously in a short time and eventually she took control of the family's concerns. The two, Lissza and Vistenodge, remained friends.

Wealth poured into Burnevitse. Armor and equipment arrived which allowed them to raid in strength and to defend themselves agains the knights of the west. In time, they threatened all the neighboring lands. Vistenodge declared himself god-king of Aihrde, fashioned a crown of iron, and set himself upon a throne of bones in the mighty slag heap castle of Luxor.

CEEANA

Count Jean-ot-Artemai rules the scattered lands of Ceeana from Capua Castle. He is a clever man, young and steeped in minor sorceries. He rules with his friend, Kenneth of O'nesbou, a cleric of Ore-Tsar.



Geographical Location

The small county of Ceeana stretches from the eastern slopes of the Massif to the Elithian Wood. The land here is dry, an extension of the broken country to the west. Only in the shades of the Elithian does the soil improve, where water is plentiful in the guise of lakes and pools.

Travel in Ceeana

The traveler is greeted with a broken hill country, where scrub and prairie grass eke out a living from the sparse elements. The country in the south and central part of Ceeana is broken, filled with many gulches and ravines, making travel tedious and slow. The forest in the east is thick and hard to travel through, but the country to the north opens back up. The Ursal Road cuts through the wood and the county on its way to the Great Wall. It is poorly maintained as the count lacks the necessary specialists in keeping it up.

The Heraldry

Her coat-of-arms is easy to distinguish. A shield divided into four quadrants where the upper right and lower left quadrants are aqua blue with a red band going through each separately. The upper left and lower right quadrants are black with three green leaves in each.

Of That Land & Governance

Count Jean-ot-Artemai rules from behind closed doors. When first endorsed by the Gathering of Forty, he toured the county, accepting oaths of fealty and reaffirming various lords in their fiefs. He traveled the land a great deal in the early years, but in 1190 md, this abruptly stopped. He met his council in the late afternoons, and then only in the great hall of his palace where the doors and windows were shut. This struck many as odd, but few thought anything of it until he built the tower of Artemai. This tall, dark edifice, set in the center of Capua, he surrounded with a high wall and gardens of thorns. The count rules Ceeana from the tower with "stones for windows," or so the people called it.

His pale complexion, dabblings in sorcery, and habit of working only at night lead many to believe that the count has in fact given himself over to the undead. They fear him and only the bravest come to see him in his halls, where it is said, "his gaze is such that it can freeze the hearts of men." Disappearances of late in the villages and towns, and once in awhile in the castles, have convinced people that Jean, in fact, is a necuratul, or vampire. To make matters worse, wolves have come to settle in the country.

Jean rules through a governor, Kenneth, who he trusts to keep the peace. Kenneth of O'nesbou controls most of the trade and markets. He does this in the name of the count, who owns the whole enterprise. Kenneth, a cleric of Ore-Tsar, feels for the poor and is seen traveling the countryside healing the sick and offering aid as well as he can.

The Gathering of Forty are the knights and nobles of the county and they wield considerable power in their own right, though have little actual influence over their count.

Economic Rating: 2

The Army

Ceeana fields an impressive force of heavy cavalry. When forced, they can strip their castles of men-at-arms and cross-bowmen, assembling an army of some size. However, if the treasury allows, they depend more upon mercenary footmen to flesh out and help their cavalry.

Of the Gods

The worship of Ore-Tsar is popular amongst the common folk and even some of the lords. The count ostensibly follows the Horse God, but many others worship or pay homage to various of the gods.

Of Her People

As with her neighbors, Ceeana thrives on the knightly tradition, and small castles and fortified towns dot the countryside. These are not as elaborate as their northern neighbors, for the country is poor and frequently are made of dirt and wood structures only. The lords themselves depend upon the count for employment. They frequently enter his service in the old imperial posts which still exist (see below). The nobles are beginning to chafe at the dark nature of their count and speak of his habits in hushed tones. Count Jean has not called a Gathering of the Forty in many years and this only causes more discontent. They do, however, jealously guard the privileges bestowed upon them by the previous count.

There are many small villages in Ceeana where people make their daily bread through hard work and toil. The land is poor, for crops and difficult to till, but the people are tied to it and may not leave by order of the count. The peasants are a sullen lot, poor compared to their neighbors. They too wonder at the peculiar habits of their lord, and the fact that people disappear with little trace only adds to their worries. They are unfriendly and suspicious toward strangers.

The region is known for its excellent warhorses, and raising and selling them is considered an honorable profession. The count, however, controls the herds, allowing only those loyal lords to utilize his stock for their own gain. The country produces little else.

How Ceeana Came to Be

During the age of Winter Dark the lands of the whole of the Ethrum and Aenoch were divided into provinces which reflected the realms as they existed in the days before the Dark Lord's reign. The lands from the Hanse River to the Massif and the Twilight Wood were divided into nine provinces; Anglamay, Olgdon, Tildune, Limnule, Beiuel, Thrace, Kareelia, Kleaves, and Ceeana. The folk who lived there, a proud people, traced their lineage to the ancient Ethrum, and as with their ancestors, they reveled in war and tournament. To bring these folk to heel, Unklar appointed governors to rule them and garrisoned cohorts within town and country.

Despite this, these warriors proved difficult to govern and they rebelled continually. To overcome this, the governors appointed them to administrative offices and gave them the title of knights. They exempted these newly minted knights from taxes and allowed them to employ small troops of retainers. To control these men further, a noble, usually the most influential, was appointed as count of that particular province. The counts, though locally powerful, ruled in name only, answering to the dictates of the governor. In this way, the governors pacified the region by creating an aristocratic cast of bureaucrats who made their wealth through controlling the whole of the region's commerce.

When the Winter Dark Wars began, Unklar's generals, hard pressed in other regions, stripped the central lands of Ethrum (from the Great Wall to the Straits of Ursal) of their garrisons. The lords of Aufstrag desperately needed experienced soldiers for the battles in the south and east. The central lands they deemed safe from rebellion, and they did not fear the consequences of withdrawing so many soldiers.

As with Kleaves to the north and west, Ceeana broke with the empire slowly. When William of Anglamay spread rebellion throughout the northern provinces, the Count of Ceeana did nothing. He offered hopes for a bright future and marshaled his men, but could not be induced to go to war. After William took the crown of Anglamay, the Lords of Ceeana, Governor Jerald of Ier and Count Etienne, sent emissaries, dutifully offered their congratulations, and promised to meet with the king to discuss future arrangements. The count of Ceeana had no intention of surrendering what little power he had to the king and entreated the governor to hand over the treasury to him so that he might hire mercenaries to stave any attack. The governor, a weak man horribly addicted to the pleasures of the flesh, acquiesced without any argument. So Etienne set about acquiring men, arms, armor, and horses. The latter were furnished to him by a merchant from the Olgdon River region in Augsberg. There they bred the best horses known in Aihrde and the count paid for them all. In this way he inadvertently created what would, in time, become his realm's chief source of income.

The local aristocracy flocked to Ceeana's banner. He promised them copious amounts of gold for their loyalty. When, in 1126 md, they gathered at the count's castle, he dutifully paid them and they in their turn swore oaths of fealty to him. The meeting, called The Gathering of the Forty, became a tradition in Ceeana, where the lords of the country reaffirmed their loyalty to the ruling count and the count granted them gifts and land.

In 1128 md, King William once more sent emissaries to Ceeana to press his claims of overlordship. These were rejected and the count threatened war. Being already embroiled in conflicts in the Hanse City States and quarreling with Kareelia and Kleaves as well, William did not feel strong enough to press his claims. They were dutifully laid aside and in exchange for a sizable gift, William dropped them altogether.

The count settled his house in the governor's palace at Capua, the largest town in the region. Etienne never forgot his friend, the governor, and continued to endorse his position. Jerald lived out his days in the palace, drinking and frolicking. The count also allowed those imperial officials who swore oaths of loyalty to remain in their posts. In this way, he continued the efficient rule of the whole county by relying upon the bureaucracy already in place. The post of governor he also renewed, even after Jerald died (of excessive drink), a practice which has continued to this day. This has created the interesting conglomeration of old imperial government alongside a feudal administration supported and endorsed by the occasional Gathering of Forty.

Etienne died without issue in 1139md. A cousin, Hugh, endorsed by the Forty, took control of the county. Hugh soon learned that the imperial treasure which Etienne relied upon for years was all but gone. In seeking a solution to the financial problems he knew he would soon face, he stumbled across the idea of breeding the famous Olgdonberg horse which Etienne imported so many years previous. He immediately set about purchasing as many of the horses, particularly mares, as his lords would allow.

He bred the horses with great success. Within a few short years he established a market for their sale, primarily destriers, in Capua. People came from far and wide to purchase them. The horses, Ceeana Olgdonbergs, are prized amongst the lords of Anglamay, Karilia, Kleaves, and Maine.

During these years, the religion of Ore-Tsar spread throughout the country. Churches and a number of monasteries sprang up. Even small villages spent their frugal earnings on churches, made mostly of wood.

Hugh I died a wealthy man. His young son, Hugh II, took the crown. Hugh II's passion for horses was only surpassed by his passion for the tourney. He sponsored events on the day of his accession and many more afterward. He instituted the tradition of tourneys at the Gathering of the Forty, but this life led to his early demise. In 1153md, during a joust, a knight called Jaques Ali-Ance struck the count such a blow that it broke his neck, killing him instantly. They lay his body next to his father's in the crypt outside Capua.

Jean Charles, a distant relative, took the crown. The first Gathering of the Forty endorsed his candidacy, and he ruled the county for many years thereafter. He supported the bishop of Avignon during the ecclesiastic's disputes with the king of Anglamay in 1160md. This led to resentment at the court of Anglamay-ot-Neider, a sentiment which has carried over to the modern era.

During Jean Charles' reign, the county of Ceeana suffered severe economics woes. The trade routes shifted further north, forcing many merchants out of business. Only the lucrative horse trade survived wholly intact, and this, of course, lay in the hands of the count. A long series of droughts struck the country in the 1170's, devastating crop production. With starvation rampant, peasants began to uproot and travel north and south, where they hoped greener pastures could be found.

This exodus alarmed Jean Charles, and he forbid peasants to leave their homes unless they paid a tithe to him. This of course led to social un-rest and some minor rebellions, often led by clerics of Ore-Tsar. The nobles put these down with a ferocity which surprised all. Even the king in far off Kayomar, Morgan II, called the blood baths inhumane and threatened to go to war against the count. Threats from distant quarters aside, Jean Charles continued the oppressive measures, divid-ing the country even further.

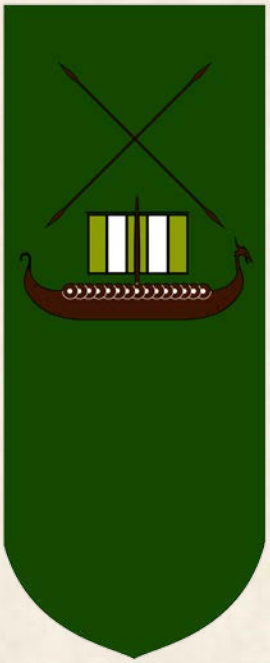
In 1184md Charles took his last breath, and his cousin Jean took the crown. Jean, a clever man, dabbled in sorcery in his castle at Artemai. The lords of the land endorsed him at the Gathering of the Forty. He appointed a priest friend of his, Kenneth of O'nesbou, as governor to aid him administering the land.

Her Counts

Etienne (1117 md-1139 md)
Hugh (1139 md-1153 md)
Hugh II (1153 md-1157 md)
Jean Charles (1157 md-1084 md)
Jean-ot-Artemai (1184 md-present)

EISENHEIM, KINGDOM OF

In the large wooden halls of Lund, King Thorismund rules this land of Northmen.



Geographical Location

Eisenheim stands upon the sea, between the dark forests of the Detmold and the rugged peaks of the Flintlock. Gently rolling hills and shallow valleys are pock-marked by small wooded glades. Streams and rivulets, small rivers, ponds, and lakes crisscross the whole realm. The kingdom gets a great deal of rain, as do all the lands of the region, and many sailors curse the ever present fog that lingers in the coastal waters.

Travel in Eisenheim

There are no roads in Eisenheim, only tracks that wind through the rolling hills. The forest is thick, brooding, and dark, allowing no easy entrance. People travel by foot, sturdy ponies, or small cart.

Heraldry

The crossed spears on green with a longship underneath, speaks to their origins as a people.

Of That Land & Its Governance

King Thorismund rules from his castle of Lund. He is an older man who loves the sea. He leads raids occasionally, but for the most part takes his dragon ships into the fjords of the far north or through the isles of the Roheisen Straits. There, he searches for the crown of his father and the frost giant axe lost at sea so many years ago (see below). He rules over a number of thanes, who each possess their own holdings.

The thanes of Eisenheim are powerful and wealthy and do not bow to the king in Lund. They meet in council frequently and argue any course the king may plot for the realm. There are some few castles here, but for the most part the thanes live in great wooden halls with their peasants in villages all about. They welcome most travelers, particularly the warlike Knights of Haven, and give food and lodging freely. All travelers who take such hospitality can not help but notice the wealth in plunder from the south and west.

Close ties with Aachen and Augsberg continue to keep the peace in the region. When the Northmen of Eisenheim feel the need to raid, they do so in the west, in the lands of Ethrum, sparing their neighbors.

Economic Rating: 1

The Army

Eisenheim commands a notable force of irregular warriors. They are armed as each man is able. They are some of the most skilled sailors of all Aihrde, combining the two military disciplines with particular ability.

Of Her Gods

There is wide worship of all the gods in Eisenheim, however the gods here are given different names and the worship of the All Father, as Erde One Eye, is prevalent.

Of Her People

The Engale who make up Eisenheim have, for the most part, settled in peaceful farming communities throughout the rolling hills and valleys of the land. In large part due to the laws of Theodahad I and Fjörgyn, the settlers live in peace with the indigenous people (see below). There are no serfs in Eisenheim; any man or woman is free to go when and if they desire. It is a kingdom much like the northern kingdoms across the sea where women have an equal say in the rule of law, and those who bear weapons, like Fjörgyn of old, are welcome at the king's council.

For the most part, crops that are grown are for local consumption as well as the mead that is manufactured, which comes from honey. Small herds of sheep and cattle are in abundance.

Wealth here is dispersed, and the kingdom produces little of its own for export. Some iron is mined in the Flintlock but foodstuffs dominate the economy. The sailors of Eisenheim are employed by many nations and peoples, and their raiding vessels can be found in all corners of the world. They are also very good traders.

The lands are not wholly tamed, and the folk have not given up all their warlike traditions. On occasion, young thanes gather small armies and take to the sea to raid the lands in the west and south. Due to the area's long history, old ruins of ages past, abandoned and forgotten, are continually being unearthed.

How Eisenheim Came to Be

With wild hair and beards to match the ferocity of any dwarf, the Northmen descended upon the Lands of Ursal. For centuries the men and women of the wild north lived free of the rule of Unklar. They thrived in the Winter Dark, for they lived already in the frozen north, pulling their livelihoods from the sea. These people lived in tribes, many the direct descendants, or so it is written, of the Engale, the friends of dwarves from long ago. Along the coast and in the hinter-lands of the inner sea there existed several large tribes of note. Upon the eastern slopes of the Roheisen Mountains lived the Est-Gotha and upon the western slopes the Vin-Gotha. (Note: the name derives from ancient dwarven, gotha being the word for tall. The dwarves called men the gotha fu, literally, the "tall people". Those tribes local to Roheisen Hohle eventually adopted the name themselves.) Legends and songs of the gotha tribes relate tales of a time when man and dwarf of Roheisen Hohle lived in peace and great concourse (see " The Andanuth"), though the halls of Roheisen Hohle had long been closed to the outside world.

The Est-Gotha and Vin-Gotha were in turn divided up into several tribes.

These scattered tribes of Est-Gotha and Vin-Gotha lived in the snow bound mountains and along the ice locked seas. With the onset of the Winter Dark Wars, the snow began to recede and the southern lands became lost in internecine war. For reasons that are not completely un-derstood, the northerners suddenly exploded upon the Lands of Ursal. Whether they sensed a weakened zeal in the imperial legions or they reacted to internal turmoil is not known, but what is understood is the terror they brought with them from the north.

With the likenesses of the gods and the dragon Inzae upon their ship prows, the Northmen rode the tides of the Inner Sea to war and slaugh-

ter. At first they raided small villages, burning coastal farm houses and thorpes. They sank fishing vessels and threw their captains into the sea. They carted off many slaves and a little plunder. In the year 1119md, the Est-Gotha Angatyr led a bold raid against Toninburg, a town upon the northern shores of Anglamay. A temple to Unklar stood in Toninburg for it was a hub of the realm. Many wealthy merchants and their captains who made their living off the trade of produce from the sea dwelt there as well.

Angatyr, with four ships carrying thirty Northmen apiece, attacked the town one early morn. No one expected the attack from the sea and they were wholly unprepared for it. The garrison was quickly overwhelmed, many dying before they were able to arm themselves. Within a few hours Toninburg fell to Angatyr, who ordered it plundered and burned. The booty they carted back in gold, jewels, and slaves amazed their fellows and galvanized the whole of the Northern tribes.

The Northmen built larger ships and filled them with eager warriors and by 1122md, the first large scale attacks took place all along the coasts of the Inner Sea. The imperial response from Aufstrag was rapid. They dispatched a fleet of galleys to destroy the barbarians. They sailed north to the sprawling city-encampment of Gokstead, intending to burn out the barbarians, but the Northmen set out in a host of long boats under King Thorismund the Great and met them at sea.

In the ensuing battle. Thorismund destroyed the imperial fleet and the entire 58th Legion with it. This victory opened the southern lands to further depredations and eventually to migrations. The raids also triggered the creation of several states, such as Anglamay and the Hanse City Federation.

In 1125md, Theodahad the Vin-Gotha of the Amal clan, son of King Thuidemere, son of Thorismund the Great, gathered a host of Vin-Go-tha, some Est-Gotha, and many freed slaves, then set forth to forge a kingdom in the wealthy south. His sister Fjörgyn joined him. They raided as far west as Avignon, but then turned north to the coasts of Aenoch. The sparsely populated lands north of the Detmold Forest offered the migrants a perfect home and they conquered the region in 1126md.

Along the coasts of the Inner Sea they forged the Kingdom of Eisenheim. Theodahad worked hard to integrate his folk with the indigenous people. The peasants who occupied the many scattered villages and thorpes of the area fled at first, but promises of safety and, eventually, hunger, brought them back. Theodahad forbid any of his warriors to molest them, but rather gave his soldiery control of land and villages, both to protect and tax. In this way a union of the two peoples came about and in time of years, they bore fruit in the semblance of a strong kingdom.

Within two years Theodahad's folk became deeply involved in the Winter Dark Wars with many serving as mercenaries in the armies of Aachen and Augsberg. Theodahad led a great host of his people, alongside King Albrecht, at the Battle of Olensk in 1129md. In the waning years of the wars, the Northmen joined Aachen, Lord Daladon and his allies in their battles with the orcs of Iergaul in the Flintlock (see "March of Zeitz"). Here, Fjörgyn and Ephremere, Queen of Aachen, formed a lasting friendship with each other and with Daladon of the Council of Light.

The power of Eisenheim grew when Fjörgyn married Alfred, the son of King Albrecht of Augsberg. The marriage proved a long and fruitful one, and Fjörgyn bore Alfred many children. Her power as a priestess of Heimdal and her ferocity in war led this woman to, in time, lead her own people. Theodahad lived only long enough to see his sister married, for he died young, slain upon the walls of Iergaul by the orc, Afrix.

The thanes of Eisenheim crowned Eurich, Fjörgyn's second son of her marriage to Alfred, as their king. In truth, he was but a boy of two and his mother ruled in his stead.

Fjörgyn ruled with a firm hand, dabbling in all aspects of the kingdom. She continued the laws of integration started by her brother as well as reaffirmed the alliances with the neighboring kingdoms. When Eurich died at the age of nine, taken by disease, Fjörgyn, ever associated with the arcane doings of the god Daladon, went to fight in the long drawn out death of Unklar. She rose to the ranks of the Val Tulmiph and soon thereafter quit the governing of her realm and retired to her lands in Augsberg. Her lands and castles she left to no one and they became wild places in the heart of Eisenheim, for few dared to explore them lest they bring down the wrath of the Val Tulmiph Fjörgyn.

Braga, Theodahad's son, a brash youth passed over by the thanes, took the crown in a bloodless coup.

He ruled the kingdom for over 20 years, and his rule reflected that of his forefathers. A powerful man with a lust for war, he could not contain himself to the quiet life of a king in his hall. He reassembled the fleets of raiders and began plundering the shipping lanes and towns of the western coasts.

Braga became the terror of his age, and few could sail upon the Inner Sea that did not bring his raiders down upon them. Braga himself led 40 vessels, some drawn from his cousins in the north in a raid on Avi-gnon in 1171md. He carried a great war axe, taken, it is said, from a frost giant king in the Grundliche Mountains by Braga himself, and battered down the outer gates. They plundered the outskirts of the town but when the wealth of Avignon brought forth thousands of mer-cenaries, Braga quit the attack and fled back to the east. Nevertheless, his ships were laden with booty.

Braga died upon the sea when his ship went down in a storm off the isles of the Roheisen Straits. He bore with him the frost giant's axe.

Theodahad II, Braga's son, took the throne upon his father's demise. Raised in the households of Aachen, Theodahad carried with him a hint of civilization. Curtailing the raids, he spent his wealth and time on rebuilding the long neglected realm. Castles in the southern fashion, though made of wood and dirt ramparts, began to appear here and there. The Northmen began at last to employ horsemen, though this practice never caught on.

Theodahad ruled for 14 uneventful years. The raids slackened and there was peace in the land. He died upon his throne, sitting in council, with his eyes open to the world. Ever after, it has become a saying in Eisenheim, "With eyes open, we face the other side."

Neither of Theodahad's two wives bore children, so upon his death, his brother Thorismund took the throne. Named after his great ancestor, Thorismund brought some of the old world and its ways back to his people and to Eisenheim.

Of Her Kings

Theodahad I (1127 md-1140 md)
Eurich son of Fjörgyn (1140 md-1151 md)
Braga (1151 md-1176 md)
Theodahad II (1176 md-1190 md)
Thorismund (1190 md-present)

ELORIA (LATZEN BASTEI "THE LAST BASTION")

Upon the windswept isle, from the halls of Elorisia Prince Morgeld of Nevermore, the Fell Knight, called the Demon Prince and Half Breed, St. Luther's son, rules from his throne of gold.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The many scattered isles of Eloria lie off the coast of the Gelderland across the Straits of Ungara. The country here is much the same as it is on the mainland, with rolling hills of broken scrub oak and grassland. Some scattered forests dot the island, protected by edict of the prince. Mythic monsters have settled here as the prince styles the whole isle his menagerie. The lesser isles are rocky out- crops with little forest, but where large pastures of deep grasses grow. They are particularly known for their rugged and fierce breed of wild panthers.

TRAVEL IN ELORIA

There are no roads here, only a few paths, usually well concealed, that cross the island here and there. The old, moss-covered forest grows thick roots in shallow earth, making travel difficult at best. The port itself is built in a deep water bay and allows easy access for multiple ships.

THE HERALDRY

His troop of immortals bare the prince's symbols in war. The midnight blue banner with the runes of chaos upon it foretell their loyalty, "In the name of Morgeld, Oh Our Prince."

OF THAT LAND & GOVERNANCE

Prince Morgeld rules in the capital halls of Elorisia. He is a beautiful man, well groomed, tall, muscular, and a little pale. He is charming and has a silver tongue. Morgeld rules the island as a tyrant. His word is law, and he uses the dreaded Crna Ruk to carry it out (see "Guilds & Orders"). Morgeld, as in the past, is very addicted to a variety of drugs and drink, much of which is imported. He loves pleasure overmuch and, or so the tales relate, treachery as well. He is the last member of the Old World who strives for mortal gains upon the plane of Aihrde.

ECONOMIC RATING: 4

THE ARMY

None challenge Morgeld's rule, for his immortals, of which only 900 remain, are fiercely loyal to him and guard him well. These mercenary knights, many of whom traveled with the prince in the Age of Heroes, are all experienced warriors and battle mages. They go to war in outlandishly decorated plate mail, with high helms and long shields. As is common knowledge, many are addicted to the same pleasures of the flesh as their master. To augment his forces, Morgeld, in times of need, hires mercenaries from the Gelderland.

OF HER GODS

Morgeld decreed that a whole district of Elorisia be set aside for religious worship. Only on temple grounds does he allow others to have a say in their own governance. The edicts of religious tolerance have given home to a host of religions. The greatest temple is the Rock of Ealor. The high priest of that Val Eahrakun dwells there, for he is given much latitude by the Fell Knight. There are others besides, great and small. The only known temple of the Crna Ruk lies in Eloria. There, the assassins pay heed to the faceless master of their order. The temple district is set aside from the rest of the city.

OF HER PEOPLE

The island itself has become fabulously wealthy. Elorisia has grown into a sprawling city that continually outgrows its walls. Jumbled houses and buildings crowd the narrow roads and alleys, making much of the city a dark forbidding place. There are no city officials, only the word of Morgeld. Because of this, much of the city is a dirty place, where little care is taken to maintain public works. Only in select neighborhoods, where the merchants live or the temples stand, are facilities kept in good working order. Elsewhere it is up to the locals to do what they may.

The city is quartered into districts; a merchants quarter, several for commoners and so on. The worst district of the city is the Break. There, all manner of ruffians gather; mercenaries, sailors, thieves, and those down and out. Muddles Inc., always in competition with the Crna Ruk, set up house in the Break. The thieves grow fat on the wealth which flows through the city. Morgeld keeps little law in the city, and most everyone has small armies of retainers or guards to keep themselves safe.

The whole city is a dark, squalid place.

Within the center of Elorisia lies the Imperial City and it is set aside by a great wall of granite and steel. Within are the palaces and places of pleasure for the immortals and a select few princes and ambassadors allowed within this sacred place. Few enter or eave this place who were not bidden. The palaces are beyond compare, for the immortals are well versed in ancient and abyssal architectures and know well how to create pleasure palaces. Here too is the only place the edict forbidding the construction of roofs and covering is obeyed, for Morgeld believes the elements are the most ancient source of power and exposure to them is the only path to knowledge and power.

The rarest of flowering trees grows therein, for Morgeld is fond of beautiful things. The Fell Prince himself sits upon his throne of gold, perched above his columned courtyard beneath the open skies, buffeted by the winds and rains of all seasons, pondering his fate, his loyalties, and his needs.

Outside the city the rolling hills bear huge manors and spired castles. The people of Eloria are indolent and revel in the wealth which their master spreads around. As is told, many of these lords are powerful and have traveled with the Demon Prince for eons. Little is produced in Eloria other than debauchery. The immense wealth of the prince is changing the commercial sea lanes in the south as he endeavors to control all seaborne trade. He has developed a primitive banking system which loans at tremendous rates (enforced by the immortals). The prince raises a great deal of revenue through taxing pilgrims of Haven; the knights of that order have recently allied themselves with Tagea to reassert their power over the southern sea lanes to counteract Eloria.

HOW ELORIA CAME TO BE

he history of the Isle of Eloria is one bound to the history of its prince, Morgeld the Bastard, for he rules there with his immortals.

Centuries ago, during the Age of Heroes before the Millennial Dark, King Luther of Kayomar (see "St. Luther"), waged continual war upon the Lords of the Wretched Plains. Those fell creatures could not overcome his strength, nor that of his comrades the White Mage and Daladon. However, what they could not win by force they attempted to achieve by guile. In the heat of battle, Luther fell to the ensorcellements of the succubus Tetstiana. She bound him for a short while, hours only, but long enough to serve her purpose. Eighteen months later, Tetstiana gave birth to Luther's bastard son, naming him in the demon tongue, Peineger, which means in the Vulgate, "to bring Torment."

As a boy, Peineger bore the twin spirits of his father and mother. Law and chaos struggled within him, as did good and evil. At times Peineger waged war upon his father, but at others he fought by his side. When Luther learned of his identity, he wept bitter tears. He forgave the boy and bid him shed his demon name and take that of Morgeld, Luther's own father's middle name. The boy wept as well and embraced his father, taking the title of prince aside that of Luther's legitimate child, Robert Luther. They lived, for a time, in peace, but in the end the machinations of his mother drove Morgeld to war with his father once more, and so they were sundered for many long years.

After the coming of Unklar, Morgeld withdrew to his fortresses in the Gelderland. He gathered a host of men, half demons and even some homeless embittered elves, about him and they made to flee or fight. These ruffians came from all over, but mostly from the east in Al-Lios. Theirs was a desperate company of desperate men.

Morgeld awaited the outcome and when the wars turned against the west and hope faded, he gathered his folk together, and with the black spear Gorgothorium in hand, made for the sea. They plundered on their march, gathering stores of wealth before they came to the port cities on the sea. They forced their way onto several ships and joined the exodus into the far west. He traveled for a time with a fleet of other refugees, led by his half-sister, Mourilee. Eventually the fleet found refuge in the lands men came to call the Greenling Fields, but here Morgeld could not abide, for his company was one of desperate creatures.

South of the Greenling Fields stood an island of granite, seemingly one stone thrust from the turbulent waters. This isle guarded the approach-es to the bay. The refugees built a tower there but were asked to leave by Prince Morgeld so that he settled his folk upon the lonely isle. "Give me this isle of stone and I'll hold the southern passages for your people. Unless I and all my company pass to the Wretched Plains we'll keep any from approaching from the south." They granted him the island and its defense.

Morgeld styled himself the Prince of Nevermore, and also, Lord of the Isle of Bliss. He bid his folk to construct a great citadel. They slaved for years in the task as the prince and his soldiery plundered the dying kingdoms of Aihrde and the Planes. They stole riches and arcane magic and bore it all to the island realm. They brought slaves, beasts, and all other things they may need to survive. When at last the citadel stood complete it dominated the island and the oceans around. The great black hulk of it, carved from the rock itself, stood as a testament to its dark master. The burg was mighty, so that none dared assail it.

His fleet he set in coves, sheltered from any storm. Atop it all he built a palace of marvelous beauty and its windows faced the west, to the Wall of Worlds so he could see the All Father's mist. He learned in time to look beyond it to see into the uttermost Void that is beyond all things. In a bitter wit he named the isle the Land of Bliss, for it grew no food, nor any plant of any kind but some few wild mosses, and no animals but wild sea birds occupied its heights. There he lived his deathless life in the company of other immortals, all refugees of the world, bound in the ecstasies of pleasure and defeat. Here, he ruled with an iron fist, holding the black spear Gorgothorium, in his grasp.

So it stood for over a thousand years.

Those years were hard on the prince and his immortals. Bound to Aihrde, they could no longer plunder the planes for riches and booty, but instead found themselves slaves to time. There, on the Edge of Forever, they did not age. Truly they were the immortals. Morgeld slipped into a world of chaos and debauchery. He took drugs and much drink to ease the pain of his life's guilt, for in truth he always loved his father most and hated his mother for the chaos she wrought.

When the Winter Dark Wars began, the Council of Light came to Prince Morgeld to rally him to their cause. He welcomed his father and the company and swore to aid them in their battles with the Horned God. In truth he rejoiced, for he had since grown tired of his life. The immortals too rejoiced, for they ever loved war beyond all things.

Unklar knew of Morgeld and he knew too his heritage. As is told elsewhere, he sent forth a fleet of black ships, filled with foul orc and ungern to hound the Son of Luther and retrieve Gorgothorium. But being bold and fierce, the prince roused now from his drugged stupor, gathered the immortals together, and set to sea in seven great ships outfitted for war. The folk of Morgeld were few in number, but fierce in battle. These men and elves carried themselves in wild abandon, armed and girded for war in outlandish suits of mail. They slipped from the isle in a lust for battle. By devious paths Morgeld, named anew the Fell Knight, came upon the Dark Fleet.

At the Battle of Utland he broke the fleet asunder and sent many orcs and other folk of that ilk to their doom in the Deep Quiet. The Fell Knight suffered as well; two of his mighty ships were lost forever to the waters and a third cut asunder and lost to him. In after times this third ship, after many long adventures, or so the tales relate, came upon the island spires of ancient dwarven homes which they believed were the remains of Alanti and they were led on many wild adventures.

None of this was known to Morgeld, for all he knew was that it was with lessened might that he sailed south around the continent and in the year's twilight came to the Elorian Islands. There he built a castle, Elorisia, and this new home he named Letzen Bastei which is the "last bastion" in the Vulgate.

As is told, some folk of the black fleet broke free of Morgeld's battle line and came to the Isle of Bliss. There they laid siege to the citadel and breaking its walls, they plundered it, casting down its high towers. They set there a great captain, and he ruled for long ages and came to be known in after times as Trubsal, which is "misery" in the Vulgate, and his isle he named Unglucksfall. It is now known that this captain was a mogrl, forged from the hatred of Unklar when he was yet young.

Morgeld joined his father and the Council in the war against Unklar and led his immortals many times against the minions of the Horned God. Many tales relate of his adventures during those days and of his betrayal and forgiveness. Too, rumors speak of his bitter feud with king Alfred of Augsberg and how he slew him with Gorgothorium. In the end this was not his greatest crime, for behold, after the heroine Septiva felled Unklar, Morgeld stole the broken horn of Unklar and brought it to his island kingdom, enshrining it in the bowels of his own palace.

After the war the years passed without event and the prince and his remaining immortals slipped into their old lives of wild abandon, comfort, and debauchery.

FONTENOUQ, THE PRINCIPALITIES OF

The noble families of the scattered Principalities of Fontenouq rule their small estates independent of each other.

Geographical Location

The lands of Fontenouq are wild, inhospitable places, consisting of rocky outcrops atop steep hills, whose slopes follow wild descents into ever darkening woods. In the valleys the trees and bramble grow close, fed by many small streams, pools, and ponds. There are no roads here, only trails, and these crisscross the country. Hunting here is good, but there are many predators, both magical and mundane.

The spired castles of the Fontenouq elves dot the countryside. Though some went to great lengths to hide their towers in the dark deeps, others were content to build them heedless of who saw them. These high thin towers rise from forested hills or valleys like singular moments. They are out of place, these otherworldly towers, but even so seem to belong with the countryside. Often the trails leading to these forested palaces are difficult, if not impossible, to find, and many a would-be visitor has entered the forests never to return.

Travel in Fontenouq

Fontenouq lies largely in the deep woods of the Gelderland. There are no roads here, only trails or tracks. The palaces and castles of the elves are usually built off the beaten path, and those trails that lead to them are well hidden. Travel here is difficult as the forest is thick and infested with orcs and other vile creatures.

The Heraldry

They bear devices upon their shields and the crests of their helms which carry little likeness to anything else in the world. They are known mostly for their high conical helms and elaborate armor.

Of That Land & Its Governance

This is an elven realm, though the elves of Fontenouq have no rulers. They live independently of each other, nestled in the foothills and forests of their adopted homeland, rarely leaving their abodes. For this reason their numbers are slowly declining. The young devote themselves to martial exploits, philosophy, or some other endeavor, rarely concerning themselves with propagating their race.

Those who do find themselves at the gates of one these palaces is likely to stay there. The elves do not welcome visitors generally, though on occasion they will give refuge to those they feel deserve their aid, such as warriors and the like. They have no friends in the world and so do not worry themselves with being kind to strangers. Instead, they indulge in internal pursuits such as the study of philosophy, music, and poetry. Even so, they retain a fierce nature and skill in armory, weapons, and magic. The elves of Fontenouq are not adverse to gathering under arms to help the kingdoms of man and dwarf defend themselves against the evils of the world.

Economic Rating: 1 x 5

Of the Army

There is no army. Each principality defends itself as it sees fit. Neighbor may help neighbor and on rare occasions a great host of them gather, though under no ruler. When they do, they ride horses to battle and wield lances, swords, and bows.

Of the Gods

They pay homage to Wenafar and Glorianna, the Goddess of War.

Of Her People

There is no commerce in Fontenouq and it is not a wealthy kingdom in the human sense, but the elves there care for their own and produce some of the finest weaponry in the world. They are also known for their carving in wood, ivory, and bone, wondrous magical tapestries, and clothing.

Though the elves do not traffic in worldly goods, the bold sorcerer or wizard can find a wealth of arcane information in any one of the elven princes' abodes. Sometimes they give this information freely to aid those they feel are continuing the struggle against the minions of the Horned God. Sometimes they seek payment, and this is always something to aid them in understanding the sins of their history (see below). It is said that certain elven princes take in human apprentices and train them in the arts of the magi. For this reason alone many travel to Fontenouq, though in truth, few return.

Occasionally some of the younger Fontenouq leave their palace castles to explore the wide world beyond. They are easily recognized by the weapons they bear, all long and thin, high helms, elaborate armors and the warlike attitude they possess.

How Fontenouq Came to Be

Of all the folk in the world the elves of Fontenouq are the most melancholy. Their elven past is clouded with treachery, cowardice, and guilt, for they abandoned the world of Aihrde when all others stood and fought against the tide of Darkness. For this crime the elves have paid with their souls, turning from the carefree, noble-born fey of yesteryear to the personified avatars of war and vengeance.

Before the Age of Winter Dark, representatives of all the high elves of Aihrde gathered in a great meeting before the feet of their queen, Yaeondae of Elean to discuss the future of the world. One of their number, Carados Scotland, a wizard of great renown and a member the Council of Patrice, warned the elven lords of the coming of the Winter Dark. His master, Patrice of the Wood, possessed the gift of sight and saw the future of Aihrde. The elves debated long and hard upon what to do. In the end, heeding the councils of Prince Lothian, they chose to leave the plane of Aihrde and return to the Land of Seven Rivers from where their forefathers had come many years ago. They could not understand the thoughts of mortal man, nor their greed in land or conquest, and they wished to preserve themselves, for to them life is precious. They returned to the Seven Rivers, to the ancient lands of Shindolay.

The wood and twilight elves stayed behind as did some high elves, for they loved the world of Aihrde most of all.

The true horror of Unklar's conquest unsettled many of the elves as they watched it from the lands of fey. They watched as Daladon Lothian, Half-Elven, cursed them with a vengeance. Too, they watched his brother Meltowg succumb to that curse and cast his life into the long fray. Many became distraught at the wars, the death and the destruction, and they called for the princes to return them to Aihrde to aid the last king, Robert Luther, in his struggle against the Horned God, but all to no avail.

As the debate grew bitter between the two sides, the folk of the Seven Rivers were soon in open disagreement. Many, at last, under the leadership of Silithian "Moonbeam" turned on the princes and the queen. They armed themselves with magic spells, weapons, and arcane knowl-

edge and made as if to leave. The queen's guard barred their passage, but Silithian drew his blade and slew a number of them. For the first time in the history of the elven folk, elf had slain elf, but the rebellious elves were undeterred and left the lands of fey, fully intent on going back to Aihrde to live or die by the sword.

Further tragedy and frustration greeted them. They found the portal to the world closed, for Unklar knew of them and others besides, for which reason he bound Aihrde in a ring of power. The elves raged against the gates, but to no avail. They hurled themselves and their magic against them, but the gates would not yield. They knew that the blood of their kin lay upon their hands, so they could never return, though few, in truth, desired it. Better to fight in limbo, they thought, than not fight at all. But they did not fight; rather they watched Unklar destroy the last resistance and damn the plain to a thousands years of law and evil.

So these immortals lived upon the gates for a thousand years. They called themselves the Fontenouq, that being, "the ones who are abandoned," or "the lost." They settled in limbo and built homes for themselves from what little magic they could glean from that horrible place. Their bitterness and rage increased. They blamed those in the Seven Rivers for damning them all in the eyes of the world, for their bondage was unknown to the men who struggled on in the dark, and men turned their grievances against the name of elves more often than not. The Fontenouq hated the Horned God and his minions, but most of all, they hated themselves for they sought honor in death and could not achieve even that. Hate consumed them.

These elves, the Fontenouq, made themselves ready for war. For a thousand years they made themselves ready.

As is told elsewhere, the elven sorcerer Melius fashioned a gate in the guise of the Prism of Alteration which opened portals to Aihrde, the Seven Rivers, and the planes that housed the Fontenouq. He placed this gem in the Castle of Spires. When Daladon came to the castle in the waning years of the Winter Dark Wars he found the garrison slaughtered, Melius dead and his own brother, Meltowg Lothian, fallen upon the floor. It became obvious to him that Meltowg had made war upon these elves, his kin, and slain them in order to open the gates. It took Daladon not a moment to finish the job his brother had begun and he opened the gates to fey. As with Melius, he did not realize that a portal to the Fontenouq lay in the Prism, but thought it only a gate to Seven Rivers. He set himself there, to watch any who might come through, so that he might slay them, for he hated his kindred. In this manner he missed the passing of the Fontenouq back into the world.

When the gate opened before them, the Fontenouq rose in arms almost immediately. Silithian, tired and old, took the lead; his son Sathonos, born in the limbo, led the army. They passed into the world mounted upon thin, long-legged beasts of arcane origins. Their conical helms and long shields set them apart, as did their thin, light, but sturdy spears and swords. They were a grim lot, men and women armed and accoutered for war.

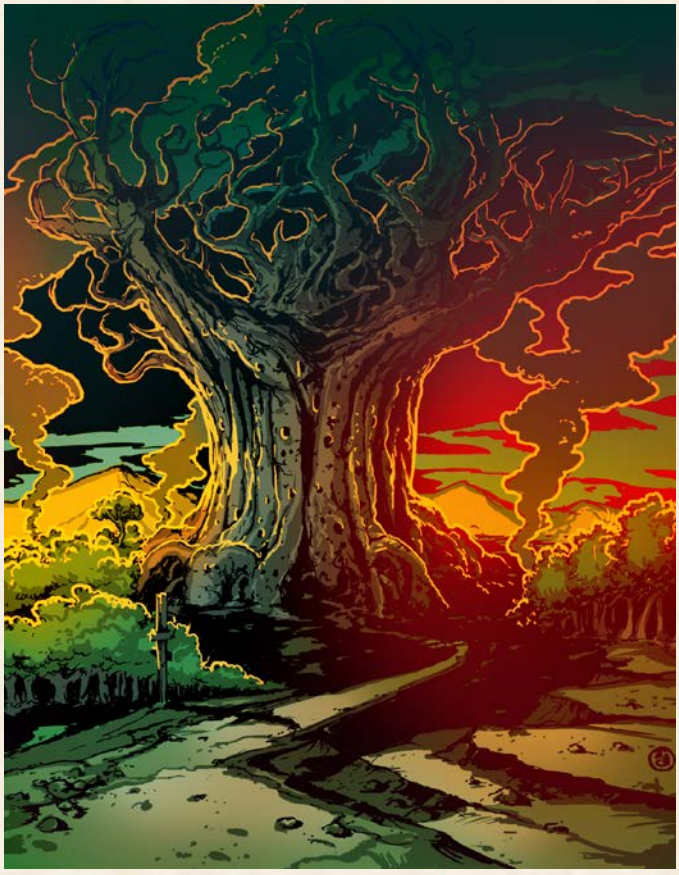
The passing of the host shook the earth and all fled before them. They rode from beneath the eves of the Twilight Wood in lusting rage for war. They crossed over the straits of Ursal into the east and enjoined themselves in any battle they could. They fought Iergaul upon the Luneberg, and even in the end at the very gates of Aufstrag upon the Toten Fields. The enemy fled from their terrible rage, only the most hardy daring to stand against them. They brought ruin and devastation upon all the forces of the Horned God who remained. Many of their folk died in these wild years, Silithian being one of them. He fell to the axe of a mogrl, but many more lived on.

When at last the wars ended, these folk found themselves strangers in a land that did not welcome them. Few knew anything of elves, but for stories of flight and abandonment, and they drove the elves out. Those who did, remembered well the desertions in the face of the enemy so many years ago, so the Fontenouq traveled though the world of men, seeking redemption.

They eventually settled in the forested hills south of the Twilight Wood. The lands were little occupied by man, dwarf, orc, or ungern and made as good a home as any. There the elves settled, mostly in family groups, and built for themselves wondrous homes. They used the magic gleaned from a life time spent in limbo, some say the very Language of Creation, to fashion substance from nothing. They surrounded themselves with books, art, and music. They talked philosophy with each other, debating the sins of their history, and studied the world of magic, exploring boundaries few dared to cross. Though they never forgot their martial powers and studied war and its practice above all things.

In time of years these princely warlords became removed from the world of men, even as they had been in the days of limbo. They closed their gates and settled back in their silks and ivory towers to nurture the comfort of their guilt. They could never shake this guilt, knowing as they did, that they quit the war too early, and that they joined the war too late. Eventually they removed themselves from each other. Each family remained in its own castle, coming out to visit only once in a great while.

Despite all this, the princes frequently take up arms and ride forth, for the lust of vengeance is still heavy with that people..



GAXMOOR, THE LOST CITY

Upon the ridges of the Massif stands the Lost City. There, no single lord claims rule, but rather, a host of mercenaries, bandits, and monsters vie for power within the crumbling walls of the once proud city.

Geographical Location

The Bergrucken Mountains cut the lands of Western Ethrum in half. From their southern origins in the Ardeen Delta region they crawl north to the Blaudun Timberland. There the mountains change, becoming darker and more stark. Men call it the Coal Range, but the Bergrucken don't end there. They turn east, and then south again until they end in the Twilight Wood far to the south and hundreds of miles from their origins. The mountains fence in the well watered Massif, that upland plateau dominated by Lake Orion. Here the country is green and fertile and men make their livings on farms and through fishing. The mountains offer little egress to the Massif and the people here live easier lives.

In the west, the dwarves of Norgorad Kam hold domination, keeping the paths of the mountains clear of madness. Here stand copses of aspen, and dark, towering green firs and other trees. Within all of this stands the ruins of Gaxmoor, nestled in the valley Ix.

The Heraldry

There is none of any significance.

Of That Land & Its Governance

Gaxmoor has only recently returned to Aihrde (see below). It lies ensconced along the rim of a great mesa, within an ancient river valley, upon the western slopes of the Massif. At first glance it seems a devastated city, but close investigation reveals a set of solid double walls surrounding the city, with inner walls towering over the outer. Beyond these lie towers, gates, and buildings of an altogether alien style. The architecture is old, harking back to the early days of the Aenochians and their emperors.

The city is peopled by all manner of folk. Descendants of the original inhabitants, speaking pure Aenochian, struggle to survive against the squatters of all types. When the city fell to ruin many came for plunder, burning, and looting, but some stayed, carving out small domains for themselves and warring with one another. The whole city is rife with intrigue and war.

The Shapely Siren Brothel is one such place, its marble walls having long held at bay the raving hordes. There, a score of humans under Sheila, the madam, struggle on. A band of sobekki, under their leader Hsithra, have taken up residence under the great canal which traverses the city. Others beyond these struggle to survive as well. The orcs of the Red Axe clan dominate much of the once great city, but hobgoblins, gargoyles, and other creatures haunt the now crumbling ruins and largely deserted streets.

Even so, the bands of humanoids and evil creatures that now plague the area are causing great harm to the peoples who dwell upon the banks of Lake Orion. The raiders descend upon them without warning, burning farmsteads, hauling off livestock, and if the opportunity presents itself, murdering the inhabitants. The word has gone out from these terrified villagers that the city must be retaken and her walls rebuilt for peace to return to the Massif.

Much treasure lies hidden within the ruined city, and the lost knowledge of Urnus Gregaria may serve to help offset the rising power of Narrheit in the estern lands of the Ethrum and her kings.

Economic Rating: 1

Groups of Note

Bone Crusher Clan (Vegg): This clan of hobgoblins is under new leadership since the attack on Gaxmoor. The old chief was killed in the assault. Vegg, his second in command, is now the chief. Vegg dresses in colorful scarves and pilfered finery. He is more interested in celebrating his new status than anything else. He is a hedonist in the extreme and pays little attention to organizing the clan. He spends most of his time in the harem or drinking ale. The Bone Crusher clan will react more slowly to attacks and have relatively low morale when faced with a determined foe.

Gnolls (Harrg and Clasch): The gnolls are split into two main groups, the bodyguard of Harecules and Harrg's Band. The larger group is in the palace with Harecules. They are his shock troops and resent their lowly position, but they obey Harecules nonetheless for fear of him. The other group is lead by Harrg and Clasch. Harrg is an experienced warrior and good leader. His band suffered heavy losses in the attack from the governor's wizard..

Harecules: Harecules is a trusted servant of Narrheit. His mother is the daemoness Tracassa and his father is the ogre magi Saburo Sato. He was the original commander of the humanoid armies which attacked Gaxmoor. He quickly lost control of his cohorts when he began searching for the Staff of Urnus Gregaria. He still commands a sizable army in the citadel, accompanied everywhere by his two demons and ettin.

Red Axe Clan: This is a veteran war band from the Red Axe Tribe. Their leader is a crafty warrior named Grond. He runs his war band like a well-disciplined military unit. They actively patrol their area and keep guard at all times. They react to an attack quickly and use their resources wisely. The Shaman will focus spells on the strongest fighter and use his wand to keep enemy wizards busy. Grond is in the city to get treasure and fame so that he can go back and challenge the tribe leader. He is not opposed to working with adventurers to obtain his goals. If they were to happen to die in the process, though, he wouldn't be too upset.

Tracassa the Daemoness: Tracassa is the mother of Harecules and one time consort of Saburo Sato. She seeks to gain the Staff of Urnus Gregaria.

How Gaxmoor Came to Be

The magnificence of the Aenochian empire is marked well in the annals of that land. Some emperors ruled with a genuine concern for the welfare of their subjects, some ruled with malice in forethought, some with indifference. But so great the wealth of the Aenochian empire in those early days that the emperors could squander it, and this they did. They built monuments to their greatness, at first statues, but later buildings and in the end whole towns. They built magnificent cities and fortresses, and road to tie them to the empire and more towns

towns and castles to guard those roads, until the land itself was a monument to the power in Al-Liosh.

In general there was peace. The empire waged sporadic wars with the tribes of orcs and beast-like creatures of Burnevitse, and fought an occasional rebellion, but overall the emperor's rule went unchallenged. As the Aenochians conquered the lands of Ethrum they constructed great fortress cities to both guard their caravans and pacify the conquered peoples.

Gaxmoor was such a city. Lying upon the frontiers of the empire, north of Kayomar, the fortress city dominated the eastern wall of the Valleys of Kayomar. The city rapidly became a haven for travelers crossing from the empire into the west as they followed the roads down the length of the Bergrucken Mountains. It became a famous way point for travelers, soon known for its ribald music, wild nights and never ending brew. Many gave over this wealth Urnus Gregaria, one of the order of the Val Austerlich, and though they built no temples to him, they celebrated his wealth in charm in all the taverns and inns.

In time Gaxmoor served as the home of the followers of the deity and as such it received many of that deity's special blessings. Not known as a god who worried or greatly cared about large standing structures or huge temples dedicated to his worship, Urnus Gregaria loved the city for its hospitality and games. Thus rest and diversion were offered to weary travelers as they passed through the mountains.

After three centuries of rule, the empire of Aenoch came to an end. Nomads from the distant west settled upon the frontiers. These fierce tribes hounded the borders with constant war. The Ethrum began to through off the yoke of slavery and even the emperor's subjects grew restless under their rule. The empire expended great amounts of wealth to combat these foes and in so doing, stripped many provinces of their soldiery. The people of Ethrum rose in revolt, casting off the shackles of the emperor's rule. Before the emperor could muster the strength to combat them, his own nobles rose against him.

The Wars of Liberation devastated the lands on either side of the straights. Imperial armies marched to and fro attempting to crush the rebellious subjects, and mercenary troops looted and plundered towns and villages. The land burned and her people were despoiled.

At the height of the war, the Tarvish leaders of the Ethrum laid siege to the great fortress city of Avignon. For many long months they starved the city, but when this proved fruitless, their commanders led bloody assault upon the walls, eventually breaching them and bringing the city down in flames. The rape of Avignon left the town a burnt hulk. Hostages were taken from the wealthy, soldiers looted, and a great host of lords and ladies were done to death for serving the Emperor in far off Al-Liosh.

Eventually, the alliances of the many enemies, dissension of her conquered subjects, and a final conflict with the Tarvish emperors weakened the once-mighty empire and resulted in the destruction of both. The empire collapsed. The lack of any safe communication with the east spelled the doom for the remaining border outposts.

As fire, sword and ultimately magic overtook the rest of the Aenochian empire, the mighty patron of Gaxmoor decided to save the city. He accomplished this by removing Gaxmoor from Aihrde, casting it into a pocket universe where time ran slow. There it was to remain until such time as Gregaria's priests felt it safe to recall Gaxmoor to Aihrde. He accomplished this by removing Gaxmoor from Aihrde, casting it into a pocket universe where time ran slow. There it was to remain until such time as Gregaria's priests felt it safe to recall Gaxmoor to the world.

Ages came and went, kingdoms rose and fell, yet Gaxmoor remained oblivious. In time of years, as is told in the histories, Unklar conquered the world and the long days of Winter's Dark settled upon Aihrde. Even so, Gaxmoor hung in the world between worlds, between the sands of time. When Unklar fell in the Winter Dark Wars, the world, born anew, came under the guiding hands of other powers, some far more sinister than the Horned God.

The powers of chaos, though, took a stronger hold on the world than the Lord of Wayward Travels expected, and over the centuries, the methods of recalling the city fell into the hands of the followers of the selfish and malign Narrheit (see "Divine Orders"), an entity of darkest evil. It was thus Narrheit's adherents that returned Gaxmoor to Aihrde for the foul purposes of their master.

The ogre magi Saburo Sato wove a great spell of Narrheit's keeping and knocked the staff from the diorama, bringing the city hurtling back to Aihrde. There, his son, Harecules the Cambion, accompanied by his mother, Tracassa, had gathered a great army of humanoids and mercenaries to take the ancient town, in hopes of loot and magic and most of all, the magical Staff of Urnus Gregaria.

When Gaxmoor returned, surprise took all the parties concerned. As the hordes of humanoids and assorted villainous mercenaries of the dreaded Lord of Chaos fell upon the city, they discovered it was no burgeoning treasure house. Instead they discovered that it was already in disrepair and only sparsely occupied, and its citizens were falling into barbarism. After some considerable slaughter, the place was "pacified" and became a haven again, this time for evil.

GELDERLAND

Here there are no kings or princes. No one rules that does not carry a sword. No one lives that cannot defend themselves and their land.

Geographical Location

The Gelderland is vast in size, from where it overlooks the Amber Sea in the south, to the Bergrucken Mountains in the west and north. In the east it is hemmed in by the Sea of Shenal and the Twilight Wood. It is a fierce country of deep forests sprawling across broken hills, where rocky outcrops jut from tangled woods, deep gulches, and winding steep valleys, what the locals call "downs." Thick bramble and forest grow everywhere; the Gnob Wood of black jack oaks and the Geiner Wood of tall white oak, maple, and birch. In the downs the land is fed by an abundance of water for the melting snows of the Winter Dark which left many pools, ponds, and small streams. Often these streams run to muck-filled marshes and peat bogs. In the hills, the country becomes drier and less hospitable.

One hilltop looks much the same as the next in the vast sprawling country of the Gelderland, and only the most skilled of rangers know the land well, for there are few roads. The trails that snake and wind through the sprawling woods are easy to lose and hard to find. It is as wild a country as there is in the Lands of Ursal.

Travel in the Gelderland

The Gelderland has no roads, only game trails and orc tracks, and these constantly grow over or fade when traffic shifts to another part of the wood. The forest is thick and unforgiving. It is easy to become turned around and lost in the woods. Most people who travel here follow the many rivers and streams

The Heraldry

The only standards that are recognizable are those of the orcs. The Ulgars have blood washed shields with chains upon the surface. The Othines disdain the use of shields, instead mounting totems upon poles.

Of That Lands & Its Governance

They have a saying in the Gelderland, a greeting of sorts. "Are you equal to it?" one will say. "Slowly. Slowly," is the response.*

The country is sparsely populated and most of those people who do dwell in the Gelderland do so on the coast. There are several towns, Icanthos being the largest, founded as colonies by the Tageans to the north. There is also Leanthos City, Taggenbrun, Grel-Et and others smaller towns, but the greatest by far is the free town of Frieberg. They all vie for control of the sea lanes with Maine and Eloria. The Tageans govern the towns loosely, taking full advantage of the independent nature of the settlers in their ongoing maritime struggle with Maine. The other towns are free cities, governed by strong men, oligarchs, or no one at all.

The Gelderland attracts all manner of adventurer. In the years before the Winter Dark the land served the Lords of Ethrum, and the ruins of those people dot the countryside. Rumors of fabulous wealth buried in deep dungeons and forgotten tombs abound. The Ethrum built huge temples to the gods, decorating their interiors with gold and silver. The lucky hunter can still find such ruins and earn renown and wealth for himself as he may desire. Though many eldritch creatures, who lived out the Winter Dark in those lost places, dwell there still. The Gelderland is a land of high adventure and many who enter its borders are lost therein.

Economic Rating: 1

The Army

The coastal towns can field small armies of highly trained warriors, usually mercenaries, and small fleets of ships. The orcs have the largest standing armies, counting many warriors and shamans in their midst.

Of the Gods

Men pay homage to those gods they deem fit.

Of Her People

Despite its relative proximity to the seaborne trade routes, the Gelderland continues to languish as a backwater amidst the Young Kingdoms. Its people are poor, living near subsistence level. It is a place where slavery is rife. The fishing fleets that hunted the coasts during the Winter Dark, are largely defunct. Much internal wealth is derived from mercenary bands that ply their skills to kings and princes. The crafty trader can come away with abundant supplies of peat, sheep, and salt, all commodities which the halflings, who wander the wilderness, possess. Aside form that, the Gelderland's wealth is almost purely in lost plunder of forgotten ages.

Frieberg is an old town nestled upon the coast. It sits at the center of the Lands of Ursal and receives traffic from the north and the south and south east. Almost everyone on the water must stop at Frieberg at one time or the other.

It is unique in that it is largely built of stone, possessing stone walls with towers set every 200 feet. The buildings too are unique in that they all possess green-shingled roofs. The streets are narrow, cobbled on the sides, with a slate drain down the slightly convex center. They wind between buildings, many too small to accommodate even a cart, crisscrossing here and there, meeting in small squares that possess a well or at least a common area. People house their own animals in yards behind their homes where small patches of grass grow or hay is brought in. In this way the town is generously supplied with chickens, sheep, pigs, and even some cattle.

There is no town square or central market, only shops. These are everywhere, usually on the first floor of a building, with the second and third being reserved for living quarters. Almost anything is for sale in Frieberg, finished and unfinished goods. There are men for hire, livestock, ships, and almost anything one could desire in the sprawling hedge of the town.

There is no government here beyond the oligarchs, town merchants who employ small armies to keep the peace. In times of war everyone able to carry a weapon must report to the walls. Those who fail to report are turned out of the town and their houses are sold.

There are many powers in the town, from the wizards of the White Order to the Muddles Inc, as controlled by Quigley Shortstride. It can be an extremely dangerous town for those without friends.

Icanthos is a walled town, founded by Tageans as a commercial colony. It is a frontier town and tends to be rough, filled with travelers, adventurers and the like. There are several powerful thieves guilds in Icanthos and a small click of Crna Ruk (see "Guilds and Orders"). Followers of the Paths of Umbra live here as well, seeking refuge from the witch hunts further north. The streets are paved, though sometimes in timber carted in from the hinterlands, and the houses tend to be two-story affairs with high conical roofs. A great deal of coal is burnt for fuel, mined in the forest by the coal men, and the city is forever stained in black soot.

Other towns lie upon the coast, most notable is Taggenbrun, where the local lords sponsor arena combat in the Cleaver Pits. These violent battles are always fought to the death and attract all manner of ruffian.

A few hardy folk have settled in the hinterlands, carving homes for themselves from the rock of the hills. These small villages are always wild, have little contact with the outside world, and are peopled by stout folk. They traffic with the halflings, trading iron and wood for finished product.

The Gelderland halflings are numerous as those folk are counted and are particularly warlike. Here their wagons are small affairs, and are always pulled by some beast with light feet. The halflings speak a cant few can understand and are as quick to kill and rob a traveler as offer him food and drink. As with all those people they carry the bitterness of being hunted for sport in the Age of Winter Dark deep in their psyche, and forever seek to destroy all vestiges of the Horned God's rule. They are battle hardened, competent fighters, and dangerous enemies. They pay heed to no gods but their own and Narrheit, calling upon that dread lord of chaos for aid against the perfidy of fools. Once upon an occasion, the various families gather to discuss the affairs of trade, the orcs and to swap brides and grooms. Borin is their most respected leader of their many bands, being a warrior of fierce pride. He commands respect in the whole of the Gelderland. The female Waldrada is unsurpassed in the whole country in the use of the iron shod mace. The halflings are possessed of wealth in salt, sheep, and peat, all of which are gathered from unknown sources in the hinterland.

Of particular note to the region are the orcs. In the Gelderland there exist some dozen small tribes and two large, the Ulgars and Othines. The smaller tribes are nomadic, moving where they can get the most plunder. They are fierce in combat, always fighting in orderly bands. They bear the remnants of the weaponry of the legions (see below), heavy cuirasses, long shields, thick swords, and spears. They wield composite bows with deadly accuracy. All in all, they are a fierce people.

The Ulgars

These orcs dwell in wood and dirt forts in the rugged back country bordering Fontenouq. The anjak (orc title for commander) of the tribe is the huge orc Unk Oakbone. Their capitol they have named Orgstall, a bastardization of Aufstrag, and set it deep in the Gelderland, high upon a hill. The reddish glow of Orgstall's fire pits can be seen on clear nights for miles around. During the day a pallid cloud of smoke always hangs over the dreaded place. A large wooden complex in the valley below the fortress serves the orcs as a temple to Unklar. Their shamans never mastered the Paths of Umbra and for this reason they have brought many humans to their kingdom. These men lead them in the worship of the Horned God. As with many of their ilk, the wizard priests search the arcane worlds for a spell powerful enough to bring back their beloved lord.

The Ulgar territory stretches from the Peatmoss River to the Unkwood River. These orcs traffic in slaves and stolen booty, carrying it all to the coasts to sell to merchants that come to the Coves, a small bay north of Orgstall. An elven slave is an almost priceless commodity, but nearly impossible to get, for the orcs are well aware that whenever one of their number attacks the elves that those folk, normally so scattered and self involved, gather in a great concourse and come down on the orcs with a vengeance. Equally dangerous and almost as valuable are attacks on the halfling wagons.

The orcs content themselves with raids into the west and the north. It is not uncommon to see the Ulgar Chain-Shield upon adventuring orcs all over the western world. They speak the Vulgate well and communicate with many men and dwarves. It is not unknown for these folk to leave the tribe entirely and try their hands at other ventures both economic and warlike.

Unklar can call thousands of well armed and accoutered orcs from their scattered strongholds, though he has not done this for many a year.

The Othines

These are the totem orcs. Led by their dual chieftains, Mordun and Grauschvoll, the Othines control the central valleys of the Gelderland. Much as their cousins the Ulgars, the Othines live in wood and stone forts, though these are generally built deep in the downs. They are well known for eating flesh raw, so that travelers are never warned by cook fires or smoke of an Othine encampment, but stumble upon them to their dread and demise.

The totem orcs are religious creatures and very superstitious. They believe, as the shamans have taught them, that Unklar still resides in Aufstrag and the world of men and elves is nothing but an elaborate illusion cast by their dread master to test them. For this reason they are most fearless in battle, fearing the rage of their god more than death upon the field. Any who defy the word or image of Unklar, in thought or deed, is brutally killed.

These orcs traffic mostly in foodstuffs, furs, and what metals they can cut from the surface of their rocky world. Much like their cousins in the north, the Othine are skilled bowyer/fletchers and their arrows are some of the finest made in the world. They trade these goods for finished armor and weapons with the Tageans.

Of How the Gelderland Came to Be

In days of old three powerful dukes and an unknown number of barons and lesser lords ruled the region, paying homage to the emperor kings of Ethrum. During the Imperial Wars, the Aenochians invaded the Gelderland and despoiled much of its wealth. The region barely had time to recover during the Age of Heroes when Unklar's minions despoiled it again, sacking many of its fortresses and towns. Here the first battles of the Catalyst Wars took place and some of St. Luther's kin, his brother most notably, perished. Prince Morgeld, St. Luther's bastard son, later plundered the land as well.

The wealth of magic and gold lost in the wilderness is untold, but many surmise it to be surpassed only by the spoils of Aufstrag herself.

With the rise of Unklar, the trade routes shifted north to Anglamay and what remained of the region's prosperity declined rapidly. It became a refuge for criminals and those who sought to escape the horror of Unklar's rule. Orc tribes settled in the land, the Ulgars and Othines being the most notable. Many a young orc found service in the legions of the Horned God and returned to his home, after many years of service, as a battle hardened veteran. In a world ruled by law, however, the Gelderland remained lawless.

During the Winter Dark wars, many refugees fled from disastrous campaigns in Kayomar. Aziz led his 4,000 men into the wilds of the Gelderland and many orcs and ungern followed suit. It is said of Aziz that he died soon after he arrived in the Gelderland. His troop took up residence in the ruins of an abandoned town, where they stayed for a few weeks. Their activities unearthed some horrid creatures of the undead and all but a few of these proud horsemen died. Those who lived fled to the north, but few would ever speak of what horror they unearthed. Aziz, hounded from the world by the Knights of the Flame, was at last lost to the world and his vast treasure with him, somewhere in the Gelderland.

GOTTLAND-NE "The Land Without Gods"

In the far north, upon a hill of slag, Lord Varucks sits upon the "Elephant's Back" and rules a land of troll, foul beast, and orc.

Geographical Location

The Gottland is a broken land of stark hills with little vegetation. To the north and west it borders the Shadow Mountains, in the east the Inner Sea and the south the Ington River (or "Deep Flow" in the Vulgate). It is best known for the bitterly cold winds which blow off the mountains and through the Kleberock Pass. The wind is forever whistling as it coils through the clefts and rocks, mimicking the sounds of the dead. This horrible whistling has given birth to the legends of the walking dead, where those who suffered from the depredations of the wizard Mongroul Nuluk and the troll lords are forced to wander the land as the damned. Strange solitary trees dot the countryside, almost always dead, with scant branches and no leaves. Despite this they remain firmly rooted to the ground (see below for the nature of the Gottland trees). The Gottland is a forsaken land where little grows, but monsters abound.

Travel in the Gottland is difficult for there are no roads for wagons or beasts, but rather broken trails winding through the twisted rock, scrub brush and broken country. The trolls from Nacht hound travelers as do various orc and hobgoblin bandits. It is as inhospitable a place as the world has ever known.

Travel in the Gottland

The Gottland is harsh, dry land cut with deep gulches, wide prairies, and plateaus. There are no roads here and travel is slow going. The halflings have carved out some paths, but these they change if others start to use them. Large herds of buffalo follow the contours of the land and those knowledgeable of the country know to follow their tracks.

The Heraldry

There is no standard here; only the troll lord has an organized army and he bears none, as they carry only totems and poles displaying their grisly conquests.

Of That Land & Its Governance

Though the troll lord, Varucks rules from the "Elephant's Back" and lays claim to the whole country, he has direct control of little beyond Castle Nacht and the valleys to the south. Even the Kleberock Pass is a wild place. This huge troll is slow to act, but clever. He uses the threats of pretended power to cajole the unwary into doing his bidding. He was once the servant of Nulak-Kiz-Din and he uses this knowledge as a weapon.

Several settlements dot the coast, Most and Ossford being the most prominent. Here local merchants control the towns though strong arm tactics and hold a corner on the trade going into and out of the interior. The towns occasionally war with each other, and as often war with their southern neighbors, for recently, the Hanse Cities have established trading posts along the coasts in their growing trade with the hobgoblin king of Burnevitse. This has led to some pitched battles with the towns of Gottland as they vie for control of the trade routes with the Hanse and southern hobgoblins. All the while humanoids from the north seek to plunder both sides.

The lawlessness has, of course, attracted hosts of would-be adventurers, thieves, bandits, ruffians, explorers, and any other breed of man which seeks to leave the perfumed comforts of civilization behind him. The towns are rough affairs where only the strongest survive.

Several large bands of halflings travel the interior, following herds, weather, and other incidents on their nomadic journeys. These halflings live in large wagon trains and are entirely nomadic and very warlike. They serve a chieftain who rules by his skill alone. They welcome strangers but punish betrayal with severity. They travel by ox-drawn wagons, but are known to ride small horses or large dogs.

Economic Rating: 1

The Army

Varucks wields two large hammers in combat, calling them by their names, Var and Ucks. Varucks commands a powerful but small troop of trolls in battle. When needed, he forces local tribes to give warriors and material to raise a sizable, if disorganized, army of orcs and hobgoblins. The halflings rarely band together, but can field small armies of archers, slingers, and mounted warriors. In the south the Olgrack orcs can field a sizable force of several thousands of heavy and light infantry.

Of the Gods

This is the ancient home of Burol the Mountain God, but long ago, he passed into the north. There are no temples or religious places and men pay homage to whatever gods they hope might aid them.

Of Her People

Within the interior the scattered humanoid tribes are mostly migratory. They feed off of livestock, cattle mostly, and a tough breed of sheep. They are forced to move from one place to the next, for the grazing is sparse. These groups tend to be small and possessed of little wealth. Their greatest sport are the Cleaver Pits. Once in awhile, the smaller bands gather together, dig pits here and there and throw in contestants which fight to the death. These are not unlike the Cleaver Pits in the Gelderland far to the south. In times of turmoil these orcs and hobgoblins turn to the troll lords in castle Nacht for protection, for the memory of the Winter Dark lingers in the hearts and minds of these people.

In the far west country, upon the slopes of the Shadow Mountains and around the headwaters of the Ington River, the Olgrack orcs rule from their fortress of Rackenburg. Their chief is a thin, wiry orc by the name of Uranoch Scatterskull. His name derives from the split in his skull which is ever-visible and forever dribbling puss and blood. Uranoch is very intelligent and rules his orcs by threatening, pleading, and cajoling them. They resist the troll lord whenever possible.

In this thankless place on the edge of the world nothing is produced other than terror and slavery. The people who live here are self sufficient, depending on fishing and farming. The orcs mine gold from the mountains and have recently begun carting it to the coast for trade of arms. The one thing that brings the wary merchant are the flowers found around the roots of the "Gottland Trees" (see "Appendix D: New Flora") They are reputed to have great healing powers and to be the source of the troll's regenerative powers.

Of How the Gottland Came to Be

The Gottland comes into the annals of the world during the great migrations of the Ethrum peoples. They came to the Kleberock Pass and passed through it, entering the lands of the stone giants. Here, from the mountains to the sea, the giants ruled, shaping the earth as they saw fit, and making use of stone to honor Burol the Mason. The men amused them and they befriended them, guiding them over the rough country to the Coal Range. There the people of Ethrum promised the giants everlasting friendship and gave them many blessings.

The greatest of these was the knowledge of Mordius, who lately had fallen to the Red God. They gave of her what they knew and the giants

wove the knowledge into the crown of their king, and ever after those people were bound, one to the other.

When the Ethrum moved into the south the giants took up the charge of guarding their northern borders and so they did for many long years until the god-emperors of Aenoch overthrew them and drove them into the mountains. After that they returned and dwelt in the lands, if only shadows of their former selves.

Early in the age of Winter's Dark, Nulak Kiz Din, called Mongroul established his great spired tower, Graugusse, in the Moravan Plains. These plains lay beyond the Shadow Mountains and were, as they still are today, accessible by crossing an overland trail. The Kleberock led into the heart of his domain. In those days, when Unklar slept much, his minions warred one with the other, so much so that they built towers and walls against each other. Mongroul built a wall to guard his own tower. As further protection he summoned the great troll lord, Hasryck, to his side and bid him to gather a host of his fellows to encamp upon the southern end of the Kleberock and block egress to the Moravan Plains beyond.

Mongroul's voice, laced with spells, captured the mind of Hasryck and that troll set about doing the wizard's bidding. He took mounds of gold into the Shadow Mountains to bribe others of his kin from their holes and come to the Kleberock. The trolls who gathered there served the gold of Hasryck, if they did not serve the troll himself. He bid them build a fortress for their dwelling place, but trolls abhor work of any kind, and they refused, but instead convinced Hasryck to gather slaves for the labor. They entreated him to lead them to the halls of the stone giants where they could "bind the very stone of the earth to serve us." Hasryck smiled, for this was his intent all the while.

The trolls gathered themselves for war, entering the mountains beneath clouds of snow. They came upon the stone giants' king in one of their many halls in the mountains. Hasryck bid them to quit the dark recesses of their holes, "Come with us, children of Burol; bind yourselves to us and serve the trolls of the Kleberock. If you do this you will know only happiness and contentment, for we shall allow you to build halls of stone for us." Unmoved at this speech, the giants laughed at the trolls and threw rocks at them.

The war which ensued shook the mountain to its core. The giants hurled boulders the size of houses onto the heads of the trolls. The trolls in turn, threw spears and axes at the giants. Many giants fell to horrible wounds, but too, the trolls could not stand against the rocks from above.

When they came to grips the slaughter was great, for neither trolls nor giants gave ground. The war spread through all the Plains of the Gottland as stone giants took up arms against the trolls and orcs. For years the war raged across the mountains and the plains of the Gottland, leaving much to ruin.

In the end a great wolf came upon the field and bid Hasryck to cease his attacks on the caves of the giants and wait for the giants to come forth. The wolf was Mongroul, and in this guise he stole into the cave of the stone giant king. Once the dread wizard entrenched himself there he summoned arcane magic and unleashed it upon the giants. They fled from him, for those giants bore superstition like a shield, tumbling out of the cave in wild abandon. The trolls pounced upon them, bound them in chains, hauling them soon thereafter down the mountains and into slavery.

Hasryck ordered the giants to build a castle for the trolls. They set about this task reluctantly, but they gathered slabs of rock and piled them on high, shaping them at the Troll Lord's direction. It took them many years, but in time a fortress of jagged rock took shape at the very mouth of the Kleberock. They called it the fortress of Nacht. There, Hasryck ensconced himself, declaring himself "Keeper of the Graugusse," a title seldom heard in these days, but one still dear to the trolls. Orcs and hobgoblins settled in the surrounding country, building villages and squalid moat-and-bailey castles. The Kleberock became a gateway to the Gottland, serving as the entrance to this realm and reflecting the evil of its dark master.

So Hasryck ruled the Kleberock for many hundreds of years until he fell in battle with a mammoth of such proportions that a single tread could break boulders to dust. From the northern glaciers it wandered into the fields south of the castle. Hasryck made to attack the beast, for such a trophy could not be passed. The fatal contest did not last long. The beast trampled Hasryck, gored him with its great tusk, and finally tore the unfortunate troll asunder. Hasryck's guard killed the beast, though not before many more troll kin fell, and its corpse they hauled back to the slag castle.

There, another troll lord rose in Hasryck's place. Rodzek by name, he took the corpse of the mammoth to the great hall, where he ordered all to feast upon it. He then took the bones and built a monstrous chair, upon which he declared, "All trolls who rule the Kleberock must sit here, upon the elephant's back." The trolls rejoiced by drinking great quantities of beer. Rodzek ruled in the Kleberock until the Winter Dark Wars.

None dared assail the trolls or their fortress of Nacht until Mongroul's tower fell in ruin. When the lords of the west gave battle to Malikor the dragon upon the heights of Eedelmere Mountain, it ended in disaster for the archmagi. As is written, "So great was the dragon's fall that Edelemere broke asunder and that most ancient of mountains was cast down. The quake drowned a host of Mongroul's trolls in rock and slag and ended their days forever. A great shuttering went through the world and the hosts of darkness were everywhere dismayed and hid themselves for a time." By these acts and others, the power of the mage passed from the north and the trolls of the Kleberock found themselves without guidance.

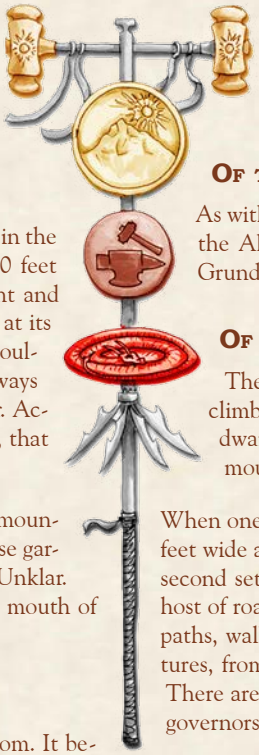
A hero born gnome came to castle Nacht soon after the Winter Dark Wars concluded. Olaf Tryggvason sought to treat the troll lord with death for crimes against his own clan years in the past. By stealth he avoided the guards, coming to Rodzek's hall by secret ways. He called out to the troll, bidding him come down from the "Elephant's Back" and give him justice. "But you are not but a little thing, gnome. How can I give you any justice." Olaf swore at him to come down, "You will give me justice or I'll pay the passage!" Olaf smote the troll a blow on the foot which roused him to anger, but even before Rodzek could lift his great bulk from the chair, Olaf struck him again with his hammer, cracking the bones in his knee. Rodzek toppled to the ground where Olaf Tryggvason slew him with repeated blows of his mighty hammer.

The trolls of Nacht scattered at the death of their lord and for many years the place remained a wild, dangerous country, and stood abandoned by folk. Only recently has some order returned. The troll lord, Varucks, harking back to his younger years when he served Hasryck, has reentered castle Nacht and conquered much of the region from the Kleberock pass to the Ington River, in the south. He bound trolls, orcs, and hobgoblins to him and so they ruled in their small corner of the Gottland, creatures of ill intent and dangerous evil.

After the death of Rodzek and the breaking of the trolls, the wider land had no governance and thus it stood for a great while. Eventually men came to the Gottland, men seeking a refuge from kings and princes and from justice. They built towns and villages upon the wilds. First they settled the coasts and then followed the rivers until a mixed bag of towns and villages dotted the landscape.

GRUNDLICHE HOHLE

Here rules Angrod King, the second of that name, Lord of Mount Orn, Hammer of Fundin, Keeper of the Deep Halls and Master of Trelleborg.



Geographical Location

Grundliche-Hohle lies within the deeps of Mount Orn deep in the Grundliche Mountains. The mountain itself towers 14,000 feet high. It stands out of the Grundliche Range in both height and girth, from the thin precipice of its peak to the broad roots at its base. High ridges, steep cliffs, deep crevices, and fields of boulders gird the kingdom in a natural fence and make any pathways through the mountain chain difficult in the best of weather. Access to the mountain kingdom is gained via the Eizle Road, that leads into a pass that ends in a broad valley.

The valley itself houses a small, clear-blue lake, leads to the mountain's feet and the massive stone doors to the kingdom. These gargantuan doors have never been breached by any force, save Unklar. A village of gnomes and halflings, Trelleborg, lies near the mouth of the valley upon the eastern slopes of the escarpment.

Travel in Grundliche Hohle

The Eizle Road offers the main road to the dwarven kingdom. It begins at Gotzenburg Keep in the Flintlock and winds north through the mountains to the road valley and Trelleborg. This road is haunted for the ruins of Unklarglich Castle overlooks it. It offers a dangerous stretch of road that many wish to avoid. For this reason a second road was built, the Burnt Cut, which circles to the west of the Eizle. It is long and treacherous, adding a day to the journey (over the Eizle Road), but avoids the evil of the main road. The Burnt Cut rejoins the main road and winds into the valley of the king. Within the kingdom are many tunnels for roads, corridors, stairs, and ramps that give easy access to the kingdom's many halls.

The Heraldry

The dwarven staff consists of an iron pole, with hammers for the cross poles. Upon the pole are the disks of the mountain, the hammer and anvil and the lore drake, all symbols of the realm.

Of That Lands & Its Governance

Grundliche-Hohle dominates the southern Grundliche Mountains. Angrod King is a young beardling, born during the Battle of the Dens. He only recently reached maturity. Angrod is stout, but thin for one of his kind, with a full blue tinted beard. He is rarely seen without the Hammer Fundin, the sacred artifact of the realm's kings. His mother, Thorva, who ran the kingdom for many years (see below), stands by his side in council and court. He defers to her often, but rarely in public. Despite this, Angrod is beginning to "get the taste of iron," as the dwarves are want to say, longing for the glory days of the past. Despite Angrod's youth, the kingdom's voice is powerful in the councils of men. Thorva's word alone carries great weight in the politics of her world.

Economic Rating: 4

The Army

Angrod commands a large force of dwarven infantry. These are all heavily armed and armored, usually going to war in field or half plate. There are contingents of crossbowmen, engineers, rune marks, and siege specialists that travel with the army. The army suffered grievously during the Winter Dark Wars and though it has recovered some, it has yet to rebound to its past strength.

Of the Gods

As with all the dwarves, the people of Grundliche- Hohle worship the All Father. There are temples to the Val Eah-rakun within Grundliche-Hohle for visitors.

Of Her People

The underground realm is huge, with levels deep in the earth, climbing to the top of the mountain. Over the long ages the dwarves have worked and reworked whole re- gions of the mountain.

When one enters through the stone doors he is greeted by a hall 100 feet wide and 200 long. Smooth stone columns mark its length and a second set of doors brings one to the kingdom proper. From there a host of roads lead hither and yon in the kingdom. These branch into paths, walk-ways, ramps, and stairs that lead to all manner of structures, from dwellings to shops, halls, temples, markets, and taverns. There are armories, practice fields, stables, forges, and offices for the governors, king, and priests.

Grundliche-Hohle is only partially occupied as her numbers have yet to recover from the long years of war and devastation, so that whole regions of the underground kingdom are empty, open to creatures that creep into the hall from deep in the earth. Generally these are sealed but people are allowed to explore them, rooting out any evil they find.

In the very deeps lie the realm's Ring of Brass and an ancient lore drake, filled with the knowledge of time. This dragon sleeps near the ring and is a friend of Angrod as he was a friend of Angrod's father Dolgan the First of That Name.

The wide valley which leads to the mountain kingdom is populated by gnomes, halflings, dwarves, and humans, must living in the village of Trelleborg. Trelleborg's houses and streets climb up the slopes of the valley wall. There, stairs both wooden and stone, ramble in a haphazard fashion from one spot to the next, climbing the cliff face. The buildings are mostly of wood imported from the south and roofed with slate shingles. This last product the gnomes are particularly skilled in fashioning, and they export the commodity as far south as New Aenoch. Trelleborg is always bustling with activity. The gnomes manage the caravans that carry goods over the mountains. They frequently employ dour-faced halflings to guide them. Trelleborg is famous for its taverns, of which there are over 30. The town itself is home to about 2,000 people, but many more swell its taverns, halfway houses, shops, streets, and inns during the trade season.

The energy displayed by the young king has stirred up the dwarves of the Hohle. The taverns, inns, and market squares are filled with gossip about impending campaigns. Despite this, business goes on as usual in the Hohle. Gnome wagons, pulled by large oxen, ramble through the iron gates, down or up ramps, carting goods to various markets throughout the kingdom. Travelers come and go, bearing goods and news from the southern lands. The best beer in all of the young kingdoms originates in Grundliche-Hohle and this alone draws people from far and wide.

Grundliche Hohle thrives on trade with the west, particularly with Augsberg, trading armaments for food and wood. Wagons lumber into

the valley, their contents auctioned to the highest bidder, and then hauled into the Mountain. In turn, the dwarves take orders for specialty armor or weaponry, which is given to smiths in the halls. They fashion black powder canon and muskets in the deeps, but only a few of the smiths have mastered this, and they are expensive beyond any common man's means. They also mine silver and other ores.

Recently a delegation from the Punj arrived with letters of introduction for Angrod. They seek to open trade with the dwarves, but the memory of past battles is recent for the dwarves and no answers have been given.

All of this awards Grundliche-Hohle a wide cultural diversity and makes the realm a lively place. Many come here to winter, for it is generally safe in the valley and the folk are friendly. Even beyond that, the mountains to the north and the Flintlock to the south are filled with riches and adventure. This attracts small armies of adventurers who settle in Trelleborg or the Hohle itself (for even here there are inns with rooms specifically designed for men), using the valley as a base for their operations. Too, many come in hopes of glory and service to one of the elder lines of Aihrde.

Of How Grundliche Hohle Came to Be

Grundliche-Hohle was cut from stone in 4609, as dwarves reckon time. It was founded by Fundin Aegold, a son of Gorthurag. He found the caves beneath Mount Orn and marveled at their depth, but more he found iron in the deeps. He called many of his kin to him and they gathered and began fleshing out the caverns until such time as they had made a home for themselves. He named himself king of Grundliche-Hohle, Deep Halls.

The kingdom flourished for many years and grew deep beneath the mountain until the kinship dispute arose. In those bitter wars the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle left their homes for battles in the distant east. It was Fundin King that led his people on the ships of Alanti and rescued Gorthurag from destruction. He returned to his halls a bitter man, for the wars had touched him closely and many of those he slew he had known in a better life.

The Hohle flourished after the disputes, replacing their losses and digging ever deeper. They took in the first of the lore drakes and imparted all their knowledge to that noble beast.

The Goblin-Dwarf Wars followed along with centuries of chaos and de- cline, but as other dwarven holds fell in the Wars or were lost in time, those of Grundliche-Hohle, or Deep Halls in the tongues of men, delved ever deeper. Ruled by the kin of old King Fund, they plundered the deep places of the earth for their forges and made mighty things of great renown. Human kingdoms came and went, yet the dwarves took little heed, but in time the folk of Fund fell in number, and Angrod and his people took the mantle of Grundliche-Hohle.

The kingdom rebounded and enjoyed years of trade, though during the reign of Angrod, the fourth of that name, the line of the lore drakes failed and the dragons were no more. Much was lost in those days and the kings and all fathers lamented it.

When Unklar came, Ungaryth King ruled. Old by then and bitter, he closed the halls and buried them deep under mountain and stone. The people under the mountain fell and declined. At the last the Horned God came and unearthed them and made great war upon them. He unmade the doors and opened the deeps and slew the whole of An- grod's kin but a few, and the line of kings was broken.

The dwarves were fierce yet and hearty, and though they fled into the surrounding mountains, they swore vengeance and eternal hatred to all of the Horned God's people. There in the high wastes Dolgan was born and raised by his father Hirn, a distant child of King Fund's second son who too was named Fund. Dolgan took to the forge before he could walk, and as a child his skill surpassed all. The Wise Ones took notice and spoke of the prophecy of his birth and doom, that he must be the Forge of the Sword and in time remake the Halls of Grundliche-Hohle.

Rumor of this came to Unklar and ever fearful, he plotted to take the yearling dwarf, to bend him to his ill purpose or slay him outright. By guile and sorcery, Dolgan son of Hirn, with some few companions and friends of his youth, was stolen from the terrible heights of the Grundliche Mountains. His brother, Margnan, younger by some few years, was with him. Goblins and orcs carried them to the pits of Aufstrag, that fell city which Dolgan later called Mithgefuhl, which is the Land of Pity in the ancient dwarf.

In time the dwarf came before Unklar and the Horned God knew him for what he was. He tried to force the dwarf into servitude, but the son of Hirn would not yield. His blood came from the Language of Creation, and more. This act of defiance earned him a name amongst many in the pits of Aufstrag. They called him Dolgan Furchtlos, which is the "undaunted." Unklar named him differently, calling him Dolgan Ungekront, the "uncrowned." Unklar bound him to Klarglich then and bid him do what he would so long as he fashioned weapons of war for the lords of Aufstrag.

So it was for years without count that Dolgan worked as a slave to the forge Klarglich, where he fashioned all manner of war machine. He soon forgot where and what he was for the forge was his great love; his hands and heart were made to the craft, and it consumed him. He worked and grew in skill, and in time of years far surpassed all those of reckoning. He was made the master of armaments and the fashioning of fortifications of Aufstrag. He came to know every hole and fissure of those caverns. He aided in the construction of Aufstrag's battlements and the dungeons beneath. He stood by the bellows, fanning Unklar's fire of hatred when the mogrl came into the world. Too, he fashioned the Krummelvole, a wonder for all the world, the crown of Unklar. In all these things he threw himself, his heritage forgotten, for he worked at the feet of the All Father's dark soul and was lost to the world.

He was ever a dwarf, though, and in time he realized his debt to the All Father was unpaid, and it was like being woken from a dream.

So Dolgan sought to throw off the yoke of Unklar and to do this he gathered a host of slaves, dwarves, goblins, and men and led them in a revolt in the very pits which he had made. Many tales abound about why Dolgan took up arms against his dark master. It is known that he had befriended an eldritch goblin, Agmour, the very one who had sacked the dwarven kingdom of Grausumhart 3,000 years before. Many believe that the two together rose in rebellion. Some others relate that Dolgan could not bear the stealing of the Krummelvole by Unklar, and he therefore threw off his shackles. The truth of it bore the likeness of no other tale. Dolgan saw the unicorn (see "Aachen"). Such a beautiful beast came into his chambers and was brought to him to slaughter, so that he might use the beast for some weapon of ill design. The beast hardly passed for living and Dolgan, seeing its wonder and beauty, took pity on it and refused to kill it. It mattered not, for it passed into the River of Time and when it died, it gave Dolgan the right of its body. He used the horn and blood of the creature to fashion an axe to rival all others but one. This fell weapon he named Havoc, that is, "Revenge."

In 1112md, he dreamed of St. Luther and in that dream the Anointed Paladin called him to rise up so that Dolgan made war on the Dark, raising the slaves of the pit in rebellion. He and Agmour gathered goblins and dwarves, men and orcs, and fought the troops of Unklar in the bowels of the earth. These were called the Trench Wars and they began the Winter Dark Wars.

Untold was the suffering of the Trench Wars. The wicked battles were fought in dark holes, down darker corridors against an implacable enemy. Knives and hatchets ruled the day, while primitive powder weapons left tunnels filled with mutilated corpses, smoke, and ash. At last in the 1188th year of Unklar's reign, the dwarves and other slaves broke free and fought their way to the mountains in the north. They bore the scars of those battles ever after.

Dolgan joined the Council of Light soon thereafter, striking up a friendship with Albrecht of Augsberg. With his aid they cleared the deeps of Grundliche-Hohle of Unklar's filth. Once done, Dolgan sent out messengers to gather his scattered folk.

In the early spring of 1122md, Grundliche-Hohle reopened and the Dwarf Lord Dolgan was crowned as its king. He declared all the Grun-\ dliche Mountains clear of the filth of Unklar and made war on the black tree of Aufstrag. The Lord of the Marsh, Coburg, Unklar's chief lieutenant in the lands of Aenoch, began to assemble a vast army of men, orcs, and giants. He meant to take them unawares and batter his way through the Flintlock and into the mountains.

As is known, in those days, only one road lead into the high mountains where the dwarf kingdom lies. The dwarves began to fortify the Stone Way by building the huge castle Havok, named for the axe of the king. Coburg moved to lay siege to Havok before it was completely built.

But war makes for strange companions, and in their battle the dwarves were aided by Albrecht, Commander of two legions of Unklar's men. He bargained with the council and the dwarves. If he held his forces back, they would support his future claims to a kingdom. In truth, Albrecht had long tired of Unklar's rule. Being a descendent from an ancient line of Aenochian nobility, he leapt at the opportunity to overthrow the Horned God's rule. He delayed his troops and robbed the Horned God of surprise. Due to Albrecht's constant delays, the full siege of Havok did not commence until 1126md. Even then, Albrecht quit the field, taking the better part of his men with him.

Feodor Paskevitch, who commanded the other legions, cursed Albrecht, and moved his great army into the Flintlock and threw them against the castle. In the time provided by Albrecht, the dwarves had gathered in great strength. They came from the mountains and hills, singly or in small groups, answering Dolgan King's call to arms. As such, Paskevitch faced an army of thousands instead of the hundreds he expected, and the castle was fortified beyond his understanding. The battle lasted for many months, but Paskevitch could not break the walls. At year's end, with his food stores exhausted, he ordered the legions to withdraw.

The dwarves launched a massive attack against the withdrawing troops. Panic spread and the enemy ranks began breaking apart. The dwarves utterly routed Paskevitch's men. Well over 15,000 orcs and men were lost, the remnants fleeing into the Punj. Dolgan King proclaimed himself Suzerain of the Flintlock.

Shortly after the great victory Dolgan found a lore drake and brought it to the halls of Grundliche-Hohle to dwell in safety and serve the dwarves as of old. She carried two eggs with her.

Early the following year, before the snows had melted, the dwarves came forth in full battle array. They fell upon Paskevitch's armies encamped in the plains of the Olgdon River Valley, throwing them into disarray. A great slaughter commenced as the men fled to the east to escape the avenging dwarven warrriors. In these, the Battles of the Flintlock, the dwarves unmade the legions, killing them without mercy. The valleys they filled with the dead and dying and the rivers ran with blood, and the bones lay in the fields unburied for years after. All that saved the legionnaires from ultimate destruction were the kobold dens.

There, upon the edge of the Flintlock, unbeknownst to the dwarves, lay a great hive of kobolds and their minions. As the dwarves passed over, they came forth and attacked the dwarven columns. A great battle commenced. The dwarves fell to slaughtering them, entering their deep holes and hidden places. Kobolds are wickedly intelligent creatures and having full knowledge of the layout of the twisting tunnels gave them the advantage. The Battle of Dens (1127md) took place over many months and dwarves and kobolds fell in deep places beneath the earth, unsung victims to the desolation of war, but the dwarves won out in the end, driving all but a few to earth.

By the onset of Winter, the dwarves settled in Gotzenburg, a great hilltop fortress in the Flintlock which they secured for defense. This proved a propitious move, for far quicker than any expected, Paskevitch recovered his legions (see "Punj"), and in concourse with Duke Kain attacked the dwarves once more. The Council of Light came forth to aid Dolgan, arriving in time to fight at the First Battle of Gotzenburg. Herein the dwarfs held the fortress against the enemy for many months. The battle raged in and around the walls and ditches with a ferocity seen in few places, for the dwarves and their goblin allies were once servants to the lords whom they now fought. The hatred on both sides caused a slaughter that could end only with total devastation. Aristobulus the White arrived and cast his potent magic upon the field, strengthening the walls and driving many men to madness, but still they attacked. The dwarves would not yield. At last, Saint Luther arrived and threw down the emperor's commander, Feodor Paskevitch, in singular combat. For reasons lost to the histories, he did not slay the commander, but banished him to his own lands. The legion fell back in dismay, and the dwarves sorely wasted with numbers much diminished, could not pursue them.

The dwarves had no time to recover from their long battles, for as is told elsewhere, in the spring of 1129md, Duke Kain crossed the Luneberg with three legions. King Albrecht marshaled all the men he could and called for Dolgan King to aid him with any dwarves available. Dolgan combed his exhausted cohorts for volunteers. So great was the love the dwarves bore for the noble men of Augsberg that 3,000 shields marched to the summons. They marched under the leadership of Oxleigh, trusted friend, lieutenant, and heir to Dolgan King.

Albrecht met Kain at the village of Olensk and there fought and won the most decisive battle in the war against Unklar (see "Augsberg"). The battle raged all the long day and into the night. The dwarves stood upon the right flank and absorbed casualties the whole long day. In the early afternoon, Kain's legions succeeded in driving a wedge between the men in the center and the dwarves. Reluctantly, Oxleigh ordered his shields to fall back. The orcs, who had failed to move the dwarves all morning, rejoiced, pressing home the attack with greater vigor. Many dwarven wounded lay behind the enemy lines, these suffered death at the hands of miscreant orcs. Oxleigh himself fell in a horrific duel with a host of orcs; the screaming frenzy of their attacks overwhelmed the dwarven lord so that, despite slaying scores of them, he was pulled asunder. When Albrecht II fell in an attempt to rescue the dwarf, a great groan escaped those dwarven shields who still stood.

Eight hundred gathered in a wedge of iron and steel. They fell upon the hosts of orcs with reckless abandon. In dismay the orcs fell back, the slaughter of them soaking the earth in a morass of blood. Though the dwarves fought on, their troops were greatly wasted, and unable to act coherently.

In the end all three imperial legions were destroyed and Kain forced to flee the field. Though the men of Augsberg suffered greatly, the king himself losing three sons, the dwarves suffered the greatest of all. One thousand and six hundred shields "returned to stone" on the field, one in two who had fought there (see "the Bartigtot"), and countless others were wounded. Only 77 survived the battle standing, and all these bore wounds of one sort or the other. Throughout the night and following day their moans carried far and wide and they tore at their beards. In their grief they vowed to clip their beards, to burn a bald spot on their chins in memory of their fallen comrades and they were called ever after the Bartigtot, the Deadbeards. The friendship between the dwarves and the men of Augsberg grew all the greater.

In 1129md, shortly after Olensk, the king recalled his army from its many holdings in the east and south. He linked up with the army at Havok Castle there to greet their return. He stood upon the battlements to watch as his weary troops passed by. An early snow had fallen, filling the mountains with a grey hue and covering all in wispy clouds of dark. Gray clouds greeted the army as it returned.

The sight of the army numbed the king. Three years earlier, from the halls of Grundliche-Hohle, marched an army of proud dwarven shields, well armed and equipped. Their beards were long, their weapons sharp and armor strong, and they were ready for battle and war. They shone in the sun like gems on the mountain.

What returned was wholly different. Three years of battle had taken its toll. Below, on the road, marched columns of sullen dwarves. Battered and torn, many without a full complement of weapons, they stomped in lengthy troops up the mountain track. Some pulled carts loaded with wounded, maimed, and the dead. Others lead or carried yet more wounded, and still others carried yet more dead. Upon their backs were worn and empty packs. Their armor was rent and torn, rusted and in shambles. Pole arms had been turned into litter poles and other weapons piled in carts and on ponies, for the snows were already deep and the tired host exhausted and hungry for relief.

As they passed the king, he saw their faces, grim and gray, hollow with vacant stares. These were the veterans of countless battles. They had left comrades all over the eastern plains, from Olensk to the Punj. Their boots were worn through, some marching with rags wrapped around swollen feet. The army shrunk against the back drop of jagged peaks and gray snow, their struggles seeming ant-like as they pushed into their mountain homes.

Yet still they marched in some order. Battalions were marked out by standards and officers, some dating back to the far off pits of Aufstrag, led them on. They saluted the king as they marched by and cheered, but the cheer was quickly lost in the whipping winds of snow. At last the battered column passed. The last unit was the oldest. The 1st Auger Battalion of 500. The king saw that its numbers were reduced by over half. The battered remnants brought up the rear and with them were the emissaries of Albrecht, Lord and King of Augsberg.

Dolgan joined the march and suffered the hardships of the last eight-day trek through the Grundliche Mountains until at last they came to the Great Halls of Grundliche-Hohle. There the combined citizens of the kingdom came out to meet them. Women, children, the elderly, almost 17,000 folk gathered along the ridges and in the valleys to watch the army's return.

Watching from the High Pass which lead into the wide valley below, the king saw the stretched column of shields coiling across the plain past the lake and to the escarpment. Like a dirty trail through the snow they tramped on and on. There, the people began to merge with the troops, looking for loved ones, comrades, fathers and brothers, sons and nephews.

Slowly the valley filled with an echo of the rolling wind, a mournful sound of ghostly wailing. It came to him then, the wails, rolling past him, over him, and filling the whole snow-rent sky… the moans of grieving kin folk filled the world of Dolgan King, for surely did more than 3000 of his kin fall in the south lands and the folk cried out at their loss. Thus did Grundliche-Hohle come home again.

They brought with them many refugees, most notable being the gnomes. The gnome Jarl (in the Vulgate, "Chieftain") Bronstead of the Vulsgard Clan entreated the dwarves for safe harbor in the valley in the shadow of Grundliche-Hohle. Dolgan King granted this so that they built a village upon the eastern slopes of the valley. With them came many halflings.

Soon thereafter, as is written, Paskevitch delivered the single greatest defeat that the western alliances suffered. In 1130md, at the second Battle of Gotzenburg, his men stormed the dwarven fortress and threw it down. The dwarves fought on in many small pitched battles, but in truth they had never recovered the losses of Olensk and were made to suffer thereby.

In battle after battle, the dwarves were routed from the heights of the Flintlock and by year's end driven into the mountains. There the disciplined legions dealt the dwarves another humiliating defeat. In a stunning coup, the impregnable fortress Havok fell to Paskevitch. It is said that goblin sorcery opened the gates of that place and let the men in, but none can now say, for its garrison was done to death, and the castle is lost to all. Renamed castle Unklarglich, it has become a place of dreaded evil. They say that a mogrl from Aufstrag settled there, hungry for vengeance against Dolgan King.

When the wars ended, Dolgan yielded his throne to his infant son, Angrod II. The battle-weary dwarf took his war to the enemy on oth ers planes and his tale passes from these (see "Divine Orders"). Thorva, Dolgan's wife, who won great renown on many battlefields, took over the rule of Grundliche-Hohle.

In the long years of peace after those dark days, the Hohle recovered much of its spent strength. Thorva ruled conservatively, though she spent lavishly on rebuilding the dwarven halls. She gave aid to the Vulsgard gnomes in constructing the town of Trelleborg which came to dominate the caravan traffic from the valley. Together the gnomes and dwarves built a new road which led north and west of the horrors of Unklarglich. In time, trade with Augsberg and other kingdoms increased. The demand for dwarven goods, mostly armor, arms, farming implements, and beer, increased. Food and lumber came north.

In 1197md, Angrod, at the ripe age of 60, came to maturity and took the reigns of the kingdom from his mother.

Of Her Kings

Aegold King (Founder, Third Rin)
Dolgan King First of That Name (Sixth Rin)
Angrod King (Ningth of That Name (Seventh Rin)

THE HANSE CITY STATES

They are led by Master Darwin of Klagenfurt - Chancellor and Keeper of the League Seals, Lord Mose - Admiral and Protector of the Waterways, and Marshal of Arms Plentik of Fiume.

Geographical Location

The broad, slow-moving Hanse River winds its way parallel to the coast, running almost the length of Anglamay. The soil along the river banks is rich and the river itself full of fish. The land is open, flat and offers extensive grazing. The coast here, much like throughout the Inner Sea, affords many small inlets and bays. All these factors have made the Hanse river basin one of the wealthiest and most crowded in all of Aihrde.

Travel in the Hanse Cities

There are few roads from town to town as most of these coastal cities conduct traffic via ship and spend precious few of their resources on roads and their upkeep. Even so the country is fairly open and flat, affording easy travels for those on foot or horse. There are, however, many bandits, landless knights from Anglamay, brigands on the run, and the like, all living in a country little patrolled.

The Heraldry

The League members all have their own heraldry. The most recognized are those of Fiume - a crenelated battlement on black and red, Arbel - one yellow chevron and three vertical black bands on a sanguine background, and Capidistria - a yellow shield with two blue strips and a mermaid (her sea captains pay homage to her upon every voyage).

Of That Land & Its Governance

The city states are powerful, independent of any governing authority, and ruled by commercial oligarchies representing the trading guilds. The greater cities, Fiume, Capidistria, and Arbel, dominate the sparsely forested grasslands, militarily and commercially. The constant shifting of political and commercial alliances have made the region a hotbed of small wars and home to hosts of mercenaries as the guilds vie for commercial control.

To limit the turmoil they have formed a loose association, the Hanse City League. The League consists of representatives of each city, chosen by lot. They come together infrequently in Fiume to discuss affairs that affect the whole region. These are usually fractious gatherings, as one group vies for power against another and a constant shifting of alliances keep them all pitted against each other. The League usually comes together when threatened by an outside force; otherwise it is a lawless region, each city governed as the burghers see fit.

No one city dominates the rest, and the town burghers govern loosely when they govern at all. The burghers, or fathers, of each city meet, usually in secret, to discuss tariffs, gate dues, trade, and similar issues. They pass ordinances to keep the peace. However, they are not too restrictive, for these same burghers are well aware that they need strong men to lead their caravans and undertake whatever missions they deem necessary. The burghers themselves come from the monied class, the guild masters and merchants, and are very jealous of each others' wealth and power. They frequently use assassins against would-be usurpers or members of their own guilds who push the limits of personal power.

Order is kept in each city by city guards, which essentially serve as the local military. These are always commanded by mercenar ies. These professional soldiers are often members of the Cult of the Sword (see "Guilds and Orders," p. 197), and follow the creed of that order. These captains are usually difficult to bribe, for their creed calls for "honor given to gold already spent." Though of course, when the amount is high enough, even they can be bought. Many folk find refuge in the Hanse area, for money buys freedom and security.

Economic Rating: 3

The Army

There is no real standing army, though each of the cities is required to supply several hundred to several thousand mercenaries for a common defense. They are also required to supply ships, depending on the size of their own commercial fleets, for the common defense. Burghers are always appointed as Admiral of the Hanse League Fleet and Marshal of the Hanse Army.

Of the Gods

All the towns in the Hanse League have temple districts wherein men and women can seek the blessing of the gods.

Of Her People

Here, walled towns and villages are generously placed on coast and river where harbors are filled with vessels great and small, unloading and loading trade goods from all over the world. Each town looks much like its neighbor. The quays upon the sea, where men load and unload ships, give way to crooked, often narrow, streets. These wind through wood and stone buildings and houses, most three and four stories high, all jumbled together within the narrow confines of the walled towns. Shops,warehouses, bars, brothels, slave blocks, market squares, and Cleaver Pits are sprinkled throughout the cities where trading in all manner of goods goes on. The towns are old and at night reflect the darker side of the merchant world.

These industrious people create goods for sale around the world. The towns possess very fine craftsmen who do woodworking, leather, book bindings, and so on. They produce weapons, armor, wood goods, pottery, wagons, copper goods, etc. Known for their art community, the Hanse City States produce a wide variety of fine artworks, statues, books, scrolls, and tapestries. All manner of goods move through the port towns: ivory, bone, sealskin, furs, fish, foods, special cheeses from Burnevitse, and gold from the Gottland.

Fiume: This city, where the Hanse League gathers once every two years, is home to the Chancellor of the League. It is the greatest of the city states and commands an army of several thousand mercenaries. Three families vie for power in Fiume. The Forths, who control most of the external trade, are led by the Lady Lissza, who in years past opened the trade with the hobgoblins (see Burnevitse). The house of Timothy Ferris dabbles in everything from diamonds to slaves. The old dwarf, Angrim the Mad runs the third family. All three are bitterly opposed to each other. They and other merchants meet regularly to conduct city affairs and make certain that the mercenary Captain Eomar is always paid and his men cared for.

Capidistria: Slightly smaller than Fiume, this city is dominated by the trade guilds; the weavers, fish mongers, stone cutters, and so forth.

The constant squabbling between the various guilds and families earns Capidistria the reputation as the most deadly city in the world. Muddles Inc., the Crna Ruk, and Umbrians are all active there.

Arbel: A smaller city at the mouth of the Hanse river, this city is far better organized than any other city state in the League. The Bennett clan controls most of the city. These folk made their wealth decades ago and have retained much of it. The master of the family, David, has recently begun importing a great deal of stone and artisans in order to build a town hall and a palace for himself. The boost in spending draws folk from far and wide.

Klagenfurt: A small town nestled at the headwaters of the river, Klagenfurt is best known for its university. There, people come from far and wide to study under the Masters of Theology, Arcana, and History. Mayor Peter Weinmeister rules the small town as he has for many years. Rumors of experiments leading to an outbreak of lycanthropy have yet to be disproved.

In all, the League is rich in adventure and opportunity, at least for those bold enough to risk their lives to achieve it. Merchants, artisan guilds, and mercenaries run the whole region and pay hard coin for information, service, and unearthed arcana.

Of How the League Came to Be

For all the long years of Unklar's rule, the Hanse River served as a highway for soldiers and goods moving from east to west. Its proximity to the sea allowed movement of goods from Aufstrag to Gottland and Graugusse to be particularly easy and this garnered the attention of Mongroul Troll Lord, Nulak-Kiz-Din (see "Moravan Plains" and "Of the Gods"). That wizard showered the cities of the region with gifts and made certain that the laws of Unklar's world did not strangle their commercial concerns.

This imperial benevolence lent much to the growth of the cities under the Winter Dark. The merchants grew wealthy and a class of burghers soon controlled the whole region. Their power, at its zenith, surpassed that of the local legion commanders and what ministers of Aufstrag tentatively ruled the counties. The Winter Dark Wars brought all this to an end as three great calamities struck the city states, which led to the immediate reduction of their power and influence.

The first occurred when Kayomar rebelled against Unklar, Mongroul sent great hosts of men and material to the southern lands. The troop traffic along the Hanse, so prevalent before, dried up almost immediately. Garrisons, stripped of their soldiers, remained empty. Many artisans and craftsmen left looking for more lucrative returns on their services, for soldiers always need new equipment and repairs to the old. Trade, too, shifted with them. The legion in Gottland moved south and the hobgoblins of the Burnevitse, lacking leadership, splintered into various tribes and began warring with one another.

The burghers hardly had time to adjust to these changes when the second calamity struck. Though the tale is best told elsewhere, Mongroul's tower of Graugusse sat upon the very feet of Mount Eedelmere. Upon that mountain he foolishly bound Daladon Lothian, Lord of the Wood and Protector of the Great Tree. When Daladon's allies assailed the mountain to free him, the dragon Malikor rose to destroy them. The battle brought down Mongroul's power and left the region in ruins.

About this time, the third calamity struck. The Northmen plundered the town of Toninburg, a small city near the mouth of the Hanse river. This began 20 years of pirating raids, burning, and looting, and led to a great host of the people of the Hanse Cities being carted off to slavery.

As the Lords of Aufstrag proved unable to defend all its many parts against the depredations of chaos, many turned to defending themselves. The Hanse Cities were no exception. They enforced men, and sometimes women, into local militias. They began building walls around their towns and hired mercenary captains and troops to fight off the ravages of the Northmen. When the lords of Anglamay (see "Anglamay") rebelled against Unklar, the fiercely independent cities along the Hanse River followed suit.

The struggle which ensued was not fought against Unklar's legions, but rather against the newly anointed king in Anglamay. King William strove to include all the lands from the Twilight Wood to the sea under his rule and to this end sent first emissaries, and then troops, into the Hanse river valley. The smaller towns fell to William with hardly a struggle. Seeing this, Fiume called a congress of the remaining free cities and in 1129md they formed a defensive league against both William and the Northmen. Many of the burghers were still possessed of great wealth and they spent it willingly on mercenaries, and of these there were plenty, for the empire was dissolving, the legions had suffered catastrophic defeats, and many ex-soldiers were set adrift.

Men flocked to the Hanse; some ex-legionnaires, some soldiers passed over in the victorious south, many just displaced thugs looking for easy pay. The rough and tumble bands which gathered fought furiously against William and his knights. William fought on for only a little while longer and then pulled his armies back across the river, a border which divides the two peoples to this day.

At the war's conclusion, the burghers and guild masters of the various towns and cities gathered in Fiume to discuss their future. In long, often heated debates, they set down the future of the League. They determined to maintain independent armies that would, in times of difficulties, be joined together under a joint command. However, they expanded the league to include commercial interests. All member cities would maintain favorable tariff and custom duties to other members. They established free right of passage along the whole length of the Hanse river to all merchants who belonged to city guilds. The delegates appointed a chancellor to oversee all of these varied activities, an office renewable every two years or whenever the Congress met.

In the early years after Unklar's fall the league struggled with northern raiders, greatly reduced trade, and the ascending star of the city state of Avignon (see "Avignon"). However, in 1185md, events took a decid-edly favorable turn. The hobgoblin lands of Burnevitse, long embroiled in internal conflict, at last combined under the firm rule of the hob warlord Vistenodge (see "Burnevitse"). The warlord happened upon a captive woman, Lissza Forth, the daughter of a poor merchant. She convinced him, as much to save her own life, of the value of working with the Hanse Cities. He warmed to the idea. Far more clever than many of his race, he had always sought to expand his influence into the east (and thereby his power) through trade. The land flowed with wealth, "diamonds" from the Bleached Hills, minerals, and other ores. The hob's love of cattle produced a surge of dairy products.

The Hanse jumped at the opportunity. Within a few short months, caravans began crossing the plains and the Great Wall, and ships began plying the waves of the inner sea. Small frontier ports sprang up all along the coasts of Gottland as merchants took full advantage of the new produce. The league quickly cornered the market of goods from Burnevitse and wealth once more flowed through the river valley.

With their new found wealth they bought their way into northern holds, and down the Straights of Ursal and have since then come to dominate the commerce on the Inner Sea and much of the straights

KAREELIA, COUNTY OF

Count Josef Olbrich, Lord of Khemi, Keeper of the Dragon Throne rules this land.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Kareelia is a land of gently rolling hills and deep grass. The soil is rich and the grass grows a dark green. There are streams aplenty and rainfall is pretty constant, watering the whole country. Copses of cotton trees stand here and there, usually nestled along the banks of creeks and small rivers. Villages dot the landscape, often looked over by the watchful knights in their castles. The castles are generally small affairs, and the villages too, with mud and waddle walls and thatched roofs. There are plenty of small taverns, however, whose proprietors offer travelers space on the dirty floors.

TRAVEL IN KAREELIA

There are fine dirt roads in the county, and these connect the many villages (with taverns) and castles. Only one cobbled road exists. The Avignon Road connects Khemi with the city of Avignon. Bordering the Twilight Wood in the west and the Gelderland in the south, Kareelia is victim to many strange occurrences. Travel at night can be dangerous and it often behooves those who find themselves too late on the road to fall upon the kindness of castle wardens.

The Heraldry

The count's coat of arms is respected far and wide. Upon an azure blue background, two towers represent the fortitude of his people. The connecting rampart symbolizes unity of mind and the stylized dragon between them harkens back to Josef's grandfather's heroic battle with a dragon (see below). The wreath pays homage to the god Ore-Tsar.

Of That Land & Governance

Joseph Olbrich rules in Kareelia. A young man filled with the legends of his forefathers, Josef fiercely defends even the slightest insult to his honor. He pays homage to Utumno and has dedicated several temples to this Lord of Dreams.

There, as elsewhere, the knightly tradition is upheld through tournament and war. Castles and fortified townships dominate the county. The count is the largest landholder in the county; however, many of his vassals own their lands, thus ensuring the rights of inheritance and giving them a greater voice in the rule of the county. The peasants are free to move, but rarely do, as the soil is rich and their lords generally keep the faith. There is a small, growing merchant class here.

The fierce spirit of independence in Kareelia is supported by close relations with the County of Sienna. Intermittent warfare with their neighbors offers employment to the local knights, as well as to all manner of adventurers. Much of the wealth of the lords of Kareelia comes from ransoms and plunder.

ECONOMIC RATING: 1

The Army

In times of war the count calls on his feudal levies, raising a large force of mounted and unmounted knights as well as complements of men-at-arms and commoners.

Of the Gods

As with their lord, many of the nobles pay homage to Utumno.

Of Her People

The peasantry are generally contented and the lord's rule here is lax. It is not unheard of for peasants to rise above their station in service to a noble and earn the title to a piece of land. There is some movement to reverse this trend, to make the rule of the nobles more in tune with those of Anglamay, but the lesser knights and peasants resist it as much as the count. In general, Kareelian peasants take advantage of the rich flat lands, producing crops of wheat, barley, and oats. A great deal of timber is logged and exported to Avignon. The local folk are known far and wide for the taste of their brew.

As the worship of Ore-Tsar spreads, many churches great and small are springing up across the land. They are generally poor, relying on locals to aid them in the creation and maintenance of the churches.

How Kareelia Came to Be

As with the other provinces in this region, Kareelia gained her independence when the imperial garrisons withdrew to the fortified cities. Even as the provinces of Anglamay moved slowly but certainly to a bloodless revolution, Kareelia moved violently into the maelstrom of war and rebellion.

The Imperial Governor of the province, Actaneb, a priest of Unklar, settled in that land as an acolyte, long before the Winter Dark Wars. No mean intellect, Actaneb mistakenly thought he understood the rule of law. He applied it with a harsh, unforgiving attitude. Whereas many folk living under the yoke of Unklar knew at least the vestiges of prosperity, the people of Kareelia did not. Actaneb taxed them heavily and spent the money on lavish residences and temples to the Horned God. When war came to the west and the power of Aufstrag waned, Actaneb fell back on his own resources. He employed an army of mercenaries and hired assassins of the Crna Ruk (see "Guilds and Orders") to kill those who opposed him.

He also dabbled in sorcery. Actaneb became obsessed with death and sought to waylay the day that he would breathe his last. To this effect he sought ways of transmuting his soul into another host. The dread experiments, which he performed on people pulled from the local environs, fed the hatred of the people he ruled.

Events came to a head in 1125md as war began to sweep the land. Actaneb's servants kidnapped the son of a powerful knight, a one time legionnaire, who went by the name Mattahius of Olbrich. Mattahius was not a man to be trifled with, but too late did Actaneb discover that he had tortured and slain the man's first born son. Mattahius gathered an army of men about him, ex-legionnaires, mercenaries, bandits, and others who would join him, and openly rebelled against Actaneb. They hounded the Governors troops, lay siege to several castles in the hinterlands, sacking and burning them, and sent their garrisons to the coast. Those garrisons, battered but alive, rejoined with Actaneb, a man of no military skill whatsoever. He gathered others to his banner, and sent to the north for aid, but the provinces there were falling into rebellion. In the meantime, he retreated before Mattahius, trying to avoid battle.

Mattahius campaigned throughout the fall and winter until he forced Actaneb's army into battle. Upon the beaches of the Sea of Shenal the two small armies met. The garrison soldiers fought for a short time but could not long stand against Mattahius. Their line gave way and the troop was split in half. Many were done to death and thrown into the sea. The rest fled the field, seeking refuge in distant parts. Actaneb fled with a small troop, heading south for a garrison fort on the sea where he hoped for rescue.

Mattahius found the Governor there, besieging him in the halls of the fortress Iliador, whose stone walls and high towers overlooked a deep bay. Several weeks passed before Mattahius mined the walls and broke into the fortress.

A great slaughter followed and none were spared. Mattahius did not restrain his men, but rather let them plunder and serve evil its just due. Everyone was slain, high and low. Actaneb, in terror of being tortured, threw himself from the high tower, his body breaking on the wall and cobbles below. Mattahius abandoned that terrible castle of death and suffering.

Iliador sits there still, overlooking the sea, a haunted place, where shadows of the dead linger. It is said that even those who seek to plunder the fortress of its wealth could not do so for fear of the undead. It is also said that Actaneb did not die when he fell from the tower, but lived on to haunt the castle as a dread spirit of terrible evil.

The war ended as soon as it had begun. No support came from the le- gions in the north or east and Mattahius found himself in control of the whole province. The men who served him proclaimed him their lord and sought for him to take a crown, for they all welcomed the rule of the man who had slain Actaneb. He hesitated, but in 1127md, when the lords of the north crowned William, king of Anglamay, Mattahius sought to join his lands to those of the northern monarch. In return for the security offered by Anglamay, Mattahius swore an oath of fealty to King William. In turn, William invested him with the County of Kareelia and placed him high in the councils of the land.

This arrangement worked for awhile. Count Mattahius enjoyed the comfort of security offered by the king. His lands sat astride the east-west trade routes, for in those days Avignon stood as a ruined fortress only. Augsberg's victory in the east (see "Augsberg," "Battle of Olensk") shattered the ability of the empire to maintain any control in the west and left many loyal to Aufstrag without recourse but to fight their way into the Young Kingdoms. Troops fleeing the east, following the trade routes, crossed his land continually, pillaging all the while. Mattahius fought many small battles, proving himself a competent general and hardy soldier. Battle followed battle.

Many men of great renown earned their spurs in service to the count. Most notable was Lord Charles Galveston, an errant knight of unknown origins, first gained the recognition of the Council by slaying a great ungern battle lord here (for further reference to Lord Galveston, in the module A Lion in the Ropes).

Mattahius lived to see the end of the Winter Dark, and fought in the final battles of the Toten Fields, but he died when a vengeful member of the Crna Ruk, still remembering the death of Actaneb, shot him with a poisoned arrow.

Francis, Mattahius' younger brother, took the reigns of power. This did not sit well with William II of Anglamay, however, who sought to give the county to his own nephew. The king sent the Dukes of Thrace and Beiuel south to represent his case. They claimed that William had not promised to invest any but Mattahius with the County of Kareelia and therefore Francis should yield to the king's nephew. To this, Francis replied with these stern words: "My lords, I thank you for your kind representations of the monarch of Anglamay, but I would have you bring him word of my displeasure at his claims so that he may know I reject them utterly. My lords, you have but two days to clear my lands or I will have you drawn and quartered and your entrails fed to the fish."

They fled north to bring news of the disaster to the king.

Francis' act of rebellion benefited from two simultaneous events. The first occasioned a religious rebellion in Anglamay. In that kingdom, as in no other, the worship of Ore-Tsar had taken a firm hold. There were many doctrinal disputes between the early priests, not the least of which was who controlled the church, the king of Anglamay or the Bishop in Avignon, a city that had grown rapidly after the fall of Aufstrag. Rebellion and war spread throughout Anglamay, keeping the king from responding to Francis' insult (see "Anglamay").

The second occasion marked Francis as one of the greatest heroes of his day. An ancient blue wyrm descended upon the county. It terrorized the whole region from the Twilight Wood to the sea. Francis armored himself with plate and shield, took up the lance of his father and rode to give battle to the creature.

Upon the way he met an elf who befriended him, saying that he was an old friend of Meltowg Lothian and wished to return the kindness which Mattahius always showed the elves. He gave over a sword that he claimed St. Luther bore in combat against the dragons of another era. With the dragon slayer at his side, Francis rode to war.

He met the dragon beneath the eves of the Twilight Wood and there they fought a horrible dual. The air thundered such that the calamity of the battle could be heard for miles around. Trees fell and the earth shook in that contest of arms, but in the end the dragon slayer took the life of the beast, leaving Francis the victor. The count paid homage to Utumno, the Dark God of Dreams, and left that place where, it is said, the bones of the dragon lay still.

Francis placed the dragon's hide upon the floor before his throne and mounted the beast's four great paws upon the throne itself, and the snout and head he set upon the chair, so that whoever sat in the throne was crowned with the horns of the dragon. Ever after has that throne been called the Dragon Throne. Francis added the dragon to his family's coat of arms.

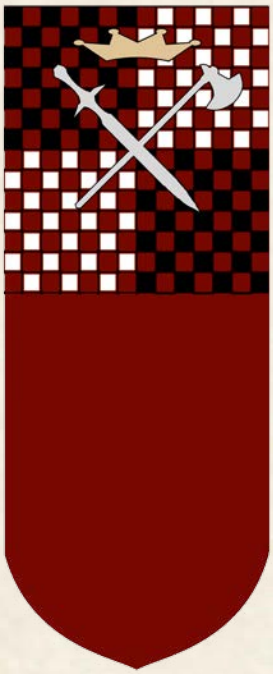
Francis ruled for a short while after the battle, but eventually died of his wounds. His son, Francis Mattahius, took the Dragon Throne and the sword, ruling as his father had for many long years. Under his rule, the county became the feudal realm it is today and the worship of Ore-Tsar spread to many of the common folk, though Francis Mattahius worshiped Utumno, a practice that grew common amongst the nobles of Kareelia. When he died in 1191md, his son Josef, a thick strapping youth, took the Dragon Throne.

Of Her Lords

Mattahius (1127 md-1146 md)
Francis (1146 md-1162 md)
Francis Mattahius (1162 md-1191 md)
Josef (1191 md-present)

KAYOMAR, (KINGDOM OF)

Eadore, the Great King, Over Lord of Kayomar, Lord of Paladins, Protector of the Vale, Watcher of the Wood, Master of the Darkenfold, stands chief over Kayomar.



Geographical Location

Kayomar extends from the wilds in the north to the Amber Sea, Eldwood, and the Darkenfold in the south, from the Ardeen River in the east to the Rhodope Mountains in the west. This vast land of rolling countryside is a fertile plain, called the Valleys of Kayomar, where four major and countless minor rivers flow in their tumbling courses to the Danau (pronounced Danow) River before spilling into the sea. The people live in towns and villages spread thinly across the wide country. Though roads connect many of these establishments, the land is simply too vast for it all be connected. Hence, there are great empty stretches of grassland where herds of buffalo and wild cattle roam. Only in the south do the plains give way to more dramatic terrain, the stark highlands of the Bergrucken Mountains, the Eldwood and Darkenfold forests, and the Shelves of the Mist. The south is more populous too. Throughout Kayomar, the knights live in their castles and fortified houses.

Travel In Kayomar

Travel is easy in Kayomar; the land is open, with little woods. The roads are mostly tracks, but are not uncommon. The many rivers offer the greatest obstacle but most of these are bridged with stone bridges. There were once great cobbled roads crisscrossing the Valleys of Kayomar, but many of these were dismantled during and after the Winter Dark Wars as men tore them up to build houses and castles. Some remain. The most notable are the Lundtrecht, Erik's Way, Aedgen Road, Cotlberg, Lothian and Malcot Roads. There are many taverns and inns at which to stop on the roads and tracks, but the roads can be dangerous as bandits and monsters such as the predatory fiedoth, or shovel mouth (see Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde.) hunt the lonely stretches.

The Heraldry

The sword and axe crossed over a four quadrant field signals to all the coat-of-arms of the king's house. The weapons represent the rule of law and strength in battle. In the upper left and lower right quadrants, the black and red checker board reflects the colors of old Kayomar. In the lower left and upper right quadrants, the white and red checker board represent that of the house of Saint Luther of Pendegrantz. Set just above and between the head of the axe and the pommel of the sword lies the golden crown of royalty.

Of that Land & Governance

Kayomar consists of three classes of people: the magnates, the knights, and the peasantry. The magnates consist of 18 noble families which include the king's. The knights consist of a vast array of lesser nobles tied to the magnates in one capacity or the other, though some few of these hold their lands free of dues and with full rights of inheritance. The peasants are tied to their lords, though not the land, so they have some freedom of movement if desired.

The country is ruled by the king and his council, taken from the magnates, or barons. King Eadore, descendent of Morgan, is a boy of 14. He assumed the throne at the age of four. Because of his youth, he is the first king to rule Kayomar who is not a paladin. His father's sudden death (see below) did not prepare the kingdom for a regency, so his mother, Debera, assumed the post. She has ruled the kingdom for 10 years with the aid of a few select advisors, one a wizard of the Mystic Enclave, EmIan. The boy is on the verge of maturity, reached at age 15 in Kayomar, and is completely unsure of how to approach his reign, for the families of Kayomar are once again clamoring for rights.

The magnates consist of 18 noble families, all of whom trace their lineage back to the Age of Heroes. These lords and ladies fought the Horned God, in one capac- ity or another, for the entirety of the Millennial Dark. Many of them have sons or daughters who are members of the Holy Defenders of the Flame, though the practice of sending a family member to the order is dying. They rule vast estates which, for the most part, are held as ancestral domains, meaning that they cannot be retaken by the king unless they commit acts of high treason or no male or female issue exists to assume the title. These are the Barons of Kayomar, and they carry such names as the Baron Erlangen, the Baron Gerhard of Sinsich, the Baron Unstruut, and the Baron Landshut. These families field small armies of retainers, knights, men-at-arms, crossbowmen and even paladins. They continue to maintain the rights which their forefathers had before, and even some besides.

These privileges include the right to tax and set tolls on roads, bridges, and ferries within their lands, supply mercenary soldiers to meet the king's levy (as opposed to reporting themselves or sending knights), maintain small private armies, and establish religious houses which do not owe fealty to the king in Du Guesilon. This last has been a source of great revenue for the families, for these monasteries, which till the land or raise livestock, owe their dues to the barons who sponsor them.

In his turn the king has sole rights to mint coins and this, above all things, has allowed him to maintain financial control of his realm. These "marks" of gold and silver are prized by merchants, for they are never debased and always pure and worth their weight. He also exercises the right to collect dues in monies, kind, or service, call the kingdom to arms, and make peace beyond the borders of the realm. Furthermore, he is the final arbiter in all disputes, high or low.

The king rules alongside a council of nobles, which consists of representatives of the 18 families, the high priest of the Grove, the bishop of Ore-Tsar and the Master of the Holy Defenders. Laws must be approved by the council before enacted, though if the king does not wish an act to become a law, it is thrown out.

The knights have no say in the governance of the land.

Economic Rating: 3 x 5

The Army

In war, Eadore commands the Holy Defenders of the Flame (see "Guilds & Orders"), raises feudal levies (each knight must serve for 60 days a year, each baron for 30 days, and also send a pre-determined number of knights), and accepts the mercenaries which the older families supply in place of regular levies. Eadore commands an impressive cavalry of 400 Holy Defenders and 6,000 heavy and light horse. The ranks are flushed out by some 12,500 men-at-arms and mercenaries. He can, if need be, raise several thousand crossbowmen and archers. In pressing needs he can raise money to hire his own mercenaries.

Of the Gods

Most all the magnates pay homage to Durendale, St. Luther, or in the case of some of the older families, Tefnut.

The vast majority of people worship Saint Luther and his wife and queen, Vivienne. There are temples everywhere to many gods however, and in the capital of Du Guesilon there is a Bishopric of Ore-Tsar. The temple there is ruled by an archbishop, but his reach is small.

Most of the knights pay homage to Durendale, Saint Luther, and the Paladins of the Dreaming, the Confessor Knights. Kayomar is defended by two relics: the Holy Flame and the Durendale, believed to be the physical manifestation of the Val Austlich of the same name. The former, said to be a spark of the All Father's Soul, burns in a sacred dish within the temple complex of the Paladin's Grove. The latter, though its whereabouts are unknown, is so bound to the grove that most believe it to be buried under the monu-ment of St. Luther.

Of Her King, The Lands and Her People

Kayomar is synonymous with knightly virtues and the rule of law and order. Many castles, large and small, overlook the countryside where small villages abound. The land is rich in soil and produces crops of wheat and barley. The people lead a simple, prosperous life, content in the protection their lords offer them. These simple folk farm the land, raise cattle and pigs, travel little and speak of the far eastern lands in vague terms. They are a religious folk and pay homage to their saints (Luther and Vivienne) and call upon the protection of the Paladin's Grove more often than not. The region is well known for its taverns and drink. Due to its proximity to the wilds, however, and the Darkenfold in particular, Kayomar's borders are constantly threatened by creatures of evil intent.

Kayomar produces notable quantities of wool and beers of great renown, and serves as the granary of the southern world. It supplies the Gelderland, Maine, Eloria, Brindisium, Norgorad Kam, Sienne, and the Twilight elves and Fontenouq with foodstuffs. Craftworks of metal from the western part of the kingdom and gold mines from the Shelves region also bring great wealth to the realm.

Most of the external trade passes through Maine or down the Danau River to the town of Elne. Elne sits between the Darkenfold and Eldwood forests and is a free town. There trade goods are picked up by river merchants, and carried into the Oth River country, down to Haverstraw, Crossed Fork, and New Edunburg. Trade from Haverstraw tends to go east on the Oth River to Hopkinsville and the Bay of Lothian. All the towns of the Oth River Country are free towns, governed by the merchants, mercenary captains, wizards, or whatever local power has risen to the top.

Kayomar is ancient and as such offers adventurers plenty of opportunity to explore lost ruins, forests, and mountains. Wealth abounds within the many deserted castles and ruins, particularly on the borders of the wilds in the Nordmark where the rule of the king is less than total.

Of How Kayomar Came to Be

Kayomar's past encompasses several thousand years. Even at the beginning of man's recorded history, kings ruled in the deep valleys. The tribe of Ethrum traced its origins to the valleys of Kayomar. The Tarvish emperors, who fought so long against Al-Liosh and the Aenochians, ruled their lands from spired castles along the Ardeen River. Once in a while, after a flood or storm, the ancient ruins of buildings or dungeons crop-up, reminding people of just how old the land is. The history of that land, however, at least so far as the modern world is concerned, begins during the Age of Heroes.

In the Age of Heroes, Luther of the House Pendegrantz reigned as king in Kayomar and at his side stood Vivienne, his queen. For 16 glorious years they reigned together and forged a realm of peace, prosperity, and power. The holy sword, the Durendale, shined over the land. In countless battles against the evil of the world he prevailed, but always over the light of his reign stood the moment that was his queen, and all men loved her and worshiped her for she was kind and gentle, a spirit of purity and hope.

At the height of King Luther's reign, war came, once more from the east, this time upon the horns of Unklar.

As war rolled across the great straits, the remaining kingdoms gathered in a holy alliance and plunged themselves on a mad crusade against the enemy. Luther had, by this time, abdicated his throne in favor of his son Robert Luther, and taken the Durendale Sword into the east in an attempt to slay the Sorcerer Nulak, or the Emperor Sebastian, whichever came near him. With him traveled his old companions, Aristobulus and Daladon. Their task proved fatal, and Aristobulus fell to a demon lord from the Wretched Plains even before they reached the east, and Luther, greatest of heroes as called by the gods, carried the Durendale from the plain into the Dreaming Sea, there to guard and hide it from the enemy.

Before departing he briefly returned to put his house in order and in 639oy he boarded his ship, the Evening Swan. His journey was kept secret for the blade's importance stood above all things, so it was that all thought he would soon return. Queen Vivienne knew better, and she knew that she would never see her love in life again, that he would cast himself out onto the Dreaming and be lost to the world for an age or more. He departed and left her grief stricken and alone. She died three days later, and was buried in the family tombs on the Freiden Anhohe (see **The Malady of Kings** adventure module).

The knights of Kayomar and King Robert Luther continued the war against Unklar. The Catalyst Wars saw the over-throw of the kingdom of Kayomar and the fall of Robert Luther.

For 39 years the King Robert Luther waged his war against the Dark in the east. The songs of his deeds ring through the years, and he is accounted the greatest hero of his age. At last, in 798oy, Unklar besieged Du Guesilon, the King's capitol. For almost two years Unklar's legions battered at the doors of that mighty fortress, but to no avail. The king laughed at them from the walls and led countless sorties into the fray, and slew many and more of the evil god's minions. At last Unklar came and unmade the walls and assailed the king in his keep, which men later called the Tower of Hope. The king came forth to face the dark god.

"Your crown of horn has no meaning here! Now, get thee from this place!" With that, he struck Unklar a blow upon his helm so great that it split the iron, and drew blood. The blow toppled the Horned God from to crash into the ground with a mighty clap.

Robert Luther's laughter frightened the ungern hosts such that they broke and ran from that land in complete terror, but Unklar lifted himself from the ground to come against Robert Luther once more. This time the Horned God came as a wedge of fury, the vapors of his hatred choking lesser men. He pounded the walls with his mighty fists and tore the gates asunder. In a voice akin to graveled iron the god spoke, "I have unmade the world. So I shall unmake you." He fell upon Robert Luther with all the might of his grim power. His spells wove a deadly mist from the Language of Creation, binding the king in a maelstrom of swirling ash. Robert Luther struck one last blow, taking a great splinter from one of Unklar's horns. Unklar cursed and gored him with his twisted horns. So the king, Robert Luther, on the 28th day of Nochturn, 800oy, died, and his body fell to the earth. The light went out in the world.

Some of the last to fall to the dark were in the House of Pendegrantz. Jariel Galen (third son of King Luther) fell on the steps of the tower next to his brother's body. Jaren the Monk fell too, in the tower, struck by the mage Nulak-Kiz-Din. Unklar's minions sacked Du Guesilon and left the castle in ruins. They left behind the Holy Flame however, for that sacred artifact the paladins carefully hid with spells within spells.

Those who survived the war fled into hiding. Many slipped beneath the eves of the Eldwood and the Darkenfold Forests. Others took to the Shelves of the Mist, and many had no place to go but lingered in the wilds to face the coming winter. The refugees survived largely due to the protection of their patron, Saint Luther. He came to them in their dreams, breathing life into their struggles. He gave them hope for the future. Too, he planted secret strengths in the people of Kayomar, so that in their dreams they were heroes born and bred.

During the long Millennial Dark, the Holy Defenders of the Flame fought on. They made Du Guesilon a holy place, where they came to pray and ask for aid from the gods Durendale and Luther. The dish remained in the ruins of the castle and a paladin made to watch over it at all times. The order shrank to a few dozen knights, for the lives of these paladins was hard, and they had no lords. The older warriors recruited younger ones from those who they deemed worthy, trained them, and taught them the law of good. They went out into the cold world of Winter to fight lonely battles against impossible odds. Countless and nameless were the heroes of those dark days, but ever did they struggle on in their war against the dark. These few brave men held the order together, waiting for the time when their king and lord would return from the Sea of Dreams.

In those days the only place the knights could find succor lay in the Eldwood. There, the wood elf kings never bent beneath the weight of Unklar, for none could assail the magic of that place. As is told elsewhere, Great Trees from the Days Before Days still wandered that ancient forest, but too, the Watcher in the Wood, a ranger order founded by Daladon Lothian, defended it with bow and spear. The Holy Defenders forged a deep bond with the folk of the Eldwood.

When, in 1119md, Luther came to the paladins from the Dreaming Sea bearing the sword Durendale, he called to them, and awoke in them a hunger for war and let them know that his return was imminent A fervor took the knights and they set aside the years of loss and grief and took up a lust for war and revenge. Morgan, Master of the Holy Defenders, called to his knights and paladins to gather at Du Guesilon. They unearthed the Holy Flame and, holding it aloft, they traveled the land gathering those who would fight the enemy. Men and women armed themselves, joining him in droves, to hound the enemy.

The knowledge of Saint Luther spread from the Dreaming, so that even those who did not join Morgan rose against the dark. They turned on their masters, Unklar's minions, and pulled them from their high seats to stone them or drown them in the rivers. The orcs fled their holds and the Sanjak Aziz, Master of the Valleys of Kayomar, worried in his many-storied hall.

At first Morgan's troops fought small battles, harrying the enemy's caravans, burning outposts, or killing guards. Aziz did not move against them until their depredations became such that his revenues declined. With troops from across the Ardeen he attacked Morgan and pursued him into the Shelves of the Mist. At the battle of Two Creeks, a troop of mounted paladins annihilated several dozen giants and hundreds of mounted men, and so the war was fought. Aziz hounded Morgan but could not bring him to heel. Morgan slew many of Aziz's troops but could not master his overwhelming numbers.

As the war spread elsewhere, Kayomar became a drain on the imperial legions. Experienced cohorts were pulled from the lands of Maine and the Gelderland and sent to fight for Aziz in the south. At last Nulak-Kiz-Din came to Aziz and told him to press Morgan into battle, or he himself would answer in Aufstrag.

Early in 1122md, Aziz marshaled the whole of his imperial legion and through chance or luck came upon Morgan on the banks of the river Hume. They forced Morgan from the river, driving him into the Shelves of the Mist with the greater part of his host, which numbered 187 paladins, 352 knights, and 2000 footmen. There they pinned him up and hounded him with the scourge of darkness, great packs of wolves and evil beasts, but Aziz's people feared to come to grips with the enemy and the Sanjak could not force them over even with pain of death. The banners of the Holy Defenders stood before them and even in those distant ages the echo of the Catalyst Wars remained with the folk of Aufstrag.

Lord Aziz called for more troops. Though the greater part of the legions were now fighting in the far west under the dark host and only a scant dozen or more legions remained in the lands of Aenoch and Ethrum, Nulak chose to reinforce Aziz once again. Troops were stripped from garrisons as far away as Anglamay and sent to Kayomar. At last in 1123md, his cadres swollen with troops, Aziz moved to draw out Morgan and destroy the Order of the Flame.

The Battle of Eadore Ridge

Morgan gave battle on the heights of Eadore Ridge. With 2000 men-at-arms and 500 knights and paladins, they met the host of Aziz on the 19th of Erstdain. Aziz himself commanded the 5th Legion of 5000 men, arranged in three cohorts, the 11th, 63rd, and 194th. These were the bedrock of his battle line. The vast array of troops culled from the other provinces and sent to him by Nulak, he set on the flanks and rear of the 5th. These included 4000 light infantry he divided in two and set on his flanks, 4000 loosely organized horse he set as reserve and a great horde of slingers and bowmen he put before his host. His whole army numbered 16,000 and more.

To counter this Morgan ordered his men to build a wall of dirt and stone atop Mt. Eadore, overlooking the enemy. There they waited.

Aziz softened Morgan's lines with archers and slingers and followed that by sending the battle-hardened 194th cohort against the rocky wall. Boulders thrown from on high disrupted their attack and they hit the wall in broken groups and sought to gain purchase, but everywhere the pikemen drove them back. Many were slain, and more were pushed off the wall to crash back into the ranks below and behind. Chaos ensued as the ungern pushed harder, clambering over the fallen, sliding through the ichorous gore of their comrades, and pulling themselves up the rocky escarpment with claw, and leg. They were easy prey to the pikemen who never yielded an inch but drove them back time and again. By close of day the ungern lay in heaps all along the base of the wall and only a tattered remnant returned to the ranks below.

Early on the morning of the second day, Aziz sent the archers forward again to pin down the defenders. He sent the 11th and the 63rd to either flank, supported by hordes of infantry. On the right the 63rd could find no purchase, but on the left the 11th topped the wall and breached it in many places. Morgan formed his knights in a great wedge and these fell upon the ungern as they regrouped around their many breaches. The knights drove them back in great slaughter, pin- ning them against the wall so that they could not escape and those coming over the wall tangled in their ranks with great confusion. The slaughter was immense, and both sides suffered grievous losses. The whirling maelstrom of iron and steel clashed with horn and talon, mace and axe and bodies fell upon bodies until the heap climbed to the wall's edge. In the late afternoon the tide turned against Morgan as more and more of the enemy

breached the walls, but in the failing light the paladin unleashed his pikemen and men-at-arms and these weighed into the battle to turn the tide once more. Those over the wall were not ungern, instead made up of men and orcs, and they could not stand the press of battle overlong. They turned to flee but were cut down so that few if any escaped.

Upon the morning of the third day the last cohort of Aziz drew up at the hill's foot and waited. As they assembled Morgan unleashed his knights and armored host. They pushed down the wall and leapt through the ruins of death all around them, running down the hill in a great clamor of noise. The ungern drew their lines up and fleshed out by the remnants of the other cohorts held their ground. Morgan's folk overwhelmed the lines of ungern in a deafening crash, grinding their ranks up in an iron wave. Within the span of an hour they were utterly destroyed, dying where they stood. The rest of Aziz's army disintegrated, fleeing hither and yon, and the Sanjak himself fled to the east, taking with him the greater part of his horse, never stopping until he came to the Gelderland. The battle bore two names ever after; some called it Morgan's Song, but to most it was simply the Battle of Eadore.

The Rise of Old Ethrum

Aziz's defeat spread disenchantment throughout the ranks of Unklar's legions. Many deserted, and others retreated to the fortresses spread throughout the land, but the greater part of them moved to the north, into the wilds. Within a few short months all of Kayomar threw off the yoke of Unklar's rule. When the Shroud of Darkness began to fade and the people once more felt the light of day, they rejoiced in the long valleys, singing songs to the Dark's demise.

Lord Morgan was not satisfied with the many enemies gathering in the northern wilds, and once more gathered his knights and men-at-arms to attack the enemy there. He moved them into the west, upon the borders of the Shelves of the Mist and attacked them in their strongholds one after the other. In this way he pushed the greater part of them to the east, against the mountains to the fortress of Ox. With him marched other lords, Daladon Lothian with many rangers, and the elven king Nigold. These were called the Battles of Weather's Gap and they were particularly bitter, as no quarter was given or asked.

The war raged around the ancient castles and fortress of that place, neither side seeing victory nor defeat. Not until the dwarves of Norgorad Kam came down from the Brass Halls were they able to overthrow the orcs there. After that, the power of Aufstrag in all the long valleys of Kayomar came to an end, so that only scattered bands remained.

In this same year Saint Luther took the crown of Kayomar upon his brow. The people rejoiced for the dawning of the new age. He rebuilt Du Guesilon and lay the Dish of the Holy Flame in the high Tower of Hope where two of his sons had fallen in a different age of the world.

Luther's reign did not outlast the wars. He fought many battles in the east and came home seldom for he lusted for the struggle against the Horned God and would not quit the field. After three years of absentee rule, King Luther I abdicated the throne of Kayomar in favor of his friend and the Master of the Holy Defenders of the Flame, Morgan. Morgan's own wife crowned him, naming him King Morgan I. Luther retained the title of palatine king of Kayomar, reserving his right to assume the throne if ever the need should present itself. He then returned to the wars and later to the Dreaming Sea where he set himself the task of watching the world and spoke to men through their dreams, and all knew that he kept an eye upon his terrestrial kingdom.

Morgan's first official act as king of Kayomar bound his line to Luther evermore. In the lands which Luther's family owned, even before the Winter Dark, Morgan established an order of clerics. They built a temple there to honor and worship the Paladin of the Dreaming Sea and the Durendale Sword. Morgan named it the Paladin's Grove. In after-days, it became the holiest of shrines for the lords of law and good. The grove encompassed 300 acres of wooded land surrounded on all sides by a low wall. The druids of the Great Tree came to the grove at the behest of Daladon Lothian and planted there a crop of silver birch, said to be the offspring of the Trees of Mordius from the dawn of time. By year's end, the Holy Flame in its dish of platinum was placed in the altar chamber of the temple, where it sits to this day.

In the years which followed, Morgan attempted to establish a feudal hierarchy in Kayomar. However, due to the predominance of the other aristocratic families, he failed to seize complete control of the kingdom. Of the ancient houses of Kayomar, few had survived, but those that did strove to exercise the same rights they believed they held under the previous Kings of Kayomar. Morgan wearied of these continual disputes with the nobles. At one moment he was heard to remark, "I now understand Unklar's reluctance to live in this land; so headstrong are these folk, that they are ungovernable."

In 1145md, Morgan abdicated the throne to his son, Morgan II, and traveled with the crusading knights to Aufstrag in secret. There he flung himself against the enemy with reckless abandon, causing much havoc in their ranks before he fell. It is said that his trusted horse, wounded beyond healing, gave out beneath him and he would not leave it. Fighting over its dying screams he held off a horde of ungern until at last he too succumbed to a multitude of wounds.

When the wars at last ground to a halt, the kingdom settled into a long peace. Morgan's son ruled for 40 long years. So prosperous was his tenure that folks called him the Great King, even before he died. His reign is viewed as the Golden Age of Kayomar for there was peace and the realm flourished. Towns grew, trade increased, and artists and poets flocked to the courts of the Great King. He rebuilt major roads throughout the realm. He also ordered that a university be established in the city of Du Guesilon, making it a bedrock of learning that eventually produced philosophers, wizards, and theologians of high repute.

Morgan II did not choose to interfere with the spread of the religion of Ore-Tsar. It took on in some areas, mainly in the north near the wilds. There, people built temples and called to the god of common folk for aid, but in truth, with the paladin kings on the throne of Kayomar, the people had no need of new gods or new ways of life.

Morgan II's son, Luther II, followed in his father's stead. The title of Great King remained, attached now to the throne. This paladin, possessed of amazing abilities, did not rule the kingdom for long. While on campaign in the wilds hunting a giant troll, he fell afoul of a devil from Aufstrag. They fought long and hard in that desolate place, but even as Luther II's men came to his aid, he fell to the creature's axe. The other paladins fell upon the devil with a lust not seen since the days of the Winter Wars and slew him soon thereafter. They bore the body of the noble king back to Du Guesilon and lay it with his forefathers.

Luther II was Morgan's youngest son. His wife bore only one child, and only late in their marriage. She gave birth to a boy in 1179md. They gave him the name Eadore, after the famous battle which his great grandfather had won. This young child assumed the throne as the Great King Eadore at the age of only 4.

Of Her Kings

Palatine King St. Luther I (1126 md-1129 md House Pendegrantz)
Morgan I (1129 md-1145 md House Dawin)
Morgan II (1145 md-1185 md)
Luther II (1185 md-1187 md)
Eadore (1187 md-present)

KLEAVES

Count Eurich Gunshoff IV.

Geographical Location

Kleaves is nestled between the southern slopes of the Massif and the eastern flank of the Great Wall. The head waters of the Lithanian River begin here. The gently rolling countryside is rich in soil. There are few trees in the county and most of those, mainly hard wood and cypress trees, grow along the banks of the river. The villages are scattered and unwalled with houses of sod and grass roofs. Small keeps, the homes of the local nobility, are usually not far off. The only town of import is Olmutz.

Travel in Kleaves

Overall the country here is open and travel is easy. Kleaves possesses a number of small roads, but these are largely tracks and trails that lead to various holds and castles, villages, and homesteads. Only one cobbled road crosses the county, the Ursal Road. Built by the dwarves long ago, the road begins in Allis at the Straights of Ursal, cuts through the whole of Anglamay, crossing the Tot River at the Bristal Bridge. After that it winds through the darkened forests until it comes to Olmutz and on to the Great Wall. It is not patrolled in Kleaves and in the woods can be a dangerous trek.

The Heraldry

The coat of arms is a blue chevron band on a green background. In the lower field is a tower and in the middle field is a diamond.

Of That Land & Governance

Count Eurich Gunshoff IV comes from a long line of noble warriors. His demeanor, however, bears only a little resemblance to his ancestors. Slight of build and possessed of a keen intelligence, Eurich early on discovered a love for knowledge. He spent several years in the Hanse City State of Klagenfurt at the university there. He excelled in philosophy and mathematics, surprising all of his professors. He wept openly upon his father's death for he loved his sire, and took the crown only reluctantly, after first trying to pass it on to his younger brother. Eric however, would not take it, for he loved the life of adventure, and eventually left the county on a crusade in the distant east, to New Aenoch.

Eurich rules as a feudal lord over his lands. His many liege men rule over their own, though they are bound to the count through oaths of loyalty. No attempt has been made to tie them to the count or his throne through land and service. The same relationship has spread to the people and the growing merchant class, who are generally free to move and own property as their wealth and labor allow.

Eurich IV and his county's fates are tied closely to Anglamay. His mother is King William's aunt, and she presses him to put himself forward as the heir to the kingdom. It is not beyond the possible for King William loves Eurich as a son, but taking the crown of that realm is a prospect the count abhors. He realizes that, though his claim may be legitimate, taking it up would only bring war to both his county and the kingdom. Even still, emissaries from the duchy of Enois have arrived in Olmutz to discuss that very thing.

The count recently moved his government from the Let-ot-Lithanian to Olmutz where he has begun construction of a small university.

Economic Rating: 2

The Army

In war, Eurich can rely upon an impressive array of mounted cavalry. The many nobles and knights of his realm bring what retinues they can to the field. There is no order to their armaments, however as each must supply his own. They of course bring small retinues of men-at-arms as well.

Of the Gods

The worship of St. Luther dominates the county of Kleaves, most turning to him as their patron lord. The worship of Ore-Tsar has spread recently.

Of Her People

Kleaves is one of the few independently wealthy kingdoms in the world; its villages produce an abundance of food, its fields cotton, its mines an abundance of wealth. It is one of the few areas in Ursal where diamonds are found.

Like much of the western lands, knightly traditions are strong in Kleaves. The local lords revel in tournament and war. The wealth brought to the country from cotton and mining allows them to build well fortified keeps. These are found in most areas and are almost always occupied by one or two knights and a handful of men-at-arms. Almost all the horses of the nobility are imported from Ceeana.

Small villages of thatched houses are found throughout Kleaves. The peasants farm a mixture of cotton, soy beans, and barley. Along the Massif are several small diamond mines and the villages there are a little more rugged. The peasants generally welcome strangers, particularly any knights of St. Luther. Every village has its own brew house and the taverns, though small, are inviting places.

Stonework and engineering account for much of the count's expenditures, particularly where the university is concerned.

How Kleaves Came to Be

During the age of Winter Dark the lands of the whole of the Ethrum and Aenoch were divided into provinces which reflected the realms as they existed in the days before the Dark Lord's reign. The lands from the Hanse River to the Massif and the Twilight Wood were divided into nine provinces; Anglamay, Olgdon, Tildune, Limnule, Beiuel, Thrace, Kareelia, Kleaves, and Ceeana. The folk who lived there, a proud people, traced their lineage to the ancient Ethrum, and as with their ancestors, they reveled in war and tournament. To bring these folk to heel, Unklar appointed governors to rule them and garrisoned cohorts within town and country.

Despite this, these warriors proved difficult to govern and they rebelled continually. To overcome this, the governors appointed them to administrative offices and gave them the title of knights. They exempted these newly minted knights from taxes and allowed them to employ small troops of retainers. To control these men further, a noble, usually the most influential, was appointed as count of that particular province. The counts, though locally powerful, ruled in name only, answering to the dictates of the governor. In this way, the governors pacified the region by creating an aristocratic cast of bureaucrats who made their wealth through controlling the whole of the region's commerce.

When the Winter Dark Wars began, Unklar's generals, hard pressed in other regions, stripped the central lands of Ethrum, from the Great Wall to the Straits of Ursal, of their garrisons. The lords of Aufstrag desperately needed experienced soldiers for the battles in the south and east. The central lands they deemed safe from rebellion, and they did not fear the consequences of withdrawing so many soldiers.

In 1123md, when William of Anglamay declared his independence and set himself up as Count of Anglamay-ot-Neider, all of the other provinces followed suite (see "Anglamay"). Kleaves was no exception. There, the same family had ruled under the local governors for over a century. The Gunshoff Counts possessed great wealth in land and castles. Count Eurich Gunshoff I held back during the initial days of the rebellion. This led the imperial governor, Menmtebno, to mistakenly think that Gunshoff remained loyal to the empire. He sent orders to the count to rally all his knights and attack William to the north.

Though well placed to carry out such an attack, Gunshoff had no intention of doing so. He ordered that the governor and his staff be placed in the castle of Haridon upon the edge of the Great Wall. He informed the governor that it was for his own protection. The wizard priests of Unklar, always a large presence in Kleaves due to its proximity to the Great Wall, bid Gunshoff to release the governor and declare himself for Aufstrag or against it. In those days however, the Priests of Unklar were much weakened. Their master failed them, for in truth, Unklar could not answer their prayers, for he was pressed too hard and fought off the attacks of other gods and the council. When Gunshoff learned of their weaknesses, he ordered the priests to be rounded up and confined with the governor.

In 1124md, the Crna Ruk, paid by coin from the governor, stole into the count's castle of Let-ot-Lithanian. They slew him and his wife in their bed where they were found the following day. This proved a fatal mistake, for Gunshoff's son, Eurich II, took up his father's crown and sword and declared himself, by the grace of Saint Luther, Count of Kleaves, completely breaking with the empire.

He ordered his knights to go to Haridon and gather the priests, the governor, and all those within and put them within the inner keep. Eurich forced them to carry their jewels and monies with them. "You may need these monies to buy your way into hell, for the light of day you shall never see again." Once done, masons came and sealed all the doors and windows with stone and mortar. There the unfortunates lay in suffering misery. For days their cries and shouts for aid carried across the walls and into the lands about. Many went mad with hunger or fear, tearing at their fellows. The dying agony of those responsible for the assassination sent a clear message to the empire and all those who pretended overlordship of Kleaves.

Eventually all those within starved to death and their bodies, some half eaten, lay strewn about in heaps and piles. Ever since, the Haridon has been a haunted place. No one came to reclaim its walls and the castle fell into great ruin. Legends speak of ghosts and ghouls stalking the halls and the countryside about, looking for food, all the while calling for aid from their dark master. There it sits to this day, near to the Great Wall, its facade crumbling, vines covering the whole of it. The inner keep, sealed with mortared bricks, is a brooding place, as if possessed of its own soul, watching and waiting. But within are treasures of the Winter Dark, held dear by the priests and the governor, though they served them to no good end.

All these sufferings occurred around the 5th of Lexlicht, 1124md. The Howling Night, as the locals call it, became a holiday in Kleaves. The locals, peasants mostly, gather in great halls dressed as ghouls, feasting and dancing the whole night.

When Eurich Gunshoff II proclaimed himself count by the grace of St. Luther, he set himself apart from the rest of the rebelling provinces. In other parts of the land, the words of Phillip the Guileless carried the weight of gold. Whole towns and villages converted to the worship of Ore-Tsar. Knights, too, and above all else King William of Anglamay called to the Horse God as his patron, but in Kleaves it was different.

As the worship spread into his own domain Eurich clung to the patronage of St. Luther. He built in the castle of Let-ot-Lithanian, a temple to St. Luther, where he invested his knights and barons with land. Many of the warrior aristocrats viewed Luther as a god of war. If not completely on the mark, their accolades proved good enough to attract the benefice of the Sainted One. Eurich and the whole of the knightly class bore testament to a collective vision where the Paladin God invested them all and their realm with his blessing.

The next four years were telling ones. Plenty of rain brought bountiful harvests and King William chose to allow the count his freedom, dropping claims to overlordship, and the wars which raged all around them seemed never to come home to Kleaves. The notion spread that the blessings of St. Luther brought this fortune. Soon the worship of that god spread even to the peasants and merchants, who built small temples of rock to pay homage to their Saint. Though the word of Ore-Tsar spread to the county and some converted, it never caught on as it did in the more eastern provinces of the region.

Eurich II ruled Kleaves for many years. He treated his people fairly, setting aside one day each week to hear their complaints. Any could come to him with any grievance and expect a fair hearing. He inherited a sizable treasury from his father and with this he managed to rebuild many of the castles of the county which had, during the Winter Dark, fallen into ruin. He traveled the length and breadth of the country, staying for many months in one place or the other, but ever did he come back to his favorite castle, Let-ot-Lithanian, to muse upon the world at large. His barons and knights, never great in number, were, as they still are, fiercely loyal to their lord.

Upon his death, Eurich II passed a donation of 100,000 golden crown to the priests and clerics of the Paladin's Grove in Kayomar, for its continued maintenance. In turn, the priests gave the count's son a seedling from the Grove, one of the silver trees of Mordius. This tree was planted upon the heights overlooking the count's favorite castle where his tomb lay. The tree took root deep in the ground and to this day, it is a holy place for all those who pay homage to the Sainted Paladin.

Eurich Gunshoff III reluctantly took his father's seat. His reign, shorter than his father's, was largely uneventful. He fought two short wars against hobgoblins from the west and spent a small fortune repairing a section of the Great Wall. He is most noted for bringing cotton to the peasants. No one could say where he acquired the strange plant, though many speculated that he took it from the hobgoblins, who were always dabbling in strange affairs. Regardless of its origin, the plant thrived in the low country of Kleaves and brought a great deal of revenue to high and low alike.

Upon his death, Eurich III granted a benefice of 25,000 gold crown to the Grove and in turn the priests brought to his grave a small box of holy earth. His son, Eurich Gunshoff IV, lay him next to his father at Let-ot-Lithanian.

Of Her Counts

Eurich Gunshoff I (1109 md-1124 md)
Eurich Gunshoff II (1124 md-1167 md)
Eurich Gunshoff III (1167 md-1180 md)
Eurich Gunshoff IV (1187 md-present)

LUNEBERG PLAINS

Here none rule the empty spaces.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

A vast savannah of rolling hills and wild grass, the Luneberg is home to a host of abandoned castles, ruined towns, and dungeons. The land itself is somewhat recovered from the dep redations of war. Wild grasses mixed with wheat grow every where, waist deep in some places. Many of the small streams, lakes, and ponds are cleaned of Kain's poison (see below), which has allowed animals to return, though some regions are still desolate and the water dangerous. Wild cattle, deer, elk, wolves, coyotes, and the like are common now in the Luneberg. Seeds carried on the winds from the Grossewald forest have given life to small copses of trees which grow here and there.

TRAVEL IN THE LUNEBERG PLAINS

Kain laid utter waste to the Luneberg Plains during the Winter Dark Wars, even so far as pulling up many of the cobbled roads built in ages past. Few cross it now, so that there are few tracks. Travel is difficult as the ground is broken, rocky, where it is not covered in deep grasses, forested in places, and full of countless ruins. Some few know where the old roads lie, and can guide one across the plains using them, following the shadow of their remains, but for the most part, travelers pick their way through the wilderness.

The Heraldry

Only the cities of Magdeburg and Unspt claim any rights of governance here, and theirs is the heraldry of evil. In Magdeburg, a red-banner with gold depicts a black double headed eagle (Duke Kain's very own). In Unspt, a dark blue banner carries a black wolf's head.

Of That Land & Governance

There is little or no governance here, only in the towns of Magdeburg and Unspt. The Luneberg Plains are wild lands.

ECONOMIC RATING: 1

The Army

Each town can sport small militias to defend her walls, but little more.

Of the Gods

Men carry their own gods with them, for surely there are few in the Luneberg.

Of Her People

Kain's devastation left the country in utter ruin. In consequence, the country has become a wild place, refuge to all manner of folk. Hermits take advantage of the solitude of open spaces. Mystics come to find the lost powers of a past age. Pilgrims of Ore-Tsar come to see the land to convert people who are too wild to care for the gods. Brigands, wild orcs, and evil creatures live here as well, for there is no law but the sword. Of course these folk bring the wrath of errant paladins and knights, or even bounty hunters, who come seeking wealth and glory, or to cash in on a bounty's worth.

Some of the best horses in the world dweel in the Luneberg, but are very difficult to obtain because many are wild and the rest are closely guarded and valued very highly.

The Luneberg is an area rich for plunder. The scattered ruins of old cities, towns, castles, and dungeons are said to be filled with forgotten riches. The armies of Kain are known to have lost a great deal of their wealth after the defeat at Olensk (see "Augsberg") and rumors of a fabulous treasure laid in an abandoned crypt of the old world bring many a would-be adventurer to the Luneberg.

Only two cities thrive here, Magdeburg and Unspt. Both places are dirty, disreputable townships, where small winding streets and old, dilapidated buildings are jumbled together, crammed behind ancient crumbling walls. They are ruled by the local mayors and the city guard, who are controlled by the thieves' guilds.

Magdeburg

Magdeburg is the greater of the two. Located in the southern plains near the Red Hills, built upon the ruins of an old city, Magdeburg is essentially two towns. Within her thick wood and stone wall are a wedge of stone houses and buildings, shops and the like. The streets are paved and in places well lit. This is considered the inner city. ere, Mayor the Lord Enternich rules. A mercenary by trade, he settled in the town after overstaying his welcome in the Rhuneland. Through muscle he has taken control of most of the burg, but continues to vie for control with the Thieves Pit, a motley collection of rouges, brigands, prostitutes, and thieves.

The Thieves Pit exists "beyond the walls" as the outer town is called. Here, the town quality declines rapidly; rickety houses of wood and slate jumble in a cacophony of architectural noise. Dirt streets, hardly more than alleys, snake and twist between buildings which sport shops, taverns, opium dens, and brothels.

Magdeburg is a dangerous place where weapons are borne openly. The city guard has authority only in the inner city. "Beyond the walls" belongs to the Thieves Pit.

Unspt

Like Magdeburg, the town of Unspt possesses narrow winding streets and old rickety houses. Built upon the slopes of several hills, these lanes tend to be steep and in the winter are downright treacherous. The houses are built into the sides of cliffs, on top of them, and in the halfling quarter, underneath them.

Unspt survived the wars unsacked. It is smaller than its southern neighbor; however, its location beneath the eastern eaves of the Grossewald Forest gives Unspt a far most interesting population. Burghermeister Mark "the Sandy" rules there. He is wickedly clever and cherishes solving riddles and games. His network of spies are augmented by two hill giants that serve him as guards. He controls the town only loosely, allowing the thieves' guilds wide latitude in running the Cleaver Pits, gambling houses, and brothels. (Note: there is no real thieves guild in Unspt, but rather a collection of several factions who constantly war with one another for possession of the city streets). He cares little for others' beliefs, but himself follows the religion of Ore-Tsar, and has built the only church to that god in the whole wide region.

Unspt attracts many people; orcs, goblins and other humanoids, halflings, gnomes, and dwarves as well. They come here for supplies, which Mark imports from the Rhuneland and sells at inflated prices. The Cleaver Pits, as elsewhere, are popular venues of entertainment. Combatants are thrown in and fight to the death. Mark has added his own touch to the games. If one wishes to challenge him to a contest

of riddles or puzzles, they may. He is undefeated and many would-be intellects' bones have fed the local dogs. He of course never bargains with his own life, only freedom of the combatant against death.

How the Luneberg Came to Be

The Luneberg Plains, much as their neighbors to the north in the Rhuneland, served as the heart of the imperial domains under the rule of Unklar. There, the gifts of the Horned God in the early days of his reign enriched the whole of humanity. With the Language of Creation he wove new life into the frozen tundra. He gave to the people of those lands a wealth of plants to grow, so that his frozen world of ice and snow would not starve. Ever since, the soil there has produced abundant crops, full and rich to eat.

The sages remind us that Unklar did not do this out of kindness for the madness of starvation which his winters brought to Aihrde. Rather, he did it from necessity, for the strengths of gods are forever bound in the strengths of those who worship them.

During the age of the Winter Dark, the people of the Luneberg grew fat upon the trade of foodstuffs. Towns were erected throughout the plains, from the Olgdon River to the Grossewald Forest. Farmers tilled the earth, and planted and grew crops which were carted all over the wide world. The western provinces of Aenoch particularly relied upon the Luneberg produce, for much of their wealth was spent elsewhere. All this brought wealth to the area which attracted an ever greater number of folk. Men conducted themselves with a greater order here than in the Rhuneland. The Lord of Magdeburg, leader of the greatest of towns, often offered guidance to the lesser townships; a kindness they returned to others.

The people lived thus for many hundreds of years. Families grew old and passed into oblivion while new ones rose. As in the Rhuneland a class of urban knights established themselves in most of the towns. Retired mercenaries who bought shares in the towns gained a vested interest, so they stayed and settled. They, of course, brought their sons and daughters up in service to the towns. A kindly competition, which rarely ended in violence, grew up between the various city states. The inhabitants enjoyed sport far more than war. Tournaments were common between knightly families and towns. In many ways the Luneberg echoed the Aenochians of the past: proud, capable, and self-reliant.

All this changed when the Winter Dark Wars began. From the outset, war came to the Luneberg. In 1112md, the dwarves and goblin slaves rebelled in the pits of Aufstrag and their battles spilled out into the fields around Aufstrag. When they broke free, they passed over the Luneberg, many looting as they went. The House Legions of Aufstrag under Lord Coburg, Master of Aufstrag, pursued them and, unused to the world at large, they too attacked the local populace.

Later the war carried to the Flintlock, the Rhuneland, and Augsberg. This last kingdom brought war to the Luneberg Plains. Formed in 1126md under the overlordship of Albrecht the River King, Augsberg's men crossed the Olgdon River into the Luneberg, conquering vast stretches of it. Augsberg, always poor in grains, desperately needed food for their vast herds of cattle and horses. Aside from that, Albrecht wished to consolidate as much land under his banners as he could. In 1126md, shortly after he was crowned king, Albrecht lay siege to the city of Magdeburg.

The battle did not last long. Albrecht himself, an ex-legionnaire general (see "Augsberg"), knew the city and its weaknesses well. Many of the towns in the Luneberg, wishing to avoid destruction, called the River King their Lord. This brought the attention of Lord Coburg, Lieutenant of Aufstrag. With the wizardry of Nulak-Kiz-Din behind him he hurled his ungern soldiery against Albrecht. The horses of Augsberg could not stand against the horrid beasts of Unklar, for they were strange to them. The king fell back in disarray, recrossing the river. Before he went he strengthened the garrisons of many of the larger towns.

Coburg gave each town a chance to surrender or suffer destruction. Some few held against him. These he overwhelmed by siege and true to his word the towns were sacked and burned and many folk put to death. After the towns Lijana and Druna suffered thus, the other towns opened their gates and lay down their arms. Magdeburg alone withstood the Lieutenant of Aufstrag and he wasted many of his troops against those high walls. He quit the field late in the year of 1127md, but not without exacting his vengeance; as he left to return to Aufstrag, he ravaged the country.

The following year the whole series of tragic events re-occurred. Augsberg stretched out across the river, conquering towns and bringing the whole country into its realm. Coburg retaliated by burning towns and villages, uprooting crops and carting wagons of booty to the deep halls of Aufstrag. Coburg himself had lost the confidence of his dark master and did not bring with him the powers of the archmagi, though he still commanded a powerful army.

Unklar sought to turn the tide against the west and summoned the Demon General Kain, called the Godless (or more appropriately the Duke of Altengrund) to command his legions. Kain's power lay in his evil and he laughed at Coburg for his kindness to the people of the Luneberg. "Do they say to you, little man, 'We shall close our gates against you?' If this is so, you should tell them that Kain is coming and he shall lay waste to the whole of this country." His words bore more than the hint of truth. He gathered together three legions of men, taking them mostly from the south. He also brought over from the Wretched Plains a troop of demon kind and all these were made to cross into the Luneberg. He sent the word forward, "All those who do not lie down in the roads before my chariot will be put to the sword."

He came to the town of Dobrich first. Here a contingent of dwarves from Grundliche-Hohle, men from Augsberg, and several magi of the Mystic Enclave strengthened the garrison. Kain drew up his armies in front of the town for three days. They had no siege equipment or articles to break the walls, so the dwarves laughed at them and called them cur. Upon the evening of the third day Kain unleashed his sorcery and broke the gates asunder. His was an eldritch power that few could resist, even the magic of a rune mark's stone could not bear it. When the gates fell wide the dwarves and men of Augsberg threw themselves into the gap and fought a great fight, but the legions came on in countless numbers, and with grapples and ladders they breached the walls in scores of places. Kain at last joined the contest, bringing ruin upon the head of the defenders with his black sword, Omdurman.

The town fell within hours and the whole of the populace was put to the sword. This brutal affair Kain repeated time and again. He sent his legions across the whole of the Luneberg, burning towns and villages and houses, carting off loot and enslaving or destroying the people. He ordered the roads behind him destroyed, the waters and wells poisoned, trees to be cut down, and the whole region utterly destroyed. When at last he crossed the Olgdon River to meet defeat at the Battle of Olensk, little remained of the once prosperous Luneberg towns. Even noble Magdeburg laid in ruins.

The suffering of that country did not stop there, for even after Kain's defeat, war came to the Luneberg. The dwarf king Dolgan led many soldiers of Grundliche-Hohle and horsemen of Aachen and Augsberg into the wastes to root out the few small garrisons that still dwelt there. When at last they withdrew, only Unspt stood, though it too had suffered repeatedly. So the Luneberg stood for many years, a blasted wasteland. After the wars, few ventured into the Luneberg, leaving it to the ghosts of the dead.

MAINE, THE TRIPARTITE KINGDOM

Maine is held by King Louis III, Count of Rotois, Lechunfield, and Maine, Lord of Ethenel

Geographical Location

Despite numerous border wars with the dwarves of Norgorad Kam and disputes with Kayomar, the Kingdom of Maine flourishes. Sandwiched between the Ardeen River in the west and the Saline in the east and with the Bergrucken Mountains in the north, and the Sea of Ethrum and Amber Sea to the south, the people of Maine are well protected by natural frontiers. It is a large realm of gentle, rolling hills, deep grasses, and small wooded vales. It is well watered, with rich run off from the mountains. The long coast of Maine offers many beaches, coves, and inlets, making Maine a stopping point for seaborne traffic. The warm waters of the Sea of Ethrum, protected from the deeper southern waters, sports the largest port in the western lands at Luisi.

Travel in Maine

Maine suffered least from the Winter Dark Wars. Her cobbled roads are largely intact and in good repair. Travel across the Tripartite kingdom is relatively easy. The main road, the Chinon, crosses Maine in the south, over the Saline River and into the Gelderland; there it falls into disrepair.

The Heraldry

The realm's coat of arms is a simple one, representing the three kingdoms under one crown. A tri-colored shield rides in the middle of a red background, the upper division dominating the two lower. The upper partition is yellow with three crowns upon it and a coiled blue dragon beneath. The stylized lion upon blue is in the lower right partition, and the lower left has a red raven on green.

Of That Land & Governance

The monarchy is well established, King Louis III being an able and crafty ruler. Despite the disputes over his inheritance with Kayomar (see below) he controls Maine with power and money.

The king rules as monarch and count of all three counties, titles he holds to himself. He is the sole governing authority in the kingdom. He rewards loyal service with patents of nobility and land.

The aristocracy is well placed in Maine, the Lechunfield, and Rotois, living in castles and paying out land for military service. Many of these are descendants of legionnaires from the Winter Dark era, given land and property themselves from the various kings. They are not especially warlike, preferring to spend their wealth on pleasures. It is not uncommon for the lords and ladies of Maine to own slaves or for the lords to have harems of wives. It is reported that some of the northern ladies who own land in their own right possess harems of husbands. The knightly class has settled into Maine as it has in most of the west.

Economic Rating: 3

The Army

The king commands an impressive array of mounted and unmounted knights, and a large army of men-at-arms augmented by crossbowmen and longbowmen. There is a small contingent of fusiliers as well; these musket-bearing soldiers are rare in the world of Aihrde. When all gathered, he commands well in excess of 12,000 combatants.

Of the Gods

The majority of her people pay homage to Ore-Tsar, including the nobility and the king. Despite this, temples to many of the Gods crop up in villages, castles, and towns.

Of Her People

Maine is the greatest regional maritime power; only Eloria comes close to her. The early support given to the merchant class by Pius (see below) has allowed these folk to thrive, especially in the south upon the peninsula. All merchants pay a docking fee and a tenth in duty to the royal house, but beyond this they are left to their own devices. They traffic in wheat and maize from Brindisium, coal, copper, and iron from Norgorad Kam, and horses, gold, and cereals from Kayomar. The greatest export is wine. Maine is well known for producing cheeses, fine wools, silver, and other metals from the Massif. On top of all this they possess a large fishing fleet.

The peasant class is generally divided into segments. The greater number of them are tied to the land they farm and pay homage to the nobility or king. The others are the sons and daughters of retired soldiers who were given land by Pius for loyal service to the crown. These men, generally a little better off than their counterparts, are forced to continually defend their rights and privileges. The vast majority of these people pay homage to Ore-Tsar and support the ever growing class of priests that threaten to overtake the kingdom. They produce a variety of crops, mostly cereals, but Maine is best known for its fine grapes, and taverns selling all manner of wines dot the country.

Rumors still abound about the treasure horde of Aziz (see below) and many hearty adventurer comes to Maine to seek it out. The kingdom also serves as a way point for those bold enough to cross the Saline River into the Gelderland, and as such, there are always mercenaries, freebooters, and adventurers drifting about her towns and villages and lingering in the ports. The thieves guild, Muddles Inc., is well established in the merchant class and they continually battle the assassins of the Crna Ruk for control of the night.

How Maine Came to Be

The Lords of Maine long ago mastered the arts of war and diplomacy. When Lord Morgan, Master of the Holy Defenders of the Flame (see "The Andanuth" and "Kayomar"), defeated the imperial legions at the Battle of Eadore the military might of Unklar dissolved in the far west and south. What remained were two legions, each commanded separately by generals Pius and Orkhan. Alongside the appointed counts they governed the counties of Lechunfield, Maine, and Rotois. Aside from their own soldiers, both generals regularly employed assassin priests of the Crna Ruk.

As is told elsewhere, General Aziz's defeat at Eadore spread disen-chantment throughout the ranks of Unklar's legions. When Aziz fled his post to the east he rode his 4,000 horse straight through the Lechunfield and on into the Gelderland. His passage utterly disrupted the three counties. Terror followed them and all believed that Morgan would soon cross the Ardeen River. Two of the counts, with their re-tainers in tow, fled to the coast, took ship, and departed into the east.

Desertions grew rapidly and both legions risked dissolving. To stop this Pius seized the remaining count, the only form of imperial governance left, and held him up as a rallying point. It was a poor choice and did little to strengthen the resolve of the legions.

Before long a quarrel soon broke out between Pius and Orkhan, though what they fought over is anyone's guess. Some rumors abound that they fought over the treasure of Aziz which many believed (and was proved, see below) he abandoned in the Lechunfield, but it is known that Orkhan wished to attack Kayomar and destroy Morgan, a thing Pius thought foolish at best and hopeless at worst. The argument came to blows when Pius refused to attack. Quarrels broke out everywhere between the servants of the two generals, in small battles in the streets of various towns and on the roads. Within a very short time the whole of all three counties was fortified.

In 1123md, the two legions fought minor skirmishes throughout the summer and fall. By winter, Pius, tiring of the fruitless battles and desiring to shift his allegiance, made open war upon Orkhan. By spring of 1124md, a full fledged civil war ensued. The brutal strife entailed the destruction of many men and ungern. Pius, at one point, needlessly sacrificed two cohorts of troops in an assault on several castles. After that, all the humanoids in his ranks fled for fear of him.

Dwarves from Norgorad Kam inadvertently sparked the final battle. In several brutally fought campaigns they drove Orkhan from his mountain castles and forced him to move south. Caught between the hammer and the anvil he sought battle. In the late summer, on the fourth day of Trocken, Pius met him on the field and in a hard fought battle defeated Orkhan at the Battle of Redhill. The defeated general fled the field only to be slain crossing over into the Gelderland by the mercenary knight, Baldwin of Klun (see "Aachen").

Pius, realizing that the Winter Dark Wars were nowhere near finished and that the power of Unklar, though greatly reduced, still reigned paramount, stepped out of the fray to await the outcome. He settled his folk throughout the area of Maine, the Lechunfield, and Rotois, and ruled there as a petty tyrant. He solidified his power by fortifyingn the western Marches against Kayomar and strengthening the garrisons in towns and castles in the north. He paid particular attention to the Sutran Deep, the narrow valley that led to the plains of Rotois from the west. He never sought the council of Aufstrag, but in those days, would heed the word of Nulak only.

Within the counties Pius moved to solidify his power. During the civil war, unrest had spread throughout the whole area. Legion commanders ruled as minor warlords and the guilds asserted control over several towns and commerce. Pius moved quickly to quell the strife. He first drove out the remaining humanoids and broke the power of the legion commanders by dispersing the cohorts. He fortified castles and gave them to his most loyal men. He ruled by duplicity and strength, but also he ruled by the power of the Crna Ruk. Many men and women who pretended to power disappeared, victims, it is believed, of assassins.

In 1128md, Pius gained the recognition of the palatine king, St. Luther of Kayomar. Luther returned at last to his realm where he ruled only in name. He needed the power of Kayomar for his continued wars in the far east, and so made a truce between Morgan of Kayomar and Pius. For pledges of loyalty and peace, Luther named Pius, king of Maine, Rotois, and the Lechunfield. Luther recognized Pius' son, Aenor, as the rightful heir to the Tripartite kingdom. Many contend that this peculiar incident gave the kings of Kayomar the right to crown the kings of Maine. These early disputes were further clouded when Pius retired to his fortress of Chinon, crowning himself with much pageantry. That the kings of Maine owe their crown and homage to the kings in Kayomar is disputed to this day.

Pius, though personally cruel, ruled benevolently. The lands of Maine, never wealthy, waxed much under his guiding hand. He moved quickly to quell the border disputes with the dwarves of Norgorad Kam and to establish a maritime trade for Maine. He gave generous license to the merchants and ship captains who lived along the coastal region and upon the peninsula. The budding trade between Brindisium and Kayomar and the far east was soon passing through the commercial shipping lanes of Maine.

King Pius reigned for 12 years and died quietly in his bed, surrounded by his harem. Aenor, barely at maturity, assumed the dignity of his father's crown, but not his rule. He inherited his father's sense of cruelty but not his judgment. His reign was long and wicked. He moved the royal household to the city of Ethenel on the coast. He loved the sport of the gladiators and imported architects and masons to build an arena, the greatest in the western world. He peopled his reign with sycophants and his government proved both corrupt and inept. The power his father spent a lifetime building eroded as nobles, priests, and commoners alike struggled against his oppressive rule.

As the worship of Ore-Tsar spread throughout the region, King Aenor attempted to quash it. It is said that he paid homage to Narrheit, the Lord of Chaos, and as such could not bear the sight of those pious folk. Many died on the gallows, hung or quartered for the Horse God. This did little to impede the spread of his worship however, as many nobles, particularly in the north of the country, converted.

Aenor's rule ended only when his brother, a convert of Ore-Tsar, slew him and took the throne. He crowned himself, Pius II. A terrible civil war followed in which the north fought the south, each raiding and plundering one another's lands. Pius II did not rule long, but succumbed to a fatal illness, dying after only three years of rule. The nobles and merchant houses gathered in a great concourse upon the death of Pius II and chose to leave off the religious disputes which fragmented the realm. The throne they gave to Aenor's young son, Louis, who, as tradition held, crowned himself king of the Tripartite kingdom.

Peace became the rule of the day during Louis' reign. He proved a good man, but a mortal one. After only eight years on the throne he died. His son took the dignity, crowning himself King Louis II.

Louis II did much to repair the remaining scars of the civil war. His luck in discovering part of the treasure of Aziz strengthened his hand in the politics of the day. He used his wealth as leverage, buying off nobles, priests, and merchants. He also reacquainted his people with the Crna Ruk, using the assassins where money failed. The feudal nobility and the monarchy became firmly entrenched during these years, maintaining control of the merchant guilds (and subsequent thieves guilds).

When Louis died, he ordained that his son Louis III take the crown, but Kayomar threatened war. King Luther II, desiring to break the control Maine had over the seas demanded that Louis come to Du Guesilon to be lawfully crowned. War brewed along the Ardeen River. Skirmishers from both sides crossed the river, investing castles and sacking towns. Before the dispute could evolve into full scale war, King Luther II died. His sudden death left a boy on the throne of Kayomar, and the hostilities were quickly called off. Louis crowned himself king of Maine as his fathers had done before him.

Of Her Kings

Pius (1128 md-1140 md)
Aenor (1149 md-1158 md)
Pius II "the White" (1158 md-1161 md)
Louis I (1161 md-1169 md)
Louis II (1169 md-1187 md)
Louis III (1187 md-present)

MORAVAN PLAINS

There are no lords here, for the Lord of the Moravan passed from the world 67 years ago. Nulak-Kiz-Din, Mongroul, ruled for 600 years. All that remains of his rule is the poisoned wasteland and the Graugusse, the Grey Tower.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The Moravan Plains are deserts of dried broken slate lying between the Holmgrad Mountains and the Great Northern Forest. A glacier of ice covered the lands in the Winter Dark and before that a great inner sea. All that remains are a series of plateaus which give way, one after the other, until they reach the Great Northern Forest. The cliffs between each plateau are steep, jagged, and difficult to climb. The skies above the Moravan are poisoned with the fumes from the Grey Tower, and in the dark and barren soil little of worth grows.

TRAVEL IN THE MORAVAN PLAINS

One road, the Feghul, snakes up from the Kleberock Pass in the south; it crosses the Wolf Runs and the Eahruk Steppes before it comes to the Gray Tower. This road remains, but little else to make travel easy. The country is broken, rocky, and dry. All movement here is half normal.

The Heraldry

Of old the wolf's paw served the wizard as the standard of his realm, but there is no banner found in the Moravan Plains.

Of That Land & Governance

The dark stain of Nulak's magic remains on the Moravan Plains. For too many years his experiments went on, unmolested, in the Grey Tower. The archmagi is gone and has never, or so it is believed, returned to his home; however, much of what he worked upon in the early days remains where he left it.

Graugusse's abandoned halls watch over the wild wastes of the Moravan. The whole complex consists of two towers, one smaller than the other, connected to each other by a thin bridge. A score of outbuildings gave home to guards, masons, smiths, and other servants of the mage.

The smaller tower, the Schestusse, the "sister tower," is only 100 feet tall and very thin; 60 feet at the base, and barely 20 feet in diameter at the top. Within is a narrow staircase which winds up the whole length of the tower, giving egress to the upper chambers. In Nulak's day powerful gargoyles guarded the tower against intrusion. Upon the very top of the Schestusse is a small room, the upper chamber. A single door which opens out to the narrow walkway takes one to a thin bridge, spanning the distance between the two towers. It is the only known entrance to the greater tower, Augusse. Though rumors of secret doors abound, none have yet come to light.

The main tower, the Augusse, "the tower of the eye" is roughly 250 feet tall, and some 120 feet wide at the base. It maintains this width for the first 200 feet, at which point it narrows drastically. There is no entrance at the base, only one from the Schestusse. Within are a host of chambers, halls, bedrooms, kitchens, and all other manner of rooms. The top of the tower narrows into a winding staircase which takes one to the pinnacle of the whole complex. There, a door leads to a thin walk of stone which arches out above the whole complex. It is 40 feet in length and has no supports, seemingly hanging in the air. There, upon the slightly widened end, Nulak-Kiz-Din stood to contemplate the world. How the span survived the fall of Malikor, none can say.

Beneath the tower a massive dungeon stretches out in miles of tunnels, rooms, pits, and cells. Nulak conducted the most horrid of his arcane experiments beneath the earth, venting the remains through small flutes which stretched up to the plains above.

Both towers suffered horribly from the fall of the dragon Malikor, but neither collapsed. The stones are magical in nature, for Nulak bound the souls of his victims in the rock of that place and made it so that they clung together with sorcery. However, the main tower is split and the bridge between the two towers is no longer secure in its moorings.

The tower purportedly holds vast treasures in gold and magic and attracts all manner of adventurers. Few return, and those who do report terrors beyond imagining. The plains themselves are home to bands of vicious trolls, several small orc tribes, and other evil creatures. Most of these feed off of each other or hunt game in the Northern Forests.

Eedlemere, the Throne of God, where it is said the All Father sat in the Days before Days, still stands upon the northern reaches of the Shadow Mountains. Better than half of it collapsed when a dragon fell at its roots. All about it, huge boulders lay strewn upon the ground and in the midst of all this debris lies the body of Malikor. In all the years since the battle with the White Mage and the Falkhynjager the body has not suffered any rot (see "The Andanuth"). Legends repute that the longevity of the creature's flesh is due to lingering sounds of the All Father's voice, for here he sat in the days of old, forever speaking the Language of Creation. What treasures and magic this fallen beast holds within him only the bold will learn.es and magic this fallen beast holds within him only the bold will learn.

How the Moravan Plains Came to Be

Graugusse, the Grey Tower, dominates the Moravan Plains. From those dark halls the archmagi Nulak-Kiz-Din ruled a vast network of holdings, including the Shadow Mountains and Gottland. During the Winter Dark, the troll lord's evil power attracted all manner of fell beasts, orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, but above all others, trolls, to the Moravan. He ruled there for 600 years.

Though his tale is another one, it should be noted that Nulak served the emperor of Aenoch long before the coming of Unklar. In those days the empire held sway over a vast land, from the Rhodope Mountains in the west to Al-Liosh (Aufstrag) in the east. Magi openly wandered the world, vying with one another for power over the arcane. Nulak was such a mage. An evil man, he sought dark routes to his goals and to do this he needed a place secluded from other men. He chose to build his tower in the Moravan Plains. He enlisted trolls, paying them in coin, to gather slaves and construct the edifice. They used grey stones quarried in the Shadow Mountains to build it.

The tower itself stood within sight of Mount Eedlemere, "the throne of god." There, in the Days before Days, the All Father sat and watched the world of his creation unfold. In the modern era, the lonely mountain watched the evil of the archmagi fashion a dark house from grey stone.

At first the tower was a modest affair, a hundred feet in height with a wall and a few outbuildings, but in time, as Nulak's power grew, so did the tower, new construction covering the old. A network of dungeons was added, as well as battlements and a second tower several hundred feet away. More buildings and walls followed. Nulak could not pacify the lands around so he laced the building stones with magic, the spells giving them some protection against siege.

There, in the Grey Tower, Nulak discovered the Paths of Umbra, those deadly incantations which summoned the Horned God to the world of

Aihrde, and eventually brought about the Winter Dark. When Unklar came to the world he forced Nulak to attend him, and not for many dozens of years did the wizard return to his tower. Though it had not suffered plundering, it had fallen into disrepair. He rebuilt it, peopling it this time with slaves, servants, and the wizards who followed the Paths (see "Guilds & Orders"). The tower now consisted of three consecutive towers, one built atop the other, all resting on a massive foundation. It stood well over 200 feet high. More battlements were added and the smaller sister tower was rebuilt as well. A bridge spanned the heights from the top of the lesser tower to midway up the greater.

The whole tower fortress stood upon the flat plains like a great grey monster. From here, Nulak sent forth plagues of spells. These, in time, enabled him to bring the whole of the Moravan to ground. The orcs and trolls who lived there took to worshiping him as a god. Nulak, ever a vain man, reveled in the adulation. He extended his rule beyond to the Kleberock, the great pass through the Shadow Mountains, and then even to Gottland and beyond. In those days, when Unklar slept much, his minions warred one with the other, so much so that they built towers and walls against each other. So Mongroul built a wall to guard his tower. He summoned the great troll lord, Hasryck, to his side and bid him gather a host of his fellows to encamp upon the southern end of the Kleberock and block egress to the Moravan Plains beyond.

Though the tale of Hasryck the Troll is told elsewhere (see "Gottland"), suffice it to say that Castle Nacht was built upon the southern end of the Kleberock. There, no armies could pass without permission from that dread creature.

The mage ruled those lands for many hundreds of years. In the Graugusse, he labored over his dark sorceries, ever striving to twist the world to his own imaginings. Laboratories the size of a king's great hall held tables and shelves which bore tens of thousands of vials, decanters, and jugs. Spell components in small boxes, pouches, sacks, and boxes were piled everywhere. Huge fire pits cooked strange concoctions; dungeons held those unfortunate enough to fall into the archmagi's hands. The tower itself, laced with eldritch sorceries, seemed to be a living thing. There were runes carved into every block of stone, though what they said few could discern. Aristobulus the White came here once and retold how the runes were spells which bound spirits into the stone and wove them together. In this way the tower could not suffer destruction but through some great calamity.

Such a calamity came on sudden to the Graugusse. During the early days of the Winter Dark Wars, Nulak-Kiz-Din captured Daladon of the Eldwood (see "Divine Orders") as he fled the heights of Monrudge. He bore Daladon aloft, binding him to the throne of gods upon Mount Eedlemere. Here, Malikor the dragon, one of the first born of Unklar's lust, set to watching the Marcher Lord.

This brought forth Aristobulus the White, ever Nulak's nemesis, and the demi-god Jaren Falkhynjager, he who had been bound upon the walls of Aufstrag for a thousand years. They set about freeing the Marcher Lord but brought the dragon down upon them. The battle which followed shook the heavens, so that rocks fell from the skies. The dragon carpeted the skies in acidic flames and the mage hurled lightening upon its crest. In the end, the Falkhynjager smote the beast a massive blow upon its chest so that its heart exploded and Malikor tumbled to the earth in flaming death. When he struck the ground he shook Mount Eedlemere to its roots and broke the mountain in half.

The collapsing wall of stone crushed an army of trolls and wasted the land for miles around. The earth shook so that the Graugusse sank into the earth. The massive stress upon the stone split the tower and the span between the two towers slipped its moorings. Though the Graugusse did not fall, it became an unstable place.

Nulak never had recourse to repair the towers for the wars took him and he found himself battling the White Mage at every turn. The arch-magi's complete disappearance in 1130md left the Moravan empty and leaderless. In his absence, the Moravan soon reverted to a wild country where local tribes of orcs vied for power with trolls and giants.

NGORONDORO, ICHLIN-YOR

In the rough cut deeps of the earth, the Eldritch Goblin Lord Uandlich rules his folk with an iron fist.

Geographical Location

Ngorondoro is a deep, wide, underground kingdom located in the heart of the Grundliche Mountains. Here hundreds of miles of ancient caves, tunnels, staircases, ramps, and houses are carved from the rock. A great river flows through the deeps and the ruins of many canals fan out from its length like spider webs. Old dams and debris clog canals and river alike, flooding whole areas of the dungeon deeps. Most of the realm is deserted, jumbled ruins and crumbling walls piled hither and yon. Monsters, great and small, stalk the deeps, preying off the unwary.

Travel in Ngorondoro

Travel within the underground realm is difficult, but not impossible. Tunnels for roads connect the many rooms and chambers, but the destroyed waterways have caused floods, deep pools, and morasses in expected and unexpected places.

The Heraldry

Upon the poles of iron and brass the likeness of the goblin queen signals to all that the goblins thrive in Aihrde once more, in the deeps of Ngorondoro.

Of That Land & Governance

Ngorondoro is a foul place of ancient evil and vile sorcery. Uandlich the goblin king controls only a small portion of the vast Underdeep, but what he controls he rules with absolute mastery. There he hordes his kin and they guard the goblin queen, Ogoltay (see "Divine Orders") as she lays eggs for their future. Uandlich holds court at the feet of a glittering waterfall, a marvel the goblins reconstructed from past ages. He is served by close to 400 eldritch goblins (see Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde) and thousands of goblins.

Though the goblins have peace with the dwarves, they are ever an evil race and their fell deeds are etched in the stones of history. Many goblins would unmake the peace, chief amongst these are the brothers, Ixius and Sonixius, both eldritch goblins.

ECONOMIC RATING: 2 x 4

The Army

In time of war, Uandlich commands an army of several hundred eldritch goblins and thousands upon thousands of drone goblin warriors.

Of the Gods

All who dwell here worship Ogoltay

Of Her People

Few are allowed access to the deeps of this, the only goblin realm, and much of it remains a mystery.

As is told, the goblins brought sorcery into the world and they mastered it long before any others. For this reason their knowledge and skills, as well as components for exotic spells and potions, are always sought after by the wizards of the world, in particular those who follow the Paths of Umbra.

They produce large quantities of platinum and gold as well, and occasionally they come forth to trade with the dwarves or the men of the Punj. Much of the gained wealth goes into the water parks of the underground, for the goblins desire to remake these as they were long ago.

Beyond the habitable lower halls the rest of the caverns remain abandoned. They are dark and travel is hard as many of the old roads and tunnels are partially collapsed. Since the snows of the Winter Dark have melted, many smaller cave entrances and doors have come to light so that egress to the underground kingdom is rather easy. Surviving within is not.

Many creatures have fled into the deeps over the centuries, many more since the fall of Unklar. The goblins stalk the lower halls as well. Few who enter unknowingly survive capture or death, though the very clever may buy their freedom from the goblin king or even win their back to the light unnoticed, with treasures hard won.

The ancient goblin water parks were destroyed long ago (see below) but near the front gate where the river first flows into the caverns, debris and damming material have created a large, deep lake. It is said that beneath this lake lies a gate to the other worlds, but whether true or not is unknown, for within the waters a foul dragon has taken up residence. The king has allowed the creature, whether he willed it or not, to remain and guard the front step.

How Ngorondoro Came to Be

The goblin kingdom of Ngorondoro rose from the ashes of history in the midst of the Winter Dark Wars. Built upon the ruins of the ancient goblin home of Ichlin-Yor, its very halls are steeped in the history of ages past.

When the Red God first twisted the goblins from the substance of the world he gave them such loathing for the light of day that they hid themselves in the deep places of the earth. One of the greatest of these holes were the caves of Ichlin-Yor, the caves "where light dies." (Note: Ichu is the goblin word for "death." When the suffix lin is added, it changes the meaning to "to die." The suffix - lun changes the word to mean "undead." For example, King Ichlun means king of the undead. Yor is the word for "light.") The goblins took up residence here before the first Goblin-Dwarf Wars. They mined the caves for wealth, carving their homes out of rock.

In truth, Ichlin-Yor was a place of great beauty. The goblins love water, flowing water most of all, and spend much of their energies creating artificial falls, with dams, locks, and breaks aplenty. Ichlin-Yor sported a large underground river which flowed through its lower caverns. The goblins constructed a series of canals which branched off the river, and dug a whole series of caverns beneath it, creating waterfalls, pools, and underground lakes. They stocked these waters with fish, newt, and salamander, and there, for many years, lived out their lives in solitude.

The goblins of course are malignant creatures, possessed of a great desire to destroy the dwarves, and so in time they came to the dwarves in war. The great Goblin-Dwarf Wars are told elsewhere and need only be mentioned here as they concern the fate of these caves. In the first Goblin-Dwarf War, the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle broke into the

upper halls and laid waste to them. Many a goblin fell, but most retreated to the depths and the dwarves did not possess the strength to pur- sue them. The halls, the goblins rebuilt during the long reign of King Ichlun.

Centuries later, during the Stone Wars, an army of dwarves led by Angrim broke the gates and plundered the whole realm. Goblins died in droves, only a few surviving, fleeing to the very deeps. The dwarves destroyed many dams, flooding vast regions, and they filled the canals with rock. When they left, the caverns were a crumbled ruin, and so they sat for thousands of years.

During the Age of Heroes a band of adventurers uncovered a door which led to these unimaginable deeps. They stole some of the riches in the upper chambers and traveled to the south with tales of their plunder. This sent word of the caverns far and wide, eventually attracting the attention of an eldritch goblin, Uandlich. He explored the mountains, found the door and to his amazement the old holes of Ichlin-Yor. He had no time to gather a band of goblins, for the dawn of Unklar's Age began and he, as with so many of his kindred, found caught up in the war, and soon a slave in the Pits of Aufstrag.

The last of the eldritch goblins found themselves bound in servitude to Unklar with Dolgan and the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle. Slavery knows only hatred for the master and in time the goblins and dwarves worked together. Agmour the eldritch goblin, the same who destroyed Grausumhart and slew the dwarf king, Rotterkin X, during the Stone Wars, became one of Dolgan's closest friends. Together, in 1112md they rose against their masters, fighting the bitter battles of the Trench Wars for six long years.

When at last they broke out into the world, the dwarves returned to Grundliche-Hohle and there reopened that ancient place. The goblins traveled with them, for they had no homes of their own and found that the Young Kingdoms bore them little welcome. Uandlich kept his secret for a great while until at last, embittered by the wars, he called upon Dolgan King.

The dwarves recount the tale:

Into the halls came the goblin warband, seventeen strong. They were a hearty troop with grim face and a hungry look. Outfitted for war with shields of iron, wicked swords and curved daggers they stood before the dwarven king. Some few he recognized, but the goblin troops had grown since the days of the Trench Wars.

This warband's leader, one Uandlich, a goblin powerful in his own right and held to be a blood in the brotherhood of Agmour, Dolgan King knew well. He had fought alongside him in many a tunnel beneath the halls of Aufstrag. A ferocious cut-throat and warrior, Uandlich made a name for himself on both sides of the battlefield. Twice he pulled Dolgan's fat from the fire.

The dwarf thanes gathered around as Uandlich stepped forward. The goblin chief did not lower his shield but rather spoke around it in a defiant manner.

"Lord king of dwarves, I, Uandlich, seek your audience." He waited and when the king gave a nod for him to continue he spoke thus: "For many years the goblin folk have labored at your side. We have plotted and planned for you, stole in the night and slain foul ungern or human at your heed and call. We watch your borders for you and let none trespass that your will does not allow. For these things we have nothing.

"You and yours have rebuilt the great Under Mountains of Grundliche-Hohle and covered its walls in wealth and filled its halls with mirth and food, yet my folk have nothing.

"You rest in comfort care of your children and old ones, and your beards grow long and soft with the kind offerings of this great hold, yet my folk have nothing.

"Agmour is dead at his own folly and Argorat owes you his blood for the rescue of his son Uel. I, Uandlich, and my folk, cannot wait for his fawning to end, and come to seek a boon and reward from the mightiest of dwarven kings.

"We want not gold or silver. We want a hole to call our own, so this I ask of you: north of here in the high Grundliche lies an old fortress and mountain deep with halls called by my folk the Ichlin-Yor. It is long abandoned now but for a few ghosts and howls of the dead.

"We, I, would ask you for the right to take up abode in this place of Ichlin-Yor and call it home."

To this entreaty Dolgan King wept, for he loved his goblin allies and he granted a great wealth of gold, silver, iron and tools, lumber, and other supplies so that they might make a home for themselves. With this bounty the goblins under Uandlich retook the upper caves of Ichlin-Yor in the year 1129md.

Some 400 goblins entered the halls to rebuild their homes. They found the place in utter ruin and learned too quickly that many wild beasts had taken up residence in the twisted dark depths. Some of the goblins perished, but in a few years they reclaimed the upper halls. Some of them remembered the halls as they were so long ago and they strove to rebuild the dams and remake their beloved waterfalls. They labored in the dark for many years.

In time Uandlich uncovered ancient magic which led them to the rescue of their queen, a feat which they did through many adventures and loss of life. They brought ancient Ogoltay back to the deeps of their kingdom where Uandlich made her queen once more. Nulak-Kiz- Din came to them then, bearing with him the Pride of the Goblins (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**), a magic needed to revive her and remake her in her role as mother of goblin kind. He let them use it for a time, only long enough to breathe life back into the beastly woman, at which point she began to lay eggs once more.

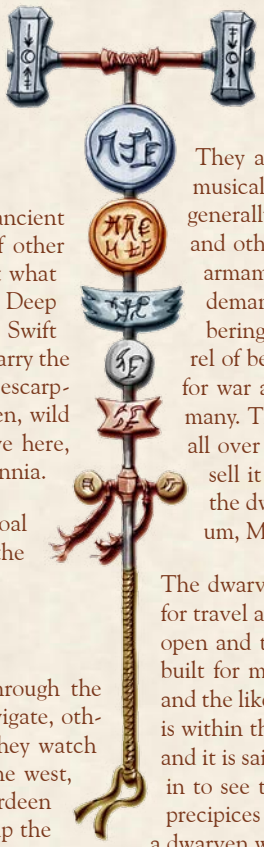
When Nulak left the halls of Ichlin-Yor he traveled south to unknown destinations. Upon the road, Erix the goblin, who served Unklar as the most trusted of lieutenants, ambushed the wizard north of the Red Hills. Nulak discarded the iron bound chest to battle the goblin, for Erix was possessed of great power and bore the Horn of Breaking (see Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde). Erix drove the wizard off but was too wounded to pursue him. The trunk was left on the road.

Erix did not realize what the iron trunk held, so that the Pride of the Goblins, that most ancient and powerful of artifacts, was once more lost in the wide world. Rumors abound that a mad gnome, who lives on the bones of fish alone, travels the rivers and ponds of the Red Hills using the box as a foot stool.

In Ichlin-Yor, renamed Ngorondoro, Uandlich ruled as king, Ogoltay lays eggs once more, and drone goblin warriors and workers come into the world. Once in a great while, a goblin of eldritch power comes again into the world, hatched from one of the beastly god's eggs. In this way the goblins returned from the depths of history and once more play an active role in the world of Aihrde.

NORGORAD KAM

Upon the Iergild throne sits Dagmar King, the Fourth of That Name, the Brass King and Lord of the Brass Halls.



Geographical Location

The Bergrucken, or Saddleback in the Vulgate, are an ancient chain of mountains. They do not aspire to the heights of other mountain chains, such as the Grundliche or Rhodope, but what they lack in height they make up for in sheer ruggedness. Deep narrow canyons are surrounded by loose shale and rock. Swift flowing rivers, channeled into these gulches, are known to carry the unwary to a rapid, watery death. Winding trails, ridges, and escarpments lead one into a maze of ancient brown rock of broken, wild country. Aside from certain monsters only the dwarves live here, patrolling the heights that have been their home for a millennia.

The realm lays claim to the all the mountains from the Coal Range in the north to the Iron Way in the south. Though the dwarves do not patrol it, nor occupy the greater part of it.

Travel in Norgorad Kam

There are many mountain passes and trails that wind through the Bergrucken. Some of these are easy to find and easy to navigate, others less so. The dwarves patrol them at times and some they watch over constantly. Entry to the Brass Halls is gained from the west, up the Kenud Road. This broad path leads up from the Ardeen River bridge to the gates of the kingdom. It winds its way up the mountain to the Brass Doors, called the Doors Impregnable, of Norgorad Kam.

The Heraldry

As with all the dwarves of Aihrde, a totemic pole serves as heraldry. The totem of Norgorad Kam is a brass pole at the top of which are two hammers extending out in a T-shape. Upon each hammer are the symbols of the Sisters, the moon and the sun. All the totems, disks, and placards are gold: one disk with the name of the father of the house, one disk with the present king, and further disks representing units, professions, etc.

Of That Land & Governance

Dagmar King rules in his golden halls and commands a powerful army of dwarven shields. Norgorad Kam has never in its long history fallen to an enemy, and the opulence of its throne room mirrors the wealth of the whole kingdom. The king sits upon the Iergild Throne, arguably the oldest and most valuable throne in all the world. He is much like his father, a little large in the gut, filled with mirth, and friendly, though fierce when roused. In battle he bares the Axe of Kenud, a powerful family artifact.

Aside from the occasional dispute with the kingdom of Maine, the dwarves of Norgorad Kam dwell in peace with their neighbors. Kayomar and the dwarves have a warm relationship, trading food for worked goods. Whenever a child is born into the royal family of Du Guesilon, Dagmar King sends gifts of gold, worked artifacts, and the like. The dwarves guard the mountain passes with regular patrols. This is particularly true in the north for the hobgoblins of Burnevitse have recently begun raiding in these areas.

They have a particular love for and keep a watch on the Paladin's Grove, for there stands the last spark of the All Father's physical form, an item most holy to the dwarves.

Economic Rating: 3 x 5

Of Her People

The dwarves trade manufactured goods for raw materials. They are well known for fine craftsmanship, particularly where musical instruments are concerned. A harp of Norgorad Kam is generally worth five times its normal value. The lutes, pan flutes, and others carry similar value. Beyond these the dwarves fashion armaments and weapons. Beer from the Brass Halls is in great demand as well, and it is not uncommon to see large wagons lumbering down from the mountains piled high with barrel after barrel of beer. The halls are well known for their brass works as well, for war and decoration. These and unworked brass are sought by many. The greatest export for the dwarves, however, is coal. From all over the Bergrucken Mountains they mine the black gold and sell it in markets from Maine to the Hanse City States. Mostly the dwarves bring in lumber, food, wine, and wool from Brindisium, Maine, and Kayomar.

The dwarves keep the roads over the southwestern Bergrucken safe for travel and welcome folk in their halls. The Doors Impregnable are open and travelers come and go at will. There are taverns and inns built for men and elves. There are markets, concert halls, libraries, and the like, inviting merchants and scholars to explore them. All this is within the upper chambers. The throne room is in the high vaults, and it is said that the dwarven skill in shaping rock allows those within to see the world without, but those who clamber over the rocky precipices beyond the halls would never know that they walked upon a dwarven world.

The taverns are famous for their fine beer and good music. They draw all manner of patrons to the kingdom. Songs of the old kingdoms are very much in style, and dwarven bards are commonly seen reciting tales of the ancient days. They speak often of the Lillian Way, a passage beneath the Massif that led to the long abandoned eastern Bergrucken, and its disappearance. There are rumors that the king will pay a great sum in worked iergild and coin for those brave enough to explore the abandoned mines at the root of the kingdom for that long lost highway.

Of How Norgorad Kam Came to Be

The world changed, and the dwarves of the Bergrucken proclaimed themselves in the midst of the realms of Unklar and opened their kingdom's deeps as if for war. Their mighty and fell Dagmar King, third of that name, bore the scepter of the king of Crazeul and the Axe of Kenud. The servants of Unklar fled from him and the whole of the Bergrucken, but for the deeper places, were made as if clean, and dwarves knew much pride and rest in the days to come.

~Leopold of Passou

Norgorad Kam was one of the original five dwarven realms. In 3402dk Kenud Iron Chin, while wandering along a cleft, came upon a wide cavern. He discovered that it was deep enough to house his people and summoned them from the north so that soon the caves were occupied. They were a fierce people, strong and filled with the youth of their race and they halls for themselves there beneath the earth.

They discovered deep veins of copper and zinc and through some experimentation wove them together to fashion brass. This brass was much sought after and in a few years dwarves and men, and giants at times, came to trade for it. The people of Kenud grew in number and wealth and eventually named him king. The year was 3481. He named his realm Norgorad Kam

During the long rule of the goblin king, Ichlun, it was the dwarves of Norgorad Kam that first unearthed the long lost passages to Inzae, the world within Aihrde. They fashioned wondrous spells which made traversing the space between the two worlds possible, and they followed them to the center of the world. From there they found tunnels that led back to Aihrde.

They learned to tunnel through the firmament, in the end bringing them to their kinsmen far away. They took many years to understand the workings of Inzae and Aihrde but when they did they set to forging the Rings of Brass. These magical devices allowed the folk to travel from one point in Aihrde to another (see "The Andanuth"). With this magic the dwarves gathered great hosts of their kinsmen in one place and made war on the goblins. As is told elsewhere, the dwarf lords overthrew the goblin king, and the wars went on.

These rings forged of brass doubly earned the kingdom the name, the Brass Halls. The king, the folk called the Brass King. The Brass King was wealthy beyond compare and sat upon a magical throne made of pure iergild metal.

After this the kingdom fell into the mists of time and history, with only the famous Mammoth Scrolls relating her day to day affairs. What little that is known, the historians glean from the many songs and poems which the dwarves love to retell. They fought in the many and long Goblin-Dwarf Wars. Thousands of young beardling shields marched to war under the brass pole, never to return.

It is known that in later years, as other dwarven kingdoms fell into decay, Norgorad Kam prospered. Her halls did not suffer the ravages of the Stone Wars and her kings ruled in an unbroken line from those days to these. They tunneled deep into the earth, making mansions fashioned of stone. Great arching hallways, bridges, and roads led one through the well-lit kingdom to various places, houses, markets, smith shops, and so on.

The greatest of their works they fashioned during the age of the Aenochians. As the story relates the empress, Rachel Lilly, loved shoes very much. As with today, the dwarves of the Brass Halls were possessed of many skills in fashioning art. They wove magic into their crafts, creating instruments, jewelry, books, tapestries, and clothing sought the world over.

The empress came to the Lord of the Brass Halls and begged him to fashion for her the most beautiful pair of shoes ever devised by man or dwarf. That empress, the dwarves loved over much, for she, unlike many of her kin, laughed often and always made great efforts in complementing the dwarves whenever she met them. For this reason the dwarf king heartily agreed to her request (of course, the vast fortune she spent may also have had something to do with it). The king set his best smiths and magi to crafting the shoes, and when completed, gave them to her in her palace in southern Kayomar.

The empress, or so it is told, wept at the sight of them for their beauty was almost too much to bear. In gratitude she awarded the dwarves fo the Brass Halls all the revenue of the traffic which passed through or over the Bergrucken.When she died, she requested that her body be buried in the Brass Halls with the shoes upon her feet. This the dwarves agreed to do. They took her to the roots of Norgorad Kam and built for her a great crypt. There her body lay from that day to this.

In later years the dwarves built a great tunnel which stretched underneath the mountains from east to west. They fashioned it of inlaid brass and placed two huge gates upon each end and named the highway the Lillian Way. They taxed the caravans coming underneath the city, vexing other local lords for stealing revenue. Though both entrances to the Lillian way have been lost, it is said in song and poem that to find it is to find the Crypt of the Empress Rachel Lilly and her shoes of wondrous beauty.

The dwarves of the Brass Halls loved and labored. Their fame as craftsmen of artifacts of power and beauty spread the world over. When war came from the east under the banners of the Horned God, the dwarves came forth in whole troops. Cast in iron shod boots with armor, shields, and helms, they soon proved that they excelled at the arts of war as well. They drove back the enemy time and again, only retreating to their mountain fastness when the Catalyst War ended all hope of the kingdoms of men stealing victory from the jaws of defeat.

The dwarves fought on for two centuries, but when word came to them of the sacking of Grundliche-Hohle, Dungror King ordered the halls shut and the gate bound. He set to making iron doors to hold the pits against the coming of the Horned God. He collapsed the lower tunnels, burying the doors to the Lillian Way forevermore. Dungror set to fashioning chains from the iergild iron and bound the gates in this substance. They called them the Doors Impregnable. In this way Unklar was denied entry to Norgorad Kam for even that fell lord could not unmake what the All Father had made (reference iergild metal, **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**).

The dwarves of Norgorad Kam survived the Millennial Dark hidden in the fastness of their mountain kingdom. They lived in safety and, as always before, prospered, making their homes grander and mining the earth for ever more riches. The numbers of the folk waxed in those dark days, and as is related, they alone of all the people of Aihrde thrived and grew stronger.

When war came, the dwarves unleashed the pent up fury of centuries and delivered stunning defeats upon the enemy. Dagmar, the third of that name, led them, young and filled with the lust to see the sun and the moon unhindered.

He ordered the Doors Impregnable opened and marched forth with an army cased in iron and steel. The king bore the scepter of one of Unklar's captain kings, and the Axe which is the rightful possession of the Lords of Norgorad Kam. The servants of Unklar fled from him and the whole of his mountains, but for the deeper places. The mountains were made clean, and the dwarves knew much pride and rest in the days to come.

In an amazingly short time they cleared the Bergrucken and the Norlling of the enemy, even coming to the shores of Lake Orion. They harried the armies of Lord Orkhan in Maine and at the last joined King Morgan of Kayomar at the Battle of Ox. Dwarven courage opened the gap in the walls of that massive city fortress and held it against waves of orcs, until reinforcements could come.

When Dagmar fell, slain by a fire giant in the Norlling, the world moaned. He held the iron blood of his ancient forefathers and many grieved. The king of Kayomar alone sent 5,000 bars of gold to decorate his tomb in the deep halls of Norgorad Kam.

Of Her Kings

Kenud King, Iron Chin (Founder, Third Rin)
Dungror King, Fourth of That Name (Fifth & Sixth Rin)
Dungror King, Fifth of That Name (Sixth Rin)
Magri King (Sixth Rin)
Magri King, Second of That Name (Sixth Rin)
Dagmar King, Third of That Name (Sixth Rin)
Dagmar King, Fourth of That Name (Sixth & Seventh Rin)

NORTHERN KINGDOMS

Countless are the thanes and chieftains who rule the northern wastes, but of them all, three stand out, the Kings of Haltland, Holmgald, and Trondheim.

Geographical Location

The north lands are wild places, where steep mountains rise from the wastes of the sea. The rugged coast hides many coves and harbors where small, cold beaches end in sharp cliff faces. In a few places, the fjords and the hills are not so steep and offer man and beast refuge from the winds of the Inner Sea and the cold of the northern mountains. There, giants stalk the land, beside huge cave bears and lions with teeth as long as daggers. It is a harsh land, dangerous to the bold, deadly to the unwary. The land is cold, winter lingering into spring. Snow drifts on land and ice caps at sea make the region an inhospitable place to those born in the south.

Travel in the Northern Kingdoms

Travel here is done by land and sea. Beyond the coast the land can be harsh and inhospitable. There are no roads, only tracks that wind through the tundra and hills, so most take boats, navigating through the narrow channels and along the rocky coasts.

The Heraldry

They carry no standards, nor coat of arms, but all the folk in the wide world know well their totems and dragon ships, the bear, the wolf, and the elk. All are symbols of the barbarian north.

Of That Land & Governance

Of all the many scattered tribes of the Northmen, three have risen which are greater than the rest and rival many of the southern kingdoms in wealth and power.

Haltland: Here, King Odovakar rules from the Great Hall, Borgundullum. There lies one of the more prominent barbarian kingdoms of the Est-Gotha. Haltland lies in the mountains of the far northern climates. Several tribes of Est-Gotha make up this loose confederation. Their king is chosen by a test of arms and rules until challenged and slain. The Est-Gotha are a fierce tribal people who glory in battle and war. They live communally in great stone and thatch halls nestled in the bays and estuaries of their land. Travelers are welcome but must endure feasts that last days, tests of arms that often run deadly, and other dangers of the flesh. The Haltlanders are forever warring on their neighbors and crossing the Inner Sea to plunder and ravage in the south.

Holmgald: King Thorismund IV towers over his land in the Great Halls of Gokstead. Holmgald is the sister kingdom to Haltland. Just before the Winter Dark Wars, Thorismund the Conqueror united the Vin-Gotha tribes, some of the Est-Gotha, and the Tervengi under the Amal clan. The Amals still dominate this frozen kingdom. Much like the Est-Gotha, the Vin-Gotha revel in raiding and war. They are not adverse to plundering the coasts of their foundling kingdom, Eisenheim (see "Eisenheim"). Like their neighbors, the people of Holmgald gather in small villages and great halls and are famous for their seamanship.

Trondheim: Here lies the home of Thane Karl the Bear, called such for as the tales relate, with his hands alone he strangled and pummeled the life from a cave bear. He rules from Aggersholm on the sea. Trondheim, as with all the north, benefited from the battle of Gokstead (see below), and is home to the powerful Gruetungi and Alanni tribes. These wild Northmen, like their cousins to the west, live off of plunder's harvest. The Gruetungi are usually at war with their immediate neighbors, the Vin-Gotha in Haltland. Karl makes his home in the Great Hall of Trondelag in the city of Aggersholm. Trondheim is home to many strange travelers, for it alone serves as a gateway to the Frozen Salt Flats (see "Terrain of Aihrde") where, it is said, the battles between the gods Unklar and Narrheit occurred.

Economic Rating: 2

The Army

They are a populous people and collectively can field thousands of warriors on land or sea, but they rarely fight together. They are able seaman and skilled warriors, if only a little deficient in strategy.

Of the Gods

These people are descendants of the Engale, who had the greatest traffic and alliances with the dwarves of old. They worship the All Father, who they call Odin One Eye, but they worship other gods by different names. Narrheit they call Loki, Corthain is Thor, and so on.

Of Her People

All along the northern coasts of the Inner Sea men have carved out homes for themselves. They bare little likeness to the civilized folk of the southern kingdoms, for they dress in furs and carry little armor but shields and helms. They worship wild gods (see **Codex Nordica**), hunt bears for sport and pay little heed to magic or sorcery. Many farm what arable land exists in the northern latitudes, others hunt, and many more make their living by pulling fish from the sea as well whales for oil and walruses for ivory. But no matter their occupation, they love war and battle, and do not fear the death such a life brings. The thanes of the tribes bring terror to the south in wooden ships of simple sail.

There are many tribes, large and small, along the coastline and in the bays of the north. They rule small kingdoms of villages and towns, and field armies of dozens of men only. They raid the coasts in the south in three or four ships, but despite the small numbers, or because of them, they bring a great deal of destruction. The Lothian Monasteries in the kingdom of Aachen (see "Guilds & Orders") have recently suffered from these raids, proving to many that the reach of the forest god Daladon does not extend to the depths of the Inner Sea.

Trade with the Northmen is sporadic. However, some bold shipping captains from the Hanse Cities do travel the Inner Sea seeking those things only found in the north, or found cheaply in the north: carved ivory, iron, bone, wood, bear skins, pelts of beaver, and fish. The Northmen jealously guard their hunting grounds where they whale for the feared leviathan beasts (sperm whales) for their delicate meat and oil that is sold at extremely high prices throughout the known world.

How the North Came to Be

For centuries the men and women of the wild north lived free of the rule of Unklar. They thrived in the Winter Dark, for they lived already in the frozen north, pulling their livelihoods from the sea. They saw the coming shroud of Darkness as the breath of the world and were puzzled when Ragnarok, the Gonfod as the dwarves called it, did not come. These people lived in tribes, descendents of the ancient tribe of men, the Engale. They lived their lives apart from the history of men, concerning themselves only with the immediate and the distant; that being the road to the afterlife. The harsh life of the northern moun-

tains made them a sturdy folk and the livelihood they pulled from the sea made them mariners without equal.

They lived in tribes and bands, all along the mountainous coast and in the hinterlands as well. They bore names which reflected animal totems; the Alanni (those like the bears), Amals (the whale men), Gruetungi (wolves on rock), and so forth. They fought each other on occasion, but mostly they fought the frost and stone giants who forever terrorized them.

In time, some tribes rose above the others. Upon the eastern slopes of the Roheisen Mountains, Thane Thorismund of the Amal clan conquered many of the tribes and bound them under his rule. These Est-Gotha, so called for they lived on the eastern slopes of the Roheisen Mountain, vied for control of the islands of the straits with the Vin-Gotha, who lived further west.

With the outset of the Winter Dark Wars, the snow began to recede and the southern lands became lost in internecine war. For reasons that are not completely understood, the northerners suddenly exploded upon the lands of Ethrum and Aenoch. Whether they sensed a weakened zeal in the imperial legions or they reacted to internal turmoil is not known, but what is known is the terror they brought with them from the north.

With the likenesses of the gods and the dragon Inzae upon their ship prows, the Northmen rode the tides of the Inner Sea to war and slaughter. At first they raided small villages, burning coastal farm houses and thorpes. They sank fishing vessels and threw their captains into the sea. They carted off many slaves at first and little plunder. In the year 1119md, the Est-Gotha Thane Angatyr led a bold raid against Toninburg, a town upon the northern shores of Anglamay. In Toninburg stood a temple to Unklar and many wealthy merchants made their living off the trade of produce from the sea. Angatyr, leading four ships and 120 men, attacked the town upon an early cold morn. The ease of the victory caught Angatyr and the town by surprise. The town, helpless against the onslaught, fell to Angatyr who ordered it plundered and burned. The booty they carted back in gold, jewels, and slaves amazed their fellows and galvanized the whole of the Northern tribes.

The Northmen built larger ships and filled them with eager warriors and by 1122md, the first large scale attacks took place all along the coasts of the Inner Sea. The raids picked up and the raiders became bolder, attack- ing down the coastline to Frieburg and beyond. The people there clamored for protection, calling to the powers in Aufstrag. The imperial response was rapid. They dispatched a fleet of galleys to destroy the barbarians. They came from Iergaul, Avignon, and other cities, sailing north to the sprawling city-encampment of Gokstead, intending to burn out the barbarians.

Twenty five vessels bore the 58th Legion from Ascalon into the north, sailing for Gokstead. Two months on the open sea brought them into the vicinity of that town, but the Northmen set out in a host of long boats under King Thorismund and met them at sea. They met the imperials in open battle, lusting as they did and still do, for death in war. Never in the memory of man had a human fleet contested the seas with the ships of Unklar. The captains were afraid, not knowing what to do, but the Northmen did know, and in packs they surrounded the larger vessels and disabled them with fire and axe. So great was their lust for slaying that they forgot all booty and with great waste burned the fleet into the depths. Making sacrifice to their grim gods they celebrated a great victory, and the 25 ships and all of the 58th Legion returned home never more.

This victory opened the southern lands to further depredations and eventually to migrations. The raids also triggered the creation of such states as Anglamay and the Hanse City Federation.

As is written, when the ice began to break asunder, and the Shroud of Darkness parted, the raids of the Northmen continued unabated and much slaughter and devastation came to the lands of Ethrum and Aenoch. The raiders built small forts along the coasts. The rivers served as avenues for the Northmen and the first of them arrived in Augsberg, traveling up the Olgdon River in 1127md. They plundered several castles and killed a number of the men living there. They carted great mounds of booty back to the north.

Lord Quin, commander of the 18th Legion, sought to stop them and moved a great host of men from the Luneberg Plains to the mouth of the Olgdon river and to other extremes, hoping to block the raiders. In this he was fatally outdone for a large party of Northmen fell upon his scattered cohorts and in a series of rapid attacks scattered them. The 18th, mostly inexperienced men and tribal orcs, disintegrated and Quin fell upon his own sword.

The Northmen came down the waterways of Ursal once more and with ships of dragon prows they sailed across the Amber Sea. They plundered the outskirts of Avignon and ravaged the coasts of Anglamay, burning many cities, villages, and towns and carrying off many to slavery and death. Their plundering even reached the Elorian Isles, though they were defeated and all slain in battle with ships of Morgeld's crafting. In the east they arrived at Trier. The admiral of the Black Fleet did not put to sea, but fortified himself in his ports, and the Northmen plundered all the coasts of the Amber and Inner Seas and as far inland as the rivers let them sail.

The raids slackened with time but the Northmen gather in ships still, pray to their gods, and cut the waves of the sea, intent on raiding for plunder and war.

ONWALTIG

Sanjak Mordinang, "the Voice of Unklar," Lord of the Isle, the Black Death, rules these islands.

Geographical Location

The archipelago of Onwaltig consists of three large islands and a dozen smaller ones; from Unklar's Sound in the south to Mund and Grichlug in the north. The waters here are treacherous for those who do not know the lanes. Rocks jut up from the ocean floor to just below the surface, easily placed to tear a gaping wound in a ship's hull. The water is always choppy and unpredictable. Upon the islands themselves are rich pastures for grazing or farming. These give way to gently rolling hills that tumble down to low sea cliffs and broad beaches. Orc villages abound, particularly on the main southern island. There are few trees upon the wind swept isles of Onwaltig.

Travel in Onwaltig

Travel between islands is done by ship, usually small, light craft as the waters are treacherous. Several channels exist however, known only to the orcs and some few they trade with that allow large ships safe passage. On the islands themselves travel is easy as the country consists of gentle hills and grasses. It's the many orcs and other such ilk that offer danger to the unwary.

The Heraldry

The broad banner of that land hangs from a staff and pole. The cloth is stained black with a crescent moon, and upon the cross pole, hanging from short chains, are many horns.

Of That Land & Governance

Mordinang the Orc is sanjak in Onwaltig. He dwells in a large temple fortress just on the outside of the town of Xarteris. From there he commands his legions, bears witness to the priests and speaks law as the "Voice of Unklar." It is Mordinang's great dream to bring back the Horned God, and to this end he employs wizard-priests to seek out his master and restore him to his rightful place. He gives them monies and plunders the world for whatever they may need. Many an orc adventurer has left the island lands in quest for some exotic leaf or something similar, only to die upon some lost trail. Mordinang is a small orc, but skilled in combat. He holds his position through a mixture of cunning and cruelty.

The sanjaks of Onwaltig command with absolute authority. They watch the island, and all that come and goes, through a series of small towers perched along the coastline. These vary in distance from one another, but are always within sight of their watch fires, for this is how each tower communicates. Generally the towers have eight to ten occupants and a few slaves to keep them. There are regular patrols as well, for the orcs live in constant fear of an attack by one of the kingdoms to the north or west.

The wizard-priests of the Paths of Umbra dwell in Xarteris, practicing their craft openly, as they can do nowhere else but for the Punj and the Confederation of Torrich. They spend their time seeking answers to the riddles of Unklar's disappearance. They are a powerful sect in the orc society, all the more surprising since they are all humans. Rumors abound that the archmagi Nulak-Kiz-Din resides here, plotting alongside the orcs for the return of Unklar.

Economic Rating: 2

The Army

The Sanjak Mordinang commands 4,000 heavy orc infantry, and several hundred wolf riders. They have a dozen large warships, and thousands of light infantry.

Of the Gods

Unklar is worshiped here and no other. Even carrying a symbol of another god is punishable by death.

Of Her People

The orcs live in villages, usually surrounded by ramparts of wood and dirt. Their houses and other buildings tend to be made of sod or, in some cases, wood imported from the mainland with great difficulty. They farm using slave labor, and even this only for subsistence farming. Several farmers grow large crops of barley and rye to brew beer, again all done with slave labor. Large herds of cattle supply them with enough food and leather to meet all their needs. Especially important to the coastal areas are the pearls from the sea and dried fish foods. Few will openly trade with Onwaltig, but merchants from the Hanse City States and Eloria come here on occasion.

Onwaltig is a dangerous place to travel and few interlopers are permitted. The tales of vast treasures which were carted here after the war, abound, however, and attract all manner of thieves and erstwhile adventurers.

Of How Onwaltig Came to Be

During the days of the Winter Dark many orcs served Unklar in his legions. They fought loyally in almost every campaign from Al-Lios to the lands Faurenost in the east. Quickly, the battle captains of the Horned God learned that singly or in small groups, the orcs could not be relied upon, but when permitted to fight in large units, they achieved amazing feats of arms. They possessed, as they still do today, a penchant for organization and mass battle tactics. Heavy casualties only added fuel to their rage upon the battlefield, so long as large numbers of them remained. For these reasons the orcs served the mighty Unklar well, for many hundreds of years.

For their part, the orcs loved their dark master, if such creatures can know love. He conquered a world and laid it at their feet. More, he conquered a world which, for centuries, hounded the orcs in their every cave and fortress. He showered them with lands, property, and rank. Even their own cruel gods failed them in these things, but Unklar did not and to him they pledged themselves, and they ruled in Aihrde for a thousand years.

In heavy armor, plate, and shield, with axes, cudgels, and iron shod hammers, the orcs of the Winter Dark terrorized all with whom they came in contact. Their stamping feet, martial songs, and lusty howls for war became common place in the towns and villages of the Horned God's empire. People fled from them, for of all the cruel servants of Aufstrag, these were the most wicked. They tortured and pillaged when they needed supplies. They forced common folk into work camps. The orcs carted others off to the slave pits, the mines, or the galleys; many of these poor souls were never seen nor heard from again.

During the Winter Dark the orcs earned hatred from all the demi-hu- mans and men as well. The halflings most of all hated the orcs, for

those poor folk could do little to fend off the iron banded legions, in the early years at least. Later, after the halflings scattered into the deep woods, living in smaller family groups, they learned to fight all the minions of Unklar, but in truth, they relished destroying orcs.

The orcs' greatest weakness lay in Kayomar and under the dark eves of the Eldwood. There, in the closing days of the Catalyst Wars, King Robert Luther, leading his paladins and knights, fought for so long and so hard, destroying thousands, that the orcs believed he possessed the soul of some undead god. Ever a superstitious lot, the orcs feared him as an unconquerable spirit, an avatar of their own destruction. During the final siege of Du Guesilon, the king struck Unklar a blow upon his helm so great that it split the iron, drawing blood. The blow sent the Horned God falling from the high wall where he crashed into the ground with a mighty clap. Robert Luther's laughter frightened the orc hosts such that they broke and ran from that land in complete terror.

To this day the name of Kayomar is whispered amongst the orcs in fear, and the name of Robert Luther never mentioned but as the foulest of curses.

When the Winter Dark Wars began the orcs fought with a ferocious zeal. Never in their wildest imaginings would they have thought that anything but victory would be theirs. With wild abandon they plunged headlong into battles. They fought the dwarves in the Flintlock and Grundliche-Hohle. Their iron shod boots tramped over the Luneberg Plains, Augsberg, Aachen and Karilia. They fought in Maine against the rebellious Pius, and a host of them even dared dread Kayomar in the Battle of Weather's Gap and the siege of Ox. More than this they fought upon the walls of the Faurenost, finally destroying that distant land. Many thousands perished at the hands of Morgeld in far off seas.

The orcs served with zeal and loyalty, but their commanders could not master the enemy. They did not understand it but their god could not aid them, so in the end, despite their cruelties, their hatreds, and their love for one-sided war, the orcs and their dark master were thrown down. Defeat after defeat destroyed the integrity of the legions, so that many of the soldiers deserted, seeking more lucrative, and perhaps less dangerous, employment. The orcs, their numbers shattered, drifted into hiding. They took to the deeper forests, the Darkenfold, Gottland-ne, Gelderland, the Grossewald, and rugged mountains and wilderness, seeking safer grounds from the ever present lust for revenge of which the men and their allies seemed to possess an unending flow.

Many priests of Unklar joined the orcs, for their religion made them hated enemies of most men and to remain in their temples invited certain death. The wizard-priests first suggested to some of the orc chieftains that they, the orcs, should carve out a kingdom for themselves before their enemies utterly destroyed them.

A sanjak (the orc title for commander) by the name of Issa took the wizard-priests seriously. He listened to them for a great while, until at last, he thought he understood the message of Unklar. A rather intelligent orc, possessed of many skills, Issa applied himself to unraveling the mystery of where they should found such a kingdom. In a very short while he decided upon the island of Onwaltig. Isolated, yet near the land, this island could house a host of his fellows and give them a safe harbor within which to recover their numbers and power.

Issa called upon the wizard-priest to send messages to others of their kind, to the shamans of the orcs. He bid them tell the orcs that in Onwaltig they could find succor from their many enemies. Issa himself led a small army of orcs, warriors mostly but many females as well, to the island realm. They passed, after many hardships and adventures, over the Red Hills and into the Aenochian Forest. There, they built river boats and set off down the wide Olgdon until at last they came to the sea. Next, they sailed their cumbersome river craft out into the waters of the ocean, though Issa carefully steered a path parallel to the coastline. In 1143md he abandoned the coast, cutting across the Lagon Straits, to come at last to the island of Onwaltig.

Issa built a camp from which he organized the construction of the orc kingdom. The orcs set about fortifying the island with monstrous slag heap castles and numerous underground warrens. Town and village sprang up across the fertile plain, swollen with a never ending flow of migrants. They came on ships, rickety boats, canoes even. In all this the wizard-priests gave instruction and guidance and rekindled the orc lust for their master in Aufstrag.

Issa used the old imperial chain of command to ensure the survival of the country. He divided the warriors into cohorts, the number of which increased with every influx of fresh bodies. He established a small fleet as well by taking the best of the ships which came to Onwaltig for himself and his marines. Within a few short years the orcs were pirating along the coasts and north to Tagea. No folk in those days possessed the strength or the will to dislodge the orcs, so they were left to their own devices.

By the time of Issa's death in 1160md, the island had become well fortified and structured into a highly caste society. Those who followed the long rule of Issa could never master the efficiency of his rule, but they did maintain his power.

Later attempts at dislodging the orcs proved futile and were soon abandoned. The Tageans attempted on several occasions, but only led the orcs to occupy the two islands north of their main isle, and growing Onwaltig that much more.

PUNJ

The Punj is ruled by King Feodor III, Master of the Horse Guard, Prince of Maerg, and Lord of Ivgonerad

Geographical Location

The Punj lies between the Plains of Achrothos and the Grossewald Forest. It is a sprawling country of rolling grassland that includes the Black Hills and the Hammers Wood. It borders the Rhuneland in the west at the Ondavar River.

Travel in Punj

Travel here is not difficult as many of the roads still exist, though they are all in ill repair. The main road, the Fichlin Lave, winds from Ivgonerad to the Grausumland and the Wasting Way.

The Heraldry

The standard of this vile kingdom still pays tribute to the god Unklar, a large black eagle on a white background, beneath whose claws are two cannons pointing out with other weaponry on the field beneath. A castle sits upon the eagle's right and Unklar's silver crescent moon is emblazoned above the eagle's left.

Of That Land & Governance

Feodor III, equal in stature to both his father and grandfather, rules the Punj with an iron fist. Unlike his forefathers he is a religious man, paying heed to the priests of Unklar and their prophets. He styles himself a religious warlord and openly calls for the return of the orderly rule of Unklar. Feodor III relies upon the high priestess as his chief servant. The king is a cruel man, and his court a dangerous place. Here, intrigue abounds, as scions of the noble houses vie for power with merchants, thieves' guilds and priests.

The wizard priests of Unklar, personified in the Cult of the Paths of Umbra, pay heed to their dark god and their temples are in every major city. The high priestess styles herself Nectanebo XIX, after the great priestess of Unklar's day. Despite this, they do not inflict evil upon the populace as in the days of old, but rather concern themselves with the business of the king and exploring the vastness of the outer planes in search of a spell to bring back the Horned God.

The countryside is ruled by a nobility of ancient linage. These families command the king's cohorts and rule the serfs as they see fit; some are corrupt, others less so. Orc lords and even a few eldritch goblins, once a powerful contingent in the imperial legions, remain in the Punj, and serve the king and his offices. Punj wars upon her southern neighbors, but more often her energies are spent staving off barbarian attacks from the north and east. They still maintain the militaristic traditions of their fathers. As in the past a great deal of their wealth comes from the plunder they take from raids upon their neighbors. Much of the world's slave traffic originates in the Punj, as barbarians from the steppes are captured and sold as galley slaves and farm hands.

Economic Rating: 3

The Army

The kingdom can field an impressive array of soldiery, up to 15 cohorts, each averaging about 1,500 men, but of these only about half are professional soldiers; the others are conscripts or forced into the army. They are well equipped, however, as their masters long ago plundered the military stores of Unklar.

Of the Gods

The worship of Unklar is dominant here, though tolerance is given to other gods where the merchants are concerned.

Of Her People

The Punj is a country of small deep forests, valleys, and rolling prairie. The serfs cultivate vast stretches of the region, growing an assortment of crops. Rye and wheat dominate the agricultural production, but lesser crops of barley and sugar beets are grown as well. The realm flourishes in trade, most of the traffic passing through the Rhuneland and on to the Flintlock in well guarded caravans to the west, where it is sold in the markets of Augsberg, Eisenheim, and as far away as Avignon. Horses are the most valuable import, coming mostly from Augsberg. Of late, many of the merchants and nobles have begun attempting to open trade with the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle. This has met with mixed success, for the dwarven memory is long and the loss of Havok Castle remembered (see below).

The Punj is a civilized land. Her people, nobles, and merchants prefer to live in large walled cities, assigning the management of their estates to trusted foremen (usually soldiers), though some are beginning to adopt the western habit of moving out into the countryside to manage their own affairs. In this manner, small palaces and castles are becoming prolific across the whole kingdom. In the cities, the streets are generally paved and the walls in good repair and heavily guarded. These towns are the last vestiges of Unklar's world and are orderly on the surface. The thief guilds own the night, many in service to the Paths of Umbra, but they pay a heavy price in gold to city officials for this privilege.

Many products are still grown in the Punj, including nuts of many types, rare spices, fruits, and so forth. The nuts travel to the farthest corners of the world, as they are highly prized. A pound of various spices may bring as much as 10gp.

How the Punj Came to Be

When the Horned God ruled the world of Aihrde, he commanded vast legions of men. These experienced soldiers formed the nucleus of his rule, but as with any army of man or god, there are soldiers who command the fear of other soldiers. Such were the men of the Punj. Here, the lands bordered the wild Grundliche Mountains where the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle waged a continuous war against the towers of Aufstrag. To the east were the Plains of Achrothos and the nomads who raided continuously, showing no mercy to any and all they encountered. To crush these many enemies, Unklar strengthened the Punj with money and power, so that in time the men of those towns and villages became wealthy in the service of Unklar. They waxed powerful under the tutelage of the Winter Dark and became the greatest of the Horned God's legionnaires.

During the Winter Dark Wars two legions held the country between the Flintlock and the Punj against the Northmen, the rebel legions of Augsberg, and the dwarves. After long years of fighting some of the most difficult campaigns and suffering the desertion of Albrecht, one of their commanders, the legions were largely spent. At the first Battle of Gotzenburg, 1128md, General Paskevitch met and fell at the hands of Luther, Lord of Dreams, though the paladin spared the commander for reasons untold in the histories. Paskevitch fell back across the

Upper Udunilay River and fortified towns and castles from there to the Ondavar River in the Punj. Defeated and disheartened, these men were all but forgotten in the continuing struggle. When the Council of Light banished Unklar from the world, the Winter Dark Wars at last seemed to be over.

Paskevitch repaid Luther's mercy with continued war. In an short time he regrouped his scattered legions, reformed them and made an attack on the Flintlock. Many refugees from Aufstrag joined him, mostly orcs and ungern and several eldritch goblins as well. With their sorcery and his armies of men and orc he returned the war to the Council.

As is written Paskevitch delivered the single greatest defeat that the western alliances suffered. In 1130md, at the second Battle of Gotzenburg, his men stormed the dwarven fortress and threw down its walls. The dwarves fought on in many small pitched battles. In truth they had never recovered the losses of Olensk (see "Grundliche- Hohle") and were made to suffer thereby. In battle after battle the dwarves were routed from the heights of the Flintlock and by year's end driven into the mountains. There the disciplined legions dealt the dwarves another humiliating defeat. In a stunning coup the impregnable fortress, Havok, fell to Paskevitch. It is said that goblin sorcery opened the gates of that place and let the men in, but none can now say for the castle is lost to all. Renamed castle Unklarglich, it has become a place of dread evil, for a mogrl from Aufstrag settled there, hungry for vengeance against Dolgan King.

Paskevitch, with dwarven rule in the Flintlock ended and his western borders free, turned to reforming the scattered townships and cities. There, local nobles began asserting themselves in the absence of direction from Aufstrag. The consummate soldier, Paskevitch conquered the townships and reorganized them along military lines. Any who resisted him went to the gallows. Very rapidly he consolidated his power over the whole vast region. In truth, the Rhuneland and the peoples of the Flintlock proved troublesome to rule and in 1138md he pulled his cohorts out and demanded tribute only (see "Rhuneland"). Using the priests of Unklar he raised himself to the throne of the Punj where he ruled until his death in 115md.

Mikhail Paskevitch, his sister's son, assumed the crown upon the old warrior's death. He too knew little outside the life of a legionnaire. Born in a military camp, he grew up with little else and he spent the better part of his young life on campaign in the Winter Dark Wars.

His proved to be an orderly, if harsh, rule. Mikhail, never kind, always dealt equally with his people, high and low. Under his guiding hand the remnants of the old legions were reformed. Their maintenance proved burdensome to the realm, and in order to alleviate this problem King Mikhail divided the old cohorts into smaller troops and dispersed them across the realm. The troops were segregated, the orcs and ungern being put in cohorts of their own.

Always a wealthy province of Unklar's empire, the Punj found adjustment to the new world difficult. They struggled against the growing chaos of particularism. It is for this reason that the folk of the Punj adapted well to the leadership of the House of Paskevitch. They were harsh task masters but they maintained the orderly world set down by the Horned God. Too, they brought wealth in plunder and trade back to the lands and her people.

In the eighth year of his reign King Mikhail died battling raiders from the east. He is remembered as a great king by the folk of the Punj, his dying words entreating his lieutenants to keep his uncle's kingdom intact and safe from the "corruption in chaos which comes from the lands of the west."

Mikhail had no children and his fall ended the short-lived Paskevitch dynasty. Feodor Godunov, the commander of King Mikhail's horse guard, took power in Ivgonerad. Only a few challenged him but the scattered armies remained loyal to the name Feodor and so it was that the Godunovs came to power in the Punj.

Under the Godunovs, the Punj increasingly developed along the lines of the other realms of Aihrde. During his short reign Feodor II re-fortified the capital fortress of Ivgonerad. In order to maintain the cost of the cohorts he strengthened the hands of the nobles against the peasants and merchants, giving them rights to lands and property above and beyond what his predecessors had dared to do. The people groaned a little, but food remained plentiful and the power of the king untouchable.

Feodor II met his end at the Hittendain Forde in the Flintlock. The Lindesfarne clan of gnomes refused to pay tribute and their thane fell upon Feodor at a feast. He slew Feodor with a great hammer. For this the Lindesfarne clan was all but exterminated and to this day gnomes enter the Punj with the greatest of care for their lives. This ended the tributary status of both the Flintlock and the Rhuneland, and the borders of the Punj became fixed on the Ondavar River.

Feodor's son Yuri took the throne and during his long reign solidified the realm of the Punj as a great power. He further strengthened the privileges of the nobility and established their further loyalty to the crown by liberally granting many of them commands in the cohorts. Many of these lords used these posts to further strengthen their regional power. Some were orcs and a few ungern; they ruled as any lords of the Punj. Yuri counteracted this by granting more rights of trade to the merchants so that they too would be loyal to him. In the ever increasingly complicated politics of the Punj, Yuri played one side off the other.

In the final years of his reign, King Yuri reformed the cohorts once more. He ordered the old brigandine breast plates discarded, and in their place the men were outfitted with chain shirts, long conical shields, bascinets, scimitars, and spears. Each regional commander was ordered to train one in every three of his men as horsemen (all the humanoids were exempted from this service). The horse guard, long mounted, was similarly attired, and under Yuri it became common practice to hire mercenary soldiers to both fill the ranks and command the troops. He ensured their loyalty with generous payments of gold.

Yuri continued the tradition of his forefathers by dying in battle. In the latter years of his reign the powers of Aufstrag came under the rule of Coburg the Undying. He sought to bring back Unklar and in preparation for this began an attempt to reform the eastern lands where worship of the Horned God remained common. Yuri rebuked Coburg and war followed. Coburg's power, still untested, proved no match for the martial spirit of the cohorts of Punj. Yuri led the army against the minions of the Undying One and destroyed them to a single man at Crossed Plains. Yuri, however, fell in the maelstrom, and his body was brought back upon his own horse.

The priests of Unklar celebrated the victory and mourned the death by crowning the king's son as Feodor III.

Of Her Kings

Feodor I Paskevitch (1131 md-1151 md)
Mikhail (1151 md-1158 md)
Feodor II Godunov (1158 md-1164 md)
Yuri (1164 md-1087 md)
Feodor III (1187 md-present)

RHUNELAND

The Imperial Governors are gone and there are no kings or princes here, only towns. These powerful burgs possess high walls and are ruled by mayors, councils or lordly families.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The Rhuneland lies between the Olgdon and Ondavar Rivers. The Udunilay River runs through the region. These great rivers, smaller to be sure in these northern climes, and their tributaries, water the flat rolling plains that lie between the Grundliche Mountains and the Grossewald Forest. Much of it is grassland, where a mixture of wild wheat and prairie grass grows. Old abandoned farms, stone shadows of their former selves, dot the countryside.

Travel in the Rhuneland

The country consists of long, shallow valleys and deep grasses. The long East Road cuts through from the Punj to the southern reaches of the Flintlock. Smaller roads crisscross the country between towns and villages, but these are largely unpaved tracks.

The Heraldry

Their standards are too many to count and reflect the power of each city individually, the families who run them, the guilds who own them, the knights who defend them, and so on.

Of That Land & Governance

The Rhuneland is a wild place, where a dozen or so towns compete with one another for trade and farmland. Merchant families, guilds, peasant communes, and a breed of urban knights are caught up in the ongoing struggle. The years of war long ago led the towns to erect walls with parapets and towers around them, and very few citizens dare to live in the open. This, coupled with an increase in the east/west trade, has brought a great deal of brigandage to the countryside. Orcs and ungern from the Grossewald Forest and hobgoblins from the mountains all stalk the open, unguarded country. Giants even, from time to time, come down from the north, hunting for easy prey.

ECONOMIC RATING: 2

The Army

Each town fields what manner of army it can afford, these range from a few dozen to hundreds. They all have stout walls and an able defense. The towns have never acted in concert.

Of the Gods

All gods are welcome in the Rhuneland; even Unklar is openly worshiped here.

Of Her People

The towns themselves are rough places. Taverns and brothels mingle with shops and markets on all the major streets. Out from the main thoroughfares people live in small houses, crowded on narrow streets. Mostly wooden affairs, these buildings are hazardous for a variety of reasons. Fires are common, thieves more so. It can be very dangerous to walk the streets unarmed at night and sometimes even during the day. The knights control the town guards, usually their own retainers, and are, as often as not, the city's only law. The various mayors, burghers and guildsmen spend much of their time and money hiring rogues to do ill jobs against their competitors, sometimes against people in other towns, but more often against their neighbors.

Almost anything of an illicit nature can be found in the Rhuneland. Opium and lotus dens abound, most of them controlled by that guild of guilds, Muddles Inc. (see "Guilds & Orders"). Brothels and slave pits are common as well. The sport of the Cleaver Pits has even found its way into the towns. These small arenas, where armed combatants are thrown against each other in a fight to the death, attract a great many gamblers.

The towns wage constant warfare against each other. They hire mercenaries to attack their neighbors, despoil the land and kill the farmers. This has led many farmers to form small communes. They till the land under the watchful eyes of their guards, but at night retire to small walled burgs. Those who tend the cattle herds generally bring them into walled enclosures each night, or at the very least, up near the town's walls. Strangers are rarely welcome unless they bring plenty of coin. The farmers grow rye and some wheat.

Halfling gypsies come to the Rhuneland all the time. Their wagon fortresses offer them an easy defense against marauding bandits. They thrive on the desperation of the townsmen and guilds.

The region's greatest export is leather, and this mostly to the Punj and the dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle. This has led the leather guilds to dominate in many of the towns.

The Red March lies within the Rhuneland's borders (see the adventure module, The Fantastic Adventure). Some of the towns of note are Gorlice, Laibach, Celtje (pronounced with a 'K'), and Oroanograd.

How the Rhuneland Came to Be

The vast sprawling Rhuneland, as well as the Luneberg Plains, served as the heart of the imperial domains under the rule of Unklar. Here, the gifts of Unklar in the early days of his reign enriched the whole of humanity. With the Language of Creation, he wove new life into the frozen tundra. He gave to the people of those lands a wealth of plants to grow so that his frozen world of ice and snow would not starve. Ever since, the soil there produces abundant crops, full and rich to eat.

The sages remind us that Unklar did not do this out of kindness for the madness of starvation which his winters brought to Aihrde. Rather it came from necessity, for the strengths of gods are forever bound in the strengths of those who worship them.

During the age of the Winter Dark, the Rhuneland thrived. Towns, such as Blathnat, were erected along the banks of the great rivers, in the plains and upon the slopes of the mountains. They tilled the earth, planting and growing foodstuffs which were carted all over the wide world. The Punj to the east relied upon the foodstuff to feed their armies. Aufstrag's host of slaves could not have lived but for the Rhuneland. All this brought wealth to the area, which attracted an ever greater number of folk. The towns swelled with men and women whose whole concern was the buying, selling, and transporting of produce. The farmers in their small villages grew the produce and the merchants used them to fill their purses.

They lived thus for many hundreds of years. Families grew old and passed into oblivion while new ones arose. A fierce competition exist-ed between various houses and towns. Mercenaries from all over were hired to defend caravans, to collect customs, and to intimidate farmers. In time, a class of urban knight became prevalent there. Retired merce-naries who bought shares in the towns gained a vested interest, so they stayed and settled. They of course, brought their sons up

in the service of various towns and grew wealthy in its defense as well as through the exploitation of the villages and farmers. In the latter years of the rule of Aufstrag, conditions became so bad that peasants and farmers built stone walls around their houses and barns. Often towns paid for these to help protect them and their produce from marauding bandits.

In all, the Rhuneland suffered greatly from the continual fighting of its masters, but the powers in Aufstrag turned a blind eye to the whole affair, so long as the food kept flowing to the legions.

During the Winter Dark Wars the region miraculously escaped despoilment. The battles shifted south to the unfortunate Luneberg Plains. The towns there were utterly destroyed, farmers put to flight or death and the whole area turned into a wasteland (see "Luneberg Plains"), but here, only the dwarves threatened the security of the towns. The dwarves however, found themselves at war in the Flintlock more than in the plains, fighting the Masters of Punj for control of that great cor-ridor to the west.

The Rhuneland did suffer however, for the empire used up its vast wealth financing the war. The Commanders of the Punj garrisons marched through the towns continually on their way to the Flintlock. They quartered troops, procured food and equipment without pay and, most telling of all, robbed the region of most of its draft animals. These last the armies needed to pull wagons of supplies with them and to haul their great siege engines into the mountains.

When, in 1128md, the dwarves defeated the Lord Commander Paskevitch at the first Battle of Gotzenburg, the retreat- ing legions plundered their way across the Rhuneland. They ransomed merchants, impressed hundreds into the army and, in some cases, they looted the smaller villages, often putting their inhabitants to death. When Paskevitch regrouped and attacked the Flintlock again in 1130md, much the same oc- curred as before. Grain was taken, livestock and equipment as well, and they paid for nothing.

The priests of Unklar encouraged the towns to give over their wealth to the legions to support the holy war they waged against the evil of chaos. Many turned against them then, welcoming the missionaries of Ore-Tsar who preached a better world under the new found sun.

The fall of Unklar led to rebellion and civil war throughout the Rhuneland as various towns and wealthy merchants vied for power. For a short while the king of the Punj, Feodor Paskevitch, exercised rule over the region, but his troops were too few and the towns too rebellious. By 1138md he pulled out, leaving the area to its own devices; his nephew and the other Godunov's took tribute for some time, but even this died out over time.

The region sank into a long morass of internecine warfare of which it has only recently begun to recover. At first, the towns relied upon their own knights, long accustomed to defending the various burgs, to protect them, but the wars were brutal and the knights too few, so they hired mercenaries to fight their battles. All this warfare horribly disrupted the harvests, which had barely recovered from the depredations of the Win- ter Dark Wars. Trade dwindled until at last it dried up. With little money coming in, whole towns were soon bankrupt, un- able to pay the many bands of mercenaries which now resided throughout the countryside.

These mercenaries began robbing their would-be masters, burning and pillaging the towns. This led, for a time, to mob rule. The guilds of various towns, acting in unison, drove out the mercenaries in one painstaking campaign after another. The slaughter on both sides was horrible and reflected the horrors which her sister lands in the south, the Luneberg, had suffered during the Winter Dark Wars.

At last, after many years, a certain equilibrium came to the Rhuneland, though not enough wealth remained to attract the soldiers of fortune. The guilds and merchants, desperate to reopen commercial trade with their neighbors, lay aside their internal squabbling and attempted to rebuild, and farmers returned, albeit in far lesser numbers, to the homesteads.

The Rhuneland prospered for a time, particularly during the reign of King Yuri in the Punj. He spent vast fortunes on reequipping his cohorts, and bought whole herds of horses from the western kingdoms. Though his own folk guarded the transport of the animals, they had to pass through the various towns of the Rhuneland where they paid dearly for fodder and water rights. Eventually the export of grains to feed the horses of the Punj became a major source of income, as did worked leather goods for the cohorts. The slave traffic, mostly from the east, found ready markets in the Rhuneland.

Though towns suffered financial setbacks during the 1180's due to bad harvests and giant raids from the mountains, they recovered quickly by shifting their focus to livestock grazing. Cattle farming became the norm and the leather guilds soon dominated the economy.

ROHEISEN HOHLE

This land is ruled by Lord of the Iron Rock, Ondorog, Helgostohl Under King, the Fifteenth of That Name.

Geographical Location

The Iron Mountains sit above the north-eastern Inner Sea. There they crawl along the coast line, their arms dipping be neath the waters, emerging here and there as islands in the Hallows Sound. Fjords cut the beaches in numerous places, clawing their way into the gentle, grasscovered slopes of the Iron Mountains. Here the mountains are very old, and much weathered, so that few of them climb as high as their neighbors to the south or west. The country is rocky, grassy, and shows very little sign of once having contained one of the greatest of dwarven holds. Roheisen Hohle, beneath Mount Tur, the highest peak in the Iron Mountains, is the oldest of the existing dwarf hohles. Carved from the very rock of Mount Tur, the city kingdom sprawls out like a spider's web in the surrounding mountains.

Travel in Roheisen Hohle

Getting to Roheisen Hohle is difficult. The city is buried beneath the weathered mountains and shows almost no sign of its past glory. Much of it has wasted away, and only one main entrance exists, and this sets atop Mount Tur. There a ruin juts out of the mountain's top, though from a distance it looks very much like a jumble of rocks. The rocks are in fact the uppermost chambers of what was once underground, but time and war have opened to the surface. Within, where once rooms stood, is an empty cavity that has filled with water. A single stair leads down into the ruin, vanishing beneath the water. The entrance lies beneath the water at the foot of the stair. There one must swim down a long shaft until it rises again in another room deeper in the earth.

Beyond that are long and deep dungeons, all piled one atop the other. These must be navigated before ever one comes to the city beneath. But the city is largely abandoned so travel to the inner city is long and hard, over unmarked halls for roads, through chambers of rooms, over chasms and through the deeps. There are no maps and only a few know the way.

The inner city is as old as any dwarf structure. Little space is wasted here; halls border houses underneath bridges which span the roads to other homes and buildings. All of this is carved from the heart of the mountain, but here, unlike most dwarven hohles, the tunnels fan out from the inner city, crossing huge distances before ever they meet another room, plunging into unspeakable depths, and driving outward as well, some as far away as to lie beneath the Straights of Roheisen. It is a wide realm.

These outer holes and forgotten places were carved long ago, and have long since been abandoned by the stone dwarves. They dwell beneath Mount Tur now only.

The Heraldry

The dwarves bear the iron totemic pole of their people. At the apex of the pole a fan of thinly wrought iron blades extends to the heavens. Upon each blade are the names of great smiths. Beneath the blades are totems made of iron mixed with gold and platinum. The top disk bears the name of the hohle's First Father. The second disk holds that of the king, the third depicts the hohle's All Father, and all succeeding disks represent units, professions, etc.

Of That Land & Governance

The king is a large, very old dwarf. He enjoys his drink over- ly much, determined, or so he says: "to spoil my last days on Aihrde with beer for blood in my veins and stone for skin on my bones!" At the king's side sits the realm's All Father. Before any large decisions are made the king calls the peo- ple to the Meeting Hall, a large, cavernous room with stone bleachers on either side of the hall. Here people gather to discuss the realm's future. There are no seating assignments outside of the king's throne and the All Father's; those first to arrive chose their own seats. Sometimes only a few show, sometimes thousands. All are allowed to speak in the Meet- ing Hall, voicing their concerns, desires, etc. The king has final say on any decision and may choose to follow the de- sires of his people or his own will.

ECONOMIC RATING: 3

The Army

Roheisen Hohle is a shadow of its former self, able to field only a few thousands warriors in its defense. However, these are all decked out in magical plate mail, with powerful weapons, helms, and shields.

Of the Gods

The All Father is worshiped here, though no gods are shunned (not even Unklar), but for the goblin god.

Of Her People

The dwarves here are not plentiful. Some few thousand occupy this vast city, built to hold so many more. They are anachronisms of the old world. They look different from the dwarves which walk the south lands. They are shorter, thick boned, with broad noses and lips. They hear and see in the dark better than any but for the eldritch goblins, for they live in the dark, keeping only candles and gentle lights to see their way. This soft light exposes centuries of finely carved statuary, friezes and motifs, all depicting the world in its unfolding. These silent halls are wondrous to behold.

These people of the ancient folk do not trifle with wealth, for the combined masses of gold and silver within Roheisen hohle defies description. They live life as they desire after millennia of eating fish captured in the depths, and living off the peculiar molds and underground fauna that dwarves have always eaten.

Many people lusting for knowledge, wealth, or pure adventure come to Roheisen Hohle. Though it is difficult to find, many dark and strange creatures linger in the lower halls, having long since taken advantage of their abandonment.

How Roheisen Hohle Came to Be

Even before the Goblin-Dwarf Wars, Roheisen Hohle stood out amongst dwarven homes. Her people settled upon the slopes of the mountains, building towns and villages, where they farmed and fished the plentiful waters of the Sound.

When chance revealed a series of wide, deep caverns beneath Mount Tur, they turned to tunneling, where they unearthed metals and other wealth. They worked the metal into tools and weapons and eventually left their villages to dwell underground.

The greatest of their people they named as their leader, and so Helgesthol came to the throne and he founded the kingdom of Roheisen

Hohle. He was called by his people the Under King, and since that day his line has ruled beneath Mount Tur, bearing both his name and his wisdom.

His people grew in both wealth and power. In working metals into wondrous devices, few matched their skill, and in stone work they stood out above a people well versed in such arts. They alone mastered the art of binding metal into stone, a technique that allowed them to create wonders of art the likes of which the world had never seen. Patient in their labors, never hurried or pressed, they were much like the stone and iron they worked. This was how they repaid the debt to the All Father and they took the task to heart.

At first they made tools and weapons, armor, shields, and other devices, but they turned their skill towards their home, making the tunnels stronger and deeper. They cast metal into all they did and this allowed them to make shapes that no stone could hold. The halls of their kingdom reflect their skill, but this proved too simple a task and they set to decorating all the surfaces of their realm with reliefs of tales of dwarves and the All Father, of giants, dragons, and all manner of diverse subject. In time the fame of their works spread far and wide, so that other dwarves came to see them and marveled at their skill.

They were called the stone dwarves and to celebrate their fame they carved a single chair from a block of iron-stone and this they gave to Helgesthol Under King. From the Iron Rock he and his kindred ruled for many thousands of years.

In time, the city grew large underground. The tunnels were like highways, arched bridges spanned the gulfs of dark chasms and halls of rooms were everywhere beneath the earth. Never as deep as others, Roheisen Hohle spread under many peaks and hills. Thousands of dwarves went about their daily tasks, crafting and mining, all in the well lit chambers of the underdark. Here, a city and its pleople flourished wholly underground.

In time, during the Goblin-Dwarf Wars, an All Father placed one of the Brass Rings in the depths of Roheisen Hohle and the kingdom became a great forge where all manner of articles of war were built. The depths they plundered for every scrap of iron they could, to make themselves and their cousins invincible to the goblins.

As is told elsewhere, the wars raged across the planes and mountains of Aihrde for thousands of years and many a hohle the goblins plundered. Though on at least two occasions the goblins lay siege to Roheisen Hohle, they never took the mountain city. During the second siege, they managed to breach the underhalls but to no avail, for the dwarves slaughtered them in great numbers and cast their dead into the depths.

In the 89th century as dwarves reckon time, during the height of these wars and after the second siege, Helgestohl Under King, the ninth of that name, closed the gates to Roheisen Hohle and sealed all entrances to Mount Tur with magic of his own crafting. Moreover, he crafted a magic into the stone of the mountains that would confuse and dishearten any who tried to mine or tunnel into the kingdom.

The king reasoned that their hohle lay too close to the goblin kingdoms in the Grundliche Mountains and therefore suffered too much from the goblin despoilment. Also, he reasoned, they had the Ring of Brass and could come and go as they chose to aid their cousins in the never-ending wars.

This they did for a great many years, until at last a flaw in the great Ring caused it to crack. The king ordered his smiths to mend it and open the portals to the other dwarven realms. This they failed to do, though they labored upon it for many long years.

At last Ondorog Under King, the second of that name, the grandson of Helgostohl IX, commanded that they desist and that the gates to the valley be opened, but too many years had passed and the spells of the old king were forgotten. Try as they might, they could not break the seals. Such were the magics of that previous monarch that the dwarves were bound within Mount Tur, unable even to mine their way out.

In truth this did not perturb them over much. The kingdom lived in peace and had not known such comfortable days since the early years before the Goblin Wars. To this end, the dwarves lived out their days apart from the world above.

They were ruled by the kings of the line of Helgestohl. They mined deeper into the world of Aihrde and fashioned wondrous works of art and sculpture. They unearthed a vein of silver and with it decorated many walls and arches. It caused a peculiar affect. It reflected the light of torches and lanterns, casting a glittering array of light in front of any who traveled the halls. In this manner the dwarves of that place took to calling their home the Silver Halls of Roheisen.

The years underground greatly diminished the folk of Roheisen Hohle. The light of day became as a legend to these people and as more of the elder dwarves passed into stone they forgot their histories. Legends of ancient battles were told to children as fairy tales. They forgot their way in the dark deeps of the world. For a great while their population remained constant, even growing some, but when the Plague of Stone, or the Stone Curse, came into the halls, all changed.

For a dwarf the Stone Curse is a great calamity. It is an incurable ailment of the skin. Only dwarves are subject to it, though some say that the goblins also fall to the curse. Its origins are not of the natural order but rather the mystical. Some say breathing the dust of magic crafting brings it on; others say lengthy exposure to the dark of the underworld is the cause. Still others report that the Stone Curse is nothing less than a corruption of the Language of Creation, a corruption of that magic which formed the world and which can never be overcome, even as creation may not be unmade.

Whatever its origins, the Stone Curse is a horrible disease, for it binds its victim to the dark. If a light much brighter than a torch brushes the skin, then that very skin is turned to stone. The pain of the transformation is excruciating, and the stone-skin must be cut off from the whole flesh. Those afflicted cannot even look at bright light or their eyes meld to rock, in which case they soon die. If the light of day should touch any part of the diseased then the unfortunate creature turns to stone. How the curse spreads from one to another has always been a mystery. There is no known cure for it; no magic poultice nor spell has ever had any effect.

There are those, few in number, who believe the Curse is tied to the Judgment of Corthain. It is believed that Burol himself, the Stone God, could lift it, if not for the Judgment, but Corthain's words can only be removed when the Red God returns.

This curse bound the dwarves to an even darker world. Only with the greatest of care could they fashion things, as is always the wont of dwarves, for the light of the forge enacted the curse. They took to avoiding one another, few ever wed or mated, and fewer still brought offspring into the world. Soon, despair took them. They felt imprisoned in their underground world. They could not leave and those free of the curse knew that eventually they too would succumb.

In time of years the once great kingdom of Roheisen Hohle declined, becoming a shadow of its former self. Her kings ruled an embittered people and the people lived out their lives, apart from the light of day and the hope of the world. The world forgot about them.

Those dwarves, historians and sages of the broader world, who studied the histories of the dwarves, wrote the kingdom off as one of the many which disappeared in the Goblin-Dwarf Wars, and even its locale they forgot. So the dwarves of Roheisen lived, lived, forgotten beneath the steps of Mount Tur, for thousands of years, and the world changed above them.

During the long Winter Dark the fire giants, evil creatures possessed of a deep calculating malice, settled in the Iron Mountains and discovered the upper halls of the dwarven realm. Long abandoned, the giants carved them out and made them a home. They dwelt there for many years, but during the Winter Dark Wars the Council of Light sought out the giants and hoped to destroy them, thus weakening the power of the Horned God. They pursued the fire giant king, Nurrich, across the straits to his halls. In the battle Daladon threw down the fire giant king, but his spell broke into the mountainside, uncovering the halls of silver.

The Council stood in amazement and set about exploring this lost world. They entered the caverns by the single stair, exploring the deeps. They were greeted by heavily armed, pale skinned dwarves of an otherworldly nature. Dolgan King, Lord of Grundliche-Hohle, stood at the Council's fore and talked with Ondorog Helgostohl, Under King the 14th of that name. The two brother monarchs wept bitter tears for the discovery, and Dolgan pulled upon his beard at news of the horrid Stone Curse.

During the Winter Dark Wars, Ondorog Helgostohl XIV made secret alliances with Dolgan and some of the gnomes. Men styled the dwarves of Roheisen Hohle the "stone dwarves," and though they did not come out of their kingdom to fight, they made weapons of war for their cousins and allies. Only once did the Stone Dwarves participate in battle, and that in the closing days of the war.

Few could match them underground and a small troop of them, bound in cloth and moved in heavy wagons, traveled to the Great Tree, entering its depths to fight a war against the creatures crawling underneath that horrid place. Tragedy befell these noble souls for they came to ancient Klarglich, the forge of Dolgan when he served as Unklar's slave, and there the Flawless Fire, that is the breath of Unklar, still burned, as it is fated to do until the Gonfod should come. The light was too great and they caught unawares and suffered for it. Many were turned to stone, though some only partially so, and their screams carried long into the far places of that hard world and they were lost.

These were the last of the dwarves to leave the kingdom for the rest retreated deeper beneath the earth. There is but one known entrance and this lies upon the gentle slopes of Mount Tur where part of the hill has given way, creating a large crater, and exposed the upper works of the dungeons. This soon filled with water and a calm, still lake formed. Upon its northern rim a lonely stair rises from the water, and it is believed that to follow it down, beneath the lake brings one to a corridor deep beneath the earth, this too is flooded but leads through a hatch to a level above it, and thus entrance is gained.

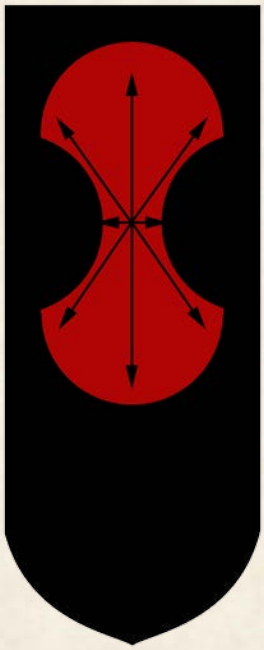
The kingdom has faded from memory however, and few if any travel there anymore. Though occasionally the petrified bones of a dwarf are found upon the slopes, lying in the cool grass and sunlight.

Of Her Kings

Helgesthol King (Third Rin)
Ondorog Helgesthol King, Fifteenth of That Name (Sixth & Seventh Rin)

TAGEA

This is the land of the Two Kings. King Niadus commands the army. King Demosthenes the city of Tagea.



Geographical Location

The islands of Tagea consist of eight larger isles and dozens of smaller ones set off the west coast of Aachen. There are also several small colonies, city states on the mainland, set between the Innes River in Aachen and the Flat Bush coastline. Gentle hills and slopes dominate the isles' topography. Wild grasses mingled with brush cover the islands, making them prime grazing land. A few small wooden glens grow here and there, usually around a small lake of which there are plenty. There is some wild game, but mostly birds, cranes, geese, ducks and the like. The smaller isles have few people living on them, a colony or two at best, and attract religious hermits, retired veterans and so forth, those who enjoy a repast of solitude.

Travel in Tagea

The country is not difficult to negotiate, making travel easy. Paths crisscross the islands, mostly goat and cattle tracks, but they make walking easy and comfortable.

The Heraldry

The men of Tagea carry black and red shields in battle, and these are decorated with a red emblem from which eight spears radiate.

Of That Land & Governance

The Tageans are ruled by two kings who each serve for one year. The kings are elected by the warrior citizens, both men and women, the hoplites, heralded as some of the best warriors in the world. Tagea is unusual in that any race may vote in choosing the king, so long as he or she resides in Tagea for more than a year, is productive in some capacity, and is willing to defend the city by force of arms or by sorcery.

The present kings are Niadus and Demosthenes. Niadus is a young man who earned his reputation as a warrior fighting under King Araxia. He is headstrong and seeks to push the powers of Tagea even further onto the mainland. In this respect he is looking south to the delta of the Olgdon River. He has sent word to Avignon for experienced explorers to chart the area for his navy. Demosthenes is older and more conservative, wishing to strip the mainland colonies of their wealth and quit them. They have had recent battles with both the men of Aachen and the orcs of Onwaltig.

The rest of the population, those who make their living wholly by farming, craftsmanship, sailing, etc., have no voice in government. They are generally taxed heavily to support the hoplite armies and the navy. The governments in the colonies are roughly the same, supporting Tagea with light infantry and auxiliary troops.

Economic Rating: 2

The Army

The Tagean army is highly organized and consists of three classifications of soldiery: heavy infantry (the hoplites), slingers, and sailors. All able citizens must bear arms and they are trained accordingly. Their navy is large, mostly consisting of smaller ships built for shallow or deep water, with rams mounted on the end.

Of the Gods

The Tageans worship all the gods, but Ealor most of all. There are small temples to him throughout the isles, but in the main town itself a large temple dominates the cityscape, being the largest building in the isles. There, a massive statue of the god stands, rising from the waves.

Of Her People

Much of Tagea's wealth comes from fishing and trade. For this reason they keep a large navy with several dozen ships of varying sizes. They are good seamen, and few but the Northmen can match them on the open sea.

The Tageans dwell in sprawling open air villas and revel in building great colonnaded temples to the Ocean God, Ealor. They are generally an open, friendly people who do not fear outsiders, but welcome them. A strong military tradition feeds into their national confidence. The taverns of Tagea are generally clean and orderly, and are well known for their wine and food.

The Tageans produce little beyond fish, whale oil, and grains. They also are famed for their armor and the much sought after Tagean Hound. For the most part, the Tageans have grown wealthy by forcing themselves upon the sea lanes of the world and taking them over, though this has recently changed. The Hanse City States in the north and Maine have begun to encroach on the Tagean domination. To counteract this they have established a loose alliance with Eloria. Together they are attempting to regain control of all southern seaborne traffic.

Legends relate of how one of the Tagean Isles, it is unknown which, is actually the isle of Ibernia. There, in ages past, Arnulf the monk hid the Grail of Jaren One Hand, the Falkhynjager, from the minions of Unklar. The shrine is said to be in a place "where silent water falls, two streams join." What this means is anybody's guess, but it is certain that those fortunate enough to unmask the riddle will find the Grail of Jaren One Hand (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**).

How Tagea Came to Be

Brindisium traces her roots to the Age of Heroes. During the final days of the Catalyst Wars (771oy-800oy), as Kayomar faced defeat and Unklar stood triumphant, the victory of Prince Erik Aristobulus Euryiance over Unklar's navy in 789oy left the command of the sea to the folk of Kayomar. Mourilee Lothian Pendegrantz and a small host of paladins gathered as many of her people as they could, and these refugees flocked to the city of Smythe in southern Kayomar. They assembled a ragtag fleet of ships, and in the company of Luther's bastard son, Morgeld, set sail for the Wall of the Worlds. For years they sailed, the journey a legendary trek fraught with countless horrors.

In the end they found a deep-water bay, surrounded by high cliffs. Beyond the bay lay a well watered land of deep soil and green grass and they named these the Ethlium Lands, that is "Man's End", but later they called them the Greenling Fields, for even in the Winter Dark the light of the sun fell upon the land and the grasses grew. A broad escarpment of jagged cliffs hemmed the Greenling Fields on the landward side, breached only by singular valley which itself was guarded by a wide river. The Valley they called the Valley of Mur, that is the "Light" in the dwarven tongue, for when first the morning's sun rose, it cast its rays down the long cleft of the valley and shone in the Greenling Fields and it was accounted a thing of marvelous beauty.

They built a city for themselves, Faurenost, and there constructed temples to Tefnut and the Og Aust and the Dreaming Paladin, Saint

Luther. It is said that Tefnut herself dwelt near the river in the Valley of Mur and guarded the realm. Rumor of Faurenost came to the west and men believed that it was a realm where the sun never set and the Winter Dark did not reign.

Mourilee passed her days amongst these people and died soon after the colony's founding. However, her line lived for many generations until at last the seed of it died out. These were the last of Luther's true descendants. Even now though, it is rumored that some lived on, trekking across the great wildernesses of Aihrde in search of the unknown.

The folk of that proud land resisted Unklar in their exile. Eventually the paladins established a Holy Council, and in conjunction with the high priestess of Tefnut they set one of their number in governance over all Faurenost. He was master of the Holy Defenders, but in time, the master took the crown as emperor and adopted the eagle as his standard. They took the imperial dignity for order, and tradition, for the Tarvish emperors of the past withstood the might of Aenoch and eventually won out their freedom. So the empire of the Ethrum was reborn, though in truth it was but a shadow of its former self.

The emperors continued to rule and to war against Unklar for a thousand years. In the one thousand and twentieth year in the reign of the Horned God saw the opening of the Gate of Thonor, a magical portal between Gottland and Faurenost. The minions of Unklar managed the gate by using the ancient Rings of Brass of dwarven make. In this manner the dark host issued forth into the Great Waste before the gates of the Valley of Mur. The black hosts filled the flooded plain with refuse and hurled themselves across the river against the high crenelated battlements within the pass itself. These walls stood boldly in defiance of the dark host so that siege was laid against it.

They were held back by the heroics of a small company of men. They lived, drank, ate, and slept within earshot of the walls and gates. When the hordes came forward, throwing grapnels and ladders against the heights, this company of men, led by Captain Tagea, threw them off time and again. The horrific slaughter lasted for many days until the orcs could take it no more and retreated. The whole realm celebrated the victory. They took to calling the company of men the Tageans.

The emperor ordered all the dead entombed upon the planes so that the people beyond the walls could not see the men fallen.

The dark host regrouped, and in fear of their master's rage, they drove against the walls once more. They dammed the river and battered the walls, breaking them apart, but when they made to move through the pass, the High Priestess of Tefnut, who had for many days lay hidden in the river, broke the dam and the pent waters spilled forth and across the host of Aufstrag. Despite this setback many came over the mountains and lay siege with great desolation to the city, towns, and keeps beyond. The Tageans and all those defending the wall found themselves cut off from the city and coast.

The Tageans rallied. After a bitter march, they cut their way across the valley to Faurenost. There Captain Tagea admonished the Imperial Paladins as cowards, "Why did you not come to aid us in our hour of need? It is true that the blood of the old world flows not in your veins!" This act forever set the Tageans and the paladins at odds.

In the end, the host was defeated and they fell back and beyond the walls which were fortified anew. However, the destruction proved devastating, for the orcs and ungern had ravaged the Greenling Fields, so the emperor, in 1125md, deemed their lands unlivable. The greater part of his people departed for the east in ships and galleys. Some few remained behind, living on in the city which escaped the flood.

It took them only a year to return to their ancient homes, but they soon learned they were not welcome, for much had changed in the thousand years of Unklar's rule. The men and women of the Faurenost had changed, and now imperious and commanding. They sailed on, searching for a land to call their own. Captain Tagea at last grew tired of the paladins, their laws, and their never ending order of rules, and broke with them. They demanded the ships be turned over to them and realizing that this would mean that they would be abandoned upon the shores of the Gelderland, Tagea refused. In the evening's early hours he weighed anchor and sailed for the north and west.

They traveled for a time until they came to the islands south of the lands of Aachen. Tagea set foot upon the larger isle to explore it for water and food. He came across a small band of druids who payed homage to Wenafar. Their leader, Cornelius, promised them riches in food if Tagea would but slay a beastly creature that stalked the island's hinterlands. Tagea agreed to this for he knew that his people were desperate and without a home. He set a trap for the creature in the island's hinterlands by placing a dead cow in a pit. Tagea waited patiently for it to come. It did not take long. Half man, half bear, the shambling monster fell upon the proffered bait, devouring it with a rage of hunger. Tagea leapt forward with his men in tow and stabbed the creature repeatedly. The lycanthrope threw off their attacks with ease, falling upon them and rending them asunder. Tagea, a large man by most accounts, grabbed the beast up in his massive arms to crush the life from him. The lycanthrope fought fiercely, clawing great gobbets of flesh from Tagea's backside, until at last the two collapsed to the ground, dead.

The surviving men carried the body down the slopes to the beaches. As word spread, the Tageans came forth from their ships, much distraught. They buried the hero upon a slope overlooking the sea. There they wept at his passing, calling for the gods to carry his soul into the other worlds. Now leaderless, the Tageans gathered in a concourse to discuss what next to do. After long debates it was decided to stay upon the isle and build a city there. This they did. They entreated the druids to join them and together they built their homes upon the sea. They named the city after their beloved captain, Tagea.

They built a temple to Ealor upon the grave of Tagea overlooking the sea. Later in 1143md, the architect Pylus began construction on the Great Temple. Made purely of marble, this huge edifice sprawled over the hillside. Within were gardens, statues, and temple grounds all over-looking the sea, a forum large enough to hold all the Tagean citizens, and quarters for priests, visitors, and so on. Pylus rebuilt the tomb of Tagea, placing his body in a marble sarcophagus overlooking the forum.

The Tageans established a republican form of government where the people elected two kings, one to rule the army and the colonies, and the other to rule the navy and the home city. Only those men and woman who fought could vote. Every year the Cadre of Warriors gathers in the Temple of Ealor to choose the new kings.

After the Winter Dark Wars, the Tageans prospered. Sitting astride the trade routes, Tagea soon became a favorite stopping place for merchants and fisherman. They conquered the neighboring isles and colonized them, though in truth there were few people there to conquer, and those that were gave themselves over freely. The colonies farmed and tended herds of sheep. The Tageans became famous for a breed of dog which they sold only to select people for a very high price. The animal, a Tagean Hound, could communicate telepathically with its master in images, smells, and tastes.

A fiercely militaristic society, the Tageans soon found themselves in demand as mercenaries in the surrounding states. In 1192md, Tagean King Araxia conquered the southern Heristat from Aachen. The wars were short and brutal, ending with the Tageans ensconced in walled towns along the coast. They grew wealthy on shipborne trade and established close ties with Eloria, whose immortal prince held a special place for his one time neighbors (see "Eloria"). Their immediate neighbors in the kingdom of Onwaltig trouble them, for the orcs there are skilled sailors who pirate ships of all nations (see "Onwaltig").

THE CONFEDERATION OF TORRICH

Prince Innocent III rules these lands.

Geographical Location

The lands of the Confederation encompass the Rleuland, the Sea Towns of Ihlsa, Unduliland, the city of Torrich, and the Hlobane. These lands stretch from the Kellerwald Forest in the east to the Kolkrab Mountains in the west, from the Red Hills in the north to the Amber Sea in the south.

Travel in Torrich

Aufstrag maintained the old Imperial Roads in and out of the Bay of Massol, particularly the Torrich Road which led from Aufstrag to that ancient trader's town. Though less maintained than during the Winter Dark, the coastal roads are in remarkable condition. Those that head due east show signs of stress. Overall, travel in the Confederation is swift, easier than in many other realms.

The Heraldry

The red banner with golden chalice heralds the prince, but other heraldry is as recognizable. The blue and white crosshatching with manticore serves the town of Ihlsa. There are also the blue-crossed white shield with crescent moons of Unduliland and the blue crosshatch over white with bear and wolf of Rleuland. There are others, too numerous to catalog, which represent various members of the Confederation.

Of That Land & Governance

Prince Innocent III, rules over the whole of the Confederation: Unduliland, Torrich, the Sea Towns, Hlobane, and Rleuland. Though it is called a Confederation, it is one in name only. The prince's word is law.

He is beautiful above all men. His youthful appearance resembles that of his father and grandfather so much that rumors abound of his origins. Some say that he is the same man, an undead creature, who changes his guise and name to stave off suspicions. The prince holds tentative control over his many realms through magic and assassination. In the latter, he utilizes the skills of the assassin guild, Crna Ruk, the Black Hand. He rules from the large sea town of Torrich, a well ordered town of cobbled streets and stone houses with shingled roofs. Strangers are always looked upon suspiciously but the many pirates who find a warm welcome there make moving through the town easier.

Economic Rating: 2

The Army

The prince can summon an impressive, if motley, army. His soldiery range from the heavy fighting infantry of the Hlobane, to the massed levies from Rleuland. The brigands and militia of the Sea Towns and the pirates of the prince's "navy" round the military power of the Confederation out. They number in the many thousands, but there is little order or military coordination in their ranks.

Of the Gods

The worship of Unklar is prevalent throughout the Confederation. Temples to him abound and are found in almost every town of any size. Some temples to other gods exist but these are fairly rare.

Of Her People

People here tend to live in large villages and towns, mostly along the coast. The land is not rich in soil, but supports many wild and domesticated animals. The old imperial roads have fallen to disrepair, as have many of the outlying settlements. For this reason alone strange beasts slip down from the highlands, finding easy prey in man and beast.

Humans dominate the Confederation of Torrich and the old imperial bureaucracy holds it together. Constant warfare has led many towns to fortify. Towns are walled, except for in the Rleuland, and few villages survive without defensive protection. Strong towers dot the landscape. Whereas in the west, gallant knights battle one another for glory as much as for land, here war is much more deadly. Honor and nobility rarely enter a contest of arms, making warfare vicious.

Rleuland: The Rleuland stretches between the eves of the Kellerwald along the coast to the peninsula. The country is largely flat. Gentle low hills and almost unnoticeable ridges are found in the south, and in the far north, in the country of the Hlobane, are featureless hills. Under the eves of the Kellerwald, the ground becomes a little more rich and the grass thicker. The people there live in small villages and towns, raising livestock and the like. There are a few castles in the Rleuland, but that practice never truly penetrated the country. The lords prefer to live in palaces or walled villas. Most abandon their holdings in the country altogether, choosing to live in Torrich or one of the larger towns of the coast.

The poorest of the Confederation of Torrich, the Rleuland never attracted the priests of Unklar. Consequently, the peasants are less inclined than their neighbors to the worship of the Horned God. They revolted against the prince in the early days of his reign (see below), seeking to align themselves with the empress of New Aenoch. The brutal repression has led the locals to shirk the rule from Torrich; they hide food, do not pay taxes when they can get away with it, and offer solace to almost anyone in the country. The local priests, who dwell in every town, try to control the populace through fear. They have done little but alienate it.

Unduliland: The kingdom of Unduliland derives its vast wealth from salt and silver, both mined in the Kolkrab Mountains. The locals live, much as their neighbors to the east, in villages and towns. Unlike the Rleuland, many of these are walled. Large herds of cattle graze the land, but these are owned entirely by the lords. The peasants live in complete poverty, subject to the whims of their masters. Where the old lords ruled with reason, the new rule with fear. Many of the locals are carted off into slavery in the salt and silver mines.

Temples to Unklar abound throughout the Unduliland. The wizard-priests of Unklar rule hand in glove with the lords and serve Prince Innocent III unquestionably. Travel here is dangerous for those not initiated into the Paths of Umbra, though the lure of wealth in magic, possessed in the temples, draws many thieves from far and wide. Rumors abound that Muddles Inc. has managed to infiltrate the priesthood.

Ihlsa: The crowded Sea Towns along the Bay of Massol are loosely organized under the banner of Ihlsa. The main towns are Nochi, Raveen and Caphyrna. Stone walls predating the current era surround most of the towns, but the inhabitants live in large wooden houses, character-

ized by small rooms and many corridors. All are jumbled together, built one on top of the next. The town governors tax the people for walled space so the houses tend to have as many windows as their struts will support. The harbors are home to few merchant ships and many pirates. They raid the coastal lanes of the Illumbrian Coasts, terrorizing the shipping to and from New Aenoch. Recently, pearl diving in the Bay has increased the wealth of the townships. In general the Sea Towns are filthy disorganized affairs (see "**The Heart of Glass**").

Hlobane: The Nation of the Hlobane orcs live in and around the Red Hills. They are numerous and powerful and still hold to the old ways of the Horned God. Their shamans worship him and their warriors fight under his banner. They are a prideful people for they alone survived the catastrophe of the Toten Fields. Their units never broke, but withdrew in order. They live in townships with large dirt parapets. Travel here is dangerous for any but the servants of the Horned God.

How the Confederation Came to Be

Under Unklar's long rule, the lands south of Aufstrag served him well. Their service to the lords of that great city predated even the his coming. Here, the folk worshiped the Aenochian Emperors of Al-Lios as gods. Many of the aristocracy of these lands served the priesthood which eventually gave its aid to Emperor Sebastian and Nulak-Kiz-Din in summoning Unklar. When the face of the emperors changed and Unklar came to roost in the capital halls of Al-Liosh, they did not turn away, but rather took him as the heir to their own god-emperors.

Nuluk always relied upon the south to supply the Umbrians with the wizard-priests the cult so desperately needed. Many temples were built upon the holy places of the god-emperors and they worshiped Unklar and his minions. In time of years the wizard-priests came to dominate all the lands between the sea, the Grossewald, the Kolkrab Mountains and the Kellerwald. They built temples, schools, and guild houses, all of which were geared toward the Aufstrag. For many centuries these lands served as the breeding ground for the dark worship of Unklar.

When war came, they took up arms and the wizard-priests strove to join their might to that of the other minions of Unklar, but they soon found that their close connections to Unklar hindered them as much as they helped, for when the gods assailed Unklar in his high tower, they tore his attention away from those who needed him most. Their prayers went unheeded and their power over Aihrde waned.

Despite this, they fought on. They served the legions as best they could, adhering to the dictates of the dark priestess Nectanebo. The schools were stripped of young wizards to fight the ever-growing enemy. Many marched off to war, though few returned again to their homes.

Amazingly the lands south of Aufstrag never suffered the ravages of war. They served as recruiting grounds and gave over vast treasure troves of wealth to finance campaigns, fashion armor, supply armies and so forth, but the war never came home to them. Their loyalty remained undaunted even after the fall of the Horned God himself.

With Unklar's demise the ruling priesthood retreated into seclusion. Rumors spread throughout the region that a woman had come who bore the Mark of Kings (see "Aenoch"). The men east of the Kellerwald declared for her, promising her the imperial crown of her forefathers. As with the Horned God, these folk saw the new empress as the legitimate heir to the god-emperor's throne, with their traditions and legends supporting this, but they did not have the opportunity to pay homage to the empress, for civil war overwhelmed the region.

In 1136md, a man arrived in Torrich calling himself Prince Innocent. He claimed to be the heir to Unklar's reign. The prince marshaled the demoralized priesthood behind him when he revealed to them sacred rituals known only to the higher priests. He entreated with them to jettison their beliefs in prayer and dedicate themselves to sorcery. Many did this, but others repudiated him, calling once more for the Horned God to return. With the sorcerers he slew many of that dark brotherhood, and drove the rest into hiding.

With the wealth of the temples at his command, he paid off the four cohorts of troops in the large port city of Torrich. He also hired a host of mercenaries. In 1138md, when his preparations were complete, he launched a brutal campaign south into the Rleuland. The lords there resisted only a little but the people rose in rebellion, anticipating the return of the old line of Aenoch. Prince Innocent crushed the rebellion in a few short months. Villages were burned, newly erected temples to the empress were torn down, and many people were put to the sword. In a very short time the whole of the Rleuland recognized Prince Innocent as their suzerain.

Along the eastern shores of the bay lay the towns of Ihlsa. Few of them bore walls of any description and Innocent's conquest in the winter of 1138 proved easy. Rumors of the destruction in the south aided him tremendously. Next he crossed the bay and attacked Undululiland. Here, the lords resisted him. They rose peasant levies, calling on them to support the empress who rumor reported had arrived in Ascalon to the east. In 1139md, however, Innocent overwhelmed the region. His gold bought allies in the great orc nation of Hlobane. These orcs, living in the Red Hills, came down upon the Undululiland in droves, burning and pillaging as they moved south. Little remained when Innocent entered the area. The rest of the region fell to him with ease.

Innocent called the lords and burghers together in 1140md, forced them into a federation, and crowned himself Prince of the Confederation of Torrich. Ihlsa, parts of Undululiland, Rleuland, the orc nation of Hlobane, and a dozen cities entered into a pact with the prince. He established the rule of the principate in the city of Torrich.

The prince's rule was further cemented when he re-established the imperial bureaucracy. This highly efficient state organ, disrupted during the civil war, returned to the old system of managing the excise tolls, taxes, the movement of persons, livestock and goods, and all the other mundane affairs of state with little fanfare. For a millennia they had kept the rule of the Horned God an efficient one, and they now turned their energies to supporting their new master, the prince.

During the next 20 years, Prince Innocent ruled the Confederation of Torrich. He crushed several rebellions of peasants in the Rleuland and lost portions of the Undululiland to civil war, but otherwise his rule continued unabated until his death in 1160md. His son and successor, whom the prince had kept in seclusion, bore a striking resemblance to his father. He took the crown as Prince Innocent II.

The early years of his reign were marked by an expansion of trade. The ship captains found that the merchants of New Aenoch had long since established the necessary contacts, built a large merchant fleet, and plied the oceans with goods. Their frustration led them into piracy. They began raiding the shipping lanes, impressing sailors, and hauling the goods back to Torrich or other towns along the coast. This eventually led to retaliation from the empress. A continual naval war along the coast continues to this day. Many of the crusaders that come to New Aenoch choose to man ships and attack the pirates of the Torrich.

In 1180md Innocent II died. His son, long secluded, and much like his father, Innocent III bore a striking resemblance to his predecessors.

ZEITZ, THE MARCH

Upon these coastal plains there are no kings or princes, but rather a hardy folk who rule themselves, all, that is, but for the fortress-city of Iergaul, that dread remnant of Unklar's rule. Here, the ungern rule under their dread chieftain, Mithruck.

Geographical Location

The March of Zeitz consists of a broad coastal plain stretching several hundred miles along the northern escarpments of the Grundliche Mountains. The area is breathtakingly beautiful. Gently sloping hills tumble down to the sea, dropping off suddenly into rocky coves or small, secluded, sandy beaches. Small streams and rivers run off the highlands, through narrow gulches to spill into the sea's churning waters. Here, the waters of the Inner Sea are choppy, for a whole range of craggy islands stretch across those deep waters to the Roheisen Mountains in the far north. Behind it all, the stark granite world of the Grundliche Mountains, with their long ridges and white capped peaks, overlook the country like tired old men.

Travel in Zeitz

There is but one main road in Zeitz, the Gunshof Road. It winds along the coast from Iergaul to the Gunshof Pass and hence south into the kingdom of Augsberg. The mountains here creep down to the shores, split by numerous broad fields and grassy plateaus. This makes east-west traffic in Zeitz difficult, as small ranges must be topped constantly, but north-south travel is easier, as the valleys generally lead from the mountains to the sea.

The Heraldry

There are not many banners here, but the two greatest belong to the Knights of Haven and the ungern lords of Iergaul. The knights march beneath the banner of their order and the ungern beneath Unklar's crescent moon.

Of That Land & Governance

The Knights of Haven dominate the coastal plains, their castles dotting the area. They rule by the dictates of the Order, answering only to the grand master or the priests of Ore-Tsar. Others who live here govern themselves as with any frontier region. The Order's chief residence in the region is in Cordea Castle, a massive castle partially protected by incoming tides.

The ungern are ruled by their Chief Mithruck, an intelligent, vile creature with an extraordinary capacity for cruelty. He rules his people and all the citizens of Iergaul with an iron fist..

Economic Rating: 1

The Army

If they gathered under one banner there would be several hundred knights and an equal number of retainers. They are usually well armed and skilled horsemen and sailors, taking to the saddle and sea with equal ease. They are commanded by the local master, Eathelstan of Cordea castle.

Mithruck of Iergaul commands thousands of ungern and half again as many orcs, goblins, hobgoblins and men. These are orderly, if not terribly well equipped

Of the Gods

People worship who they will, but where one is offers some clue. In the Haven Castles, Ore-Tsar is honored, in Iergaul, Unklar is called upon.

Of Her People

The March attracts wild adventurers, desperate fugitives, and erstwhile wizards. The locals war and intrigue against each other and raid the lands to the south. There are several powerful castles of the Knights of Haven, sitting astride the main Gunshof Road, only adding to the confusion in the region.

The March has little to offer the civilized world. There are towns and one city, but all of these are rough frontier communities. The people build their homes out of thick timbers and rock, using thatch to cover them. Sturdy yet primitive buildings, they serve the people as small forts within the larger walled communities. Only the more wealthy towns have stone walls, most having wooden palisades. Within, the people are a dour lot. Men mingle freely with dwarves, orcs, ungern and other races. They care not who someone is; only that someone avoid nosing about. They are brigands, warriors, bandits, and adventurers mostly. They are the world's flotsam and jetsom.

Some, however, are pilgrims, arriving on foot from the south lands. These stout souls seek spiritual aid from the town of Haven which sits upon the far shores of the Inner Sea (see "Divine Orders", or "Ore-Tsar"). For the most part they are poor men and women, but a few nobles come along, though they rarely travel without guards of one type or the other.

The Knights of Haven (see "Guilds & Orders") are a continual presence in the March, serving the pilgrims as guides and guards. They have a few large castles, mostly on the coast, where importing lumber is relatively easy. In the hinterlands they live in small moat and bailey castles. As singular knights, or in pairs, with a dozen or so men-at-arms, they offer refuge to any folk of Ore-Tsar. Food and housing is given freely, though it is common custom to offer goods or coin in turn.

In the March, these knights (even the lesser ones) are rarely molested by the local populace. To do so may bring scores of their brethren down upon the offender, and they are ferocious and unforgiving, putting all malcontents to the sword, regardless of who the original perpetrator was. This is not to say, of course, that their lives are sacrosanct. Many knights die upon the highlands. They fight lonely battles and die lonelier deaths, slain by creatures of eldritch evil and power, hunted, or murdered, like all men.

Iergaul: The only city in all of the March is the dreaded town of Iergaul. High walls with towers interspersed along its whole length make the city look the part of an impregnable fortress. Its history (see below), well known to the locals in legend and song, only adds to the mystique, but the truth is different. The walls are old and cracked in many places. The once impenetrable gates are gone as are many of the towers. Though the cobbles remain, many of the streets have been torn up. Stone buildings great and small lay in ruin, though some still sport shingled roofs. The city is a wrecked ruin, a shadow of its former self. Though, as many have recently learned, it is not uninhabitable.

Many strange creatures call Iergaul home. Even as Haven serves the pilgrims so does Iergaul serve those who pay homage to the Horned God. Wizard priests of the Paths of Umbra (see "Guilds & Orders") live in the long halls where they plot to bring their long banished master back to the world. Recently an ungern lord, Mithruck, has arrived in the city. With him came several hundred of his own folk. He claims to rule the whole city, styling himself "Lord Under Unklar," but he no

more rules the whole place than does the Horned God himself. He has however, begun rebuilding those sections of the city he controls.

Many adventurers are lured to the city, for within its halls are reputed to be many lost treasure troves, hidden away in secret where the crusaders of years past could not find them. Too, there is glory to be had, for slaying the folk of Unklar is always a credit to one's name. And it is a place to hide.

Of How Zeitz Came to Be

During Unklar's long reign the northern barbarians, in distant Gal-Land, never fell to his conquering armies. When the Shroud of Darkness came the barbarians thought only the great Fenris wolf had come to Aihrde, blanketing the world in his breath. On more than one occasion the Horned God or his servants sought to subdue the barbarians, but never fully succeeded. For this reason, when they began their migrations south, they came in strength. They settled upon the northern shores of the Inner Sea and harried all the folk of Unklar's Empire in the Land of Ursal long before before the Winter Dark Wars. Unklar's commanders sought to control this scourge. To this end they built a fortress city upon the sea, one which could hold great stores of goods, horses, men, and other necessities of war. This fortress they named Iergaul and peopled it with a host of Unklar's folk.

The first expedition sent several legions marching around the Inner Sea and against the barbarian tribes of what is today Trondheim. Early successes led the legions to plunge deeper into the wild north. There they attracted more tribes of these wild Northmen, and though these battle-lusty folk always fought one another, they banded together for the glory of the war with the southerners. The campaign ground to a halt in the frozen north. The barbarians chipped away at the legions until at last they began to disintegrate. Their commanders withdrew the legions to the south.

Many more expeditions followed and, they too, ended poorly. The barbarians loved war, rarely shrinking from a fight. Eventually the legionnaires established a few colonies upon the islands south of Mount Tur (see "Roheisen Hohle", "Haven"), but these were eventually abandoned.

Meanwhile, Iergaul grew into a large sprawling port city. Much of it remained within the walls, but whole districts sprang up in the environs. It attracted all manner of folk during the Winter Dark. Here, men could find work as carpenters, metalsmiths, blacksmiths, sailors, boatsmen and other besides. If all failed, then as mercenaries they tramped into the distant north to fight the ever present barbarian hordes.

During the Winter Dark Wars the region languished from neglect. The dwarves closed the passes through the Grundliche Mountains so that only a few could manage to cross over to Iergaul or the lands around. Worse came when the Northmen arrived in their ships, girded for war. They raided the outlying communities, burning and pillaging. The threat became such that a great concourse of ships gathered in Iergaul, and in 1122md when the main fleet sailed from Avignon intent upon the barbarians' destruction, they joined it. They never returned to the city, for as is told elsewhere, they perished at the Battle of Gokstead (see "Eisenheim" and "The Northern Kingdoms"). For the first time in many centuries the folk of Zeitz knew fear. The raiders came more frequently and the Northmen became more bold. Larger towns fell to the raiders. Those that did not die, fled to the hinterlands or found themselves slaves in distant northern climbs.

Thrown upon their own resources, the region quickly dissolved into a host of small cities and townships. They fortified their homes; walls with parapets sprang up as if overnight. Those who did not defend themselves soon perished. The lords of Iergaul rebuilt the walls with huge fortified towers interspersed along its whole length. They turned away many who came to the gates pleading for aid, but only the strong were allowed entry. It soon became a desperate place filled with fierce men, orc, and ungern.

Zeitz continued to suffer. The imperial cohorts that remained deserted the region in 1126md. They plundered the whole country on their march to the south. In some instances they ransomed whole towns with threats of destruction. For the most part, they burned and pillaged, taking what they wanted. Early the following year these same cohorts, little more than a disorganized mob, came over the western mountains to Eisenheim. Marching on to the Detmold in newborn Aachen, they fell afoul of Baldwin and his knights. There they perished but for a few.

These desertions only served to embitter those who remained. Once a proud and powerful land, the March slipped into the obscurity of a backwater. The land soon became the home of many deserters, bandits, homeless knights, adventurers, and homeless riffraff. The towns took on a decidedly different character. Gone were the days of Imperial order, replaced by ramshackle communities run by strong men and thugs.

The barbarians' raids continued, only abating a few years after the fall of Aufstrag. The coves and bays of the coastal region served the barbarians well and many settled there, building small fortified enclaves from which to continue their raids. Within a few years of the Winter Dark Wars, the March broke apart into a dozen walled towns and an equal number of Northmen settlements. Iergaul, for a time, lorded over the region. Internecine war consumed the towns and settlements and the March became a chaotic place, dangerous to all as men and ungern battled for survival.

The greatest of these battles took place in the early years following the banishment of Unklar. In the latter part of 1129 the lords of Iergaul, seeking to enjoin themselves to the victories of the king of the Punj (see "Punj") sent great waves of orc and ungern south and west into Eisenheim. There, they overwhelmed the Northmen settlers, driving all before them into Aachen and the Detmold. All of this brought the Val Tulmiph Daladon to the northern wastes. He brought with him a host of rangers mounted on griffins and wood elves from the Eldwood. Together they joined Queen Ephremere, Baldwin's daughter, in a campaign against the orcs of Iergaul. For almost the whole year of 1131md Daladon remained in the north. He fought two great battles against the orcs, one at the River Rot-Tor and the other at the fortress of Utual. Daladon was hard pressed to keep the forces of the queen together. But he met the warrior cleric Fjörgyn, the Vin-Gotha sister of King Theodahad from Eisenheim, who joined his armies with a host of fresh warriors. With these to strengthen him, Daladon and Ephremere were able to push the orcs back and by the spring of 1132, they lay siege to Utual again. But they could not break its walls and after many months of futile combat they quit the field. Utual survived the siege.

Early the following year the orcs again raided into the south, reaching Aachen where they burned farmsteads and small villages. Daladon rejoined Ephremere in a campaign to destroy them. They fought a series of battles that mimicked the previous years. They fought the bloody Second Battle of River Rot-Tor, where the dead piled so thick, that they clogged the river. The second Siege of Utual came soon thereafter as Daladon was full of the wrath of his people. At this second battle the fortress was overwhelmed and its garrison put to death. The ruins of Utual remains a wrecked ruin, haunted by the ghosts of the dead.

Ephremere's forces came at last to Iergaul and lay siege to it. The siege lasted many months and the ranger-god and his Watchers fell upon

the orcs time and again, but they could not break the walls.,The orcs taunted them so that Daladon became mad with a lust to destroy the city and all who dwelt therein.

To this end he attacked Iergaul time and again. Thrice more he brought armies to the north, battering its walls. In 1140md King Theodahad of Eisenheim stormed the gates of the great fortress, but made it no further, and died there a hero's death. It would not yield, for that mighty place bore great magic, and the ice of the Winter Dark lay in its very stones. At last in 1143md, Daladon rousted out the long disbanded Council of Light. St. Luther called a crusade against Iergaul and many knights and adventurers came to the far north to lay waste to the March and break Iergaul at last. With the armies came Queen Fjörgyn and troops of Eisenheim and Augsberg. Dwarves also came, and they brought diverse instruments of war with them. Many elves of Fontenouq joined the siege, girded in strange armaments. The great host gathered upon the green hills before Iergaul and called for those lords to step down and quit that place.

The orc warlord Ustuf stood forth, laughing and taunting the knights and gods before him. "Do not think you are greater than you are. Curs you are, one and all. By trickery you slew our dread Lord Unklar while he slept in his great halls, but we do not sleep! We are vigilant and have no have fear of the likes of you. For 20 years you have battered at these walls, to no avail. For 20 years we have carted off your people to our slave pits without fear of you. So get you from this place; return to your chattel houses in the south and await us like good slaves. We are your dread foe!"

Daladon returned, "Ustuf! Beware, for I have brought a new battering ram." Then the wizard and archmagi Aristobulus came forth. Clouded in cloaks, he was steeped in eldritch sorcery. He rode a gold-hued charger and from its back called down the powers that only he and Nulak could command. A great howling wind thundered from the skies, battering the gates, even as Aristobulus hurled waves of fire and acid into the cacophony of magic. The doors, rent from their moorings, flew back, crushing many an orc, and the walls cracked, great pieces of them falling away. Daladon led the army forward then, filling the breech with iron and steel, blood, bone, and flesh. He slew Ustuf upon the walls and many more besides. All day and night the battle raged until at last the town lay in ruin, a burning wreck of what it once had been. The southern lords left it thus, after slaying all its inhabitants.

This touched off more wars and the battles between the various Marcher Lords, towns, and other inhabitants continued, unabated for many years. Iergaul was eventually reoccupied, creatures from far off Aufstrag crawling into its wreckage as the wars boiled on, ever more bitter.

Into this maelstrom of brigandage came the Pilgrims of Demeter. Within the foothills of Roheisen Hohle, across the Inner Sea, lay the town of Haven. There, Philip the Guileless had been born, lived and preached the religion of his god. Too, he retired there for some few years. In consequence, the town became a place of pilgrimage which drew many people of all walks of life. Though some crossed the sea, such voyages were costly, and many sought more direct, if longer, routes. This invariably brought them through the March of Zeitz. They trekked up through the far western passes of the Grundliche Mountains, coming down into the coastal plains seeking transport across the sea, or to continue their journey around the ocean through the dangerous lands of Trondheim. Small bribes bought them safe journeys or put them on fishing boats to island hop across the sea.

Though some brought troops of guards and others traveled in large bands, many more fell victim to the ravages of the Brigands of the March. They robbed and extorted the pilgrams, sold some into slavery, and others they killed. All of this eventually gave birth to the Knights of Haven (see "Guilds & Orders"), an order of paladins and cavaliers dedicated to protecting the pilgrims. They built small castles along the pilgrim's routes, giving them safe haven from the depredations of the brigands. They manned these castles with two or three knights and a dozen or so men-at-arms. In 1178md the first of them arrived in the March itself, where they remain still, adding to the constant warfare which plagues the region.

Fifth Narrative - Lands of Ursal

Aihrde consists of five greater lands and a host of lesser, two oceans and a scattering of seas. Its climate ranges from the frozen north and south to tropical and temperate. Though dominated by the giant landmass of the Rienland, where lies the Cradle of the World, it is world of tremendous diversity.

The Greater Landmasses

Aatuck

Climate: The climate varies from dry to polar.

Landmass: Aatuck lies in the northern hemisphere. This is a land of great contrasts. In the south are deep conifer forests, where the ancient ean trees grow. These are monstrous trees that tower hundreds of feet into the air. These forests stand upon deep firths and inlets, countless bays and estuaries. Further north, beyond the forests, the land dries and the frozen tundra begins, cut only by stark rocky hills and deep valleys and gulches. There are two great mountain chains in Aatuck, both of which sport active volcanoes. The slumbering magma beneath the lands of Aatuck gives rise to hundreds of hot springs and lakes, making much of the land hospitable despite its northern latitude.

Populace: Some dwarven settlements created inroads here for almost all the peoples of the world. Of the humans, the Aathians and Engale dwell here. The Aathians, or those who remain, dwell beyond the tundra in alabaster cities. The Engale live along the coast. They are a barbaric people, long removed from their southern past. There are scattered tribes of orcs, and some few elves and other peoples, but largely the land is inhabited by monsters of all calibers.

Mythology: Here the Aathians settled and studied the stars. They subdued the first dragons here and ruled the northern realm from the saddles of those massive beasts. Beyond the forest and tundra lie mythic cities of alabaster and gold, abandoned now by men and filled with forgotten treasures.

History: Home of one of the most ancient human civilizations in Aihrde, here the Aathuk, or Aathians, settled and plied the skies with their flying ships, studied the stars, built wondrous cities and bound the dragons. They eventually declined and many of them died out. After the decline of the Aathians many people came and went from Aatuck: orcs, elves, other humans, and more besides. During the Winter Dark the land was largely ignored and its people retreated into the hinterlands. It is largely a wilderness area now where the Northmen carve out their home on the sea and the last remaining towers and cities of the Aathians remain.

Burow

Climate: Polar

Landmass: Burow lies in the deep south. It consists of wide, snow covered tundras that lap against stark mountains. The wind is forever blowing here and the tundra changes shape constantly as drifts pile up and blow away. There is little life here; few plants grow, and few creatures as well for the surface water is frozen, and those that do are hearty and dour. Deep vents beneath the oceans allow for a plethora of fish to feed a wide variety of marine life. The land is shaken by many earthquakes.

Populace: No people live here, though giants hunt the quiet places of the land, far removed from the struggles of man and god.

Mythology: It is believed that Narrheit stood his house in the lands of Burow, a vast palace of ice and stone. Here he sat and watched the world, contemplating his mischief. It is said that his foot steps unsettled the land, so that it shakes from time to time. It is believed that within the deeps of Burow are realms of his making, wild places of abandon and horror.

History: There is little history here, and none the analysts have felt necessary to record. The land is barren and inhospitable. It is truly a land that time forgot.

Ianuk

Climate: The climate varies from temperate to cool.

Landmass: Southern Ianuk is temperate and seasonal, whereas the northern reaches of the land are gripped in long, harsh winters. Many indigenous hardwoods grow along the southern slopes of the mountains with conifers further north. Ianuk has a great chain of mountains for its spine, and as with much of the mountains in the north, there are many volcanoes here.

Populace: There are some few dwarves, halflings, gnomes, and the like. The land is largely dominated by the Nia peoples and elves. Legendary creatures stalk the highlands and forest paths, ever preying upon the Nia who dwell here. There are many orcs, ogres, and giants in Ianuk as well as hobgoblins and gnolls.

Mythology: The land is filled with great and ancient magics as many of the lesser Val Eahrakun fled to the further reaches of Aihrde to avoid the All Father. Many settled here and in Surne. The early humans have fought these demons through all the long years of the world.

History: The dwarves almost never ventured this far north and across the seas, though some few colonies of Alanti were founded along the coasts and in protected harbors. These vanished with that kingdom and left only a remnant of its people. The Nia dominated the land for many centuries, so much so that the dwarves there absorbed the customs and manners of the humans. The Winter Dark left all in ruin and the peoples are only recovering from them.

Inklu-Naid

Climate: Its climate is tropical with cold climates only in the highest reaches of the mountains.

Landmass: This continent consists of deep jungles and a great plateau of mountains. It is separated from the Aenochian mainland by the Dwarven Anvil, the violent straits that divide the Wilston and Amber Seas.

Populace: For the most part this landmass is occupied by men. The Inklu dominate but the Naid and some scattered remnants of Aenochians and Ethrum dwell here. There are almost no dwarves or halflings, but elves and gnomes are found throughout the jungles. There are humanoids; some wild orc tribes and many lizard men and troglodytes have lands here, with some dwelling in large kingdoms.

Mythology: Wild and strange monsters dwell here, exotic and beyond the reckoning of the men of the north.

History: Inklu-Naid has a long history of habitation, starting with the great tribes of the Inklu and the Naid. The Aenochians and Ethrum built colonies, and waged war and the like upon the northern coasts. In times past the dwarves of Alanti built colonies and trade centers here, but the Winter dark left much of these lands in ruin and only now are the island societies slowly recovering. Kingdoms dot the northern coasts, the most powerful ringing the Amber Sea. Jungle covered ruins mark the places where great cities once stood and if any of the peoples retain the knowledge and wealth of their ancestors they have hidden themselves in the deep jungles.

RIENLAND

Climate: The continent of Rienland is huge and its climate varies from tropical to cold, though it is largely temperate.

Landmass: Rienland lies largely in the northern hemisphere and is the greatest landmass in Aihrde. It extends from Faurenost in the utmost west to Ikem's Horn in the east, from the frozen tundras of the north lands to the jungles of Zuala in the south. It comprises massive mountain chains, the great Channel Lakes, several large inner seas, the temperate forests of the central belt, the Great Desert, all the lands of Aenochia, Etrhum, the Dulcet, the Sea of Erun, Arnul and Crusp mountains.

Populace: The dwarves were the first to settle these lands and are still found there in many parts. Hosts of people of all races make their home in Rienland including five of the tribes of men: Engale, Ethrum, Aenochians, Zuala, and Madriu. The orcs dwell in the eastern wilderness as do many of the elves.

Mythology: In the west Rienland holds the cradle of life, for here the All Father dwelt upon the slopes of Mount Eedlemere and fashioned the world. From those heights he saw the first fires of the distant mountains, created the Sisters, and pounded the molds of the dwarves. In the west, it is here that the gods first took refuge, fleeing from the fires of the All Father's forge that lay further west. The dragons first came from the White Mountains north of those lakes and still infest those high peaks in tremendous numbers.

History: Rienland has seen peoples rise and fall and the ruins of ancient civilizations are found throughout the whole continent. In the west it has played host to the world's greatest wars and suffered like no other from the Winter Dark. Of all the lands of Aihrde. These lands are ripe with ruins, dungeons, old cities and the like, for the dwarves and goblins had their beginnings here and left much in ruin or abandoned it after the many wars.

The dwarves made little penetration of the lands beyond the Turmberg Mountains, though they did settle on the far coasts around Ikem's Horn. Their decline saw the rise of man and the Aenochians extended their power into the Marl where they were briefly halted by the iron fortresses of the orcs and other men. During the Winter Dark the orcs of the Marl rose to power over most of the eastern countries. Since the fall of Unklar their power has waned and other regional powers are on the rise.

SURNE

Climate: The climate varies from temperate to cool.

Landmass: Surne is a huge land mass located in the northern hemisphere. It includes the frozen tundra of the north, the archipelago of Chianuk in the south, and the large island of Ephar. A harsh land of frozen wastes, high mountains, and deep and forbidding forests, where narrow firths cut gashes into the coast and stark cliffs hold back a violent sea.

Populace: Here the fey gather in great numbers and build cities upon the edge of the world. There are powers in Surne, avatars and demons who do, from time to time, rise and build kingdoms of their own. They fight the Nia, the elves and other folk who dwell in and around these unforgiving lands. Only in the southern islands of Ephar did the early dwarves make their homes and there a remnant of their people still dwell.

Mythology: It is a land of magic, where the fey dwell in their greatest numbers.

History: Surne is a land of tremendous magic, filled with monsters great and small, for it was to these forbidding lands that the greater host of creatures fled in the Days before Days, even before light came to Aihrde. They came here after the All Father made the land and the sea, but they hid from him in fear of being banished to the Void. Even after the war of the gods, many stayed here and have dwelt in secret for countless eons.

OTHER LANDMASSES

ALANTI

Climate: The climate in Alanti is tropical to temperate.

Landmass: This series of islands stretches between the mainland of eastern Rienland and the land of Aroyo. There are hundreds of them, great and small. The waters around them are always choppy, so much so that many sailors prefer taking the long voyage south of Aroyo rather than risking the dangerous waters about the islands. The islands themselves offer a variety of vistas, from soft, sandy beaches to high rocky cliffs. Many of the islands are covered in beautiful tropical jungles. There is plenty of fresh water on almost all of them. Monsters from the dawn of time crawl and creep through the jungles, including great hydras, manticore, and the like. The ruins of many towns and cities lie buried in the jungles.

Populace: Here the human Zuala dwell in some few numbers along with some of the Rykaard. There are also a few scattered groups of elves and other demi-humans.

Mythology: These are the lands of the fabled kingdom of Alanti, where the sea faring dwarves and Rykaard settled in the second Rin of the world. Their realm fell away many years ago so that few, if any, survive. The islands are rumored to be home to fabulous treasures and magics of the dwarves.

History: The fabled dwarf kingdom of Alanti was built upon these islands with her streets of cobbled gems, high alabaster halls, sea walls built of pearls and the like, but Alanti is no more, destroyed by the Dragon Riders of the goblin king, swallowed by the seas, and wasted by time.

AROYO & ELIS

Climate: The climate here is tropical.

Landmass: These islands are the two largest landmasses in the southern Oddine Ocean. The northern of the two, Aroyo, is covered in dense jungles and low lying hills and some few active volcanoes. The southern and larger of the two, Elis has sparse jungles along the beaches and inland valleys but is largely dominated by highly active volcanoes.

Populace: Rykaard and Zuala dwell here in any numbers, some very small communities of Aenochians still thrive, as do remnants of their trading posts.

Mythology: The warm climes and the updrafts in the atmosphere attract many dragons who come to these islands to mate and fight one another.

History: Both islands were settled by the dwarves of Alanti and their human allies the Rykaard. Early on the dwarves left the islands to the humans, concentrating on the huge megalopolis that was Alanti. The civilization of the Rykaard and Zuala thrived for several thousand years, but the fall of Alanti and the course of time degraded the civilization much. It is now largely forgotten or much diminished. The ruins of their red-brick towns are reputed to be filled with the magics and lore of the ancient dwarves who left them long ago. The islands themselves are wilderness areas much visited by dragons and other strange monsters. Their distance from the greater landmass of Aenochia has shielded them from many of the devastating wars of the northerners.

GAL-LAND

Climate: The climate is cold, dry, and polar.

Landmass: Gal-Land is a mountainous cold land with short seasons, as is to be expected in the northern climes, but it is well blessed with many warm springs, ponds, and the like. It has a generous supply of both hardwood and conifers. The Engale live mostly on the southern or northern coasts, or along the rivers where they have a plentiful supply of wood. The hinterland is a land of giants.

Populace: This land is home to the Northmen, the Engale.

Mythology: The Engale settled here even before the Goblin-Dwarf Wars and have dwelt here ever since. They pay homage to the gods by different names, favoring Odin One Eye for the All Father, Thor, Freya, and the like. The giants here are monstrous creatures who inhabit the high mountains of the land's center.

History: The giants migrated here long before written history and thrived in the harsh mountains and cold. Later their numbers and power grew and they spread to the Rienland. When the Engale arrived during the Great Migrations, the two peoples began a long and troublesome war. Many of the engale migrated south during the Winter Dark to settle on the Inner Sea and later played a major role in the fall of Unklar.

KATH

Climate: The climate here is tropical.

Landmass: The twin lands of Katha are covered in dense jungles and high mountains. Rivers and streams criss-cross the country, massive waterfalls dot the landscape, and deep gulches and ravines are filled with all manner of tangled vegetation. The skies are very blue here and the weather generally warm. Gentle plains end in stark, high mountain ranges and cliffs in this land where many active volcanoes sweat upon the earth's continued creation.

Populace: The Katha dwell here, though they are much reduced in number and power. The Zuala occupy large areas of both islands. No dwarf ever built a colony here, though orcs and other human-

oids came during the Winter Dark years. Other monsters, some strange, some commonly found elsewhere, dwell in the terrible jungles of this land on the far side of the world.

Mythology: The Dragon Cult of the Kath have their origins here and their dragon god dwells here still (*see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde***).

History: The Katha rose and fell in these islands, but since their time none have come to the fabled land and many have ceased even to believe it ever existed. It is reputed to have many lost treasures and the secret of ever-lasting life.

WODONHOHLE

Climate: The climate here is polar.

Landmass: An island locked in the frozen snows much of the year, it is dominated by one huge mountain and its low lying hills. The Engale call this Wodon Hohle, and believe it to be the home of Mordius and others of the gods. Few dwell here, but some venture forth to explore it and seek out its legends. There are strange monsters here, many beyond the reckoning of northern scholars and unrecorded.

Populace: None.

Mythology: Here stands the Hall of Harlking, Mordius's Hall. Here the greatest of trees were planted and all the land made to blossom, but the Red God came and slew Mordius and stole the warmth of the land. After that, ice settled upon the land and everything froze. It is a land of giants and where the Val Eahrakun dwell.

History: In the dawn of time Mordius first heard the call of the world ash, the Eahrtaut, or Yggdrasil as the Engale call it. She took of it some hardy seedlings and planted them here, and they grew and blossomed so long as she lived. She built the Harlking Hall of these trees. Much was lost when she died, though her hall stands there still.

OF THE OCEANS

Anderoth's Deeps: These waters lie between the lands Inklu-Naid and the frozen world of Burow. They are deep and turbulent. Storms rage here almost continually, some carrying warm rains from the north, others frozen waters from the south. A few islands dot their empty expanse, but little else. Great and monstrous creatures hunt its depths, many from the dawn of time. It is said that here Anderoth the dwarf met his final end during his contest with Ealor, Lord of the Green Halls. The waters are named after him

Iuldine (The Windy Sea): The waters of the far north are little explored. Sheets of ice break from the Northern Ice Shelf and float through these choppy waters, unnamed ridges jut to within feet of the surface making navigation difficult and dangerous. A constant wind blows across these waters, whipping up the fury of the waves. It is cold as well, and boats that venture here are often coated in ice.

Dulzdine (Deep Waters): This great ocean spans the world. It is deep and stretches from the Shallow Sea to Ikem's Horn and from the land of Surne to the Southern Ice Sheet. The water warms in the summer months and possesses currents like rivers that ship traffic uses to traverse great distances. These waters are rich in sea monsters and lap upon the shores of a thousand islands.

Oddine (Green Water): This ocean extends from the continent of Inklu-Naid to Kath and from Aenochia to the Southern Ice Shelf. Here Ealor makes his home in the Green Halls and rules over all the world's bodies of water. The ocean is deep and wide and filled with hosts of small, many unnamed, islands. Though it is subject to massive and violent storms which kick up the sea bed, giving the waters a greenish tint, it is normally a calm body of water and has served the world as a highway for centuries. Here the dwarves plied their great ships in times past before the sea swallowed Alanti, and through it the fleets of Unklar carried his dominion across the world. Now it is largely quiet, for few nations are great enough to afford the ships and fill the lanes with traffic.

OTHER BODIES OF WATER

Amber Sea: The great southern sea, famous for violent storms and unpredictable weather, borders the lands of Aenoch. It is well traveled and charted, opening into the broader Oddine Ocean.

Austun, Sea of: This is called the Sea of God by the dwarves for it is reputed to be where the All Father came to wash the toils of his labors from his hands and body. It is tumultuous, deep, and filled with all manner of strange creatures. The waters are dangerous and only the most skilled sailors risk their crafts in these deep blue waters. The stuff of his being sank into the waters, giving birth to strange creatures. The sea feeds the Channel Lakes.

Banning Sea: Lying between Aenochia and Aatuck, the Banning Sea is a calm body of water. It is a favored hunting ground of whales and fisherman of the Engale. Here it is said the dwarves built a wondrous lighthouse upon the shores of Aenoch, so that they could see all across the still waters.

Barriers: A large body of coral reefs that surround the Shallow Sea, they are rich in marine life of all kinds. Thousands of small, uncharted islands dot the Barriers. Fisherman speak of them as a warm, blue-water paradise.

Channel Lakes: This chain of long, narrow, deep lakes follow ancient valleys from the Sea of Austun to the northern plains of Ute. They are fresh water lakes, filled with strange life, fish, and fowl. They housed the sentients long ago and it is here that Ineng, the first of the trolls, turned to evil.

Drakum, Lake: This huge lake lies in the far east of Aenochia. It lies in the primeval lands where few if any men dwell. Only giants and dragons dwell in that region and the lake is a favored hunting spot.

Dwarven Anvil: The narrow straits that stand between Rienland and Inklu-Naid, they are violent waters and much feared by sailors.

Erun, Sea of: This wide, shallow sea stands upon the doorstep of Gorthurag. Its shores played host to the world's first sailors and proved a perfect testing ground for ships of all stripes, for it is calm and still for the greater part of the year.

Green Sea: These waters touch the shores of Rienland around the Jungles of Is. They are dangerous, for storms brew on the deep waters to the south and blow across the Green Sea, turning it deadly with powerful gales. The merfolk lay claim to the under water here, their king ruling from somewhere in these deep waters.

Misty Sea: In this shallow body of water where reefs and islands abound, active volcanoes push the ocean floor to the surface with great tumult. There is always vast amounts of steam and smoke rising from the water. It is a dangerous region, but one reputed to be the dwelling place of many of the merman and their kind.

Orn, Lake: Lake Orn lies beyond the Ringold Mountains in the distant east. It is large, but shallow, rarely reaching depths of over a thousand feet, often less than a hundred. Sands bars and other shoals dot the lake. Zuala humans dwell here in some numbers, building cities of stone, and working iron and other ores.

Shallow Sea: The waters which lie beyond the western coasts of Rienland and Inklu-Naid are calm, and colored a light blue for the many reefs of coral, rock, or sand that lie scattered throughout the region.

Vanhir, Lake: This large fresh water lake lies north of the Great Desert. The lake has broad shoals that slowly wind off into deep water. Several miles into the lake the water becomes extremely deep, to depths of up to 7000 feet. The center of the lake bubbles constantly, at times violent enough to overturn small ships. The lake is rich in marine life, including a species of alligator that dwells along the southern and central blanks, as well huge, long-necked serpents that hunt the water from one end to the other.

Vittangjarvi, Lake:A lake in the northern climes, it is subject to freezing in the deep winter months. Ice remains in patches until the summer thaw.

OF MOUNTAINS

Arnhul Mountains: Here lies Gorthurag, First Home and the Fore of the All Father where all the Faulerde were made. The Seven Swamps lie here as well, at the feet of the mighty dwarven kingdom.

Crusp Mountains: This long mountains played host to Grausumhart.

The Marl: This massive mountain chain dominates the gates to the east. The Marl house the Eahratuat, the Great Tree in some lost and hidden valley. The first of the sentients grew upon the western slopes. Here also the orcs first rose from the scattered mind of the All Father. Their first homes are here and lie deep at the roots of the mountains

OF PLAINS

Dulcet: This wide, open grassland is home to many horse riding humans. It is dry most of the year, with long, sturdy grasses dominating the steps. Here the dwarves first sailed upon the Sea of Erun.

Fartuk Steppes: These rolling plains are well watered from the north. They are warm in the summer and cold in the winter, but give life to a wide variety of grasses and shrubs, making it one of the riches, most fertile regions of Aihrde.

Great Desert: Dry winds carry the heat and no relief as they ramble over the dunes of sand, broken rock, and open flats of dry gravel. Only the deep gulches, carved beneath low lying cliffs, offer any refuge from the heat.

THE CRADLE OF THE WORLD

The Cradle of the World, also called the Lands of Ursal, are those lands that lies between the Rhodope Mountains in the west, the Plains of Achrothos in the east, the Holmgrad Mountains to the north and the Amber Sea to the south.

FORESTS OF NOTE

Aenochian Forest

This dense forest fills much of the Valley of Aenoch. The forest proper is noted for its many birch trees, whose black-marked white bark sets them apart from the wider, deeper forest of oak, hornbeam and larch. Trees in the forest cluster together, choking out much of the undergrowth, except along creek banks and river sides. There are a great many small lakes, ponds, creeks, and streams, and around these lichens and mosses cling to the trunks, and hang in long streamers from the trees' thick boughs. The forest grows evermore to the south, reaching its fingers up through the southern Valley of Aenoch to the base of the Red Hills. The Mundus River flows leisurely through the center of the forest before meeting up with the River Olgdon near the forest's eastern reaches.

The Olgdon is well traveled by Augsburgian barges, ships, and traders, while several outposts stand along the river and under the eves of the sprawling forest. Ancient cemeteries housing the restless dead and long buried temples, castles, and palaces are rumored to abound within this forest, for the forest was the ancestral land of the House Golden, the old imperial family of Aenoch. Many believe these ghosts haunt the forest still. It is even said that the tomb of the last Aenochian king lies somewhere within, hiding the riches and magic of his folk.

Bjornak Wood

Circling the capital of Trondheim as it does, this wood is largely occupied by the Northmen. Villages and towns are sprinkled throughout, as are many independent homesteads. The hunting and fishing here is considered good, but the wood is prone to cold, wind, rain, and fog. Giant bears, sloths, wolves and other wild animals are common, as is a giant species of semi-intelligent frog, able to swallow a child whole. They dwell in the moors of this wood and are prized by the Northmen for their meat. They are dangerous however, and able to use primitive tools. It is seen as a sign of manhood to hunt the beast.

Blaudun Timberland

This forest is also called the Crown of Tefnut for in days of old it marked the northern boundaries of the Ethvold. Today it stands between the Wilds, the Tar Kiln, and the Bleached Hills. It is a tangled forest of weathered hills, deep gulches, and meandering creeks and streams. The trees are gnarled black-jacks, maples, sycamores, and hawthorns. Hosts of berries find home here, growing throughout the forest, along stream banks, and in the cool gulches. The forest grows a tangled mess, with no easy avenues to cross it. What trails do exist are game trails only and these are haunted by predators of all stripes.

Few dwell there that aren't wild and capable, for the land is dangerous, peopled by wolves, bears, and mountain lions as well monsters that hunt the plentiful game. The men who do dwell there are known for their wines, for they pluck the berries and concoct a brew that is sold far and wide. Any who drink it enjoy a rush of adrenaline.

The headwaters of the Ardeen River are found within this wood but none have yet found their exact location.

Darkenfold

The Darkenfold marks the beginning of the southern wilderness. It was once part of a greater forest, the Ethvold, which spanned across the Valleys of Kayomar, from the Rhodope in the east to the Bergrucken in the west, the Amber Sea in the south and the Blaudun Timberland, the Crown of Tefnut, in the north. Those days are long ago, when the world was occupied by dragons, and men were young. Now the Darkenfold is much reduced, stretching only several hundred miles from the Danau River in the east to the doorsteps of the Rhodope Mountains in the west. In the south, the Great Soup Marsh hems in the ancient trees, and the forest continues in wild growth from there to the Shelves of the Mist in the north. It is said that the Eldwood, that other remnant of the Ethvold, holds the heart of the Ethvold, but the Darkenfold holds its dark memories. It is an evil wood, filled with its own wild abandon and creatures of ill intent. Those who live there know that the trees and the soil hold memories of their past, deeply rooted in black earth and soft soil, and the trees do not forget the axes of those that have plundered them of their glory.

The edges of the Darkenfold are hemmed in by long lean oaks. These young trees' leafy green branches hang to the ground to mingle with the thickly tangled thorns and bushes growing in the rich black soil.

Travel here is not easy due to the thick bramble which oft times overgrows the few existing paths.

As is known the forest has an Otherworld presence, and it is always pushing out, trying to reclaim what it lost. Thus on the edges of the Darkenfold lie a tangled fence of deep vegetation. Thick, entangling grasses grow high, coiling into the overhang from young trees. Within are brambles of briars and dark flowers whose aroma causes men to sleep and to dream.

Beyond this tangle lies the old wood. Here, giant dark-wash oaks, heavy with foliage, mark the heart of the forest. These peculiar trees are native only to the Darkenfold and give it its name. The mature trees are covered in a greyish-black bark that literally absorbs light; whether a torch, campfire, lantern, or sorcery, the trees drink it in, consuming it, making the forest dark on a bright day. At night, however, the forest is dark beyond imagining.

Note: Anyone with twilight or dusk vision is limited to 30 feet, deep vision at 60 feet, and dark vision to 45 feet. All other light sources are cut by 75%.

These great trees tower above the moss covered ground, their leafy canopies blotting out the light of the sun. However, grassy knolls, open meadows and slow-running brooks pocket the forest deeps and break the sinister visage cast by the old trees. Here, where the sun shines, lilies, bluebells, hyacinth and other wild flowers bloom. At night, the light of the moon and stars spill through, and when the evening is still, the fey come out to dance, sing, and play. The forest is thick with these crea- tures. Remnants of the Ethvold, they came here long ago, before the Wall of Worlds girded the earth from the trackless wastes of the Void. Sprites, nymphs, nixies and pixies, as well as water lilies, blue bells, and the like abound throughout the deep recesses of the forest. There are darker fey as well; bogarts, shadows, bullworts, and carp snails are often found causing mischief. Indeed, many believe that the Darkenfold's na-ture is derived from the queen of the Unseelie Court who resides in the forest's southern reaches, beyond the Downs, in the Lilly Fare.

Two main roads cut through the forest. The larger of the two, the Old Post Road, meanders through the upper reaches, veers north and emerges in the Broken Steppes. The Southern Way, a spur of the Old Post Road, is overgrown and weeded with small trees and is slowly vanishing back into the depths of the Darkenfold. Both roads are vestiges of the Age of Winter's Dark, when the Empire of the Horned God attempted to conquer the forest. The Old Post Road in particular rises several feet above the forest through which it cuts, being fashioned of

several layers of gravel and topped by cobbles. There is enough slant to provide run off ,and two long, shallow ditches run the whole length of either side of the road. In many places, the cobbles have cracked and slid away into the ditch, or the road itself has sunken into the moist ground. There were once way posts along the road, which the ungern and orcs used when traveling these dark eves. They were generally one or two-room stone buildings with wood shingle roofs, but those have fallen into ruin for the most part or vanished into the forest entirely.

The Southern Way was never paved, and its condition reflects that. Its track is still visible in most places, but in some it has vanished into the wood, being covered in young growth trees and brush. The ungern began work on it at one point but gave up when the Winter Dark Wars began. The pile of rubble from the cobbles and equipment lies still where the Post Road and Southern Way join, though much of it is overgrown with weeds and the like.

Few men venture into the Darkenfold. Those who do are a hardy lot with stout axes and stouter wills. Some settle in the few clearings or along the old roads, and build strong wooden houses beneath the dark trees and along the meadow tracks. It is unknown what motivates them. Whether some crime or want of justice has driven them, or whether they desire a piece of earth far away from the civilized world, they find a dangerous home in the Darkenfold.

Where the Old Post Road and Southern Way meet lies the small village of Ends Meet. Once a thriving trade town, it has since fallen on hard times and has slowly wasted away to a rump of a community. The remnants of an old stone wall surround portions of the village. The wall is in ruins and rarely rises above three feet in height. A small inn and trading post, the Cockleburr Inn and Tavern, encompass the pride and joy of the slightly suspicious, but overall friendly villagers, who number about 300.

Another village, Greenbriar, resides under the folds of the wood. Smaller than Ends Meet and sporting only a tavern (the Long House), Greenbriar sits astride the Westerling River. The hundred or so hearty souls who inhabit Greenbriar are a friendly, if cautious, bunch. The size of the village makes them far more vulnerable, and thus more watchful, than their neighbors in Ends Meet.

There are other habitations, Willowbreak on the Powder River, Bent's Trading Post, and the abandoned village of Alice, but beyond those most people live in the forest to get away from others.

A small band of dedicated rangers have taken on the onerous task of protecting the forest and the folk who reside there. They call themselves the Rangers of the Knot, for they meet in a glade wherein two ancient trees have wrapped their boles around each other.

The rest of the vast forest provides hunting ground for those creatures whose motives and concerns are little bent towards the good of men. Evil goblins band together and roam the forest. The most notorious of these foul goblins have taken up residence in a thicket of bramble and trees to the south called Broken Vale. Their leader, Horntooth, is intelligently wicked and merciless. The Downs to the south of the Broken Vale are rolling, forested hills and comprise the heart of the ancient wood. They stretch for many miles to the very borders of the Great Soup Marsh. The Downs are peopled by elves and some gnomes, goblins, and other creatures of ill intent. A few hardy humans live in those parts, and they share their world with all manner of beast, animal, and monstrous creature. In the Downs are the hunting grounds of some of the greater and lesser miasmal dragons, the Nakal Dragons (see Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde) being the most common. The fierce creatures are highly predacious and hunt all manner of creature.

Detmold

This vast forest stretches along the western flanks of the Voralberg Mountains. In places thick and others thin, great conifers provide a blanket of light green across the lands of Eisenheim and Aachen. During the years of the Winter Dark this forest supplied the empire with timber for its many fleets that crossed the Inner Sea and beyond. Fortresses and villages sprouted up throughout its depths as the ever increasing need for timber demanded a heavy price upon this once pristine wood. Times have changed though, and the forest has been left to its own devices for many years. Travelers making their way into this grand wood follow the Ursal or Bratvag roads, both of which have fallen into disrepair and have become dark roads to travel. Along both paths are many abandoned fortresses and villages, dotting the hillocks and dales alike. There are those who remained though, men who have carved small principalities out of the remnants of the empire's once mighty lands.

The forest itself is a mishmash of magnificent conifers and stunted hardwoods that clump around the region's natural springs and sprout thickly on the tops of hills. They cover this hilly land from the foothills of the Voralberg Mountains to the interior of Aachen where the forest gives way to a vast open savannah. It is a well watered forest with many rivers and streams coursing their way through its innumerable valleys and dales. It is a serene place, quiet with anticipation of the days to come. It is said that the fey have returned to the trees to care for their wounded spirits and that the nymphs tend to the workings of the waters.

Lost within the forest's interior is the Glade of the Unicorn. There, at the heart of the Detmold lies a copse of hardwood trees which date back, or so legends recount, to the Days before Days. It is there that the god Daladon gave Ephremere over to the unicorn. The sacred and powerful Winter Roses grow within the Glade.

Eldwood (see Malady of Kings Adventue)

Of all the forests in the world, the Eldwood is held to be the oldest, the heart of the ancient Ethvold. Here Tefnut came and built her house upon the shores of the Edenflow. From there she pushed the forest boundaries into the north and west. Now the forest is ringed by the kingdoms of men and is a shadow of its former self. It clings to the river like a dying man in a flood.

The Eldwood is protected, however, for the kingdom of Kayomar, the most powerful realm in the west, stands constant guard. Her knights and cavaliers have long held the ravages of the world at bay. Her kings long ago made peace with the elven lords of the forest, so that the Eldwood's trees are not harvested by the men of Kayomar. Her kings of old were buried in the heart of the wood, for they considered it holy ground. All of this serves to make the forest the natural home of elf, druid, and ranger. Only in the Oth River Valley in the south do men still offer the forest harm, but these tread lightly, for the elves slay them for the slightest transgression.

Before the coming of the Dark the druids gathered in the Eldwood and planted a sapling. The little tree was a gift from the goddess Wenafar, one of the Val Eahrakun. In time it grew to become the Great Oak, the Father, and legend in its own right. It was a sapling of the One Tree in the east, the Eahrtaut, and its might was such that it kept the Dark at bay.

The Eldwood survived the degradations of the Winter Dark and the rule of Unklar for over a thousand years, and the elves which people its more distant reaches never fled nor succumbed to his dark designs. During the Winter Dark Wars, the elves, chided by Daladon Half-Elven, joined the Lords of Kayomar and fought against Unklar, driving him from the southern lands. After the wars the forest came to know a peace it had not known since its earliest days. Daladon, a Val-Tulmiph,

dwells here, as do his flights of griffon riders and marches of rangers, the Watchers in the Wood. King Nigold rules the wood elves as he has done for time without count. The druids meet still, gathering under their master, the high druid, in their hidden glades to watch over the forest and their charge, the Great Oak, the Father.

The Eldwood is an old growth forest, consisting mostly of oak trees, though this is slowly changing. The forest is usually divided into three parts. In the Vulgate, the outer forest is called the Rimwald (the forest rim), the old boundary the Festungwald (the wall), and the heart of the forest the Eldwald (the old forest).

In the Rimwald, travel is easy. There are many paths wandering through the open trees and a number of small human settlements are sprinkled throughout. Along its northern reaches, the forest gives way to pine trees. Where the Oth River Valley begins, the forest oaks give way to wild trees and short grasses. In the east, the great oaks of the forest's heart look down from high bluffs. In the north, the forest has changed, if only in recent years. An ever growing number of silver maple and birch trees are expand- ing the size and slowly changing the composition of the forest.

Passing deeper into the forest travelers encounter a great tangle of underbrush, younger trees, and wild animals, the Festungwald (festung being an old dwarf word, literally translated "fortress"). This marks the border of the old forest and the natural wall that ranger, druid, and elf planted to keep the minions of the Horned God at bay. It also marks the old boundary of the kingdom of Kayomar, and is now in some dispute between those who dwell within the forest and the king. In the Festungwald, which averages 15 miles thick in places, travel is very difficult. The tangled brush, vines, and thick trees all lend to an inhospitable maze. When the forest was planted, the rangers took advantage of the old fortification of Kayomar, so that dungeons, abandoned castles, and old ruins are not uncommon, adding to the dangers of the fortress.

Within the deep woodland lies the old forest, the Eldwald. Ancient oaks stand like monumental buildings. The boles of these massive trees line the forest like pillars of stone, and are capped by arching branches and leafy canopies. The trees are wide spaced, allowing easy passage across the vaulted forest floor. Beneath lies a land of ancient mystery. Deep pools in hidden places feed cold streams that trickle through hidden valleys. Glades of wondrous beauty hide the homes of dryads and faerie. The wood elves of Nigold hunt here in small bands, and eldritch monsters from the world's dawn stalk the forest deeps. It is said that the trees themselves come alive, and when the moon waxes, the eldest of them lift their tired roots from the ground and gather in a great meet to sing lamentations of their lost world, for they alone, of all the world's denizens, remember the Days before Days when the trees alone wandered the earth.

There is but one road, the Old Post Road, which traverses the length of the Eldwood. It was constructed early during the Winter Dark and stretches from the eastern borders by the sea, through the Eldwood, to the town of Elne, and on into the Darkenfold forest. From there it goes into the far west, to the Rhodope Mountains. The ranger order, the Watchers in the Wood, led by the half-elven ranger, lord, and high druid Daladon Orcbane (named for the Val Tulmiph of legend), guard the road and keep it in good shape. There are no villages on the road, but near the forest center there is a large open meadow called the Open by the folk of that forest. Here the forest lords, be it elf, druid, or ranger, gather to meet one another or other folk who seek their aid or council. Travel on the road is at a normal pace, and it offers the only easy access through the forest.

Elithian Wood

This forest once stretched from the Straits of Ursal in the east to the Massif in the south and to the Inner Sea in the north. The forest's trees are numbered amongst the strongest conifers in the world. Their strength is ideal for ship building, their pliability ideal for such work. The hardwoods are ideal for bow and lance. In all the forest feeds the need for fuel and building materials in the burgeoning populations of Anglamay, Avignon, the Hanse Cities, Kleaves, Ceeana, and Kareelia. It has shrunk since the days of old.

Great portions of the forest are well manicured by woodsmen in the employ of the various kingdoms that work its vast interior. In these sections, the trees grow tall and straight and are oft found in straight rows, piled up by the diligent woodsmen. It is illegal to hunt or reside in many areas, with the woodsman strictly enforcing the laws. There are, however, many folk who make a living harvesting the trees into usable timber. Barges of all sorts ply the Lithian and Tot Rivers, supplying the woodsman and transporting timber back to the cities beyond.

Yet despite this, there are portions that have avoided the destruction of the axe, where the splendor of the old wood remains for those who seek it. There, one finds massive trees, and though not as tall as the southern oaks, they are broad. Five men linking arms could hardly encircle the boles of these trees. They grow lazily into the sky, taking the time the All Father gave them, unaware that doom tramps upon their doorstep. They do not crowd around one another, but give each other space so that their limbs stretch far outside their boles, as much to cover a farm house and barn. The many springs and rivers which run pure from deep aquifers quench the thirst of these behemoths.

Much rumor has been spread about this forest. Giants lumber in its midst, the ancient trees still guard their groves, the faerie make portions difficult to enter, and the ground itself is said to consume those who trespass too deeply into its ever-shrinking bounds. Whatever the case may be, there are portions no woodsman will enter and oft upon a starry night, unwary travelers disappear from the world and meld into the dark eaves of those most sublime trees.

Illitrim Wood

"*What a forbidding forest. Though its beauty is only rivaled by the Darkenfold, it is not a safe place for travelers.*" ~ from a letter to the Bishop of Avignon.

The mighty oak and mysterious beech befriend one another in this tan- gled wood. Glorious and young of heart is the Illitrim, bound not by ancient hatreds and endless wars, these trees have grown to their fullest and blossomed handsomely under Aihrde's new sun. The beech are a nutty brown and stretch straight to the sky as if they were tremendous arrows ready to let fly. Their nutty brown and white bark is used for paper by the twilight elves, for the trees themselves seem to impart a certain wisdom to those that use them. The oaks are gargantuan. They tower so high in the air as to make one giddy; their boles are massive, dwarfing even the giant kin.

The forest thins and thickens and opens occasionally onto brightly lit glades. Beneath its boughs though, the air is clean, yet chilly and rarely sunny. Dark green mosses and yellow lichens abound, and strings of clinging vines droop to the ground from the lowest branches. The forest can be difficult to travel through. The husks of long dead trees litter the ground like skeletons in a graveyard, further impeding movement, and within the dark shadows and thick undergrowth dwell all manner of nefarious creatures, having hid there in times past.

Gorgon Wood

This small wood is nestled between the West and East Fork Runs in the wilderness. It remains a small vestige of the Ethvold. Here, majestically tall white oaks are predominate. Huge boles, wide canopies, and deep roots keep much of the undergrowth low. Rocky streams tumble through on the way to the rivers, meandering through meadows where birds flock in the warm spring.

It is a haven for elves who haunt the forest tops, but it is named for the famed beasts that haunt its corridors, the gorgon. For this reason it is not uncommon to come across a stoned man or dwarf, victim to the dread beast.

The Great Northern Forest

Few have traveled this far north and fewer still have bothered to tell about it, for this forest is wild and fell and no peoples have cared to explore or plunder its fasts. Even Nulak-Kiz-Din, during the height of his power, concerned himself little with these lands, though they stood upon his doorstep. Even to this day, only wild orcs and wilder men tread beneath its black trees.

It is known that the Great Northern Forest is a hilly land where huge magnificent conifers grow thick, fir trees that tower to the heavens. It is said that the boles of these trees are sometimes the size of small houses and that their tips touch the clouds in the sky above. The bark is dark, nearly black, and thick as the hide of a dragon. They produce tremendous cones, some even the size of a man's head. The needles of these conifers are a dark blue green that shimmer in the setting sun. The land is cluttered with them, and travel becomes an arduous task even for the road savvy and those who call the forest home.

The trees shroud the land in a gentle evening light during the brightest days and a easy darkness at night. Undergrowth is thick in those spots where the sun breaks through the canopy. There, great leafy plants and thorny berry bushes abound. The ponderous forest breaks on occasion to open glades, both small and large. Lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers abound, all running with that gray cold water from the wintry north.

Wonderful and terrifying beasts roam this land. Large hairy elephants with twisting tusks longer than a giant's spear, elk larger than the war-horses of Ceeana, wolves whose shoulders reach the height of a man and with jaws strong enough to shatter the bones of a giant in a single bite, huge boar, and bison. These and other beasts of gigantic stature and others of strange design, house within this forest.

Even with the dangers, some men attempt to dwell here. The wildest and hardiest of men, the Ustracan, can be found here. They brave the long harsh winters without the shelter of house and home. As it is rumored, they live in caves and small huts. They fight and outwit the terrifying beasts of this forest. They must also fare with the giants that stalk the land, and these giants are the most terrifying of all the forest's denizens. They too are wild and little inclined to creating anything other than havoc and food, and they love the flesh of man, dwarf and elf.

It has been said that the eldest of the faerie live within the night of this forest. These are they that sprung from the mind of the All Father after his unmaking, and they are the most eerie and primitive of the All Father's beautiful thoughts. They come from his base being and are said to mouth his will still, in these the long days of the world.

Greenwood

Once a well tended and safe forest, watched over by the masters of the land, its trees grew to great heights, thick and with long blue-green needles. The Greenwood became a special preserve during the Winter Dark, for the tall trees, once cut, remained slightly pliant, making excellent masts for the ships that floated the world round, so the lords of the land tended this forest well, cleared its land of creatures, and created a vast farm for trees.

Times have changed though, and the masters have died. The forest is coming into its own, freed from the yoke of human control. The forest floor is alive with mosses and lichens, and the animals are returning, as are the spirits of the wood. Its paths grow over and its endless rows of trees are slowly returning to their chaotic collections. For now, no one rules this land. War is made upon its soils and the trees remain uncut in the forest's center. Some say the forest has finally come alive, others that it is doomed without the aid of man.

Grossewald

This is an old forest. Its birth stretches back to the dawn of time and it has grown, inexorably, ever since. The trees are neither massive nor awe inspiring in their beauty, but they are as hardy as the goblins who reside, to this day, beneath their eaves. They are as gnarled and knuckled as a pit fighter, with thick gray and ocher barks, and bent and twisting limbs creeping towards the earth. They are green trees whose broad-lobed leaves never brown or yellow with the season, but withstand the encroachments of age and time, perhaps without dignity, but with great fortitude. These peculiar abilities allowed the forest to thrive during the Winter Dark. The forest is friendly to sun, allowing it to shine hither and yon into verdant green glades.

It was upon the northern flanks of the Grossewald that the Aenochians first settled, and through its long trails that Baetan hunted the stag (see "The Andanuth") that guided the Aenochian lord to his consort Imbrisius, there to snare his people ever afte.r

The forest spreads wide, dominating central Aenochia, from the Hammers Wood to the Minden Deeps. The great rivers Udunilay and Ordavar flow mightily beneath the limbs of these trees. There, within the forest, crea-tures never seem to die, for 'tis told that eldritch goblins, the sorcerers of old, still move about in freedom. All manner of beast is found within, the remains of the All Father's imaginings, as well as those cast aside by Unklar. After the reign of that unholy lord, many a minion fled into these uncharted wildernesses, biding their time in dark anticipation for his return.

Along its frontiers, though, dwell clans upon clans of halflings, the only untainted ones in all Aihrde willing to brave both the forest and its horrible minions. They are led by the battle lord, Witterkind, he who bares a Font of Narrheit upon his belt (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**). These stout folk live both in laagers of wagons and villages built into the hills, valleys, and forests.

Ivrun Wood

This thick wood marks the boundary between Trondheim and Zeitz. The wood tumbles down from the slopes of the Grundliche Mountain following the Rot-Tor River. The forest has few paths, a great deal of undergrowth, and sports tall, thick trees. They are valued for their ship building qualities, but difficult to get, for the wood is haunted by qu fiends (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**), creatures that the North-men enjoy hunting.

Kellerwald

Another of the world's largest forests, stretching from the Aratok Mountains in the east to the Rleuland in the west, from the Blighted Screed in the north to the Amber Sea in the south, it is a seemingly harmless

and innocuous place where fantastic beech, birch, oak, and hickory grow straight and tall. They are leafy and healthy trees. They rest upon fertile earth worn level by the tide of years. One might travel for miles through these woods without stumbling, so level is the ground. The trees are broad in areas and thick in others. The beech and birch groves are truly wonderful to behold. A veritable sea of brown and gray papery barks stretch in endless parades before the eyes.

In fall the region explodes in colors only the All Father could have imagined. Yellows and reds of every hue celebrate the end of summer and await the long winter. From on high in the Red Hills one can see the Kellerwald during the autumn months and it is as if some great fire were raging along the coasts of the Amber Sea, on and up to the borders of that foul heap, Grausumland.

The forest is divided in two, with the Udunilay River marking the boundary. In the west the forest is a fairly safe place as the trees have never known the unbridled hatred of man nor even of Unklar. It does not act kindly to those who strip it and treat it poorly, so the goblins, orcs, and other foul creatures make their homes elsewhere, but it is home to those who do care for it, creatures that, though friendly to trees, are not so disposed to the races of man, elf, and dwarf. In the east it is more wild and dangerous, for here Ineng the Troll settled to die and from him the land came alive. All the country south of the Blacktooth Ridge seems in a fit of restless slumber; the fey are returning, elves hungry for vengeance and fearsome monsters that stalk the unwary (*for adventures here see the A series adventures,* **Assault on Blacktooth Ridge A0-A12).**

Micklewood

This sparse timberland has a mixed bag of hard and softwoods, mostly loblolly pines, black jack oaks and hickory. It ranges all along the southern banks of the Big Mud River and marks the true wilderness. It is filled with wild animals, wolves, bears, elk, and the like. Saber-tooth tigers stalk these woods, and are known to travel with some of the wild men who dwell there, with which they communicate via a limited form of telepathy, whistles, and calls. The forest attracts bull-headed men who hunt with saber-tooth tigers.

It offers the ranger good hunting but is extraordinarily dangerous. The Og Aust were worshiped here as this was once part of the Ethvold. The ruins of their temples and fortresses remain, long abandoned but rumored to house hidden treasures of an ancient world.

Mied Forest

The Forest of Mied tracks the final journey of the Fromian River before it dumps into the sea. The wood consists of cottonwood and willow trees in and around the river. These give way to a wide variety of oaks, elms, birch, and similar hardwoods in the back country.

This is true wilderness, with few dwelling here who are not hunters, adventurers, or wild creatures, or those desiring solitude. It stands upon the doorsteps of Onwaltig, and for this reason alone attracts many orcs and wild wolves.

Mithlon Eaves

This forest lies nestled in the shadow of the Rhodope Mountains. Named for Mithlon, the high elf, who died fighting off the incursions of both goblins and orcs during the waning days before the Winter Dark. The battles were cruel affairs, with no quarter given nor taken, fought between small bands in lonely places. Many of those who fell died long after the war was lost. Many of these, whose names were forgotten and deeds are unsung, remain as spirits left to wander lonely nights in this small wood on the edge of the world. Many believe the spirit of Mithlon lives on, wandering the forest, seeking revenge upon those evil folk who find their way into the wood, for he failed in his war and the forest was overrun. Only the wild elves survived, and these by hiding in the deeper parts of the forest.

The forest itself is a wonder to behold. The trees are tall and lithe with a yellow and red bark and deep green leaves. The leaves are small, fluttering in the delicate winds that whip off the Rhodope, constantly twittering with each other, retelling tales of the days before the Winter Dark and remembering the deaths of all the elves who ever fought beneath its eaves. If one listens carefully they might unravel their speech, for these trees ever want the world to remember valiant Mithlon and the others who passed into the dark.

With the passing of the Winter Dark, the wild elves have come out of hiding, and move more freely through the wood. Living with them are many of their fey cousins and kindred once thought lost to the world..

Moark Wood

This forest lies in the far south of Aenoch. Cut by the Yrr River it is a dry, hot wood, with mesquite and sycamore growing in abundance. The river valley is dominated by the cottonwood tree, which, during the winter months, feeds the many wild horses that range on the Plains of Saeros. The forest is a favored hunting ground of coyote and wolves. A small community of ettins dwells in the wood as well.

Myrka's Wood

This small forest lies south of the Fortress of Hul where the Hlobane dwell. It is a tangled forest of young trees and thick underbrush. The wood is a den of thieves, as many outlaws and brigands come here fleeing from their fellows or other powers who may wish them harm. Travel here is dangerous.

Rilthwood

These slender, stark, white trees rise high above the numerous ponds and streams like spires of bone. In the fall, the normally shiny bright, green leaves of the Rilthwood trees turn a brilliant red. When viewed from the Grundliche Mountains to the east, the trees appear to be columns of white-coated and red-helmed giants marching across the landscape. The ponds there shimmer like mirrors in the sunlight, reflecting the subtly shifting colors of the Rilthwood. They are icy clear and one can see far into these deep ponds. If one looks very carefully and patiently, one may witness a picture of the Rilthwood's past, for the ponds remember everything but are careful about divulging its secrets.

The wood of this forest is valued in the courts of princes and kings. When carved by skillful hands, it is as if it were ivory. The armies of Grundliche-Hohle heft many an axe with this white wood, and wizards claim it is inherently magical and makes for the best staves and wands, while seers value the forest waters, claiming they hold the memories of the All Father. Warily must one tread here, for the halflings guard this land, and interloping mages and woodsman steel its magical bounty.

Ruswald Forest

This sprawling wood lies in the far north between the Holmgald kingdom and Haltland. It is a vast wood of tall oaks, walnut trees, and ash. The woods are deep green, moist and rich in undergrowth. It is untamed and largely unexplored. Only the Northmen venture into the wood and this only for wood for their ships. The wood is generously sprinkled with rivers and lakes, which combined with the cold creates thick fogs that perpetually linger in vales and valleys.

It is haunted by beasts of wild design and unnatural cravings. It is told that here, Ealor of the sea claimed this wood as his favored hunting preserve and the fogs that grip the wood often as not hold him or one of his minions.

Tund, Forest of

This small wood lies at the heart of Trondheim and as such houses the heart of that people. There are many villages and towns nestled in its deep valleys and along the banks of its many streams and lakes. Hunting and fishing are rich here and attract many druids and rangers..

Twilight Woods

The Twilight Woods hunker along the eastern edge of the Massif like a wolf ready to pounce. It was once connected to the Elithian Wood and marked its southern terminus, but during the Winter Dark that great forest was sundered into three parts, this being the southernmost. During that time this forest, once a rare and wonderful place evolved into something altogether different. There, the mind of Unklar warped and wove its black dreams into reality so that the elms and oaks, with twisted branches, grasp the night air like fingers of death and the trees' scabrous barks resemble the diseased of hell. The peculiar leaves, dark and fleshy with white veins, absorb the light of the moon, growing thick and long, lingering overhead as an headman's axe. In the forest heights, at the top of the canopy, are great leafy vines that droop and sway from limb to limb, clinging to branches and bole alike, blocking the light of the sun, such that the forest is locked in a perpetual twilight.

The land is home to Unklar's dreams and it is said that Utumno, the Dreaming God, wanders paths of his own making in these woods. All manner of fell beast reside here, making residence in the many caves, crevices, nooks, and crannies off the slopes of the Massif. Fear treads this wood in the likeness of those souls who never crossed over. Many who die here are forever imprisoned in the nightmares of Unklar and must spend their eternal rest in this drab place.

The twilight elves also walk this wood. These are the offspring of the high elves who chose to remain in the world rather than leave with the coming of Unklar. They are strange though, and unlike their kindred, they fought alone beneath these eaves and learned to distrust men, dwarves, and other elves. They are as evil as they are good and are still locked in the war with Unklar.

PLAINS, VALLEYS, PLATEAUS & COASTS

Aenoch, Valley of

This deep and ancient valley rests between the Nicoleigh Hills and the Saylon Heights. It flanks the Aenochian Forest, housing many creeks and streams that run off and feed the Olgdon River. The valley's rim is sparsely forested and covered in great sandstone boulders while its central region is a broad lowland alluvial plane. The southern portion of the valley beyond the bottle neck is wild and untamed, prized by hunters of all stripes.

Alpa, The Toten Fields (Fields of the Dead)

The Fields of Alpa were once fertile lands where people lived out their lives in the relative peace of the Winter Dark. Villages and farmsteads dotted the landscape, and so close were they to Aufstrag that few molested them even during the height of the Winter Dark Wars. This changed in 1137md when the final battle between the dark and the Young Kingdoms was fought.

For months, humans, dwarves, and elves gathered in the wilds of the Luneburg, and in the high summer of 1137md, the allied host crossed the Udunilay River to attack Aufstrag. But the imperial forces had not been idle. They had gathered the flower of the empire and called on those dragons who still lived, devils and wild fiends of the pit. Several of the foul mogrl joined them, as did many wizards. All the hosts of the west met them in battle, the flower of Anglamay, Kayo- mar, Augsberg, Grundliche-Hohle and Norgorad Kam as well as many other diverse nations. The battle waged far and wide across the plans and was called the Turegfell, the Battle of the Tree. Turegfell shook the land to its foundations and left the whole land about Aufstrag a desolate wasteland. Many of both hosts fell, including such lords as King Morgan of Kaymor and the Princess Elisa. Coburg too, lord of the tower died as well. So great was the carnage that men left their brothers on the field, and even the dwarves' stout hearts failed to pull the fallen from the calamity and ruin of the war. Mounds of dead lay where the fell. The magic of the magi blasted the earth beyond heal-ing, charging the very air with arcane power. Even the druids failed to break the horror which hung over the fields of Alpa.

In time, the place became a stinking morass of silted pools and poisoned earth. The Plains of Alpa were renamed then, called the Dead Lands, or the Toten Fields.

The earth eventually swallowed up the dead and the land healed some little, but the lands of the Toten Fields were ever after haunted places, plagued by the howls of the dead and damned. It is said that on warm days the goodly Princess Elisa (see "Aachen") can be seen calling for her lords and her father to come to her and find her. Untold wealth and magic lies buried in the Toten Fields, sunk deep into the earth, but the ghosts of the fallen wander the hills, calling out their pain. Necromancers thus frequent the land in search of the power of the dead.

The only thing of value in the whole land is a small worm that, when coaxed right, produces the finest silks in the world. A yard of the silk can easily sell for 20gp in Anglamay. Reputed to be used only by the Horned God himself in times past, the silk is now available only rarely, for few brave the wasteland to cull it from the stricken earth.

Ashen Flats

This flatland lies in the land of Punj. Small but deep rifts in the crust continually push out flaming rock, which frequently sets the dry summer grass to flame. The almost yearly burn creates a very fertile grass- land so that in spring the grass grows deep and rich, attracting game both large and small.

Few live here for the danger of fire, but many come to sacrifice at the rifts.

Ashen Gap

This broad valley separates the Grundliche and Voralberg Mountains. It is open country with no real roads, only trails. Mounted brigands hound travelers and in response the Knights of Haven have constructed several castles along the Gap.

Baratine Coast

Much like the Flat Bush to the south the Baratine suffers from lack of rainfall due to the Anvil Wind moving north of the coast. It is dry, with short, broad grasses growing in the broken country. Its most notable attribute is South Pass, which opens into the coastal prairie. Merchants and others wishing to travel over the Voralbergs pass through the Baratine on their journeys east or west. For this reason the country is filled with bandits and is dangerous to cross if unarmed.

Dry Flats

This area of poorly watered lands extends from the Kolkrab Mountains in the west to the Red Hills in the north, and to the edges of the Kellerwald in the east. To the south lies the Illumbrian Coast. The plains are dry, receiving little runoff from the mountains and even less rainfall than those heights to the north and west. What little water does fall pours into the region's many lakes and ponds, keeping them full and clear. The lands are gentle and generally flat, only rising slightly as one travels north away from the plains. The Dry Flats support a hardy prairie grass, as well as tall and narrow poplars, all of which withstand both the heat and dry of summer.

Ebensfield Downs

These rich grasslands serve to feed the large horse and cattle herds of Aachen. The country is open and flat, so much so that on clear, cloudless days, one can see the distant peaks of the Voralbergs. The hunting is good and the water pure, air clean and the grasslands a safe place for men and halflings. The Downs are peopled with stouthearted villages and farmers who have little to fear from men, for they enjoy the protection of the king of Aachen in the north and the ships of the Tageans, with whom they often trade, in thes south.

Feador Plains

Between the Gray Coast and the Holmgrad Mountains lies a broad expanse of open prairie. The land here is flat with little in the way of elevation. In spring and summer the grass grows deep and green in the loamy soil. In the colder months, the grass wilts, but clings to earth, offering the large herds of grazing buffalo plenty to eat. Stocky ponies dwell here also, alongside the buffalo. These creatures are stout, with good stamina. They have long manes and tails and a crown of hair around their hooves. They come from old dwarven stock and are prized by all who live in the north. Mammoths, wooly rhinos, and similar beasts also come to graze upon the Feador.

The wind forever blows here in the warmer months, rising from the south. In the colder months it comes from the north and west, through the Kleberock.

This is a favored hunting ground for pelt traders, but it is a dangerous place, for it is also a favored hunting ground of the Jolmuen (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**) as well. With the bodies of large boars, and the torsos of giants, these massive creatures take great sport in hunting herds of buffalo and the human hunters who follow them.

The Feador Plains sport a few communities on the coast. These are mostly small villages established by the Northmen. They are welcoming communities, though guarded against evil. They generally traffic in pelts and fish taken from the Inner Sea.

Flat Bush

This dry prairie lies between the Sulfur River and Flat Bush Run. It lays south of the moisture-bearing Anvil Wind (see "Appendix B: Climate"), which pulls the dry air from deeper south up along the range of Voralberg Mountains. All this means that the Flat Bush is dry and hot most of the year, but subject to sudden and violent storms when the Anvil Wind bears south.

The grass here is sparse, clinging with shallow roots in the barren soil. It is home to an odd assortment of reptiles, prong-horned antelope, and coyotes, as well as ogres and some of the dragon kin.

Frozen Salt Flats

The lands to the north of Ursal are frozen wastes. Unklar's freezing grip and icy breath are still felt in this fell region. Once, a flowering open savanna covered in dark warm grasses and thick black firs, but war came and the gods wrestled. Here, Narrheit forbade Unklar dominance and the Horned God contested his wild power. For long days they fought, the venom of their contest spoiling all it touched. Narrheit stood his ground for he was unspoiled by the years of creation, and he was of the Named and not bound by the Judgment. But Unklar was the more powerful and filled with the rage of his youth. Eventually he struck down the Lord of Chaos but not before all the land around was poisoned, frozen in a salty glacier that sat upon the land like the weight of death.

Miles thick, in places it is split, broken, and torn by deep crevices or high crags, while in others it is as flat as glass. It is cold and the ice is poisoned with salt. The glacier crushes the earth, but is not content with what it owns, stretching its fingers in all directions when the winters last overlong. Snow heaps and furls over the peaks, while shallow salty lakes amass atop the glacier during the summer melt. Hidden within its crevasses and razor sharp jags are innumerable shifting caves of ice.

The Flats are a nightmare for the northern rim of the Grundliche Mountains, for the winds roll across the Flats and batter those mountains, and they always blows cold and bitter.

What little lives in this land is most terrifying, for only Unklar's minions could survive in such an inhospitable place, but tales speak of massive white bears with long shaggy hair and teeth the size of small daggers, of slim six-legged lizards with brilliant white scales that glimmer in the moonlight, and other fell beasts. Some brave souls do make their way to these lands, for into them fled the last remnants of Unklar's people after he was cast down and they brought with them great wealth, which has long since disappeared into the caverns and palaces of ice beneath the frosty wasteland.

Huntlands

These broad, open flat prairies are favored by vast herds of beasts; buffalo, elk, and deer of all stripes wander the country. They are followed by huge wolves, bears, and other predators. Dragons are known to hunt the country, joining the many men of the northern tribes who spend months on the wild hunt. It is bitterly cold in the winter for there is no break given from the weather coming off the Great Northern Tundra. It is hot and humid in the summer.

Illumbrian Coast

The coastal region is stark and bare, but coves, bays, and inlets hide beautiful and secluded retreats protected from the harsh seas of winter and cooled by the Amber Sea's lazy summer winds. These areas are highly prized by the more reclusive of the Confederation of Torrich, and are home to some of the most powerful personages, both villainous and otherwise.

Ishii Basin

The Basin, also called the Hundred, lies between the Kolkrab Mountains in the south and the Nicoleigh Hills in the north. It is a large swath of open country over 100 miles long and 30 wide. It is dry in the Basin, though grass grows during the cool spring and early summer, browning by fall. Snow falls lightly here when it does, though it is rare. The Basin is protected from the Anvil Wind to the North and the Trader's Wind to the south, making the region still and quiet.

A wide variety of animals and beasts stalk the Hundred; they are joined by several small tribes of nomads who wander the country.

Olgdon Plateau

This dry stretch of upland lies above the Aenochian Forest, beneath the rain shadow of the Voralberg Mountains. The soil is thin and the grass sparse in spring and summer. It avoids the harsh snows that tend to batter the Vale of Fund, and because of this, attracts a large number of deer and elk. They in turn bring the giants down from the mountains, who come to feast upon the creatures.

Throughout the plateau are a number of hovels, built as temporary homes by the hunters, and posing dangers to travelers of any stripe.

Ork

Despite its name, this wide open country has few orcs within it. It is warm year round, receiving very little rainfall, lying as it does south of the moisture-bearing Anvil Wind. The country consists of ever rising uplands, staggered like gigantic steps, until they come to the Kolkrab Mountains. If the lack of moisture was not enough, the Trader's Wind picks up the ash from the active volcanoes that lie in the Kolkrab Mountains and deposit it across Ork.

Its a hot, dry, dismal place, and home to giants, particularly hill and hunting fire giants. Others dwell here but they are not friendly and rarely welcome outsiders.

Plains of Saeros

These broad open plains are dry and hot, suffering from a northbound wind that carries little moisture. Despite this, wild horses - small, stocky, but sturdy beasts - roam the plains, feeding on the short grass in the warm months and the cottonwood trees that grow in the Moark in the cold months. The West River runs through the plains but is dry most of the year, though water lies not far beneath the surface.

The horses have attracted a number of human tribes that range these plains and the large Valley of Elixir to the south, the Ishii Basin, and Ork beyond.

The valley itself is more a broad prairie, slightly better watered than the plains to the north. Here giant lizards stalk the land.

Red March

The Red March comprises that region around the Rilthwood that lies at the foot of the Grundliche Mountains. It refers to a wilderness area that is claimed by no king, but is distinct for its stone mounds and friendly thickets. The land is fresh, the ground fertile, the winters mild, and the trees abundant.

What distinguishes this land most though is its people. Hospitable beyond words, these sturdy farmers offer house and home to stranger and friend alike. It is a safe respite for those weary of the world and its dangers. Hearty food, heady ales, and comfortable feathery beds at a cheap price offer havens for many travelers.

The population is sparse though, and its plentiful waters and open paths attract all manner of creature, both fell and wild. Monsters situate their dens in the crooks, crevices, and crannies of the land, making passers-by and travelers their occasional prey. It is home to some very famous monsters, such as the giant Skullgrinder and his band of surly burglars, the Fallowmouth Serpent, the crazed Rendweird, and Palatine the wayward bard, who sings horrible songs with a breath that smells like a swamp and with the voice of an ogre. So famed are some of the monsters that the inhabitants would be loathe to see them go, but hardy adventurers and the like always manage their way into this land in search of easy loot and clean living.

Tar Kiln

Beneath the Bleached Hills and far from the settled lands of Kayomar lies the Tar Kiln, a large untrammeled forest in the northern Valleys of Kayomar. The Big Mud River separates it from the Mithlon Eves in the west, and the horrid Marrowdell marks its southern boundary.

This forested scrub is a mixture of pines and hardwoods. The northern tracks are thickly covered in tall, aged pines. The forest floor is littered with their dying husks. In the south are large hardwoods, beech, oak, elm, hickory, locust, and the like. The land is interspersed with open glades, upland prairies, hollows, and ravines.

The lands roll with gentle and wooded hills and are cut by many clear-flowing streams and creeks. Small ponds and lakes are fed by deep, clear springs, but these pleasant vistas belie the region's real dangers. The Tar Kiln earns its name for it is littered with tar pits, constantly bubbling, oozing the ichor of the world's birth upon the green grasses. These pits are deadly dangerous, for once snared, few escape them. They are the favored hunting ground of bull headed men and the Jolmuen, boar men with four arms (see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**).

A few hardy men dwell along the many rivers of the Tar Kiln, hunting and trapping. Their makeshift towns spring up, dirty squalid affairs, as fast as they disappear. They are wild and free men who left the south for the wilderness.

"*There are creatures out there, let me tell you, wild wolves the size of a horse, boars as big as elephants, snakes that can eat a man in one bite. There too are dragons and giants, cruel trolls and others besides, but we brave these lands for the elk are plentiful and the trees strong. Here we are far from the prying eyes of those taxing Lords of Kayomar which I fear even more than the dragon.*" ~ Chris Sands.

Twin Rivers is the largest town in the region; it stands between the two rivers Big Mud and Teifsich. It is a walled town with a fierce reputation (*see* **Rune Lore**).

Vale of Fund

Perhaps one of the richest agricultural regions in the Lands of Ursal, the Vale is generously watered by 5 large rivers and scores of smaller ones. It is the heart of the kingdom of Augsberg, including both the Harzberg and Krichland. It is well populated with towns and villages, farmers and free holders. The country is generally safe and well patrolled. However, due to its proximity to the Luneberg Plains, it is frequently the landing spot of creatures crossing over the Olgdon River. For this reason the people there generally live in fortified houses and towns.

Vale of Lothian

This valley lies nestled between the Silver and Ruthan. It is the ancestral home of the Lothian elves, famed for their struggles in the Winter Dark. Meltowg died at the Castles of Spires and Daladon rose to prominence as a Val Tulmiph. It is a peaceful valley, occupied by a number of powerful though very elusive high elves. Those of good intent often flee to the Vale for refuge.

Vale of Skadi

In the mountains, nestled between the Nostian and Fromia rivers and south of the Toten Fields, rests a small and forgotten valley referred in local legends as the Vale of Skadi. In this valley, a large and prosperous town named Brunhille once existed. They dwelt under the dominion of Aufstrag. With access to mines, the town grew in power and wealth through trade and commerce. Unfortunately Brunhille tried to remain neutral when Unklar's powers waned and the Winter Dark Wars began.

It was under the rulership of Aurion the Black that Brunhille refused the increased demand of resources which Aufstrag mandated. Action was swift as many of the towns people were rounded up and put to death as sympathizers to the newly formed Council of Man and Dwarf. Brunhille rose up and rebelled against the imperium, but as the forces of light closed in on Unklar's seat of power, armies of darkness were closing on the valley.

In desperation, Brunhille called upon aid and, according to stories, giants came from the mountains and hills, whereas gnomes rose hidden places in the earth and came to fight the invaders. Rumors say that an unknown renegade archmage summoned demons to do his bidding and fend off the enemy. Other tales tell of a warrior, carried on a dragon-mount, that led the charge against Aufstrag's folk.

But it was to no avail. By the time the reign of Unklar came to an end, so ended the existence of Brunhille. It is believed the very mountains came down and crushed much of the invaders and the town itself was destroyed, leaving nothing but ruins and abandoned buildings. It was a massacre and meant to be an example for any others thinking of rising up against Aufstrag. Some survivors remained and settled a small village on the outskirts of the ruins, but in the years that followed, the fate of Brunhille, the village, and its stories were mostly forgotten.

But whispers remain. Whispers of a fortress belonging to giants up in those mountains. Whispers of a warrior's tomb and the dragon that guards it. Whispers of a wizard tower at the center or a town in ruins. And whispers of untold wealth lying unclaimed in the ruins and the mines not far off.

Valley of the All Father

The Valley of the All Father lies in the Maedrumaust Mountains in the far south of Ethrum. It is almost impossible to enter. In the north the Danau River enters the mountains through a wide gap, however the gap is strewn with monstrous boulders that have tumbled down from the mountains in jumbled slopes. No paths lead over them and only the river offers access through them, however, it too is strewn with the mountain's rubble. For over 20 miles the river batters its way through a series of violent cataracts that turn the water of the river into a churning maelstrom. Few boatmen possess the skill to survive the river, and few trackers have the patience to wander the boulder-strewn landscape.

The Valley is guarded by an ancient power. Here dwelt Hirn, son of Vol, son of Hlothver, who was the first dwarf to speak to the All Father in the Days before Days. Hirn wandered the world in his youth and when he found the Valley he dedicated his life to paying his debt to the All Father by carving a statue of the god into the living rock.

At 742 feet high, the statue gazes out across the gentle rolling slopes of the grass-washed green valley. It stands on the far slopes, on the east bank of the river, gazing north to the cataracts. The Valley itself is peaceful; the mountains guarding it from almost all creatures but some antelope that graze its floor, birds, and other similar creatures. Hirn, honored by all his people for his heritage, claimed all the valley and forbid any to enter it and the dwarves honored it and him for centuries. Only the goblins despoiled it during the Goblin-Dwarf Wars, but even they feared the All Father's visage and would not mar it in any way. Only time and weather have softened the image, but even those have not utterly removed the visage carved into the stone of the mountain's side.

In later years a company came to the Valley and rooted out an Oonluth (see Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde) that had take refuge there, and in doing so recovered the skull of Hirn, and this they set in a tomb at the stature of the All Father's feet. Gunthor of Norgorad Kam summoned the ghosts of his own ancestors to guard the tome, and thus it stands.

Valley of Elixir

See Plains of Saeros.

Valley of the White Tower

A broad, open valley to the west of the White Tower, this valley is nestled in the feet of the Rhodope Mountains. It is here that a narrow set of steps lead up several thousand feet to Perrin's Break, a pass over the mountains.

Warden Plains

These plains are similar to the Feador and possess the same deep grasses and wild pony and buffalo herds. They are far more haunted by the traffic from the Kleberock Pass however, and also dire wolves of the Troll Downs. The lands here begin to break up as well, rolling into long, broad valleys. Further south they break up even more, the prairie split into washed-out gulches with a low brush. These areas offer plenty of room for ambush and most travel here with caution.

Wastelands

Beyond the Grundliche Mountains, before the Frozen Salt Flats, lies a narrow belt of country that men call the Wastelands. Here the country has recovered some from the horrors of the conflict that made the Flats. In the warm months grasses grow, and fields of wild flowers. Some stunted trees grow as well and small multi-limbed bushes, but the country is still hard and dangerous and the ruin of the Salt Flats is ever on the minds of those who dwell here, most of whom seek to remove themselves from the kingdoms of man and live lives of solitude. Old brigands, those fleeing from friend or enemy, hermits, Fontenouq elves and others carve a meager living from this place.

MOUNTAINS & HILLS

Antule Mountains

These dense mountains overlook the plains of central Aenoch, from the Toten Fields to the Aenochian Forest. They are squat, solid mountains with few roads through them. Narrow tracks wind through their ranks, traveling to and fro, following game trails and the like. Mount Aenoch dominates the range. At 11,000 feet, one can see distant Aufstrag as a finger on the horizon. Here the emperors of old enjoyed a pleasure house hollowed into the mountain fastness, but where it lies none now can say.

The spine of the Antule is found along its northern extremes. Here, the waters pour suddenly into the Galen Valley. The runoff has created deep valleys and steep cliffs where only the hardiest of trees gain a foothold. During winter, many of the creeks pour over rough falls into cascading valleys before dumping their muddy waters into the Fromia

and Nostian Rivers.

Aratok Mountains

This low-lying range of hills marks the south-eastern boundary of the Lands of Ursal. The Aratok rise north of the Hruesen River and include the famed Blacktooth Ridge (for more see **A1 Assault on Blacktooth Ridge**) and the lesser known Stone Ridge. They are lightly forested with a mix of pine and hardwood trees, and are laced with caves and old, though usually small, dungeons. It is here that the Ineng Tree has rooted to the ground, the first of the evil trees and the first of the trolls of old.

These hills are dangerous, offering refuge for many creatures driven north after the Winter Dark. The knights and barons of New Aenoch who attempt to carve out holdings in the region must continually drive these creatures back across the river.

Bald Mountains

The Bald Mountains are the eastern fence of the Massif, dominating the Twilight Woods to the east and Fontenouq to the south. They brace against the Coal Range. They are not especially high, but are rugged and difficult to travel through. The flanks of the Bald Mountains are littered with hidden valleys and dark caves.

Iron and copper abound in its southern reaches, near Mount Norling, which itself once housed the dwarven hold Dunlag, now abandoned. Especially valued are the silver deposits that flank the eastern slopes of the mountain. In the north of the Bald Mountains bordering the Coal Range are diamonds, the largest known the world over, and many a battle is waged over these precious deposits. The rock is difficult to work and only engineers of phenomenal ability and the giants of yore know how to unmake and remake it. This is the selfsame rock that was transported north and used in the building of the Great Wall of Ethrum.

Bearcoat Roughs

This low range of hills is dominated by one large mountain, Mount Pendlton. The Roughs lie in the southern Luneberg, between that wasteland and the Toten Fields. They consist of broken, steep hills, deep gulches, and precious little water. Furthermore, they are home to a host of creatures who hunt the surrounding plains. Dangerous and unfriendly, the country is avoided by most except the die-hard.

Bergrucken

Commonly referred to as the Saddleback Range, at least by those in Kayomar and Maine, these mountains stand like a long, thin, impenetrable wall that begins in the north on the edges of the Coal Range, stretching all the way to the Iron Way and Five Hills. The dwarves of Norgorad Kam refer to this as their home and refuse to name it anything other than Bergrucken.

The range runs north to south, like a spill of rumbling rocks coming off the Massif. They are not tall mountains, though they are fairly rough. Travel is arduous over this range as one moves up and down through deep valleys and over steep passes. It is enough to weary a giant. The valleys are forested in dark evergreens and run with clear mountain waters. The heights are home to large white and gray mountain goats, huge elk, vicious cougars, and soaring eagles.

There are several passes, and most are safe. It is rumored that the dwarves have a secret method of traveling across this range. A great road beneath the mountains allows them quick movement to and fro, or so it is rumored (see "Norgorad Kam"). There are also the occasional bandits, as the dwarves cannot be everywhere at once and the merchants who make their way over these hills are fat and wealthy. Even ogres live in these hills, but they are shy and scared, only making their way out in the cover of darkness. Rumors abound of great abandoned mines, old palaces, tombs and the like. Most are proved to be nothing more than rumors, but, if truth be known, many ungern and others fled to the rugged hills after Unklar's fall, and his captains were ever want to build palaces in high places.

The dwarves patrol these mountains constantly and it is not uncommon to find a patrol on a pass questioning passersby, merchants, and travelers, which invariably causes friction with their human neighbors to the south and west. Nevertheless, it persists.

Black Hills

These hills mark the northeast central boundary of the Lands of Ursal. In the early days of the emperors of Aenoch they were hunting preserves, but when deep deposits of gold were discovered, deep mines began to scar the landscape.

These mines, the Marlgul Mines, named after their original owner, are deep and consist of hundreds of shafts and tunnels, many of them miles deep. They were mined out years ago, and afterward served as an armory for Unklar's folk. They are now home to all manner of creatures who take up residence in the abandoned darkness, giant spiders, basilisks and other serpents, fire giants, and salamanders, as well as all other manner of creature and host of Aufstrag.

Bleached Hills

These are a range of low hills and shallow valleys that rest on the north edge of the wilds. This tumbling range is distinguished by its height and composition. The hills in the northern wilds have been ground down by time so that they are little more than jumbled, rocky mounds. Where the Bleached Hills begin, the range has not suffered the vicissitudes of time so poorly as their brothers. In this region, the sandstone base is capped by white limestone that has resisted the erosion of time and gives the region its name.

Narrow valleys and steep cliffs predominate, while many waterways course through them to tumble out into the River Teifsich. The limestone has also given rise to many caves and caverns, both natural and unnatural. Some of these caverns stretch for miles into the earth, and the dwarves, in all their long years, have yet to manage the deepest or widest of them. Much of the hills are forested in thick oaks and sturdy hickory but there are glades atop many of the rises and in many a vale. There, tall, thin grasses grow throughout the summer, attracting all manner of herbivores.

The Bleached Hills were the farthest extent of Nulak-Kiz-Din's kingdom and power, and a countless number of men and beast fell in the glades and forests. So many battles and so many deaths occurred in these tumbling downs that the dead often lay unburied, forgotten monuments to the cruelty of the age. Skeletal arms, legs, skulls and ribs, pinioned through with spears and swords and tangled in the forest growth, remain for those with eyes to see. Many folk, those of a more morbid nature, claim this is the origin of the region's name.

Blessed Hills

These low hills enjoy a great deal of rain fall, and possess a large number of small lakes and streams. Wild sycamore grows here in abundance. They are gentle hills, offering plenty of refuge and safe, easy travel. Their great disadvantage lies in the griffons who regularly hunt the range.

They are named for an early sainted priest, Airaboth, whose tomb lies in the hills. He stood against the tide of darkness during the early days of Unklar's conquest and fell with iron in his hand. His body was laid to rest beneath a great stone and marked with a simple rune. It is said that those noble of heart and spirit, whose bodies are laid upon the stone, are brought back from the Endless Pool or Stone Fields, but those cast upon the Wretched Plains gain no such joy.

Coal Range

Commonly, this reference is to a range of hills north of the Bergrucken. More precisely, though, this is an outcropping found along the entire outer rim of the Massif. Here coal is found in abundance and mined from one end of the Massif to the next. These are generally low hills, worn by water and time, revealing large expanses of "black gold." Along the east rim, the coal is mined by humans, gnomes, and even a few dwarves down on their luck. The halflings apparently will not stoop to such endeavors. In the western portions of the Massif the miners are human, locally referred to as coal burners. These are a mean folk, for their lives are short, hard and brutal. The coal is sold throughout the neighboring kingdoms of Maine, Anglamay, Ceeana, Kayomar, Burnvetsi, and the Gelderland.

The hills are sprightly forested in the pitiful loblolly pine. In the east they are short, rounded hills with shallow valleys and lazy streams. In the west, the hills are larger, a little more fierce, but still worn by water and time. They have resisted though, and so the land is full of deep gulches, rocky precipices, narrow winding paths, and steep cliffs. This, mixed in with an abundance of bad weather, makes travel here difficult. This is further hampered in the east by wandering bands of wickedly intelligent kobolds, who clamber out of their wretched pits and caves to raid surrounding communities, merchants, and travelers.

Five Hills

The Five Hills mark the boundary between the Bergrucken and the Silver Mountains. Their ownership is contested between the dwarves of Norgorad Kam and the Kings of Maine and as such they are largely empty of both realms. People who dwell there do so outside the confines of any kingdom and are usually rough adventurers fleeing from something or hunting something else.

They derive their name from the five nearly identical hills that mark the region. They are mounds built by the Ethrum king, Haerlun Thul. Each contains an identical tomb, but only one the body of the king. The others are trapped and deadly places for any would-be interlopers. Few even remember where the hidden entrances lie.

The Flintlock

The Flintlocks are a southern spur of the Grundliche Mountains. They range higher in the north and west, tumbling down to the Vale of Fund in the south. The Flintlock ranges from jagged, steep inclines to soft, rolling hills. Throughout the whole there are steep and shallow valleys, long narrow ridges and massive boulder fields, generously spread amongst the low peaks and rounded mountains. To the south there are finely wooded areas with many red cedars and tall pines.

Water is plentiful, as moist air rolls across the hills from the Ashen Gap. The snows fall heavy and thick during winter, blanketing the entire region in a perpetually white drift.

The hills and valleys, cliffs and peaks are dotted with fortresses, mines, caves, houses, farmsteads, and the like. Many are abandoned but some are still held by the gnomes who live here in great numbers. These friends to the dwarves were once part of the kingdom extending from Grundliche-Hohle, but no more. The wars with the Punj left the region out of the Mountain Kingdom's territory and the gnomes call themselves kings of their own now, ruled by the Clan Thanes.

Forty seven clans reside here. Stout and harsh, the gnomes patrol the mountains incessantly, scouring the landscape of any and all unwelcome intruders. But the gnomes do not possess legions of warriors and the Flintlock has become dangerous for it. More and more creatures of ill intent make their way to these lands. Gotzenburg Keep, long a dwarf stronghold, is held by orcs now. They hold to the old ways, fiercely organized and ruled by the Anjak (orc king), Rwin of Ateck, a large burly orc with an eye for human slaves.

Grundliche Mountains

The white-capped burgs of northern Aenochia dominate the north. Called the Roof of the World, they are the tallest mountains in the world. Some peaks are high enough that the clouds rest on their shoulders. The mountains are both beautiful and horrible. They tower over and above one another in an endless fashion. Jumbled rock piled on high, braced against cliffs that climb ever further, reaching into the heavens. Sharply spired peaks cross the horizon, merging with the heavens in white peaks of clouds. At these heights on a clear day, one can see for great distances, to the plains in the south and the frozen salt flats to the north. From there the peaks descend perilously to deep troughs and great upland plateaus covered knee deep in snow all year long. Furious weather whips at these heights, dumping snow and blasting chill winds that grind away at one's skin. Nothing lives here except the hardiest of beast and gods of old.

Further down the mountains are narrow canyons carved by immense glaciers, sharp ridges, fields of boulders, mountains of slate, granite precipices, and many other wonders besides. Even further down one comes to the trees, streams and rivers, valleys and dales, and low plateaus. All are rough and tumble, shaken by the quakes that still rumble and groan at the top of the world. Madly, the landscape slips and falls to the plains below and only then does it release its grasp upon the world.

Here live the famed dwarves of Grundliche-Hohle. Powerful and strong beyond compare, these dwarves have fought from the beginning of time to keep their grip on this land. They hold this perilous land dear and few tread where they live without permission.

The mountains are vast and untamable. Goblins also live here, in Ngorondoro. They strive, as do the dwarves, for control of the mountains. There are great beasts, tigers with sabers for fangs, bears the size of trees, massive rams, elk, and mountain lions as well. There are giants who reside at the Roof of the World, apart from and uncaring about the worlds of men. Massive hulking beastmen wander the upland plateaus. Dragons too, hunt in the daylight, which rarely happens in the rest of the world. The beasts that stalk these mountains, like the land itself, are innumerable, powerful, and unforgiving.

It is the immense wealth that lies in the mountains that draws people to them. The mountains are full of gold, silver, gems, jewels, and other ores of great value, for here Ornduhl of the Val Eahrakun spent much of his labor. The mountains have been home to folk for many thousands of years and many chambers and halls were built in days of yore. Much has been abandoned, and yearns for the dungeoneer. The countless wars have left vast underground tracks empty of goblin and dwarf.

Upon the southern stretches of the mountains very near to Grundliche-Hohle lies dread Unklarglich. Like a moment of darkness, the

castle of the mogrl stands as a testament to the age of Winter Dark. The ever watchful beast within scans the mountains and the valleys, looking for any brave enough to challenge him. He is a dread master of the dark, fearless and filled with hate.

The Holmgrads

This is a low range of mountains that creep out of the great northern wastes and edge up to the Inner Sea. The mountains are thickly forested in evergreens. The Holmgrads are not high and are gently sloped, having been scraped raw by the glaciation during the Winter Dark. The mountains frequently give way to highland plateaus, areas where the elevation is sufficiently low enough to allow for longer summers. The range is very wet, dominated by cool weather from the north and warm from teh south. In the higher regions, winter lasts throughout much of the year and snow can fall at any time. There the summers are short, many creeks and streams of frigid water wash through frosty vales and across the cool plateaus.

Many creatures of the north dwell here, sea lions on the coasts, musk oxen, white bears, wolves, snow deer, yak, elk, caribou, and moose. To those who know the secrets of the Holmgrads, it is a bountiful land and one full of promise. Winter is the only enemy, for it is harsh. Frozen winds from the Inner Sea mix with the chilly storms of the north in a battle in the sky, bringing icy rain, then snow, all carried by bitterly cold winds.

The men of Holmgald call this place home, and many wander into the Holmgrads seeking fabled creatures, snow-beasts, and white dragons. An old dwarven highway remains, the Andrus Road, beginning in the

Gruswald, wandering the whole length of the mountains to end in the Moravan Plains. It is narrow, made for foot and mule traffic only, and frequently consists of little more than stairs carved into the mountain, or peg cliffs designed for climbing up vertical walls. It is sprinkled with old hostels, stone ruins now, a testament to when the dwarves wandered the road on an almost daily basis.

Iron Fence

The Iron Fence is a stark set of black-rocked cliffs upon the northern edge of the Grundliche Mountains. High and steep, they are extraordinarily difficult to cross. The Fence serves as home to a number of dragons, who find the inhospitable cliffs a perfect home.

Iron Mountains

These weathered mountains are home to Mount Tur and Roheisen Hohle. Once a tall chain of mountains, they are much battered now, the wind and rain of countless centuries tearing away the lesser stone, leaving behind gentle rolling hills and slopes that suddenly end in deep gulches or canyons or are interrupted by stark walls of stone from the mountain's granite core. It is beneath one of these weathered mountains that the dwarves dwell (see "Roheisen Hohle").

The mountains are well watered, allowing for rich, if short, grass to grow during the spring and summer months. This makes the Iron Mountains very inviting and is the very quality that attracted the first dwarven settlers to build homes here.

Travel here is easy; there are numerous old paths winding through the region and these are used by the large number of wild goats and deer that populate the heights.

Kleberock Pass

This pass lies between the north end of the Shadow Mountains and the west end of the Holmgrads. It is a very low valley cut between the two mountain ranges. It offers the safest - at least the most level - passage from the Moravan Plains to Gottland. The wide valley was created by the Sorgon River, that drains from the Wolf Fens in the north.

The pass itself is wide, about three quarters of a mile at its widest, and extends roughly 40 miles. The pass is crowded by the Sorgon River. The Sorgon is dammed in three places, heaps of stone and earth tossed into the current by the trolls, and these dams make two small lakes. These lakes narrow the passage even further so that it can only hold two wagons abreast.

The valley was once verdant with all manner of flowering vines and trees, but these have long since been cut from the land as Nulak-Kiz-Din and his forces claimed the region. They blasted the valley so that now little grows there other than pain and suffering. Towers and fortresses, some occupied, others abandoned, are sprinkled throughout the valley floor as tribes of trolls or orcs move back and forth, battling for supremacy. Many slaves work the land for food and it is a horrible fate to befall any of those who are cast into slavery in this land.

Kolkrab Mountains

The tall spires of the Kolkrabs dominate southern Aenochia, ranging from the Straits of Velug in the west, to the Western Poprad River in the east. They dominate the Illumbrian Coasts for hundreds These are gorgeous mountains with tall, thin, white-capped peaks. Narrow paths cling to the mountain's flanks as they wind hither and yon through the whole range, marking narrow valleys and steep inclines. Its valleys are gentle and its streams fresh with life.

The wind blows cool from the mountains, warming over the Dry Flats and coming to sea as a gentle breeze. Few trees grow here, but most that do are tall deciduous trees that root deep and drink from underground waterways. They are lonely trees, kept company by the many flocks of large black ravens. The mountains hold gold and silver in their roots, as well as gems and other precious things. The early Aenochians mined these mountains for many years and much was taken from the mountains and it gave without regret, for it was always a friendly place and remembers the Days before Days and the goodness in the world then.

Things, however, are changing. For a thousand years the mountains suffered the yoke of Unklar and many a shaft was driven straight to its heart. Much was plundered and taken without return. Now the place is growing wary of strangers and fearful of miners as its life is being drained. The greed of the Aenochians is creating a rush for these lands, and the mines begin to drop deep. Powers within the mountains begin to put themselves forward and travel has become more difficult and dangerous.

It is said that Frafnog, that most ancient of dragons, dwells in the Kolkrab and that his presence alone gives the range an almost supernatural life.

Lessar Marl

This range of mountains lies in the greater Rhodope Mountains and earns its name from the large number of orcs that infest them. There is one active volcano in the Lesser Marl and this has attracted the humanoids in large numbers. They dwell in a variety of tribal groups and bands, in caves and hovels from the Kanu Basin to Mount Brega. They are loosely aligned with the orcs of Rackenburg Fortress.

Maedrumaust Mountains

This chain comprises the mountains that lie on either side of the Valley of the All Father. They are dry, inhospitable mountains, with several active volcanoes. They are little explored. The Valley of the All Father, that rich land that lies between the two chains, was a sacred place to the dwarves of old and few if any ever visited it. Legends grew up around them, tales of dwarven magic and ancient power. These served to dissuade most form venturing into the mountains so that they have stayed, largely, as they stood at creation.

Mammoth ridge, "The Beormot"

This wide, low ridge is known by many names. The halflings call it "Mammoth," the orcs "Klugtak", and the Northmen the "Beormot", but it is best known as Mammoth Ridge, for here is where the great troll lord, Hasyrick, fell to a tusked mammoth which he sought to slay. The ridge stretches from the sea to the mountains, and divides the Gottland in two. There is little wealth here, just some scattered orc and hobgoblin villages and small ramshackle human communities. There are a few farmsteads. Most of the humans who live here are drifters and homeless who have found themselves at the end of the world and at the end of their tether. They are generally rough, but sometimes friendly to strangers.

Travel on the Mammoth Ridge is only slightly more difficult than in the lowlands. The ground is broken into small hills, and there is grass for grazing and enough scrub and underbrush for camp fires and the like. The halflings rarely follow the same paths in order to keep their enemies from tracking them.

The greatest danger on the Mammoth Ridge lies in the winter months. The mammoths who migrate from the Moravan come across the Dante Pass and down into the lowlands. They work their way to the Ridge where the bulls vie for the attention of the cows. These great lumbering beasts are often worked into a fury and attack at the slightest provocation. To make matters worse, the trolls of the Kleberock gather from time to time to avenge their long dead master, Hasyrick. They come to the Ridge to hunt the giant beasts. During the winter, it is not uncommon for a raging wooly mammoth to be locked in combat with a dozen thick-bodied trolls. Neither the trolls nor mammoths pay attention to what gets in their way and many a party of adventurers have been trampled to death when they are caught up in these titanic struggles.

The Masif

Thrusting out of the vast plains and gentle hills of Ethrum are the jagged spires and crumbling cliff faces of the Massif. It is rumored in the halls of the learned that this tremendous bubble in Aihrde's crust was created in a weak spot when Unklar first bent the world. Others claim that this is where Inzae tried in vain to break through the crust of the world to gain entry to Aihrde. Still others, of a peculiarly modern bent, claim that a great eruption of earth and fire rent this hole in the land. Whatever its origin, the Massif is a peculiar and fantastic phenomenon in Aihrde.

The gigantic spires and cliffs of three mountain ranges, the Bergrucken, Coal Range and Bald Mountains, circle the lush valley in which reside Lake Orion, Illithrum and Inzae's Back. This ring of steep cliffs, sharp ridges, and ragged gorges stretches for many hundreds of miles in a large circle broken in only one spot, at the Falls of Thorgrim. The cliffs of the Bald Mountains are steeper than the lazy cliffs of the Bergrucken and Coal Range.

Access to the Massif isn't easy. There are traces, paths, and a few well known and not so well known passes that crisscross the ridges. Most wind along precarious routes that edge narrow ridges and look over long drops into deep gorges.

Within the Massif are the gently sloping plains of Illithrum. These are well-fed grasslands, moist with all the flow from the mountains and are very fertile. For the most part, the plains are open and clear with deep flowing bright green grasses. Along the edge of Lake Orion are copses of aspen and some towering dark green firs, while within the plains proper are small beech and oak glades, lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and swamps.

The area is home to an abundance of wildlife. The famed long- horned antelope, lumbering gold-bear, large brown furry bovine, and graceful elk predominate. There are also dreadful creatures that pasture in this fertile plain, the massive and hulking rhinodon, wolves of notorious bent, and scaly lizards crawling in the muck and mire near the swampier shores edging Lake Orion.

Mount Hayden

In days of yore a young peasant from the Rleuland traveled along the Illumbrian coasts seeking the wisdom of the dragon Frafnog. Legends told that the ancient wyrm lived within a deep cave upon the spire of the highest mountain in the Kolkrabs. Whether true or not, the young man never returned and the locals named the mountain after him. Ever since, Mount Hayden has drawn wanderers and hermits who seek its ancient wisdom. Stark and terrible, the 9,000 foot high mountain looks out over the shipping lanes along the coasts. Its stark cliffs and endless trails claim many a would-be adventurer.

Mount Norlling

Mount Norlling is not a single mountain as the name suggests. Rather, it is a series of ridges and peaks. These mountains have been worn smooth with the passage of years and their structure is neither very high nor strenuous. It is a gentle range. With few natural caverns and open accessible valleys, the mount has never been used as a hiding place for those less than estimable denizens of Aihrde; rather it has attracted giants of a not altogether evil bent who enjoy its peaceful valleys and easily worked stone. The dwarves built a great hall here once, Dunulag, Deep Home, but abandoned it centuries ago.

Nicoleigh Hills

These tumbled mountains, with their many high and low peaks, were once the hunting grounds of the royal houses of ancient Aenoch. They stretch from the Culdune Gap to the Galen Valley and overlook the Ishii Basin in the south and Aenochian Forest in the north. They are gentle hills; even the highest peaks, which can be very high, are easy to climb.

Deep forests of oak and maple once covered the lower hills, where streams ran deep and fast. For the longest time the larger mountains protected these glens from the ravages of man and monster, but eventually people learned of them and they flocked to the mountains, settling there to earn a living off the nobles and their gold. Eventually constant hunting depleted the land of game, and the settlers destroyed much of the forests.

In the waning days of the empire, the Empress Nicole Leigh declared the lands her own domain and drove the many people who lived there from the hills. She destroyed towns, tore apart dams and attempted to reforest the area. She forbid hunting and the harvesting of trees in an attempt to restore the land to its past glory. In this she was only partially successful. Though civil war interrupted her endeavors, and she fell to an assassin's dagger in the very hills she loved, her efforts served the forest to some degree. Her body was laid to rest in a vast tomb beneath the mountains, heaped with all the riches and treasures of her long reign. Guardians from the other worlds were set to guard her, in hopes that she might watch over the hills for all time.

Today, the water in the many streams and creaks runs clean and pure. Copses of forests grow here and there, slowly spreading across the now stark mounds, but in many places the land is rugged and broken, soil erosion leaving it unpalatable for much growth. Some few folk, those whose ancestors were allowed to remain, live off the land and remember and care for it. A druidic people, they worship the trees and sky and other natural spirits. Some monsters have settled here too, but these are ancient and they are friendly, as often as not. Few now remember the empress who lent an empire to save a forest.

Red Hills

The Red Hills are part of the southern chain of the Antule Mountains. In the south they rise gradually out of the Illumbrian Plains, and overlook the Toten Fields in the north. These hills and valleys undulate for many miles, increasing in height and depth the further into the mountains one travels. The northern reaches of the mountains become steeper though they are not topped with the jagged peaks and steep cliffs found throughout much of the Antule Mountains. The upper slopes are sparsely forested with a mixture of aspen and stunted junipers while wispy grasses grow over much of the remainder.

The southern slopes are usually dry, being washed only by gentle winter rains and summer showers. During the winter, the runoff forms small

creeks and streams that pour down into the plains to the south, filling its many lakes and ponds. These rains have also cut into the deep red and black clays that form the lower slopes of the mountains. These

clays are highly prized for making pottery and many a village depends on their export and processing for their livelihood. The upper reaches are poorly explored and little used, but the grasses do offer summer fodder for small herds of bovine, elk, deer, and other grazers.

The southern portion of these mountains is dominated by the Hlobane orcs of Fortress Hul. These highly organized orcs were the pride of Unklar during the Winter's Dark, and have not forgotten it. They worship the Horned God still and slay any who transgress in their lands.

Rhodope Mountains

This sprawling mountain range stretches from Mount Brega in the north to the Amber Sea in the south. These are the truest mountains in the Lands of Ursal. They are young and tumultuous; volcanoes sprout on many peaks, spewing and belching forth fire and brimstone. Their smoke can, on occasion, be seen as far away as Burnvitse and Kayomar, and oft the mountains are called the Smokeys or the Smoking Giants.

The tallest peaks stretch up into the sky nearly 25,000 feet, where no man can live. They are covered in perpetual snow and glaciers. Storms rise fast and angry at these heights, often catching those brave enough to battle them by complete surprise. These mountains have jagged peaks, tumbling boulder fields, narrow canyons, steep cliffs, and razor sharp ridges. Mountains of slate, ash, granite, and all the stones known to man lie within. There is a constant rumbling and groaning of the earth as numerous quakes send boulders the size of ships crashing into the valleys below.

Few are the brave souls that attempt these mountains, and fewer still are the passes that cut through them. The heights are commanded by giants who reside in the clouds, the glaciers by the giants who resemble them. Dragons are known to roost here in the old lava tubes and empty cones. There are other creatures besides, creatures from the Days before Days, creatures never tamed by time, by Unklar, by magic, nor by man.

These were once the holdings of the dwarf kingdom Norgorad Kam. They built roads through and under, magical corridors guarded by shifting rocks, that transported one from place to place. Through these mountains they directed a great deal of traffic, carrying trade from the Brass Halls to the shores of the Sea of Erun and First Home. They founded and built Magdul-Hohle here, their one colony realm that fell to the goblins of old. That was in days long past and the world has changed, and now all that remains are the many abandoned halls, dungeons, and hidden ways of the dwarves, and these are filled with creatures of ill intent as often as left empty.

The Tower of the Demon, Turm Gehwir, lies in these mountains.

All this and more is what brings the adventurer, or the foolhardy, to the Rhodope Mountains, for there are wonderful treasures, heaps of gold and silver, mountains of gems, artifacts of old, and magics unknown. These attract adventuring warriors and the curious mages as thieves of renown.

Bearded Pass: The southernmost pass through the Rhodope mountains, it was cobbled by the dwarves of old and cuts through a long series of high-cliff valleys, over hills and through canyons. Though the road lies largely in ruin, with whole sections gone, destroyed or carted off, travel through the pass is fairly easy. In the east there is nothing left of the old road in the Darkenfold, though a bridge that was once part of the dwarven road remains over the Mistbane. In the west nothing but a ruined watchtower remains, overlooking the rolling plains beyond.

Divide: This marks the middle of the Rhodope Mountains and was at one time a way point on the journey to Magdul-Hohle, now lost to dwarf and man.

Feldum Gap: Two low ridges mark the east and west areas of this gap, allowing relatively easy passage over the Rhodope Mountains.

Perrin's Break: This narrow, treacherous pass snakes its way through the mountains, following cliffs and mountain peaks. It is snow bound much of the year, requiring careful navigation over ice covered ravines and cliff faces. In the west it ends in a narrow stair that criss- crosses the mountains until it comes to the Valley of the White Tower.

Ruthen Mountains

These mountains lie squarely in the kingdom of Kayomar, but of old the dwarves claimed them as part of the greater kingdom of Norgorad Kam. They are rich in iron ore, supplying Kayomar with much of its metals for their very large war machine. The town of Meikleberg is the font of this wealth of iron, much of the mine's product passing down mountain trails into the town.

The mountains themselves are stark and tall, and difficult to cross. There are no roads and only a few trails into the mountains for beyond them lies the large, fast moving Ardeen River.

It is in the Ruthen that the Holy Flame was discovered in ages past.

Shadow Mountains

This is a dire place, a dreadful place, one full of foreboding and evil. They are called the Shadow Mountains for Ineng the First of Trolls dwelt here, making his home in the high passes. There he sounded his horn, fashioned of the vapors of his malice. Though usually only referring to the western heap, this range of craggy, volcanic peaks stretches from the Rhodope Mountains to the Kleberock Pass.

In truth they are an extension of the Rhodope and share many of its characteristics. The mountains are treacherous for they stretch high into the sky and contain many tall peaks. They are young mountains and angry. Volcanoes abound and erupt white ash and molten lava that dumps and steams into the valleys and defiles throughout. They are ragged and tough, though easing at the eastern ends.

In the far north, overlooking the Kleberock, there are orcs and ungern innumerable, the remnants of the retainers of Nulak-Kiz-Din. Their holes rival the volcanoes in the production of filth and greasy smoke as they harness the deep fires to make many weapons of war. Underground the orcs delve ever deeper into the earth, seeking precious stones and rare minerals. Tunnels upon tunnels and mazes of circuitous paths make up this pock-marked place.

Shelves of the Mist

These hills are a mixture of gentle swells coming off the eastern spur of the Rhodope Mountains, and large escarpments overlooking perilous cliffs. Worn rough by volcanic activity, leveled by tremendous winter runoff, and scoured by the winds from the vast plains to the north, the Shelves of the Mist offer a vast array of tumultuous terrain.

The entire region is sparsely forested in blunted oaks and towering pines. The land is hot from underground lava pools that threaten

eruptions. Geysers dot the landscape, steaming pools which litter the escarpment, where the rivers run warm and the creeks hot. Falls and cataracts abound along the escarpment edges. Steam flows from the earth in these spots. Mixing the warm waters and cool airs creates a veritable curtain of mist over all these lands.

Here, there is a veritable menagerie of the most fantastic creatures of Aihrde. Both good and evil dwell and constantly war with one another among these misty heights. The fortresses of ancient giants, the eyries of hippogriffs, the caves of troglodytes, and the towers of mages all lie perched amongst the peaks, crevices, plateaus, escarpments, and valleys of this land. Even the falls hide perilous forts and nasty caverns. One must travel with great care in this misty land.

Too, the Shelves are a magical place, for the elves under their queen dwelt here for many long years, hiding from the Horned God, and they shaped the land to be a part of them. The very rock thinks arcane thoughts and many a mage spends a lifetime trying to decipher the messages and powers of this land. What draws them most are the rumors of gates and passages to other worlds and the lands beyond. It is even said that these hills harbor the gates of Vakhund, and one of the Rings of Brass (see "Cosmology of Aihrde"), both doorways to other worlds.

Silver Mountains

These majestic hills lie upon the east banks of the Ardeen River, climbing in gentle slopes several thousands of feet. In winter they are crowned with snow and in the spring months the melt off tumbles down dozens of small waterfalls, coursing through wooded creeks and streams before it waters the plains of Maine and swells the river to the west. Their name is derived from the many waterfalls that cut the mountain's slopes. There are some men of Maine who dwell here, as well as dwarves and other peoples, but the lands can be dangerous, as some dragons are drawn to the water.

Voralberg Mountains

The Voralbergs are a huge, towering range of mountains that stretch many hundreds of miles north and south.The peaks are high enough to have glaciers tucked between them and are covered in snow year round. Deep troughs and narrow defiles and crumbling ridges make up the bulk of the mountains. The upper reaches are bare except in the south where the range is more broad and vast. Upland plateaus are famous for their colorful summer flowers. The lower slopes house all manner of trees depending on the elevation. Crooked creeks and streams pour off the mountains in abundance, feeding the lands to the east and west with fresh water.

No kingdom claims this range. It is peopled sparingly with a few dwarves and gnomes, some knights, and even some few claiming royal lineage. Their homes range along the passes, the Canult in the north and South Gate near the Blessed Hills. The roads here are fairly safe but do see their fair share of banditry and raids from the more nefarious of the mountain's inhabitants.

Outside those passes though, the mountains are dangerous. Many foul creatures wander the lands. Though not cruel by nature, the giants here are indifferent and care little for the ways of man, or any other creatures that walk or crawl across the earth. There are also great fabled beasts here, flying lions, three headed lizards and the like. For centuries untold bandits have been raiding merchants and traders who dared pass this range. Thus, the mountains attract a great many adventurers, some successful and others not.

Near Black Rock, a town in Aachen, lies a huge gate built in the Voralbergs. It is closed and bound with magics, but it is said that beyond it lies a road beneath the mountains that opens up somewhere in the Maegersland on the far side.

Canult Pass: The Ursal Road passes over the very high, but well maintained Canult Pass. Merchants crossing over the Voralberg use the pass, as do other travelers on various journeys. The road is cob- bled where needed, but mostly just cut through stone, long flattened by years of use. Merchant guilds from Aachen and Augsberg jointly cover the cost of the pass' upkeep. The pass in not patrolled, and giants, bandits, and humanoids are known to hound those using it; for this reason those using the pass hire guards or are well armed.

South Gate or Crowbill: The Crowbill is the southern most pass that crosses the Voralberg. It is a narrow way that cuts along steep ridges and canyons. It is not preferred by travelers but used nonetheless. The weather can turn violent quickly, blanketing this high road in snow or lashing it with cold rain.

SWAMPS AND MARSHES

Grausumland

The Grausumland, the Gray Pools, is a mire of stinking, fetid, rotting swamps. The swamps are dark, cast in thick fogs and smokes. Unklar created this grotesque bog to protect Aufstrag. He churned the land with his malice, and vomited the fiflth of Aufstrag upon it, creating a wasteland twisted and foul. Into this he drained waters from the Uphrates and Undillay rivers, flooding the whole region. The waters carried the filth to the fore turning the water black and releasing foul vapors that ever hang over the swamp. Nearer to Aufstrag the swamps becomes a dangerous mire, for there, sprawling out for miles around the mighty fortress lay the ruins of Al-Liosh, buried now, lost to the filth of the Gray Pools. But beneath the waters lies a world of ancient houses, palaces and the armies of ancient Aenoch, where streets are roofed in mire, and the dead wander in hopelessness.

The ground swells and bubbles, spewing sulfurous odors and red mud. The land abounds in sink holes, mud slicks, quicksands, and slimy pits that suck down anything that happen to step upon them. Huge skeletal remains of long dead trees crowd the lower reaches, as time and water wear them to nothing. The stench from the Gray Pools is overwhelming, knocking lesser men to their knees; the smell carries far beyond the swamps so that even those who travel on the plains to the north, west, and east, or the Blighted Screed to the south must travel beneath the depressing blanket of its stench.

The Gray Pools are home to great hulking trees, many hundreds of feet tall. Called by the locals the Grunlere Trees, the "arms of the earth." Their roots are like gnarled beasts; their branches, both high and low, droop with curtains of green moss and drapes of yellow lichen, bark thick and gray, constantly peeling and falling to the muck below to slap the water, the echoes of which carry far and wide. The high branches leaf out, narrow, thin leaves as thick as a wasp swarm crowning the whole. Other trees grow in the shadows of these monsters, cypress, prickly ash, and swamp willows. And plants grow in abundance. Flesh-cutting saw grass, eelgrass, horse-tail, sedge, and cane crown knolls of mud and line the trails that meander the swamps. Mixed with the swamp's grasses are arrowhead weeds, devil's thorn, knotweed, and skunk cabbage. Hosts of other plants crowd the swamp, from chokeberry to greasewood, milwort to bridal wreath.

This place is crowded with denizens of one's nightmares. Unklar's breath lingers, and the life he gave to many a foul creature echoes in

the cruel and wretched beings that stalk the waters. There are many and more besides, most hidden from the eyes of the world and left to find their way in these swamps, who stop any would-be interlopers. There are great blood-drinking bats, mud-breathing lizards, and flying snakes. Dragons are said to be here, as well as ungern in great numbers, and orcs and goblins from old.

The plunder from a thousand years is stored in deep holes and massive treasuries in these swamps. Arcane magics are found and weapons from the wars at the beginning of time. The swamp rests upon the ruins of Al-Liosh and all the treasure contained therein.

Fushdam Bottoms

North of the Twilight Wood lies the Fushdam Bottoms. The wet, murky country is filled with tall heath, cypress trees and their countless rooted knees rising from the water, and willows. It is a desolate region where few live but for the occasional hunter. All manner of beasts dwell here, but it is known as a breeding ground for some of the greater wyrms.

Rusback Bogs

This flat, lowland lies beyond the Ivrun Wood, nestled at the feet of the Grundliche Mountains. The bogs are open country, soaked in rain, but the soil is too acidic to support anything but short flowered mosses, which rot into the wetlands in large deposits when they die. In spring and summer the moss is so thick it is hard to tell one is in the wetland until it's too late. In the fall it dies back, revealing a horrid wasteland of blackening dead moss and fetid water.

The Rusback is home to a number of creatures, both fell and foul, but draws many wild beasts as well. Caribou dwell here in abundance, as do beavers and bears. There is little here to attract men aside from hunting and the wilderness, but it is a favored home for hermits who serve the Red God.

Soup Marsh

This lowland marsh is fed by the Danau River and the seas from Bay of Brand. It is a shallow, boggy marsh with a foul stench. The salt waters from the bay mix in stagnant pools, and mud bars create an odor that can be picked up as far as the edges of the Darkenfold, and some even say along the coasts of Brindisium.

The eastern half of the swamp supports little plant life and no large trees. There, thick, tall reeds are mixed with bushy, tangled, and knotty shrubs that grow out of the briny water. Streams crisscross the reed fields, roads for shal- low boats and canoes, but they are dangerous for there is little order to them and one may find oneself deep in the Soup with no obvious way to escape.

The western half of the swamp is a mixture of large stretches of foul water, creeping with crocodiles, lizards, and birds, both large and small, of the most beautiful hues in all the known world. Trees too, grow here, tall majestic cypress that stretch hundreds of feet into the sky and which grow in large clumps as well as individually. The waters of the swamp flow with the ebb and neap of the sea and the flows of the Danau River.

Generally considered impassible, the river men and bargemen of the Oth River Valley know the route the Danau follows through these swamps, and into Lake Volkstag, but it is a shifting riverbed and its secrets are well kept, giving great power to those who travel through the swamp. Otherwise, the swamp is a horrible place, difficult to pass or navigate, a cesspool of disease and death. It would be avoided by all if it weren't for the constant rumor of mysterious towers hidden deep in the muck and murk that house eldritch treasures and ancient magics of dwarven craft and construct.

Wolf Runs (Fens)

These fens lie beyond the Shadow Mountains and upon the northern doorstep of the Kleberock Pass. It is a broad country of low-lying, very wet grassland. Here the winter snows melt and remain, soaking into the soft soil. A wide variety of northern plants grow here, heath and other grasses and flowers as well.

Travel is difficult in the Wolf Runs as there are no roads, and the few trails attract wolves, bears, trolls, and other large predacious beasts. The thick mud tends to cling to boots and gear, making long overland travel slow and exhausting.

Halflings dwell here in some numbers.

RIVERS

Ardeen River

Another of the massive rivers in Ethrum. The headwaters lie somewhere in the wilds to the north of Kayomar, in the Tar Kiln or the Blaudun Timberland. It is much sought after by wizards and priests and druids. There is even a rumor of great reward to that soul who can find the headwaters, for its source is said to be a magical glade of Tefnut's own design.The river collects runoff from the Bergrucken Range and the plains to its immediate west. It is a healthy river, home to many fishes and water fowl. It flows rather steadily in its course, changing its banks only rarely and usually after great floods. It narrows in the Long Valley at the southern tip of the Bergrucken Mountains where it manages to cut a path through those low hills. From there it spills into the Vale of Lothian and on to the Falls of Areos where it tumbles over 200 feet to the riverbed below, gathering force to thunder on down south.

As it dumps beyond the mountains, it loses strength and spreads out into a vast, though not uninhabitable, delta region with many courses and breaks.

Its upper reaches are sparsely inhabited but its lower end is thickly peopled. Even the mouth of the river, in the delta, has its villages and towns. It is generally pleasant and peaceful there. Its immense size makes war between Kayomar and Maine difficult, but not impossible. It is bridged in many places, and fjords are found in abundance to the north.

Danau River

This mighty river's mouth is the large Greenloop Lake, which collects the runoff from the central Rhodopes and the plains of far western Ethrum, growing in power as it courses south. It cuts its way through the plains of southern Kayomar, bordering the vast Darkenfold forest and its Perth Timberland. The river is wide, deep, and strong and marks a natural border.

To the north of the river the flood plain is fertile and that is what attracts settlers. The earth is dark and loamy, smells good, and grows thick harvests of grain and barley. Plentiful and good is the food in this region. The river flows between the Darkenfold and Eldwood forests, passing beneath the great Bridge of Eln, picks up the Powder River, tumbles into the Valley of Oth, and carries on through the Soup Marsh. There it passes into the Maedrumaust Mountains and the Valley of the All Father before it at last passes out and into the sea.

During the rainy season and late spring the river is at its worst. It has been known to flood its banks in quick order, spilling into the lands about and covering many hundreds of square miles beneath several feet of water. Fish thrive in it and offer great sustenance for the people of Kayomar, but it also brings things from those high mountains. Water weirds and nymphs come down every spring to gather the dead and entice wise men into deep pools.

Fromia River

This muddy river tumbles out of the northern Antule Mountains into the lowlands of Aenoch where it wanders for many hundreds of miles until it reaches the sea. It is a muddy affair in its early courses, cutting down through steep valleys and over precarious falls, pulling dirt, soil, and clays along with it. Where the Olgdon spills into it, it clears and widens, consuming that massive volume of water and pushing it all down to the sea.

The upper courses of the river and its many feeder creeks attract prospectors of all kinds, as it is rumored that out of this region of the Antule Mountains come their only precious metal - silver. In truth, it must be said that few dwarves or gnomes ever bother with the region, indicating the lack of veracity behind this claim.

Where the river spills into the sea lies the Formian Ostiary, a wide, wet land.

Ington River

This foul mess flows from the Shadow Mountains. Its origin is unknown, but many surmise it flows from deep pits beneath the mountains. This lumbering giant of a river winds its way through the Shadow Mountains, passing foul orc, hobgoblin, and troll holes and dens, collecting refuse as it goes. When it spills into the plains of Gottland, it gains in width what it loses in speed, averaging 150 yards across. Several hundred miles into its course, the Teifsich River joins its run to the sea. That clean water does little to dilute the Ington's foulness. After this juncture, the river widens, deepens, and gains speed. From here to the sea, it is generally 250 yards wide, possessed of deadly currents and tide pools. It dumps its impurities into the Drab Sinks near the Inner Sea.

Nothing but foul creatures live in the river, yet the orcs, ungern, hobgoblins, and others live close to its banks, fishing out dead animals and muck dwellers for food. They fear not the seasonal flooding, and have houses and small towns built behind great river walls or upon high stilts.

The river is not easily crossed. From the mountains to where the Teifsich joins it, there are only two bridges, the Grand Bridge and the Urlpalls. Both are stone and in decent shape. The Grand Bridge in the west can hold four wagons abreast, skirting the river by a mere 20 yards, while the Urlpalls is far more narrow and high. This span with its huge abutments towers 60 yards above the water, but only two may walk abreast.

There are no easy crossings after the juncture of the two rivers. However, travelers relate tales of a ferryman of the Ington Woods who crosses its course, traveling the length and breadth of the river. He offers passage to those in need, but always at a cost. There is also some river traffic from Most, but these are folk of ill repute who lust for gold and will often take advantage of strangers and travelers. They are often aligned with the orcs on the banks and they charge a great deal for any services they grant, and there is always the risk of being turned over to their allies on the far side.

Lithanian River

The fabled Lithanian River is often called the River of Wood. The Lithanian traces its circuitous path through the Elithian Wood. It is a broad and lumbering river fed by many creeks, streams, small rivers, and innumerable springs. The waters usually run deep, clear, and clean. The Lithanian spills into the Straits of Ursal near the city of Avignon.

The river is well traveled. From within the forest come the many thousands of logs floating to the sawmills scattered all along the lower reaches of the Lithanian. Barge traffic also makes its way up and down this river, bringing supplies to the many bands of woodsmen in the Elithian and farmers along its lower banks.

Mistbane River

The Mistbane River, or the Blue Creek, has its headwaters in the far Rhodope Mountains where it begins as little more than a trickle. It tumbles and flows, following many courses through the Shelves of the Mist, where it gains more strength from tributaries and earns its river name. It breaks free of those hills just north and east of the small town of Petersboro and the Darkenfold. The river widens here and slows its pace considerably, drifting down beneath the eves of the Darkenfold where it continues its southern journey. The river is slow, ranges from 80-120 feet wide, and is rather deep except in the few fords that breach its travel. Patches of light or heavy fog, which reduce visibility considerably, accompany the Mistbane's flow. Considered by many of the locals to be dangerous they avoid the fog at all costs. They speak of tales of ghosts who snatch the unwary from their roosts and carry them to the seas beyond.

The river continues its course through the Darkenfold by turning sharply west in the Millorian and passing through the Downs, an even more dank and deadly portion of that horrible wood. The Watchita eventually joins the Mistbane and then with increased strength it flows into the Danua River near Haverstraw and the sandy beaches of Lawn.

The banks of the Mistbane sport many wonderfully tall and full-bodied willow trees. These trees often reside on small grassy knolls at the water's edge allowing their branches and leaves to brush the water. They are vaguely-sentient relatives of the older sentient trees and treants. These willows serve the river as guardians of sorts, offering refuge from the river or the forest, or both.

Note: For more on the banshees of the mist, the healing power of the willows, see the adventure Shades of Mist.

Nostian River

The dark waters of the Nostian begin in the mountains of the Galen Valley and wander through that fertile plain until they spill into the larger Fromian River. The dark waters have given rise to many myths and legends concerning the evil origin of the river and its nature. These legends have kept away all but the most fearless or foul of heart and little is truly known about the river.

Olgdon River

The greatest of the eastern rivers, the Olgdon flows from its headwaters in the Grundliche Mountains near, as tradition has it, the resting place of the first dwarven king of Grundliche-Hohle. It collects the waters from the Grundliche and Voralberg Mountains, as well as from the eastern plains, until it swell into what is truly a massive river, a ponderous giant that swells and buckles in its course. The river is nearly 1,000 feet wide by the time it reaches the middle of the Vale of Fund.

From there it only becomes wider. It is impassible except by barge or boat or the only two bridges that span its breadth in southern Augsberg. Fish and waterfowl abound in the marshes and pools along its banks, as well as clams, crayfish, and freshwater shrimp. It offers great bounty to those who fish its clear waters.

The river is well traveled with barges and commercial traffic, and in some places it is even crowded.

It is not a perilous river by any means, as it sits so lazy and flows so easy, but it has dangers. The river is large enough and deep enough to offer home and refuge to many creatures. Some of these are evil and cruel who hide themselves in the deep waters. They tend to linger around towns and cities and rear their ugly heads in the most surprising ways. Hags, too, live along the reedy river's edges with small tribes of cruelly misshapen men, water trolls, and the like.

Ondavar River

Fed by the snows, glaciers, rivers, streams, and springs of the Grundliche Mountains, this river flows fast and furious into central Aenochia. It is a turbulent river, only calming as it approaches the northern reaches of the Grossewald. Through this forest it flows unevenly until emptying into the Udunilay River.

It is home to blue and yellow trout. Halflings have gathered in small villages along its banks, fishing for these tasty treats. It is also home to boundless number of beavers, whose skins are traded as far away as Avignon, but there are mean beasts here also, creatures who have crawled out of the depths of time and live submerged in its waters, attacking lone travelers and unwary fishermen.

Rot Tor

This river tumbles madly out of the Grundliche Mountains, spilling violently over a series of cataracts as it winds its way through narrow defiles and over tall cliffs, creating frothy waterfalls before it crashes at the mountain's feet. There it pools in a shallow lake, before pushing on into the broken country there. Gathering first in a series of pools and glades that make up the Rusback Bogs, the river then moves on, cutting through the low country and into the wooded coastal plain. There it spills into the Inner Sea.

It grows to tremendous sizes during spring as the mountain snows fill it to flooding, making it impassible during spring except at well guarded crossings.

Saline River

The runoff from Lake Orion gathers in the south, draining into the Saline River. Broad and shallow, the river wanders south across the open plains until it comes to the Morlin Gap where it narrows, building force before it thunders over the Thorgrim Falls into the plains below. There it passes on into the south, watering much of the kingdom of Maine.

The river dispenses its glory along its entire path as it brings with it fertile silts and sands from the Massif. The entire river valley is very rich and much grows here. The river valley itself is prone to flooding. During the rainy season, its waters overflow the banks and cover the lands for many miles around beneath cold fresh water. For this reason, few live along the river's banks but are perched some miles away on the hills and rises above. There, the inhabitants grow the most fantastic grapes in all the known world. The people also know how to enjoy the river's bounty and celebrate in yearly revelries and wine festivals.

Sorgon River & Pools of Dunhollow

The Sorgon is a broad, shallow river originating in the Great Northern Forest. It cuts through the Kleberock Pass and marks the boundary of the troll lord's realm.

This river tumbles down from the pass with great speed, but rapidly loses much of its force in the pools of the eastern Dunhollow. These pools are deep, carefully crafted by the stone giants in the days of yore. They were built as great reservoirs for fish, but have since become entangled in the horrors of the Dunhollow Wood. They are strange and are stained a dark blue. Fey dwell in them (particularly sirens and dryads) and they are known to be dangerous to cross.

The river passes through this haunted forest, breaks free in the west, and then spills out across northern Gottland. Here it winds its way down to the Inner Sea. The waters are dark and cool. Years of filth have made the Dunhollow Wood an ugly place and the river reflects this. Many orcs and trolls make their home upon its banks.

After the pools, the river ranges from 60 to 120 yards wide with a gentle current. Though there are places where deep clefts of rock have made the river difficult to pass over, the whole of it is fairly easy to ford until it widens and spills into the Inner Sea upon the Gray Coast.

Teifsiich River

The river begins far up in the Rhodope Mountains as a mere trickle. It flows down the mountains into and through the Mithlon Eaves. There, it gathers force from numerous feeder streams, including both the Suz River and the South Suz River. It passes beneath the stone walls of Twin Rivers, taking in the Big Mud. This last waterway broadens the Teifsich to hundreds of feet. It fills in the land around Twr Island, becoming ever greater until it finally spills into the Ington River.

The waters are clean and pure, unsullied by the trappings of too many inhabitants. Fish are boundless in this river, attracting bears, eagles, and other animals that find these fish a tasty morsel. The savannah to the east of the Mithlon Eaves slopes evenly and steeply to Gottland. These low hills give the river strength as it pours its water through open grasslands. It is also famous for its one most peculiar inhabitant, the blue skinned trolls, bent and disfigured from spending too many nights in dank caverns along the river's edge. These creatures are neither evil nor good, but simply try to survive in a land growing none too friendly.

Udunilay River

A mighty river, perhaps the most fearful of all rivers upon Aihrde, the Udunilay begins high up Mount Ud, deep in the Grundliche Mountains near the Hohle of the same name. It is said that the water flows from the eye of the All Father, so clean and pure is its beginning. It is called the River of Eternal Life, for, like many things in this part of the world, it seems indomitable and endless.

It tumbles and careens over falls and mountains, fed by an ever increasing number of streams, spring melt and glaciers, until it dumps a mighty gush of water onto the broad plains of Aenochia. From thence it flows through the Grossewald, the Grausumland, and the Kellerwald before arriving at the Amber Sea. It is fed by the Undovar and the Uphrates, making the river's southern courses a league or more in width.

So powerful is its flow, the Grausumland could not absorb it, though Unklar bent much of his will towards taming it, and it filled all the ruins of Al-Liosh.

The Udunilay stood as the main avenue of traffic for centuries, until the creation of the Grausumland, carrying goods north and south. It fertilizes all the central plain, watered the people of Al-Liosh and later Aufstrag. It is here that the first of the Aenochians dwelt.

Yellow River

The Yellow flows through the heart of the Aenochian Forest. It is possessed of tremendous currents, eddies and underwater whirlpools, largely made by the fury of the two mountain streams which feed the river. Little is known about the Yellow, though some hold that it was a holy place to the ancient Aenochian emperors, and because of this hides vast troves of magic and treasure.

BODIES OF WATER

Amber Sea

The Amber Sea is the most traveled of waters for it begins at the dwarven Anvil in the west and ends at the Islands of Alanti in the east. Here man and dwarf sailed for centuries, carting goods back and forth. It gained its name for here Ea-Vette first saw her reflections, and the fire of it burned into the ocean stone, so that ever after the blue-green waters carried a golden hue.

It is a daunting place, deep and wicked to those who suffer for wisdom or skill. The heat of the days can be unbearable. Months may pass without a single drop of rain coming from the sky or a cloud to break the sun's heat. In moments though, storms brew into a frothy mess with waves reaching as tall as a great oak. Ships are sundered when cracked by these waves, and sink to the bottom of the sea.

In these unfathomable depths one can catch and kill the great whales. The oils, skin, meats, and bones are valued highly throughout the world and in a good year can make a man wealthy enough to live in Avignon in style for the remainder of his days. There are also tales of great serpents wrapping themselves around the largest of vessels and dragging them to the ocean's floor. Other tales relate that furious monsters with many tentacles wrap themselves tightly about a ship, flinging everyone overboard and leaving the ship to flounder upon an uncaring sea.

Chaf, Sea of

The Sea of Chaf lies beyond the Deepling Challen in the far north west. It is a salt water sea, like the Inner Sea, but generally calmer. However, the many shoals and rocks beneath the sea make sailing through the water dangerous. Northmen from Trondheim and Haltland pass through these water regularly, as do the ships of the Knights of Haven, bearing pilgrims to and from Haven. The waters are hunted for the many dragon turtles that haunt them.

Deeps

The Deeps are a small stretch of the Amber Sea located several hundred miles off the southern coasts of Eloria. They are distinguished by their unusually calm seas. There are rarely storms of any significance here and the waves hardly crest over two or three feet. The water is cool, even on the surface, and has little in the way of fish, though whale pods are seen frequently, particularly sperm whales. They dive into the deep ocean hunting giant squid and other beasts.

What strange occurrence causes this stretch of water to be so calm is unknown, though many speculate that in ancient days when the dwarves ruled Aihrde, here lay their most wondrous kingdom, the realm of Alanti. They say that it is the magic of these dwarves which causes the sea to slumber and the whales to play. In truth the water here is tremendously deep.

Inner Sea

The Inner Sea is a saltwater sea fed by scores of rivers and the snow melt of both the Holmgrad and Grundliche Mountains. It is not normally a turbulent body of water, but the waves, never great in height, are numerous and constant, and only sturdy ships survive the crossing. Weather is an even greater problem. The dense water is frequently whipped to a frenzy as the cool northern winds collide with the warm southern winds; these create sudden cyclones and gales that batter the shores of the Inner Sea, the islands that dot her waterscape, and the ships that dare the crossing.

The depths of the sea have not been fathomed, but the surface is dotted with islands throughout. Beneath the surface of these waters are great whales and massive serpents. Water dragons and other monsters of the deep swim to the surface to catch a tasty morsel on many an occasion. "Ever have they been and ever shall they remain," claim the sailors who ply those waters.

Many have lost their lives here, and somewhere beneath is a city of dead ships crowded with the ghosts of sailors and merchants. On those rare occasions when the moon is right and the night sky cloudless, these dead are said to rise from the deeps and return to the homes from which they came, trying to drag loved ones to the lonely deeps they now call home.

The Inner Sea is a violent place as well, as constant struggles occur between the Hanse City States and the raiders from Holmgald, Haltland, Trondheim, Zeitz, and Gottland. These fierce naval battles rage during the early spring and throughout the winter as the more civilized nations to the south try to stop the many pirates and those fierce icebound raiders from the north. They battle over the goods that crisscross the sea, for the Hanse Cities have grown exceedingly wealthy and the men of the north exceedingly envious.

The sea itself is in constant turmoil.

Lake Orion

This lake is deep and cold. Its icy blue waters lap gently upon grassy shores for much of the year, but during winter the lake's character changes. It seems the gods of Lake Orion detest the cold and make war upon Unklar's season, giving rise to furious and frothy waves. It is perhaps the All Father's will that lives on in these icy depths or mayhap it is Unklar's most ancient enemies who hid themselves in its frigid depths during the long Winter Dark that make the water so angry. This is of only passing concern to those fisher folk that crowd the lake's northern end, for none even dare venture onto it during the winter.

Thousands of streams and small rivers pour down madly through the Massif, hit, spread and slow in the plains, before gently coursing their way through to fill this lake. The mouths of the largest of the streams and rivers are murky and filled with reeds as high as a tree, and quagmires choke the only lands not covered in water. The lake empties out in one spot. At its southern tip, a fast flowing river winds south through the low spot in the Massif. Here, the water careens through 12 foaming cataracts called the Falls of Thorgrim.

What beasts must live in the depths of the lake keep mostly to themselves and rarely bother the land-bound inhabitants, but it is known that things do live in those waters, things that come aground occasionally, things that pull fishing vessels down into its depths.

Shenal, Sea of

The cool waters of the Inner Sea spill through the Straits of Ursal, calming as they head south, making the vast stretch of the Sea of Shenal a calm body of water. Calm, at least, until it reaches the deadly Straits of Velug, for here, the warm waters of the south collide with the cool of the north, creating angry waters that pitch and writhe between the lands of Ethrum and Aenoch.

The Sea of Shenal is fed by a number of large rivers which push the silt of land and mountain deep into the water. In the north it is dissected by the Bridge of Ruins, the remnants of the old Ursal Bridge of dwarf make.

The sea is subject to a great deal of rain, as warm currents roll across the Gelderland and Ethrum and out over the cooler water. These storms are gentle affairs compared to those that plague the Inner and Amber Sea. As often as not ships suffer only the wet and not the dangers.

Travel here is not swift for the winds are rarely strong, but it is safe and a comfort to merchants and pirates alike. Here, fisherman from Avignon and Frieberg ply their trade. The waters are generally deep and cool, but closer to the surface, broad streams of warm currents draw hosts of fish. These are gathered in nets and stored in "ice houses," special holds kept cold by the ship-mage, usually a fledgling wizard with spells of ice and cold. Work on a fishing boat is a dangerous job, one that pays well, but one where many men and women lose their lives.

Igon Channels

These straits lie between Onwaltig and the mainland. It is a bountiful area. The sea is fed fresh water in huge amounts, and with it comes nutrients to feed the teeming hordes of fish that live here. During spring, however, the area can be dangerous. The waters from the Fromia come in such great heaves as to cause tumult around the estuary and the many islands there. The weather also becomes perilous as storms from the south whip the shallow waters up into a terrible fury.

The channels are sometimes called the Dragon's Maw. Legend speaks of a great beast of a dragon living in the Kolkrab Range whose mate died in battle with a great hero from Avignon in the waters there. On frosty clear nights when the sky burns bright with what seems to be gouts of flame, one can see a dragon come to mourn the loss of his mate. Woe to any who finds himself at sea when it arrives, for this dragon seeks revenge and will exact a terrible toll upon all it can. Some variances on the legend say that this dragon is none other than Frafnog himself, but these are only tales and the night has been dark for many years.

Ungara Straights

This is a very shallow and rocky passing between Eloria and the mainland. The waters here are always in a fury, churned by deeper currents from the Amber Sea and washed by the shoals around the mainland. Many shipmasters refuse to cut this course, taking the southerly and safer route around Eloria, but those in a hurry, trying to escape pursuers, or just foolhardy, will try to wind their way through the straits.

There are a few shipmasters who know these waters. The men of Eloria are said to pass them with ease as can the Tageans. One of the palaces of Prince Morgeld sits on a rocky precipice overlooking the straits. This, more than anything else, is enough to keep travelers away, for he does not take kindly to ships that refuse to pay him heed, and quickly dispatches those he can.

Ursal Straights

The straits connect the Inner Sea with the Sea of Shenal. It also divides Aenochia from Ethrum. The straits are fairly narrow, and with good winds a stout ship can cross in a few days. Generally, the Straits are friendly to those who traverse the waters, but on occasion they become fierce and stormy as the two seas collide and collapse in a maelstrom of wretched weather. During these times the winds toss the sea about in such a fury that the waves are as tall as a castle's walls. The winds whip up such a horrible froth that sails and masts can easily be ripped from their holdings. These storms seem to sprout and grow in little time and with little warning.

For this reason, the great Ursal Bridge was constructed by the dwarves long ago, but it is claimed that Ealor did not like the bridge and helped in its destruction. And ever since he has populated these waters with creatures of ill intent to ensure that none rebuild the edifice. There are further claims of a kingdom beneath the waters, in which great lords of the seas gather to make war upon those who would close the gap between the Inner and Outer seas.

ISLANDS

Barrier Isle

This massive structure guards the entry to the deep Bay of Lothian. It rises from the sea in gentle, grassy slopes, until it dominates the area. It possesses rich soil and is home to all manner of creatures. However few have ever settled it for it was of old the lands of the Queen of Kayomar, Vivienne, and she dwelt here in the Winter Months. She built a palace upon the high steppes overlooking the Bay of Lothian. She named it Waltheal, the Winter Palace. When she passed into the Stone Fields the house was abandoned. It stood thus for years until a creature, high in the councils of Unklar, came to dwell there and it became a foul place of evil and rot.

The island remains free of most people; sea elves come to it and fish its waters and hunt the wild grasslands of the large island, and hippogriffs and other creatures hunt the game there.

Faciaus Headlands

A narrow range of islands off the northern coast of Ork, here wild grasses, shrub and small trees grow. These islands are the mating grounds of gray whales, who frequently turn violent during the season. Otherwise the islands are home to only a few hermits and ancient, ruined watch towers the Aenochians built in the days of the god-emperor

Lothian Isles

These low lying islands lay in the Bay of Lothian. They are warm, grassy islands and home to all manner of birds. The sea elves dwell here in some abundance, living in the rocky coves, with easy access to the deeps they love so much.

Pentos Isles

A small chain of islands off the coast of Ork, they jut from the sea like the jagged fingers of some forgotten god. The islands are low lying formations, raising only a few hundred feet from the water, many only a few hundred from each other. In the south they are battered and rocky and in the north, more gentle, though some of the islands are so small it is hard to tell the difference. Grass grows throughout the islands as do small trees and brush. All are home to a wide variety of birds. The Pentos are dangerous as pirates enjoy their protection while awaiting merchants traveling between the east and west.

Valgathir Isle

Lying in the Sea of Chaf, off the coast of Trondheim, this stark island is a landmark for many sailors of that kingdom. Its tall cliffs keep most from

exploring it, but hidden stairs in those selfsame cliffs lead men to the ruins of ancient castles that once belonged to the early Aenochians. Here they dwelt for a time, before they moved to the south and their doom.

The castles are of simple design and much wasted by time and weather, but hidden in their dungeons are reputed treasure of great value. All this is guarded by a dragon, a behemoth of white scales, who slumbers in the warm summer but rouses herself in the cold winter months.

UNUSUAL PLACES

Great Wall of Ethrum

In the early days of man the people of Ethrum and Aenoch struggled for mastery of the Lands of Ursal, those being the lands to the east and west of the Ursal Straits. The Aenochians conquered much of the world so that only the Tarvish emperors remained to struggle against them.

During the great battles, called the Isles of Mark, the Tarvish emperors saw that they could not master the Aenochians, so they reflected upon how best to defend their homeland in the long Valleys of Kayomar. First, they fortified the fjords and bridges which crossed the rivers Saline and Ardeen. They did likewise throughout the Bergrucken Mountains. There they constructed mighty fortresses.

In the north, the rolling lands of Anglamay offered easy access for any invading armies, so there they set to building a great wall. Artisans, engineers, and laborers worked for many long years building the edifice; all the while the Tarvish emperors spent their strength in blood and gold to hold back the Aenochians. In the end it proved to no avail, for the Aenochians crossed the Bergrucken instead and plundered the rich valleys beyond.

The wall is several hundred miles long, and ranges in both height and width. The average width is 100 feet and the average height about 200. A broad road mounts much of it, following its course, along its entire length and punctuated by towers every 400 feet. There are 14 main gates and tunnels, that provide access from east to west. In their day they were guarded by a massive portcullis and double iron-bound doors. Each tunnel housed a regiment of soldiers who could strike from above and on the sides. The interior possessed a ground floor and 4-6 levels above that, that provided access to the top of the wall. All was connected with a vast network of tunnel/roads within the wall. On the western side, stairs were built into the wall, giving easy access to the armies of Ethrum. Theses are set at 400 foot intervals. Here were barracks, kitchens, armories, smithies, and rooms for all the many needs of an army.

The wall stood for many hundreds of years, sometimes occupied, sometimes abandoned. So great is its size that the wall became home to whole peoples of all races. Soon it became laced with tunnels, dungeons, and more fortifications. During the long centuries it suffered neglect and the harsh climate did much to reduce it, entire sections falling into ruin, but since those days the Great Wall has become an attractive place for adventurers for its chambers, forts, and castles are reputed to be full to overflowing with treasures and wonders of the old world.

The wall is now much in ruin, some sections collapsed, tunnels fallen in, towers down, and stairs little more than rubble, but the greater part is still intact, though changed. Forts and castles have been built upon its height, staking out territory of whoever built them. Some of these

are ruins upon the ruins, some occupied. Within, the wall is riddled with new construction, tunnels dug out of the mortar, connecting one area to another. These have weakened areas, causing them to collapse. The 14 gates remain, some guarded by creatures fell and dangerous, others in ruin, others open to any who wish to pass.

It is a dangerous place where all manner of creatures dwell.

Paladin's Grove or Palladium Grove

The most holy shrine of the order is found in the Palladium Grove. Once the family lands of St. Luther, it holds the greatest relics of the order, including the Holy Flame and sometimes, the sword Durendale. The grove lies north and east of the Nordmark in Kayomar, between the Bergrucken Mountains and the Ardeen River. In 1129md, King Morgan of Kayomar established the grove in honor of St. Luther. He ordered a shrine built to serve both the Holy Defenders of the Flame and one dedicated to the worship of St. Luther and Durendale. For the site of the shrine Morgan chose the ancient family holdings of Pendegrantz.

The grove encompasses 300 acres of wooded land surrounded on all sides by a low wall. A temple building stands in the center of it, along with a few smaller buildings for travelers to stay in and one villa for the king of Kayomar. The Holy Flame, in its dish of platinum, rests in the altar chamber of the temple. In further honor of St. Luther, the druids of the Order of the Oak came to the grove at the behest of Daladon Lothian and planted there a crop of silver birches and elms, said to be the offspring of the Trees of Mordius from the dawn of time.

The temple honors St. Luther, promoting his worship as well as that of Durendale. It is a place where people come for peace and to learn of themselves by spiritually traveling the Dreaming Sea, learning what they may from the Lord of Dreams. Others come on pilgrimage to learn what truth the Holy Flame can reveal. All who approach the Flame must be bare of foot. It is said that the sword Durendale lies hidden in the grove.

The temple is guarded by a knights marshal appointed by the Order of the Holy Defenders of the Flame. He always commands one battle of knights. It is serviced by clerics of Durendale and St. Luther who are in turn serviced by the Protectors of the Flame.

Turm Gewirr

About this time many folk of the Mystic Enclave moved to the Rhodope Mountains and there, where in ages past Aristobulus had made a tower, they lifted it up again and fortified it, naming it anew, Turm Gewirr, "Tower of Chaos," but in after days it was named Turm Damon, "Tower of the Demon," for men came to fear the magi of the old world. ~ The Histories

During the Age of Heroes the mage, Aristobulus, built himself a great tower of stone. Through his sorcery he fortified it, making it virtually impregnable. It stood within the mountain fastness of the Rhodope Range, where two, narrow gulches met in a deep wide valley. This valley was surrounded by high cliffs and jagged peaks, and the passes, both narrow and treacherous, were easy to defend. Within the valley itself there stood a deep cool glacier lake with a small island in its center. Upon this island the mage erected his tower.

It towers 250 feet high, capped in shingle roof with a walkway all around. There are no doors or windows, or obvious means of entry. Rumors abound that Aristobulus employed an army of dwarves to build a network of secret passages and mazes beneath the tower to allow only those with some acumen egress to his studies. He peopled the maze with strange denizens, eldritch creatures summoned from the Maelstrom. Arcane spells, traps and the maze itself serve to waylay those who would attempt to enter the tower.

With the mage's passing the tower fell into disuse, only a few were bold enough to occupy its spaces and these held Aristobulus to be a god. Even before the Winter Dark Wars the Mystic Enclave came to be and held up the master's visage as the salvation of the world. To this end they rebuilt the walls, and outbuildings and renamed the tower, calling in Turm Gewirr, the Tower of Chaos.

Alas, the newly built fortifications fell into ruin when a mogrl of Aufstrag came upon it from the air. He made war on the valley, tearing down many of the walls and buildings so that all but the tower lay in ruin. He slaughtered many of those within, for none possessed the strength to withstand him. He hunted for the hated magi, but he could not find the White Mage, and he raged at his failure, and taking his great hammer, he smote the tower so that it cracked and pieces fell to the earth.

The tower has stood empty ever since, a haunted place of empty promises and eldritch power, for much of the mage's sorcery lies there still. Some say that the mogrl settled into the tower deeps to await the return of Aristobulus the White, but for the truth of these tales, none may say. Many have tried to breech its walls, but few have found the secret ways, and those who did, failed and were never seen again. So that men now call it the Tower of the Demon.

Ursal Tal

This bridge was constructed in the Days before Days. Men called this bridge simply the Ursal Bridge, but its true name resides with the dwarves, who called it Andstein. There is no direct translation for this word in the Vulgate tongue. "And" means to bind through an oath. "Stein" means stone. Literally, "the stone bind." It probably held significance as a stone creation which bound the early dwarf kingdoms together as would an oath.

The bridge stretched across the Straits of Ursal from Aenochia to Ethrum. Its mighty stones rested upon tremendous pylons of granite. The bridge was close to a hundred feet wide, and covered in many areas, offering travelers safe harbor form the elements. As many as 10 wagons abreast could cross the Ursal Tal, safe from the water of the Sea of Shenal.

The bridge offered land travel from Ethrum to Aenochia for many a millennia and towns sprang up along its length, so many that over a dozen marked it from east to west. Time, which beats everything down, eventually wore into the bridge. During the Imperial Wars, the bridge was worn with disrepair; the towns had long since been abandoned and the pylons were cracking. It took little work for the Tarvish Emperors to destroy the bridge and prevent the eastern armies passage into their realms of Ethrum.

The pylons still remain. They thrust from the frothy waters of the straits 30 to 40 feet above the water. They are wide and long, built on small islands of slag and stone. Many small communities, the Ursal Towns, have grown up on the pylons themselves and in the rocky ruins that house them. The people who live here, to so outside the bonds of any realm or people and are free according to their measure. These towns perched on the spires are wild places, with spindled walkways snaking around the pylons and hanging over the water or floating in the wreckage, tethered like barges. The Ursal towns serve as havens for pirates, thieves, and even fishermen in times of need, even as this testament to the Days before Days continues to plod forward and fight the erosion of time and man.

SIXTH NARRATIVE - GUILDS AND ORDERS OF URSAL

here are the Bartigtot who shave their beards and the Knights of Haven who offer passage to pilgrims on their long journeys. The Letners protect the heritage bound in the Empress of their land. The Lothians give refuge to the tired and hungry and orphans of the world and the Holy Defenders protect the Flame, the last breath of the All Father on Aihrde. These are only a few of the orders and guilds of Aihrde.

GUILDS AND ORDERS

There are many guilds and orders throughout the Lands of Ursal. These are usually small and local, distinct to certain areas. However, there are larger organizations that thrive in all the many realms and wildernesses. Below is a list of the major organizations and a brief description of each. There are of course many more than listed, smaller guilds in town and locales.

MILITARY GUILDS & ORDERS

These organizations are largely made up of fighters, knights, barbarians, and rangers; however, unless specifically stated below, they are not restricted to these classes. Bards, rogues, and paladins commonly join them, and on rare occasions, magic-based classes.

Bartigtot

Meaning "the Deadbeards," this is the dwarven order of soldiers who fought at the Battle of Olensk. Their losses were so great that the survivors shaved a strip of hair from their chins. These dwarves are largely homeless, the survivors having never returned to Grundliche-Hohle. Only veterans of the battle, their sons/daughters or the sons/daughters of those who fell at the battle can become Bartigtot. They must be of a warrior class to join. They are fiercely loyal to each other and the soldiery of Augsberg, but especially to the veterans of the battle. They number about 1,200.

Covenant of the Lion

Almuric the Lion founded this knightly order in 1151 md in Anglamay. The Covenant primarily consists of noble sons and daughters dedicated to knightly virtues. Many of the nobles of Anglamay, Ceeana, Kleaves and Karilia are either members or are associated with the order. Master Charles of Sifford is the present guild leader. He has close ties to the king in Anglamay. The order has no affiliation to organized religion, though most of its members pay homage to St. Almuric. All of its members strive to earn the "Order of the Mane," a privilege given only to the bravest knights who achieve glory through arms.

Cult of the Sword

This mercenary order was founded soon after the Winter Dark Wars by Tiberious Claudious, after his master Agrippa failed to overthrow the ruling consuls of the Republic of Brindisium. Tiberious and the other survivors were driven into exile. Tiberious harkened to his ancestors for guidance, and received a vision of Augustus, a great warrior from the Age of Heroes. It was his sword, now an heirloom, that Tiberious carried in battle. In the vision, Tiberious saw that the power of kings lay in the power of their military might.

With this in mind Tiberious began to work toward founding an order of unaffiliated warriors and mercenaries, loosely bound together and following a simple code. Thus the Cult of the Sword was born. The movement spread far and wide, and those who join wear the tattoo of the Cult, a simple gladius sword, on the upper left forearm with the name Tiberious Augustus stenciled around it.

The code of the Cult is simple. Members identify themselves to one another and state who they are fighting against. Any member who finds his opponent to be a member of the Cult can refuse to fight him for any reason without losing honor or face. The Cult is extremely powerful as many mercenaries, freebooters, and pirates are members. Frequently they sell their services in blocks, so that whole armies are made up of Cult members.

Only a loose hierarchy administers the Cult; its leader, called by the title "Tiberious" followed by leader's name is chosen by two feats of arms, personal combat, and strategic knowledge. The guild headquarters is Piselberg, a large castle, stands upon an island off the coast of the Twilight Wood.

Flintlockers

The Flintlockers are a loose band of gnomes, dwarves, halflings, and humans who are proficient in the flintlock musket. In many cases they make up the backbone of the gnome clans' war parties. They have no leaders, but come together frequently for contests or "shoots." To become a Flint-locker requires a 15 dexterity. Flintlockers gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls when using their muskets. Their headquarters is located in the Flintlock Hills where they gather (when able) once a year to discuss guild buiness.

Knights of Faurenost (The Lost Brigades)

A once great order that served Faurenost, they are now a shadow of their former selves. Indeed, the master of the order was always the Emperor of Faurenost. When revolution overcame the newly founded empire of Brindisium, the emperors were overthrown and many of the paladins slain. Those that remained or escaped took to a wandering life.

Today many are holy men who follow Durendale, often hermits or mendicant knights who help the downtrodden as best they can. For this reason they are frequently given safe haven by local towns or villages. In the past a member was required to trace his heritage to a direct descendant of the old Kayomese gentry. For this reason they often had close ties to the nobility of Kayomar. This is not the case anymore and the knights consist of whomsoever the knight takes as his squire, who then works their way up the hierarchy.

Founded in the hinter lands of Brindisium, they have spread throughout the Lands of Ursal, usually following the sea lanes. Some have joined the crusades into the east, in the lands of New Aenoch. To this end they have begun to organize, founding missions throughout the ports of Ursal. Many have consequently become skilled sailors.

The order has no real hierarchy; knights or paladins choose an apprentice, who serves for a number of years until the master deems they are worthy. They are awarded a weapon of choice and can later take their own squire or continue the life as a Unbound. However, the missions all possess a House Master as well servants of the household. There is much talk of unifying all the missions under one Grand Master.

Knights of Haven

This order was founded in the latter days of the Winter Dark Wars. As the worship of Ore-Tsar spread throughout the lands, pilgrims

began to flock to the town of Haven. The distant locale of the town, upon the slopes of Mount Tur across the Inner Sea, made the journey arduous. Pilgrims had to cross the pirate-infested Inner Sea or travel overland through Zeitz and Trondheim. So many pilgrims were lost on the road that a knight, Francis the Blessed, founded a clerical military order to protect them, the Knights of Haven.

The Knights of Haven attracted many young converts of Ore-Tsar and soon became a stalwart pillar in the worship of that god. Through the patronage of the Church of Avignon and the kingdom of Augsberg, the knights were able to establish a host of castles along the roads of pilgrimage.

Today the knights are a large order, with castles and houses throughout the Lands of Ursal. The knights have a very strict hierarchy and code of con-duct. Their headquarters are in the large, coastal castle of Hafunich in the March of Zeitz. The present guild master is Eurich von Mager- Falkenheim of Aachen. They command a fleet of several dozen ships of various sizes, though these are scattered far and wide in service to the order.

Every knight must tithe 10% of their income to the order. The hierarchy is as follows:

Grand Commander of the Knights of Haven
Head of Order, Head of Armed Wing

Knight's Marshal (there are five)
Each command a battle of knights

Exchequer
Collects tithes, administers all financial needs of order

Marshal of Horse
Commands the Cavalry and Knights

Marshal of Arms
Supplies the order with needs

Admiral
Commands fleet

Knight's Commander
Has 1-10 Knights and Men serving him, or 10th Level

Knight
Has at least one squire

Sergeant
Serves a knight but is not one

Armiger
Squire, or servant (paid or other)

Many of their castles are occupied by only three to four knights and a dozen sergeants or attendants. Many of the knights travel singularly, protecting those in need. The order relies upon the individual's own ethics and honor to maintain its strict and disciplined code.

In time of need, if the Grand Commander should call, all knights who are able, must assemble at that point and time determined by the Grand Commander.

Letners

When the empress called the first crusade men flocked to New Aenoch to serve her. Many of these were veterans of the Winter Dark Wars or young warriors seeking to rival their fathers' exploits, so they came to fight the minion of Unklar who lingered in the wilderness north of her realm. They soon learned the dangers of those lands and many perished, their songs unheard and unsung, for those lands around the Blacktooth Ridge were full of the minions of Unklar that had fled Aufstrag. At one such battle, Letner Ridge, a group of knights led by Mickael ot Sien found themselves hard pressed by several hundred orcs and wolves. Once the battle was over the survivors swore an oath of brotherhood and thus the Letners were born.

The order consists of knights and warriors who have sworn to serve the Empress of New Aenoch and all that it entails. They are bound to one another through a strict code and set of rules. Upon the Letner Ridge they built Mickael Castle. A town soon sprung up around it, named simply enough, Letner Town. The Grand Master rules the Letners; he is chosen from among the members by the members.

The order is large, with houses in most large cities and members in many of the royal households throughout the east. It requires that each knight donate 1% of their income to the order.

Lunar Knights

When the elves chose to flee Aihrde to the Land of Seven Rivers, some remained to fight the evil that they knew was coming to the world. The Lunar Knights, a tight band of elven warriors, cavaliers, clerics, and wizards, was one such group. Very organized, these capable knights fought the minions of Unklar for the whole of the Winter Dark. They survived by constantly moving. Their most prestigious member was Londea, daughter of the elven queen, who died at Blue River.

Though the order is greatly diminished, it still attracts new members from amongst the elves of Fontenouq or even those who continue to come from Shindolay. They have the patronage of Wenafar the faerie queen. The Lunar Knights are distinguished by their silver cloaks. These magical vestments, awarded to all members, allow the wearer to hide in the shadows, acting as a cloak of elvenkind. A character must have a 15 wisdom to become a Lunar Knight.

Eralthul

During the Age of Heroes, the arch magi Patrice founded an order of magic users dedicated to fighting the coming of the Horned God. Patrice fell victim to Nulak-Kiz-Din and was set in the heavens as a light for men to see forever after. Thus he passed from the land of the living into the heavens, forced to traverse the Net of Ea-Raena for all time. Called by men the Eral Star, the "far traveled", it was seen as a portent of mighty power, bringing blessings to the good of heart.

In later years, after the Winter Dark Wars, some few founded an or-der of those who serve the arch magi's memory, following the Earl Star. They have no guild hall, but wander the world without desire of house or home. They are marked by a brooch, which they wear as a cloak pin. It consists of a fiery orb with a tail.

The Eralthul are uncommon but filled with a vast store of knowledge about many locales, for they travel great distances, learning of the world around them. They frequently become well acquainted with a community for several years, but once familiar move on.

Vale Knights

Meltowg Lothian led an order of mercenaries during the Long Centuries of the Winter Dark. They were comprised of fierce elves and humans, and they waged a tireless and brutal war against the enemy. They were destroyed in the Battle for the Castle of Spires in 1122md when Meltowg attempted to open the gates to the Three Realms. The Vale Knights succeeded in overthrowing the castle, but were all slain but for one elf, Elysian of the Red March.

Elysian left the castle, stricken with grief for his fallen master. For many years Elysian remained in hiding, but eventually he gathered a small following of elves, humans, and others who sought his wisdom. He re-established the Vale Knights under his guidance. Though the order is very small, it thrives throughout all the Lands of Ursal.

Vale Knights swear no oath, only paying homage to the memory of Meltowg Lothian and the sword Noxmorus, which Meltowg wielded in his final battle. When combating the remaining minions of the Horned God (Crna Ruk assassins, ungern, mogrl, umbra wizard-priests, etc.), Vale Knights' morale and ire are raised such that they gain a +1 to melee damage, and +1/level temporary hit points.

Watchers in the Wood

This guild of rangers is dedicated to the worship of the Great Oak and bound to the protection of the ancient forests. The order is perhaps the oldest of associations in Aihrde, being founded even before the Age of Heroes. Its greatest member, Daladon Lothian, rose to prominence during the Age of Winter Dark. Though he himself fell afoul of Nulak-Kiz-Din, the order struggled on throughout the long years of the Horned God's rule. They lived in hiding, particularly in the Eldwood and the Darkenfold. Though their numbers were never very great, they came to play a major role in the wars in the west.

Daladon Lothian once more assumed leadership of the order when he returned in 1119md. He led it for many decades and expanded its power across the Lands of Ursal. He planted watchers and druids from the Order of the Oak (see below) in all the forests of the world. There, they enlisted the aid of the fey and initiated others into the guild.

Today the guild is extremely strong and widespread. Reputed to be the best rangers in the world, the watchers find close allies in a variety of states, particularly Aachen and Kayomar. In the former, where the Winter Rose grows, the rangers are treated with the utmost respect.

Their guildhall, the Ranger's Knot, is in the Darkenfold. There, the towering oaks of yesteryear hold the houses and lofts of the rangers in their high branches. Though Daladon left the guild leadership years ago, all in the guild pay him homage. The main task of the Watchers is to aid the Order of the Oak in safeguarding the Great Oak of the Eldwood, but, they continue to keep the forests of the world safe from the depredations of evil.

RELIGIOUS GUILDS & ORDERS

These organizations are largely made up of clerics, druids, and paladins; however, they are not restricted to those classes. Fighters, knights, bards, and the like frequently join religious orders for service owed or to render service to their patrons.

Confessor Knights

At the height of the Winter Dark Wars, in the year 1128md, St. Luther broke the blade Durendale upon the crown of the High Priestess Nectanebo. The blow ended her days forever and she passed from the world, but in her death she also slew Luther, driving him back to the Dreaming Sea. There he labored upon his sorrows and grieved at the loss of Durendale, the shards of which he took to the Paladin's Grove

for safekeeping and to await the coming of the next bearer of the sword. He wove himself a mantle to wear in humility. Imbued with the gifts of Corthain, this mantle became the article of confession which marked Luther's latter days in Aihrde. He became Luther the Confessor, and when at last he mustered the strength to return to the world of men, he returned as an agent of good with the duty to cleanse souls.

In that year, 1129md, he founded an order of knights to bid his heed and serve the world in a similar fashion. They were chosen from the most lawful and honorable of men, be they peasant or lord, and were dubbed knights by St. Luther. They were given mantles of azure blue to mark their station and rank. These great cloaks were pinned around their shoulders with clasps of Corthain's symbol.

Armored in plates of steel and sat upon great destriers, armed with lances and swords, these knights left the Isle of Blight and the Sea of Dreams to explore the world and confess the deeds of men, whether they be good or ill. They numbered 32 in their beginning, but four fell in the intervening years. The order has grown little since then, for to join it one must gain the attention of St. Luther and be given residence upon the Dreaming Sea, a thing the Paladin Lord is little inclined to do.

The Ceremony: When Luther summons the worthy to the Dreaming to become a Confessor Knight, he bids them leave their worldly possessions behind, taking with them only the clothes upon their backs. They are told to lay in state for four days and contemplate the misdeeds of their lives. Each must fast during this time, eating only some little bread in the morning with a draught of water. They may have two more draughts of water: one at noon, and a third in the evening.

When they feel their minds are open to confession, they call to the Brothers in Arms for transport to St. Luther. They cast themselves before him, and await his confession. When he deems they are ready, he holds them aloft and confesses them. If they live through the experience, they are deemed able to bear the burden of men's souls. The inductees are returned to their cells to prepare for the test of arms.

For a month they will languish so, as armor and arms are made for them. When this is done, they are placed in their mail and brought before the Dreaming Lord. There Luther knights them with his blade, and the Brothers in Arms place the azure mantle upon their shoulders. Once a Knight of Confession, the power of confession flows into them, and it may be used over man, woman, or monster.

Power of Confession: Confession involves seeing into the hearts of mortals to understand them and their sins. No knight will involuntarily confess anyone. The creature being confessed must ask the Confessor Knight to do so.

Confession is an aspect of role playing that should not be controlled by a dice roll. The CK should use his best judgment in determining the outcome of a confession. A successful confession redeems the confessed mortal of his life's evil deeds, renewing his life in a way important to him individually. Those that fail confession are typically struck dead or insane, unable to handle the power of Corthain's justice. The knight must make a class check against the target's level. If he succeeds the check, the target is confessed and purified of his misdeeds. The target switches alignment to some type of good and is given a point of wisdom, intelligence, and charisma. If the knight fails the check, the target must make a constitution check. If he fails that he is killed or driven insane. If he succeeds nothing happens.

When confessing, a Confessor Knight gains the following spell-like abilities, all operating simultaneously (cast as a level equal to his or her own): 1st-*cause fear, command, detect chaos/evil/law/good, remove fear, sanctuary*; 2nd-*augury*; 3rd- *remove curse, remove disease*; 4th-*discern lie, dismissal, sending, tongues*; 5th-*atonement, commune* (with recipient), *dispel chaos/evil/law/good*; 6th-*banishment, geas/quest*; 7th-*holy word, repulsion*; 8th-*holy aura*; 9th-*soul bind*.

No knight may confess anyone of a level greater than himself.

Holy Defenders of the Flame

In the Age of Heroes, a knight named Gerard of Kayomar changed the course of history. He found a tongue of flame burning on a slab of stone. The flame, or so the tales relate, was the last spark of the Language of Creation and as such a powerful source of magic. He took this fire, placing it in a dish of silver and platinum, and bore it aloft amongst humankind. He called for the holy and the righteous to join him in a brotherhood of arms. Soon after, he founded the knightly order of the Holy Defenders of the Flame.

The order thrived for many years but achieved its apogee under the guidance of Luther Pendegrantz. As king of Kayomar, he combined the might of the crown with that of the order, creating the Peace of Pendegrantz throughout all the valleys of Kayomar, a state of affairs that lasted 30 years.

During the long years of the Winter Dark, the order was forced to hide in the hills and forests of Ethrum, yet it lived on. One of their masters, his name lost to history, took the Flame from its hiding place and moved it to the Tower of Hope in the ruins of Du Guesilon. There he hoped it would serve as a signal for Luther's return from the Dreaming Sea. A singular knight remained in the snow-bound ruins of the castle to keep watch, and to bear word when the paladin should return. This vigil they kept for the full six centuries until Luther's return was realized. When the Winter Dark Wars began, the master at that time, Morgan of Dawin, called his knights together and they, first of all the peoples of Ethrum, rose in rebellion against the Horned God.

The Holy Defenders possesses a code and a stringent hierarchy which all members must abide. The order is very militant, its members all paladins, knights, clerics, or lawful good fighters and bards. The master of the order serves until he is slain, dies, or deemed unfit to command by his comrades. The Defenders are commanded by Marshals, and Knights Marshals by Knight's Captains. Knight's Captains command a Battle of Knights, usually 10-50 knights and an Order of the Flame, those men-at-arms and the like that serve the Knight's Captain. They possess castles throughout the Lands of Ursal, even though the Holy Flame resides in the Paladin's Grove in Kayomar.

Knights Marshal
Head of Order, Head of Armed Wing

Knight's Marshal
Commands 10-50 Knights

Master of Tolls
Collects tithes, administers all financial needs of order

Knight's Captain
Commands the Cavalry and Knights

Knights Captain of Arms
Supplies the Order

Knight
Has at least one squire

Sergeant
Commands 10 Men-at-Arms

Man-at-Arms
Soldier

Lothian Clerics

In the latter days of the Winter Dark Wars, Daladon Lothian saw the suffering of the homeless and war-torn people of Aihrde. He took a great part of his wealth and established a monastery in Kayomar. He peopled it with the good of heart and instructed them to aid those in need.

Abbot Edmund, the first abbot, established the Rules and Orders of the Monastery. Those who joined the fledgling monastery adopted the name of Lothian and in time, it attracted clerics, monks, and loremasters. The first Lothian Houses filled with a small host of orphans. The early success of the monastery encouraged Edmund to establish many more, and monasteries soon spread across Ethrum and Aenoch. In some regions, particularly Kayomar, the orders are very powerful and powerful, enjoying the protection of many of the Lords of many diverse realms. They pay homage to the Wenafar, as well as Daladon

Order of the Oak

This Order consists of human and elven druids, rangers, and others dedicated to the preservation and protection of the Great Oak in the Eldwood. There, the Great Oak towers over the forest, an offspring of the Earhtaut. The Oak is ageless, and worshiped as a god by many in the forest. It speaks only to those it deems worthy, and usually only to the Val Tulmiph Daladon.

The Order is very small, numbering in the hundreds only. Though most of them live in the Eldwood, they have adherents in forests all across the Lands of Ursal, keeping a watch on magical glades. These include the Detmold, where the winter roses bloom, and the Paladin's Grove, where the silver elms grow. They have a strong presence in the Gelder-land as well. They are very secretive, possessing no allegiances to any prince. They are closely associated with the Watchers in the Wood of the Darkenfold, and are loosely aligned with the wood elves of King Nigold.

The Order's houses are called Woodholes, the chief of witch stands in the Eldwood. They are usually built in hidden, defensible glades where there is a source of fresh water.

Members of the Order carry wooden staves or wands made from fallen branches of the Great Oak. All members of the Order gain the following abilities, usable once per day: know direction, speak with animals, and speak with plants.

Protectors of the Flame

The Protectors of the Flame maintain the Palladium Grove, the holy resting place of the Holy Flame and Durendale. They support and serve the Holy Defenders of the Flame. Clerics, fighters, rangers, druids, monks, wizards, and loremasters make up their number, although membership is open to all those good of heart that would serve the Holy Flame. Some of the Protectors go on to become Holy Defenders. They serve the Master of the Grove.

THIEF AND ASSASSIN GUILDS

These organizations are largely made up of rogues, thieves and assassins. However they are not restricted to those classes. Fighters, bards and others may join them from time to time.

The Asylum

The Asylum is one of the largest thief and assassin guilds in the lands. It is based in Avignon, and its name also refers to the district of that city which is its base of operations. The Asylum has its hands in all of Avignon's affairs. It has spread to the lands north, in the Hanse City states, the towns of Most and Ossford in the Gottland, as well as south to Frieberg, and even in the far east in New Aenoch.

Gaining membership in the Asylum takes some time. Prospective members generally join one of the many sub-guilds to prove their loyalty and worth to the organization. Those who fail and murdered, those who succeed are given the passwords and locales of the meeting houses, all kept secret.

The guild headquarters remains in Avignon.

Crna Ruk (the Black Hand)

An order of assassins founded by Nulak-Kiz-Din in the early years of the Winter Dark, the Crna Ruk rose to great prominence as their master gained power. After the fall of the Horned God, they attempted to bolster the power of the mage, but in so doing brought the wrath of Coburg the Undying down upon them. Coburg put many of them to death.

Recently, their order has grown again, attracting many followers of Nulak They form small independent units in towns and cities, paying homage to priest-assassins of their dark god. They are highly secretive, murderous, and altogether evil. They mark their kills with a tattoo of a black hand. Their main guildhall is said to be in the Punj. Some Crna Ruk are cleric-assassins, called the Black Slayers. The Black Slayers are composed of blackguards dedicated to the service of Nulak-Kiz-Din.

All Crna Ruk are lawful evil. They believe that the only way to return "peace" to the world is through the order and control. They can only attain and maintain control through terrorizing the world. The Crna Ruk know little life beyond the guild and the evil worship of their dark deities. There are no members of their guild who believe in a different path. They are irredeemably evil.

The guild itself is highly structured and follows a strict hierarchy. Those chosen for the guild become Initiates. Those Initiates who are gifted and highly skilled become Crna Ruk Scholars. A very few of the Scholars possess the necessary skills and abilities to become Inquisitors. The Inquisitors are few in number, very powerful and rule the order with an iron discipline. To break with the guild or defy or even question its law is an instant death sentence for any member.

There are 10 ranks of Scholars. They are ranked from the weakest to strongest: Quill, Rune, Scholar, Master, Philsoph, Purger, Blood Letter, Waylayer, Assassin, and Herzlos (the soulless). Each serves the Order it his own capacity. They have no particular task but the ranking usually denotes time and experience.

There are 5 orders of Inquisitors: Executioner, Deacon, Inquisitor, Grand Inquisitor, and He Who Wears the Shroud. A Deacon and Executioner are appointed to a House. The Inquisitor has no chapter house association, but serves the order as a Judge, traveling from one House to the next, investigating infractions by guild members, and meting out punishment. There are only 9 Inquisitors at any given time. The Grand Inquisitor is the temporal leader of the Crna Ruk. He organizes his own chapter house, always the most powerful, as well as all the other chapter houses. There is only one Grand Inquisitor. He Who Wears the Shroud is the spiritual leader of the Order, the one who speaks to the wizard-god. He is the conduit between the other world and this. There is only one and he always dwells in the main temple usually not far from the Grand Inquisitor (For more see Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde).

Crna Ruk never do anything for personal gain and never work with or for others without strict instructions to do so from the Order. If the

Order does find such a reason, it is with the express purpose of finding a particular item or destroying a particular enemy. They never wander without purpose as they must follow the strict guidelines of the guild and hierarchy.

The Order consists of chapter houses. Each house commands a city, town, district, duchy, or any other number of political regions. Each house is different in size, some very small and others very large. Each house consists of a Deacon, an Executioner, several Scholars, and an indeterminate number of Initiates.

Muddles Inc.

Muddles Inc., a varied shipping and wholesale company, fronts for one of the most notorious and profitable thieves' guilds in Aihrde. Founded by the siblings, Mac and Susie, the Muddles family still controls this ever-expanding organization.

Muddles Inc. has five major guildhalls, all controlled by halflings. The Muddles family sits at the head of the organization, and administers and maintains power over all of the guildhalls. It personally oversees the Avignon operation. It is headed by Mac Muddles VIII, a calculating, highly intelligent, master thief with ironclad control over the organization, who is very protective of his family's interests. The family itself is huge, spread over several generations with multitudes of cousins of many degrees.

Frieberg: The Shortstride family oversees the Frieberg guild, one of the most profitable because of the open spirit of the city. The current master is Quigley, who enjoys rubbing shoulders with the upper-class of the city, especially when it leads to acquisitions for his ever-growing jewel collection.

Eichstatt: The Frizzyfoots direct the Eichstatt guild in Augsberg, and have sunk most of their garnered wealth into a series of very profitable and legitimate bakeries. They are quite recognizable, having been blessed with genes causing them to be, on average, a full six inches shorter than the normal halfling. The head of the family is Harlo, a wiry scrapper who stands a full 18 inches tall.

Capidistria: In Capidistria, in the Hanse Cities, the guild is headed by MacKenzie Lumpkin. MacKenzie is the daughter of Mac Muddles, who married into the Lumpkin family. After Exeter Lumpkin, her father-in-law, and Ely, her husband, were assassinated in the Three-Pit Guild War, MacKenzie assumed the mantle as family head. Some of the Lumpkin family work against her, resentful that she is only Lumpkin by marriage, but MacKenzie bends her father's ear and employs many of his tactics to maintain strong control over the Lumpkin clan. Chappy Lumpkin, Exeter's brother, stands behind MacKenzie and dissuades rebellion among the resentful of his family.

Rhuneland: The fifth family, the Harrigrays, reigns over Rhuneland. This family is uniquely headed by brothers Christian and Dotnevets. They are the youngest of the families and are fighting a major battle for control of the underbelly of Rhuneland with two other local guilds, the Hatturmucks and Unchen. They run the opium and lotus dens in those scattered cities.

Ihlsa: A sixth family, the Griffiners, once ran a guildhall in the Sea Towns of Ihlsa. The family was wiped out during a guild war with the Freetraders and Nachtkrichen. Only a few remain, and these in hiding.

Race is not a limitation to membership in Muddles Inc. Indeed, all manner of races, including some humanoids, serve in the various guildhalls, or as freelance operatives and contacts. Only halflings, however, can be made a part of the five families.

Rat's Den

This is the head guild of a loosely based organization of thieves' guilds spread across the lands of the southern Aenoch. The heads of each thieves' guild meet once a year in the Rat's Den, which is moved to a new location every year.

Nachtkrichen: "The Nightcrawlers"

The headquarters of the Nachtkrichen lie in the twisted streets of Ihlsa. It has since grown beyond the confines of that town and region, spreading with the sea lanes to as far north as the Hanse Cities where they have clashed with the Muddles people, and east to New Aenoch where they have found an open field within which to hunt.

The guild's name, Nachtkrichen, means "the nightcrawlers" in the Vulgate or common tongue. Guild leaders, and now most citizens, refer to the members as kricher or "crawler." Each kricher has the guild's symbol tattooed somewhere on his body, but it is typically located on the inside of the left arm, below the armpit. The tattoo is a spidery letter N with a teardrop hanging off it that symbolizes the guild motto, "For those who cross us will have everlasting sorrow." Each member also carries a small curved dagger with a black hilt and red scabbard.

They frown upon freelance thieves and consider them enemies. This is largely because they are out of the guild's immediate control. Any criminal action not within the guild's plans draws the guild's attention. Usually, they force violators to join the guild; sometimes, they drive offenders from the areas they control. Truly obstinate individuals or groups are dealt with in a deadly manner. There is no forgiveness for crossing the Nachtkrichen.

Wizard and Illusionist Guilds

These organizations are largely made up of wizards and illusionists. However they are not restricted those classes. Bards are sometimes found in their ranks.

Mystic Enclave

A wizard guild founded by Aristobulus in 694md to serve his causes, it is no longer active. The guild was destroyed and most of its members slain during the Winter Dark Wars. Only a few survived. That that did live on the periphary of society.

Nebians

In the early years of his rule Uklar ordered his realm as he deemed necessary. Chief amongst these necessities were the religious ordes. Many had already turned to his worship and called him their god. They gathered in the valleys of Al-Liosh before the making Aufstrag and their built temples to him and sacrificed in his honor. They were wild with a lust for him that drove them to terrible deeds. As Unklar brewed upon thoughts of Aufstrag he thought that some must be set to manage it. So he walked amongst the proselytes, and of them all chose a woman to lead them. She was fell and beautiful, filled with a power that lay all low before her. He gave her the name Nectanebo and she joined him willingly. All those that followed her were given station and rank and when others saw this they flocked to join her. Some she accepted, others she cast out.

These are accounted the first priests and were called in after days, the Nebians. And their high priestess bore the name Nectanebo.

As Aufstrag rose from the ruins of Al-Liosh, so did the Nebians. The High Priestess took up quarters in the Citadel, but the greater body of

the priesthood she established in the Horned Acre, the Second Level of the First Ward. Here they governed all that came and went from Aufstrag and they wielded a power greater than all others.

When Unklar fell, so did the Nebians. Their ranks were thinned by war and strife, for civil war consumed the powers of Aufstrag, as one power sought to dominate another. Nectanebo XIX set herself against this blasphemy and struggled to maintain control of Aufstrag and rally all to the cause of Unklar, but she was unseated in her attempt and the Nebians wasted in the strife that followed.

Now they are a shadow of their formers selves, enclaves scattered through Aufstrag and some few in the lands beyond. They are all bent on the worship of Unklar but weak for his absence.

Members of this order include clerics of Unklar. They are powerful within Aufsrag, but if found beyond the confines of that dread tower they can only cast up to 5th level spells.

Paths of Umbra

The members of this order are called Umbrians. The "Paths" reflect a dual meaning. On the one hand they are a series of spells and magi-cal incantations which Nulak-Kiz-Din mastered and used to summon the Horned God to the world of Aihrde. Later, they became indicative of the wizard-priests of Unklar and Nulak, for it was said that a wizard-priest who served either of the two must first follow the Path of Umbra to know his dark lord.

Today, as the spells themselves are reputedly lost in the deep treasure labyrinths of Aufstrag, the "Paths" refer to the guild of wizard-priests who serve the memory of the Horned God and worship Nulak. Since the Winter Dark Wars, the guild has broken apart into many smaller units. Only in the United Kingdoms and Punj does it exercise any real power. There it rules at the right hand of Prince Innocent and frequently works with the Crna Ruk. In other lands, the order has gone underground, building temples in old dungeons or abandoned castles.

Those who follow the Paths of Umbra are altogether evil, seeking the destruction of the new world and a return to the order of the Winter Dark. They forever seek the Blood Runes, those incantations which allow one to travel time, in order to bring back the Horned God and the "Age of Eternal White."

Members of this order include lawful evil wizards, illusionists, clerics, or multi-classed combinations of such. They possess masterful knowledge of cold-based spells, and receive +2 on saving throws against them. They are sometimes referred to as the "Ice Wizards."

White Order

This guild is spread far and wide throughout almost all the known kingdoms. In many cases, they built their libraries and halls, which are generally referred to as schools, upon the very foundations of their predecessors, the Paths of Umbra. There is no particular guildmaster or hierarchic command structure. There is, however, a system of ranks to which the magi adhere. These ranks mark both the power and acquired knowledge of a guild member and are delineated by color and title.

The greatest school of the White Order is Aranowl. It lies upon the Isle of Eleriath, the southernmost island which covers the approaches to the delta along the Ardeen River in between the Kingdoms of Kayomar and Maine. This massive complex sits atop a high cliff overlooking the seas to the south. During the Winter Dark, this edifice served the Lords of Aufstrag as their fortress to overlook the sea and river

beyond. Soon after the war, the king of Kayomar seized the castle and decried using it as a fortress, for its walls were too wasted. Eventually, he granted the right of occupation to the White Order. They have occupied it ever since, rebuilding its holds and halls, the outbuildings, and eventually the walls. It is not used in a warlike capacity at all. In fact, the White Order has made a gesture to the king of their peaceful intentions by removing the gates in the main wall.

Aranowl is a university, filled with libraries, laboratories, school rooms, dormitories, and the like. There are usually 150-450 magi and scholars there at any time, most of which are first or second level rune marks, wizards, or illusionists. Their teachers however, range in level from 5th to the accredited Lords of the White Order, who are 12th level or higher.

Much of the collected wisdom of the world is gathered in this place, for the guild-masters here keep in constant contact with other lore masters from all walks of life, both good and evil, by letter and magical means.

Many visit Aranowl for knowledge, in which case they much pay for the services. A day's worth of research usually costs 50gp in coin or gem, but the knowledge revealed is frequently worth the price. How long it requires to research particular questions on history, language, customs, spell-craft, etc depend upon the complexity of the question asked. As a guideline roll a 1d8 for the number of days it requires, +1 for simple, +3 for complex and +5 for complicated. Not all questions are answered, in which case the fee is 50%. The Castle Keeper must adjudicate the complexity and availability of the information sought.

BARDS

These organizations are largely made up of bard and loremen.

Brotherhood

The Brotherhood was founded after the Battle of Goztenberg Keep. Its founding member, Christian of HarIs, survived the battle, but carried the scars of that horrific contest for the rest of his life. So great was his tale of the battle, so many having died or been wounded, and so great was his fear that future generations would forget the sacrifices, that he wrote its song and sung its history there upon the blood-soaked field. Later he welcomed others who had to tell similar tales of their struggles or battles and they formed a bond amongst them and they took to calling themselves the Brotherhood.

This started the tradition of the warrior poets of the Brotherhood, men and women, dedicated to both the art of the story, but the art of living it as well. Members of the Brotherhood must be tried and tested on the fields of battle, whether large or small doesn't matter, but they must carry the scars of their own adventures before they recite stories of others. For this reason they are sought by many courts, princes, and nobles, for their tales are always gripping, filled with danger, glory, romance, and death. Wise princes award the bards well for their work.

The Brotherhood is large, spanning all the Lands of Ursal and beyond, and probably comprises a membership who collectively have more experiences than any other. They have no houses or halls, no tithes or organization, but rather travel far and wide. Members are inducted by older members who feel that the pledge has earned his spurs. They take their honor seriously and anyone found pretending to be a member of the Brotherhood is killed.

They follow a simple hierarchy: older, more experienced bards gain the right of song at any court or function. Guild members charge no price for their tales; however, gifts are expected and those who do not grant them are blackballed and ignored by the other guild members.

Red Nails

The first of the Red Nails appeared after the Winter Dark Wars in the plains of Aachen. Baldwin's tale of the unicorn inspired a small group of troubadours to bring knowledge of the ancient world to the present and so they formed the Red Nails. Traveling to Grundliche-Hohle, they won permission of the dwarf king Dolgan to speak to the lore drake that dwelt there. They devoured her tales of the old world, of the Val Eahrakun and others, and brought them to the world at large.

Every member is inducted by another and must spend at least 5 years with that member, traveling and learning the stories as told by the drake. Once the initiate displays significant knowledge of the tales he is given a red nail as a symbol of his graduation. He then sets off to spread the tales he has learned, and to learn more as happenstance permits.

They are a dedicated group of stalwart poets.

TRADE GUILDS

Understated, but very powerful, the trade guilds comprise those guilds both local and widespread that represent the trades. They are most organized in the lands of men in and around Anglamay, The Hanse City States and New Aenoch, but their influence extends much further and deeper, stretching as far away as the Punj. Only in the militarized realm of Augsberg are the guilds forbidden, and those who speak of them or attempt to form them are put to death by fire. The guilds all have fighting components to them, to protect the Guild's property and members. Consider Apprentices as 0 level fighters, each Journeyman a 1st level fighter and a Master a 5th level fighter or above. Note that not all tradesman belong to a guild, many are free and clear of the guilds. Furthermore there may be local guilds of one trade or the other that do not follow the dictates of the major trade guilds.

The Trade Guilds are often at war with each other, fighting for recognition, patronage, or some market place grievance. The most notable are the Stone Masons and Weavers.

Fletchers

The Fletchers are a powerful, far reaching guild, found in almost every city of Ursal. They are crafstmen, who fashion bows and arrows for armies as well as the general market. Membership is limited to the most skilled, and arrows bought from the Fletchers cost twice as much as normal, but yield a +1 on all to hit rolls for their quality.

Stone Masons

The Stone Masons consist of many master and journeyman stone workers, sculptors and architects. The Guild Halls are located in many cities, but the headquarters lie in Allis in Anglamay. Each hall is given control of its own affairs, but all are required to retain an armed retinue. Their symbol is the hammer and chisel set in a triangle. The head of a Guild is called the Master Stone Mason, the head of the Stone Masons Guild is the Head Master Stone Mason.

Leather Workers

The leather workers are numerous and dwell in almost every town and hall of any size or significance in and around Anglamay and Kayomar. They have no halls or guild houses but for Strapping Hall in Fiume in the Hanse City States. Journeyman must go to Strapping Hall before they are given the rank of Master. It is there that they are recognized. The leather workers are easy going and some join the guild or are trained by a Master or Journeyman without ever seeing Strapping Hall, even so they can call themselves Guild Members. The head of the Guild is called Lord of Strapping Hall.

Woodsmiths

A very small and selective guild, the Woodsmiths consist of those able to carve and shape wood into some form. They are not carpenters, but are artists who specialize in wood. Their main chapter house, called the Mithelume, lies in Aachen. There apprentices learn the trade and then set out on their own to find suitable employment. Some make it, others do not. Once employed they are required to send one third of their first 3 years earnings to Mithelume to pay for their training. They are closely aligned with the Lothian Houses as those clerics enjoy worked wood in their monasteries and houses, who pay a great deal of money to Mithelume. The Guild Master is referred to as the master of the branch.

Weavers

A very large and powerful guild, the Weavers boast the largest militarized arm of all the guilds, employing both their own numbers but mercenaries as well, despite being the most loosely organized. They have no main hall, but are loosely organized into regional chapters, each with its own head Master Weaver. Any chapter threatened by another guild or entity can call upon another chapter for aid and they send assistance. Each chapter is commanded by a chapter lord.

Appendix A - A Note on Languages

Most of the languages of Aihrde find their origins in the ancient dwarf language. This is true for modern dwarf, goblin, gnome, halfling, giant and human languages apart from the holy and runic tongues. Knowledge in one, however, does not necessarily mean knowledge in them all, for there are racial, socio-historical, and cultural characteristics which make each language unique. The languages spoken by elves, humanoids, and ungern do not originate in ancient dwarven and are altogether different.

DWARVEN ROOT LANGUAGES

Aenochian, "Old Imperial": This was the dominant language during the age of the Empire of Aenoch. It is now spoken mostly by the aristocracy of the east, the Punj, the United Kingdom, Augsberg, Onwaltig, and the Hlobane Nation (reference the Confederation). The cult of the Paths of Umbra uses the language in their everyday speech.

Dwarven: Dwarven is the base root of all Human, Goblin, Gnome and Halfling tongues. This is the reason that many place names seem similar to ancient Dwarven. It is a simple language based around solid descriptions. For example, in describing a decisive person, a Dwarf would say, "His mind is as certain as stone." These types of language constructs make Dwarven extremely verbose. Many Dwarves, most famously Dolgan, are long-winded, even when speaking other languages because they translate from Dwarf into the other tongue. An advantage lies in the language's structure, allowing most non-Dwarves to master it within a few short years of study. Dwarven is spoken in the Dwarven Hohles, and by Goblins, Gnomes and Halflings.

Ethrum, also called "Kayomarese," or simply the "Western Tongue:" This was and still remains the dominate language in the west. The decedents of the tribe of Ethrum have maintained their native tongue quite well over the centuries, even during the Winter Dark. It is associated with the struggle against the Aenochians, and also against Unklar. Ethrum is the common tongue in Kayomar, Eloria and Maine. It is the only tongue which the aristocracy of those two lands speak or write in. Like Aenochian the language is a complicated one, and difficult to learn.

Giant: The giant tongues share the same root tongue in dwarven. Most giants can understand Vulgate, Dwarven and Gnomish. The Stone Giant tongue is markedly different however, sharing more in common with the gnome tongue

Gnomish: This language is similar to dwarven, its mother tongue.

Goblin: Much like the goblins themselves, this language is a twisted representation of the dwarven tongue. Where dwarven is easy to learn, goblin is difficult. Sentences are convoluted, filled with many phrases and pauses that are seemingly pointless. The language is not, however, for goblins are by nature devious and their language is as well. The goblin language is used to force a person to respond and to thereby expose his own emotive desires. For this reason, linguists, who understand goblins very well, are frequently found sitting motionless for hours while goblins ramble on, speaking only when they are certain the goblin has finished his speech.

Halfling: The halfling tongue also derives from dwarven, but it has aspects that make it wholly different from any other language.

Vulgate, the Common Tongue: This is the common tongue of men. Merchants use it in their daily discourse for it is spoken all over the world. Most peasants speak it as well. It originated in the early days of the Aenochian empire and is a bastardized version of Ethrum and Aenochian. During the Age of Winter's Dark, the Imperial bureaucracy adopted the tongue to better integrate the rule of Unklar with the common folk, and for this reason, it became the most pervasive language in Aihrde. Most of the Young Kingdoms, from Eisenheim to Cleves, speak Vulgate in courtly circles

DISTINCT LANGUAGES

Elven: The elven languages distinctly involve a great deal of body language. The elves communicate not only by speech, but through emotive expressions which manifest in the way they stand and sit, their facial expressions, and so on. Learning the elven languages is extremely difficult, taking years of practice. The Age of Winter Dark exaggerated the differences in the elven races.

Fontenouq High Elves: Their lust for war has given the Fontenouq Elves a militaristic world view. Their language is sharp and clear, with few references to things beyond the physical plane.

Shindolay High Elves: The High Elves of Shindolay, commonly called Seven Rivers, speak this sing-song language which remains the root of most all the elven dialects.

Twilight: The Twilight Wood, a place which thrived during the Winter Dark, did so by feeding off of the light of the moon. The Twilight Elves adapted to the peculiar nature of the forest, and their language reflects it. The tone is quiet, almost secretive. They identify things and places through metaphor as much as through nouns.

Wild & Mist Elf: These elves remained upon Aihrde during the Winter Dark, migrating from one area to the next. The Wild Elf dialect is a smooth flowing, high pitched language. Their sentences are frequently laced with double meanings, for they lived in the open during the Dark and were hunted far and wide.

Wood Elf: Like the Wild Elves, these elves hid themselves in deep forests and combated the Winter Dark. The Wood Elf tongue is thickly accented, almost guttural, and is the most difficult for other elves to comprehend.

Humanoid Languages: Orcs, hobgoblins, kobolds, and other humanoids speak their own languages which are generally unique to each individual race. Humanoids who descended from the same race, or who often co-mingle, will also often share bits and pieces of language.

Thieves' Cant: The language of thieves is spoken worldwide by almost every thief and guild. It involves hand gestures as well as key words with double meanings.

Troll: Troll is unique amongst all the language of Aihrde, its root lies in the language of the trees, which is wholly different than spoken languages as it relies upon the sense of touch more than anything else. Trolls are able to speak the Vulgate some, but generally communicate with each other by touching one another. Few, if any, can master this communication and speaking to them requires magic.

Ungern: The ungern speak their own tongue, reflecting their origins. It derives from Old Aenochian, but Unklar's knowledge of the Language of Creation gave the tongue a hidden power that other languages of Aihrde do not possess. The language is guttural and very difficult to learn, requiring a minimum intelligence score of 16 to master it.

MAGICAL LANGUAGES

Holy Tongue, "the Words of Law": This is the language of the law and good, used by such groups as the Holy Defenders of the Flame, the Confessor Knights, and the priests of Durendale and St. Luther. The language evolved over a long period of time, and involves emotive responses and intuition.

Runic Tongue: This language predates most of the wars of Aenoch and Ethrum, coming from, or so scholars assert, the Age of the God Emperors. It is exceedingly complex and few on Aihrde can speak it with any fluency. The priests and wizards of the old gods are adept at the language, and frequently use it as their holy tongue. Those who are fluent can generally understand and speak both Ethrum and Aenochian

THE LANGUAGE OF CREATION

The Alenerde-ut-Pilt, the Language of Creation, the Holy Tongue, is the language of life. The All Father spoke the world into being, fashioning it from the Void. From his voice, the language, its parts, its tone, the nuances of inflection, and their order sprang all that it is or ever will be. It is said that the All Father used the Alernerde-ut-Pilt to spin the magic of his being into the world of Aihrde. And those who heard the sound of it knew power beyond any other.

It is a powerful language, and being the greatest source of magic, serves as the root of all things.

To master the language is almost impossible. Only a few have come close. The goddess of the inner world, Inzae, could not understand it when the All Father tried to teach it to her. He wrote it for her, laying it down in glyphs and symbols in the Obsidian Book. But she tainted the language, changing it into a language of chaos of evil.

The sentients, trees of old, learned it in the Days before Days, as did the dragon Frafnog; the All Father taught it to them. But the early trees had no interest in it, for their minds were ever on cool earth, fresh water, the sun and wind. The dragon, mightiest of all that breed, folded the language into his mind and whether he knows it still or has forgotten it no tale tells.

And the All Father taught it to the Dwarves. Few of that folk, as clever as they are, managed to comprehend it, and even when they did, it was a collective endeavor. Eventually the Greater Dwarves of Inzae wrote it down, scribing its magic in a vast set of runes, which they set upon the brass halls, walls and stairs they constructed between the worlds, the Rings of Brass, and later, some small measure of it, in the Mammoth Scrolls. But the Rings are too great for any one man to translate, and the Scrolls that were scattered or remained within the confines of the dwarven realms are now lost.

Some clever men sought out the Dwarven Runes, finding them in wild, forgotten places. They taught themselves the runes they had, and grew powerful besides. 'Tis said that the Arch-Magi Nulak-Kiz-Din mastered much of the Language when he discovered The Paths of Umbra, and that Daladon used its power to bind the Unicorn to the Ephremere, Queen of Aachen. Aristobulus One Eye, too, understood many pieces of the Language.

Any spell, written or spoken, represents a small portion of the Language. "Nothing so much as a singular drop of water in the Amber Sea," or so the Mage Patrice used to teach his students, in reference to their individual spells when compared to the overall Language. To master it, a nearly impossible task, would bring the wielder infinite power.

Dwarven Mastery

As is known, some dwarves worked with the Language of Creation, taught to them by the All Father. The early fathers could speak it, though in practical application it failed them. Its subtleties escaped the hard minded dwarves and their craft suffered for it. The Dwarven All Fathers, priests of their realm, managed the language better, but even they suffered in its use. Their creations require the hammer to shape and the mind to mold. In the fashioning of items of metal and stone, and carving great halls of wondrous beauty from the bones of the earth, they excelled, surpassing all others that came before or after. The Language proved greater than that, however, for its power comes from the everlasting Void and the deeps of the All Father's mind. It is subtle and brutal, fair and foul, it flows without restraint but is bound in iron, it is a rope with no end. The dwarves, ever masterful, sought to control the world through which they trod, but both the seen and the unseen and the nuances of the Language escaped them. They might create, but their creations fell short of the maker's desires.

The greatest of Dwarven smiths took their knowledge, that which they understood, and marked it down in the Mammoth Scrolls, those holy writings of the early dwarves. The scrolls they cast in thin sheets of brass and etched all the history of the world, its making, those that moved across it, the runes and the language of creation as he understood it. The Scrolls were rolled up and placed them in stone cases and set in the high halls of Gorthoraug atop Mount Austrien.

The ever practical dwarves understood their limitations, and using the Mammoth Scrolls, recast the language in those long ago days. They set to crafting the words of the language into physical constructs, making tools of its power. This power they captured in a complicated and vast set of written characters, the dwarven runes. The runes contained power, often one power layered upon another. These runes the dwarves used, crafting them into items and objects of their own desire. Thus the runes came to be; glyphs with the power of the All Father's words bound within them.

The dwarves learned how to write them and keep the runes, for few substances could contain the written marks so that stones would break, wood fall to ruin, bones to dust and so on. Brass, they found kept the runes intact, as well as parchment made of dragon wings, and flesh. So they turned to this new craft, placing the runes upon sheets of brass, dragon parchment or their own bodies to carry them out into the world where their power might better serve the dwarves in war and peace. With these runes they made many wonders, building halls of deep glory, treasures of renown, worked jewels into crowns unsung by man or elf. The runes of Dwarven manufacture were later grouped into schools by the wizard Nulak Kiz Din; The Four Pillars, the Arcs of Time, Paths of Umbra, Gray Mist, etc.

So it was for many long centuries until the rise of the goblins and the sorcery of Ondluche.

The Sorcerer's Runes

Too many knew of the Language, or pieces of it, for it to remain wholly secret, and in time of years one of the Eldritch Goblins, Ondluche by name, unraveled some of its secrets. From where it is not certain, but it is known that he began the mastery of it long before in the Quiet of the World. Some have it that the Red Duke, who men call the Bull or Thorax, taught it to him, others that he gleaned it from walking among

the sentients, while others more correctly surmised that Ondluche was a dwarven Father, steeped in the knowledge of the runes, who was corrupted by evil.

But howsoever he came by the language, Ondluche used it for his own personal power. He was the first to do so, and the greatest of the sorcerers that came to plague the world.

Ondluche spent many centuries bent over his great alchemies, unraveling more of the sacred Tongue and ever increasing his power in sorcery. It is said that he possessed a great tower, Lugtundra, which loomed over the whole world, and within it were hosts of rooms and passages wherein he conducted all manner of vile experiments. Cloistered thus he learned ever more and rose to even greater power. Many came to him to learn of his witchcraft, and these bore it into the wide world, spells written on parchments or cast into swords, shields, staves or whatever item they fancied.

In later days, the sorcery he practiced, matched the true language of Creation and he bent the world and destroyed much. These powerful dweomers he kept for himself, burnt into the recesses of his mind. In time the power of these sorceries drove him near mad so that he could not keep them all contained. In secret he rewrote them, casting them into runes of power. These runes he carved on stones and totems, but he kept them well hid. These magics were the Ondluch-Eroan, or in the Vulgate, the Runes of Ondluche. He used them against the Dwarves and all who stood against him and in later ages they destroyed the All Father and split the world, opening it to the ravages of the multiverse and the planes beyond.

Ondluche's reign ended when the Dwarven King of Norgorad-Kam, Dognur VII, entered the halls of Lugtundra and slew the sorcerer. It is said that the Dwarf waded through a sea of rune magic like a ship in water and he took up the sorcerer in his hands. Grasping him by the neck he ground his neck and bones to gristle and cast him aside. But the Goblin's sorcery was forever a part of the world of Aihrde. Though few would ever understand its origins or what it was, most forgot that the sorcery was the Language of Creation, only corrupted, and foul. And the runes were scattered far and wide.

Through the machinations of the Red Duke the dwarven power came to an end, their kingdoms waned and their power faded. For the most part the runes fell into darkness, lost in time.

A Magi's Quest

The knowledge of the runes lay forgotten for many ages. Rumors of the powers of the dwarves and the wizard Ondluche came down to scholars and adventurers, but few believed them and even fewer still sought them out. But eventually word of them came to the scholars of kings and the wizards of men.

Those who did know understood that mastery of the Language could bring ultimate power, and they sought to find the magic stones and the runes written upon sheets of brass and dragon wing. The runic tongue was born in these quests, a tongue comprised of the vulgate speech of traders and the tattered understandings of the language. The tongue was never complete and few understood the words or how to unearth their power. It was left to a single wizard to unearth the rune lore.

A human magi, whose own history is mired in the depths of time, rose during the Age of Heroes to become one of the greatest of his peers. In those days he bore the name Trigal, and served the Emperors of Aenoch. But Trigal was an evil man, and in his true purpose he used the power of the Empire to scour the world for the magic of the ancients, particularly for the Rings of Brass, the Mammoth Scrools, and the Obsidian Book. But he found them not; the latter remained hidden, the Scrolls lost and the former long ago destroyed in Inzae's War of the Gods. But what he did find was evidence of the Ondluch-Eroan, those spells that Ondluche cast into runes. He learned that there were many runes, single, paired or in whole sets; he also learned that the runes possessed different powers when used singly or together.

Trigal's evil lost him the support of the Emperor of Aenoch. He named him then anew and called him Trigal Dark Tongue, and drove the wizard from his halls. Trigal took another name, Nulak-Kiz-Din and he continued his quest for The Paths of Umbra.

In those days there were tomes in the Dwarven Halls that recorded much of the history of the world and that of the Dwarves. Nulak gained entry to the deeps of Norgorad-Kam where the greater part of these manuscripts were kept and studied them for many long years. His sorcery was so great that the Dwarves did not know of the deception for a long while. When they discovered that he was a magi they cursed him. They bound Nulak and branded his hand with an iron from the Hall's Forge and named him Baeglulth which is Hand of Ash. This mark stayed with Nulak ever after. The Dwarves drove him from the Hall, but it mattered little to him, for Nulak had what he needed. He gathered to him a group of stout fellows, rogues and warriors and a few priests and he began a trek into the west in search of Gorthurag, the First Home of the Dwarves, long abandoned.

His long adventure, filled with dreadful deeds, great heroism and battles with ancient beasts do not come into these tales, but suffice it so say the wizard found what he was looking for.

Gorthurag, long abandoned after its destruction in the Goblin Dwarf Wars, stood like a hollow tomb. He sought after the Mammoth Scrolls, those ancient texts within which the Dwarves recorded their own and the world's history. He hoped that they must somehow reveal the hidden knowledge of any of the Runes, the Obisidian Book, or other devices which would lead him to greater power. Though he never found the lost archives where the scrolls were buried, he did find other clues, and dangerous ones at that.

He learned that when the Dwarf King Dognur VII slew Ondluche, he found upon the Goblin's broken body a tube of brass within which were many sheets of magical runes. They fell out of the history of the Dwarves when Dognur gave them over to some of his allies. Nulak learned also of Dognur's ordering of the Runes into schools, and to include the greater runes, those of the dwarf fathers of old. And so the schools, Four Pillars, Arcs of Time, Paths of Umbra, Gray Mist, etc., came to be.

So Nulak took up his staff once more to quest the world over, until he at last gathered the fabled Rune Sheets to him. He knew then that these were a set of the Ondluch-Eroan. From them he garnered the power to cross over from the material world and enter the outer planes. During the long plague that followed, his followers spread throughout the world, and with them, many of the Runes. What Ondluche had guarded with care, the magi did not. Greater knowledge of all of Ondluche's sorcery came to them, and more runes as well. Men sought other sets, the Blood Runes called the Arc of Time, the Dream Runes called the Deep Waters and the Bone Runes called the Dead's Chorus and more besides. In all these travels Ondluche's other runes came to light as well, a host of lesser runes and other greater still.

Appendix 6 - Calendar

here are 367 days in a year. Originally the calendar was based off of the dwarven calendar. This consisted of 24 Eval, or "walks," of 15 days each. The 15 days signified the amount of time it took to walk by foot from the gates of Gorthurag to Gods Forge at the top of Mount Austerien. This journey was a holy journey for dwarves and called the Forahnock.*

The dwarves set aside 7 days at the end of each year as a time of rest; this was called the Rik.

During the Winter Dark the calendar was changed to reflect a more orderly world. The cycles were set to reflect the cycle of the moon and the seasons. The dwarven Eval were converted into 12 months, however, the measurements were never perfect, reflecting Ea-Raena's constant rebellion against Unklar and the number of days in a month were adjusted, some possessing more days than others.

After the collapse of Aufstrag, both calendars were combined by the Council of Light. The year now is divided into 13 months. Twelve of the months each have thirty days, but the thirteenth month is a celebratory month, the Feast of the Unmaking, and is only 7 days long. Though there are many local and religious holidays, the Feast of the Unmaking is celebrated throughout many of the Young Kingdoms as a time of thanksgiving for the destruction of Unklar.

Time is generally tracked by the day of the month that it is, not the eval or rik/week. So one would say it is the 14th of Trocken.

When discussing time many of the root names remain. An eval is 15 days long. There are two per month, and one might say "meet me in the Uelich Eval of Trocken" or "meet me in the Second Eval of Trocken." This would be the 16th-30th of Trocken. A Rik, or in the Vulgate a "week" has been translated into a seven day period, due to the fest held at the end of the dwarven year. The dwarven holy journey of Forahnock roughly equates to the Fortnight of 14-15 days, or an eval.

*This journey constituted a difficult trek around the mountain several times, following the path. The journey was greatly shortened in later years as the road was improved, however the 15-day period remained as a measure of time for the dwarves, as it does to this day.

THE CALENDAR YEAR

Erstdain (First Month)	**Spring**
Regnerisch (Rain)	**Spring**
Lothian (named for the god Daladon)	**Spring**
Uthdain (named for the god Luther)	**Spring**
Feast of the Unmaking (7 days)	**Feast**
Falkhyn (named for Jaren Falkynjager)	**Summer (low)**
Trocken (Hot)	**Summer (high)**
Frostig (End of heat)	**Autumn**
Erstfhroe (First Frost)	**Autumn**
Lexlicht (Last Light)	**Autumn**
Nochturn (Evening)	**Winter**
Winterdark	**Winter**
Arist (named for the god Aristobulus)	**Winter**

COMMON FESTIVALS

Aedgenthr, or Aedgen's Day: Celebrated by the Etrhum on the first day of spring. It recognizes Aedgen'smetting with Tefnut. It involves large feasts, usually held out door, on the banks of rivers or lakes (if possible) and gift giving. Celebrations continue all day and into the night with games for children and gift giving. It is often the time debts are forgiven.

Cuthr: This marks the birth of the Day Star. Though Unklar created the star from spite, it proved a great moment for the peoples of the world. Every 1st of Falkhyn people pray and make minor sacrifices to the gods.

Eathr: Ea-Raena's day is celebrated by people all across the lands of Ursal. It is usually held on the 30th of Trocken, though sometimes on the 15th. It is marked by night activities, dancing, feasting, and drinking under the light of the moon. Any child conceived on Eathr is considered a blessed child.

Festival of Clowns: This macabre festival marks the slaughter of nobles enacted by the Aenochian Emperor, Marcus IV. People wear clown masks and stalk one another in the streets or their homes, usually to terrorize them. However the festival often turns violent when victims are startled. It is outlawed in many realms, but wildly popular in the east, particularly New Aenoch (where it is outlawed). The Festival takes place on the 1st-15th of Lexlicht.

Letthr: A festival celebrated on the 15th of Winterdark by most of the Ethrum. Sacrifices in foodstuffs and other perishables are made, usually by giving to those in need, in the name of Let, the god of hope.

Mordiusthr: A day of fasting and morning for the death of Mordius. Celebrated by all the Ethrum, Aenochians and Engale. It is considered an act of unforgivable evil to take a life on Mordiusthr. It is held on the 15th of Regnerisch.

Onuthr: This marks the birth of the Night Star and even as Cuthr it is a mark of celebration for the spite of Unklar was turned to good. It is celebrated on the 3rd of Lothian.

Rik: This is a 7 day period of rest for dwarves. It occurs after the 24th Eval of each year. It includes feast, drinking and gift giving. Gifts almost always consist of foodstuffs or personal items to family and friends.

CALENDAR RECKONING

The standard calendar year is that of the Millennial Age (as begun by the Dark God Unklar). The current year is 1197md. There are, however, four calendars of reckoning, Dwarf, Elf, Olden Year and Millennial. All campaign dates are given in md.

Conversion chart:

Millennial Age (md): 1
Olden Year (oy): 800
Dwarf Year (df): 12188
Elven Year (ey): 3452

To arrive at the Olden Year, add 800 to the present md. For Dwarf year add 12188, and for Elven year 3452. A History will read: In 1129md (13317df; 1929oy; 4581ey) the Dwarves of Grundliche Hohle made peace with the 47 clans of Gnomes.

Appendix C - Chronology

The Annals of Days

The First Rin: The Days Before Days

Herein came to be the world of Aihrde wherein the All Father brought substance from the Void. He created the lands and oceans and peopled them with multitudes of fauna and flora. He created the Maidens, those Sisters, who brought light to the world. The Val Eahrakun, crossed the threshold of the Void and settled throughout Aihrde. These creatures wandered the world in wonder and frolicked beneath the new born skies for many long ages. In time they warred upon one another and brought much mischief to the world. The All Father formed the Sentients and breathed life into them. They roamed the world in their myriad forms. These were ever his greatest joy. In time he bartered with the Great Beast, Inzae and brought the Dragons into the world and they multiplied and ruled over the world for many eons. But in those long years the All Father never stopped creation and the last and greatest of his creations he shaped in anger, pounding the substance of creation with his hands alone. So the Dwarves came to be and these he scattered ascross the wide world to see what they would do.

Second Rin: Of the Beginning of Days

But in those long years the All Father never stopped creation and the last and greatest of his creations he shaped in anger, pounding the substance of creation with his hands alone. So the Dwarves came to be and these he scattered ascross the wide world to see what they would do. And for them he created the Stone Fields and the Red God made the Gegelmesh. And the dwarves account all living things bound by the Andanuth, which is the debt of life.

Third Rin: Songs of the Dwarves

The long days of the rise of the dwarves and the founding of their many kingdoms. The contest of wills between Ornduhl the Red God and Agrind. Herein is the death of Mordius and the making the Cloak of Red. The rise of the Kingds of Ethrum and Aenoch and the long days of the world.

Dwarf Years	Elf Years	Olden K.	Dark Years	Events
1				The Making of First Home, Gorthurag or in the Vulgate "Gods Eye"
54				Agrind forges the Axe of the All Father
76				Crowning of the Dwarf All Father Argrind; 13 tribes of men
300				The temple of Gorth Krag founded and the first writings upon the Mammoth Scrolls; Mordius settles among the men of the north
321				The Dwarf Lord Anderoth first ventured upon the Sea
530				Anderoth sails around Rienland, his brother, Ikem, dies in the east and they founding a colony of dwarves at Ikem's Horn
600				Death of Anderoth
602				Third War of the Gods
602-1200				Reign of the Red God
727				Grausumhart Founded under Uthkin the All Father
984				The war between Argrind King and the Red God
999				Death of Agrind, First King of Gorthurag, at the age of 1143
1000				Beginning of the Great Migrations
1200				The murder of Mordius by the Red God, Ethrum and Aenochians migrate
1400				Dwarves settle in the deeps of Grundliche Mountains
1643				The Bergrucken are discovered
1800				Dwarves spread to the coastal regions of Zuala
1400-5200				The Founding of the Dwarf Realms throughout and under the world
2609				Grundliche Hohle (Gondolim) Founded under Aegold the All Father
3400				Ornduhl begins corrupting dwarves, the first goblins
3402				Norgorad Kam crowns Kenud its first King
3000-4750				Founding of Londuck Hohle, Magmun, Roheisen Hohle, Hamville Krus and Krag-ut-Thune throughout the world
3956				The free Dwarves of the Sea Kings unite and create the Realm of Alanti (in ancient Dwarf Bogda-Rawd, which is upon the Sea; they name Anderim, a distant kinsmen of the explorer their All Father
4750-5050				Herein are the ages of Peace and Dwarven craft
5089				The Kingdom of Norgrund under the All Father Nodrick
5123				First mention of the Goblins, the Kav-Orun, "cave dwellers" in the pits of Norgrund
5207				The Death of the line of Argrind Darkeye and the beginning of the Kinship disputes inaugurating 200 years of warfare between the various kingdoms
5457				The Sundering of Realms and the end of the Third Rin of the world

Fourth Rin: The Dwarven Laments

The Goblins lived for many long years, nurturing hate. A hate that was not their own, but rather Thorax's. When they thought their power great enough, they issued forth from their caverns and halls in great numbers. They were bound in armor and bore weapons of iron and brass. And they made war upon the Dwarves. So began the great Goblin-Dwarf wars which brought the world so much that is evil, and yet, so much that is good.

The Goblins, under King Ichlun, issued forth from their caves, sweeping across the valleys and plains in a wave of terror and war. As is written they bore armor, shields and weapons of iron or brass They favored jagged knives and short swords, spiked balls and whips, so that their war was made all the more gruesome. The Dwarves, caught unaware, threw up weak defenses, but these did not hold the ferocity of the Goblin attack. The Folk fell, cut down by the host of Thorax's hate. These were largely innocent people, farmers and their kin, those who lived above ground and had no recourse to defense. They fled before the Goblins.

Dwarf Years	Elf Years	Olden K.	Dark Years	Events
5590-5592				First Goblin Dwarf War, wherein the Fathers of Grunliche Hohle plunder Ichlin-Yor
5596				The All Fathers of Alanti begin fortifying their towers
5616-5640				The Second Goblin-Dwarf War wherein the Dwarves are driven to their holds, but for the Sea Kings of Alanti. The Nine Lamentations of the Dwarves calling all to homage the deaths of so many thousands. The retreat of the Dwarves.
5640-6010				The Reign of the Goblin King and the coming of WitchCraft, Alanti holds out all the other Kingdoms are closed or lost.
5689				Discovery of the Rings of Brass
5704				Men begin to chart the stars
5725				The fleets of Alanti come to the mainland and begin building fortified estuaries and towers in defiance of the Goblin hordes
5730				Bearin discovers steele
5804				Ondluche becomes servant to the Goblin King Ichlun
5802-5812				Using the Rings of Brass the Dwarves from the scattered Kingdoms gather in Gothurag under All Father Isenharg IV
5812-6010				The Third, or Great Goblin-Dwarf War in which at last the Goblin Kings are thrown down and driven to the far reaches of the world. The Field of the Ravens and the death of King Ichlun. The Long Days end.
6010-6600				The Peace of Tunnels. Tribes of men spread to the four corners of the world
6600-8000				The rise of the Sea Kings of Alanti. All the world is mapped and the stars besides. Great wonders enter the world and the gates immortal are opened and the Dwarves know peace again
7500				Aegold founds the First Kingdom of the Ethrum
8603				Ondluche is named Goblin King
8608				The founding of the Second Kingdom of Ethrum
8613				Fourth Goblin Dwarf War begins
8645				The plundering of Alanti
8693				Gorthurag is destroyed, the Seven Swamps created
8733				Ondluche's sorcery shatters the Realm Physical opening the Gates of Forever
8735				Ondluche is slain by Dognur VII ending the Fourth Goblin-Dwarf War
8735	1			The coming of the Elves
9804	1069			The Goblins rise in force to plunder the world and the Stone Wars begin. The rise of the Aenochians and the Chariot Kings
10302	1567			The Stone Wars in which the Goblins are at last destroyed but not before the realms of the Dwarves are looted and plundered and the Dwarves broken forever in numbers and strength
10302	1567			The plundering of Grausumhart & the end of the Songs of the Dwarves

Fifth Rin: The Age of Man

From their shallow roots the thirteen tribes of men grew. The fathers and mothers begat sons and daughters, and they multiplied and spread across the land. More adaptable than Dwarves, they settled in the forests, deserts, and plains. And in the space of many years, their Kingdoms grew upon the face of Erde. The Mammoth Scrolls reference these thirteen tribes many times, some greater, some less so. Of these the Aenoch, Ethrum, Madriu, Niad, Engale, and Inklu are named. These men lived long lives, mimicking the Dwarves, who 'tis said, were their ancestors.

Dwarf Years	Elf Years	Olden K.	Dark Years	Events
10650-11012	1915-2277			The rise of Aenoch. The rule of the God Emperors. The War of the Gods
11388	2653	1		The reckoning of men under the Olden year
11480	2745	92		The founding of the Third Kingdom of Ethrum. Rise of Aenoch
11595	2860	207		The crowing of Olivier I, Emperor of Aenoch
		239		Bloodless Revolution, Tultulun II overthrown, Aenochian emissaries slain
11629	2894	241		The conquest of Ethrum Begins
11634-11636	2899-2891	246-248		Stone Giants Build the Great Wall
11651-11654	2906-2909	263-266		Isles of Mark, 9 battles that destroyed Ethrum
11655	2920	267		Aenochian Emperor Crowned God Emperor, creation of the Cunae Mundus Usquam
11864	3129	476		The Festival of Clowns and Marking of the Emperors
11791	3202	549		The founding of the White Order
11818-11822	3229-3234	576-580		The Imperial Wars
11821	3233	579		Beginning of the Wars of Liberation
11830	3242	588		Founding of the Empire of Ethrum, destruction of the Ursal Bridge
11977	3242	589		The death of the Emperor Marcus Owen I
11978	3243	590		The fall of the Aenoch and the rise of the Middle Kingdoms
12002	3267	614		First mention of the Halfling folk
12026	3291	638		Founding of the Defenders of the Holy Flame
12064	3329	676		Nulak-Kiz-Din discovers the Paths of Umbra
12081	3346	693		The Council of Patrice
12081-12124	3346-3389	693-736		The Age of Heroes, Aristobulus, Luther, Daladon; Elven migrations
12094	3359	706		The rise of Rapscallion
12095	3364	711		Baron Petrovich becomes keeper of the Cunae mundus Usquam
12102	3371	718		Sebastian Olivier I, crowned Emperor
12110-12112	3379-81	726-728		Siege of Avignon
12116	3385	732		The Durendale found by Luther
12120	3389	736		The Holy Alliance
12123	3392	739		Enslavement of Aristobulus, Luther to the Dreaming Sea, Death of Daladon Half-Elven
12128	3397	744		Jaren founds the Order of the Scintillant Dawn
12136	3401	748		Through the Paths of Umbra Unklar is brought to Aihrde
12138-12149	3402-3413	750-761		War of the Gods
12140-12144	3404-3408	752-756		The Elven quarrel and divide, Shindolay & Fontenouq
12149-12151	3413-3415	761-763		The Siege of Avignon
12149-12188	3413-3452	761-800		The Catalyst War

The Sixth Rin: The Winters Dark or the Fell Winter

As the last breath of the Days before Days blew across the land the Emperor Sebastian Oliver I sat upon his throne with the Cradle of the World upon his brow. Behind him stood his councilor, the High Priestess, Nectanebo, servant of the goddess Imbrisuis. Before them both stood Nulak-Kiz-Din. Folds of sorcery wrapped the Arch-Magi, clothing him in power. He called upon this fountain of magic and lay the Incantations of the Paths of Umbra to summon the horror from the Void. Sebastian used vile sorcery learned from the Wizard Aristobulus, to aid him and Nectanebo lent her considerable weight to the spell's undertaking. The Paths of Umbra split the Wall of the Worlds, opening a gate to the beyond. Unklar, wrapped in shrouds of the substance of creation, stepped into the world of Aihrde.

Dwarf Years	Elf Years	Olden K.	Dark Years	Events
12188	3452	800	1	The Age of Winter Dark begins, Unklar crowned God Emperor of Erde.
			71	Creation of the Seven Rods and the Seven Captain Kings under Unklar
12313	3577	925	125	Grundliche Hohle overrun; Unklar begins remaking the world.
			241-247	Great Revolt of the Inklu-Naid, it is suppressed
12563	3827	1175	250	The Cold Mist and the Shroud of Darkness.
			300	Hounds of Darkness created
12490	3704	1102	302	Faurenost founded by Kayomar refugees, Aristobulus returns.
12491-12493	3705-3707	1103-1105	303-305	First War of the Sun between Faurenost and Unklar's Folk
12529	3743	1141	341	The Captain King Cruxael unearths Gorthurag Kingdom and is lost
12530-12559	3744-3773	1142-1171	342-371	First War of the Captain Kings, Unklar remains passive
12579-12597	3793-3811	1191-1209	391-409	Second War of the Captain Kings
12586	3800	1198	398	Elven Quest Knights arrive in Aihrde.
12699	3913	1209	409	Bending of Aihrde.
12713	3927	1223	423	The Flame removed to Du Guesillon.
12740	3954	1250	450	Founding of the City of Seven
12660	3874	1272	472	Hounds of Darkness scattered or destroyed
12798-12883	4012-4097	1410-1495	610-695	Third War of the Captain Kings and the Uneasy Peace
12842	4056	1454	654	Melius hide the portals of Shindolay
12882	4096	1494	694	Aristobulus founds the Mystic Enclave.
12888	4102	1500	700	The Uneasy Peace is shattered by Unklar's return.
13038	4252	1650	850	Dwarves issue forth from Norgorad Kam to raid enemy in the south
13093-13140	4307-4354	1705-1752	905-952	Five separate wars with the Faurenost
13140-13149	4354-4363	1752-1761	952-963	Fourth War of the Captain Kings
13307	4521	1919	1119	The return of Luther and Daladon; Aristobulus convenes the Council.
13307-13324	4521-4538	1919-36	1119-36	The Winter Dark Wars
13324	4538	1936	1130	Banishment of Unklar

The Seventh Rin: After Winters Dark or The Rise of the Young Kingdoms

After the Winters Dark men shook off the shackles of fear and rose into their own, rebuilding the world as of old.

Dwarf Years	Elf Years	Olden K.	Dark Years	Events
13324-385	4538-4599	1936-97	1136-97	The birth of the Young Kingdoms.
13325	4539	1937	1137	Brimottaut (Battle of the Tree, Battle of Ten Days), Sacking of Lower Halls of Aufstrag
13326	4540	1938	1138	Rules of Order for the Lothian Order
13328	4542	1940	1140	Pryzmira crowned Empress of New Aenoch
13385	4599	1937	1197	War breaks out on the Hruesen between the servants of Unklar and the folk of Aenoch.

Appendix D - Climate and Weather

Aihrde is a large world, nearly 24,000 miles of land and ocean lie from the waters off Fourenost to the far side of the world in the deep Dulzdine Ocean beyond the lands of Ephal. Beyond these points the Wall of Worlds begins, or the anchors of the Winter Dark that made the world round. She is affected by a moon and sun that pass through the heavens at regular intervals, chained now in their cosmic journey.

The world possesses vast oceans and seas, one primary continent and a dozen smaller ones. Her south and north poles are covered in thick sheets of ice year round.

Aihrde is a lively, active world with a wide variety of regional climates, from the tropical moist of Inklu-Naid to the Boreal Forests of northern Aenoch, to the moist continental of the lands of Ursal to the dry tropical of the Nabian Deserts. Here local flora and fauna thrives; dwarves, men, elves and others live out their lives, monsters hunt the unwary, and gods play. Each of these biomes possess local climatic conditions peculiar to their latitude, proximity to the deep waters or frozen ice caps, wind conditions, physical geography and all the myriad factors that make up regional climates.

In general Aihrde is a moist world, that enjoys a great deal of precipitation, both in the form of rain and snow. For all the Long Centuries the world lay bound in an age of ice and winter and the residual affects of Unklar's rule remain.

Regional Biomes and Climates

Biomes consist of a climate, which dictates what type of flora (plant life) and fauna (animal life) thrive in that region. Climate is the characteristic weather conditions, including temperature, sunshine, cloud cover, humidity, prevailing winds, and precipitation of any given area. The climate determines what can and cannot grow or thrive in a region, which in turn, defines the biome. The following is a composite list of all the climates existing on our earth. Each entry includes average temperatures and rainfall.

The standard biomes exist throughout the world of Aihrde. Regional conditions vary but the chart below gives an average annual precipitation and temperature for those climates outside the Lands of Ursal.

Note: For a more complete discussion of biomes and climates consult the **Castle Keepers Guide**.

Climate	Average Annual Precipitation	Average Annual Temperature
Tropical Moist Climates (Rainforest)	120	76
Wet-Dry Tropical Climates (Savanna)	.5	58
Dry Tropical Climate (Desert)	.5	58
Dry Mid-latitude Climate (Steppe)	6	40
Mediterranean Climate (Chaparral)	23	10
Dry Mid-latitude Climate (Grassland)	36	52
Moist Continental Climate (Deciduous Forest)	40	52
Boreal Forest Climate (Taiga)	16	70
Tundra Climate (Tundra)	12	-15-40
Highland Climate (Alpine)	11	-10-50

Global Wind Patterns

There are a host of wind patterns which govern the weather in the world of Aihrde. Below is a list of the major winds that drive that weather. Refer to the map for the general location of each wind.

1 Felun Wind
2 West Polar Wind
3 East Polar Wind
4 Merick's Wind
5 Highland Wind
6 Dragon's Wind
7 Banning Wind
8 Great Northern Trace
9 Anderoth's Trail
10 Ursal Wind
11 Anvil Wind
12 Trader's Wind
13 All Father's Breath
14 Anderoth's Turn
15 Green Wind
16 Ikem's Doom
17 The Turning Wind
18 Narrheit's Breath
19 Aroyo Wind
20 Blue Wind
21 Narrheit's Tooth

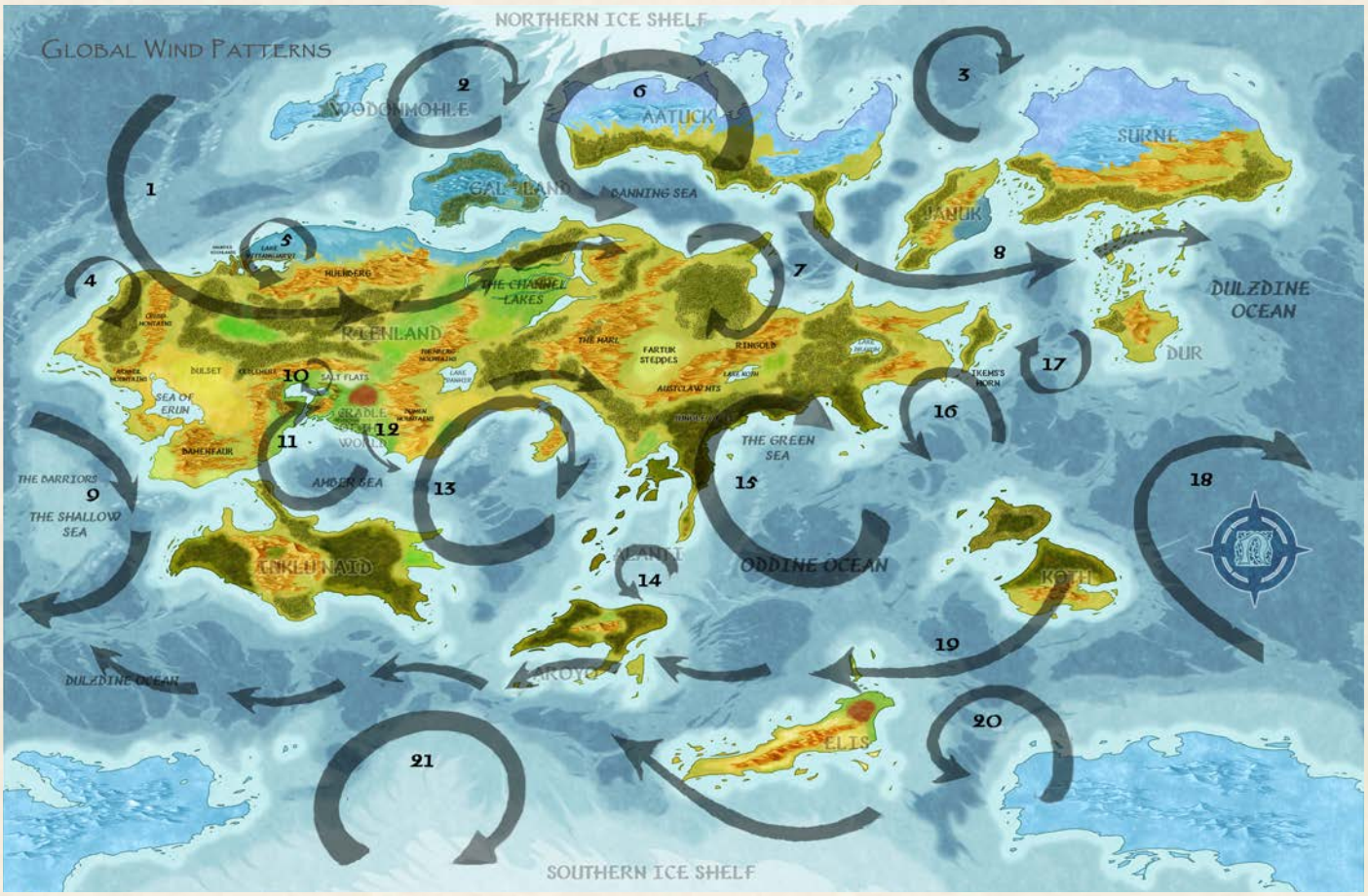
The Lands of Ursal

This is nowhere more apparent than in the Lands of Ursal, what men call the Cradle of the World.

The Lands of Ursal comprise those lands from the Amber Sea in the south to the Holmgrad Mountains in the north; from the Rhodope Mountains in the west to a north-west line from the Aratock Mountains in New Aenoch and the Red Hills in the Punj. These lands comprise the heart of the civilizations of both the Ethrum and the Aenochians as well as three of the dwarven Kingdoms and the only surviving, open, dwarven kingdoms in the world.

The Lands of Ursal have a moist continental climate. Here the polar masses of the far north collide with the tropical masses of the south, creating for very large seasonal differences in temperature and rainfall. Summers are generally hot, and winters are very cold; fall and autumn have heavy precipitation. For more refer to the **Castle Keepers Guide**.

Within the Lands of Ursal are a number of different biomes, from temperate broadleaf and mixed forests, to flooded grasslands, lakes, river and deltas. The rainfall varies markedly from one biome to the next. But generally the Lands of Ursal are affected by an west to east weather pattern driven by the Anvil Wind and fueled by the Ursal Wind.



The Anvil Wind brings warm, moist air up from the region of the Dwarven Anvil and the Amber Sea, blowing across the lands of southern Ethrum, the Darkenfold and Soup Marsh. Here it picks up and deposits vast quantities of water on its movement into Kayomar and the Gelderland. This same eastward blowing wind crosses the Bergrucken, fueled by the Ursal Wind, as it passes over the the Sea of Shenal and into Aenochia. Here it picks up moisture from the Ursal Wind and Sea of Shenal, depositing it further east in Aenoch.

The Ursal Wind builds further north beyond the the Holmgrad Mountains. This weather pattern brings vast quantities of cold air into the south. It picks up steam across the warm Inner Sea, making that body of water very tumultuous. The Ursal Wind pushes the Anvil Wind south in Autumn and Winter, bringing cold air, and lots of precipitation.

Where the two winds connect their are plenty of storms, including heavy rain or snow, and in the summer months tornadoes.

Futher east the winds, still strong, dry out as they pass over the Aratock Mountains and the Plains of Achrothos. In the south the sailors call this the Southern Trade Wind. It is strong and dry. The Madriu call it the All Father's Breath for the Plains are always windy.

Smaller winds, such as west to east bearing, Trader's Wind move in smaller patterns, this one coming from the south in the Amber Sea to wash over the Illumbrian Coasts. It is void of much moisture, but favored by sailors traveling west.

There are many different rain patterns throughout the Lands of Ursal, varying with each biome. However the annual average is listed in the following table.

Temperature and Rainfall

The chart below indicates the average temperature and rainfall for the Lands of Ursal which lie in a moist continental climate. The real-world equivalent for each month is in parenthesis. The temperatures do not hold if you leave the Lands of Ursal. Moving just a little north of the Inner Sea places the adventuring party in the broad steppes of the north, where temperatures mimic those of a dry mid-latitude climate.

AVERAGE MONTHLY TEMPERATURES IN AIHRDE

Month	Season	Avg. Temp.*	Avg. Precipitation†
Winterdark (January)	Winter	12	7
Arist (February)	Winter	15	6
Erstdain (March)	Spring	28	7
Regeerishc (April)	Spring	41	7
Lothian (May)	Spring	51	7
Uthdain (June)	Spring	67	6
Falkhyhn (July)	Summer	74	5
Trocken (August)	Summer	73	5
Frostig (September)	Autumn	61	5
Erstfhroe (October)	Autumn	48	6
Lexlicht (November)	Autumn	36	6
Nochturn (December)	Winter	22	6

* Average Temperature in Fahrenheit.

† Precipitation in inches.

Appendix E - Flora of Aihrde

There are many herbs and plants in the wide world and these offer those skilled in their use a wealth of treasure. From healing elixirs to poisons, from restful sleep to weapons of war, the flora of Aihrde can be powerful. Below is a sample of some of the more legendary and well known species.

Dew of Amelia

The Dew of Amelia is a small, dark green shrub that grows in cool, soil-rich spots. The veins of the amelia leaves are pale yellow or silver, and very moist. When exposed to moonlight the moisture gathers on the leaves, creating a glistening sheen that glows ever so slightly. The leaves are prized by seers, clerics and druids. If plucked beneath the light of the moon and set upon the tongue it grants one clarity. All divination or scrying spells are increased as if the caster was 2 levels higher. The very skilled can also spiritually pass over from the material world and onto the Arc of Time. The effect lasts for 1-2 hours before the spirit is returned to the body.

Blaudun Wine

The hobgoblins of Burnevitse live in the deeps of the Bleached Hills. They plunder the wilds of the Crown of Tefnut, the Blaudun Timberland, for many of its riches, its grapes not the least. From them they brew a potent wine that tastes sweet when drunk. It sits heavy however, and a long pull fills the same as a full meal. Anyone who drinks a pint's worth of the wine is refreshed as if they ate a full day's rations. It is important to note however, that the body is not getting all the nutrients it needs and the wine can keep one going only for a limited time, 3 days, plus the drinker's constitution bonus. After that the body revolts and the drinker begins to lose control of their bowels, vomiting, diarrhea, etc. Eating a little food, at least 1/3 a day's rations, doubles the amount of time the wine can be used as a food substitute. After that, the body breaks down until they have rested for 1 day for every 2 they drank the wine.

Gottland Delphinium (Tree Tears)

The Gottland Delphinium grows amidst the roots of the Gottland Trees, where trolls have rooted to the ground. As is known, troll lords do not die of old age, but rather they become so weighted down by their own evil, that they grow roots into the ground and there they live out their days as trees both twisted and foul. These are called the Gottland Trees. Their roots pass some magic of themselves to the earth; for ever about their feet flowers grow. Whether the flowers are atonement for past deeds, or memories of an ancient flora that walked the world in the Days before Days, few can say. These beautiful, bowl shapped, violet flowers are the only things of color that grow in or around the trees. They are short, only three or four inches high and grow in thick patches. Their bowls are made of four overlapping flowers. Gathering these flowers together and mashing them into to a pulp, and watering the pulp creates a healing salve. The salve, when administered to wounds, heals 1d4 points of damage. A vial of the salve for goes for 75gp on the open market.

Mure Grass

In the Days before Days, before the coming of the sun, grasses grew beneath the shadow of the moon. There grew grasses tall and lean and these drank the silver light of Mailahm the moon. When her sister came to the world, the grasses withered in the light of the sun and largely vanished from the world. They are rare now, growing in lonely places where the light of the sun never touches. The grass is bluish-green, 12-14 inches tall when mature and as thin as paper. If boiled in water the moon's light passes from the grass to the water, giving the water a slight glow. It can light up a 10 foot square area. If ingested it gives one dusk vision for 1-4 hours.

Red Glass

Also called the Tears of Ornduhl, these small flowers sprang to life all across the world soon after the Red God's confrontation with Frafnog. 'Tis said by the wise that when the Cloak of Red was torn and scattered into the winds, that where ever the shadows of the shreds first fell that red petaled flowers sprang to life. These small flowers are deep red, on short, green stalks and possess a bell that faces the ground. Within are small yellow stalks of pollen. They bloom all year long if the conditions are right. The smell is gentle and intoxicating, its fragrance calms the nerves and numbs the mind. Anyone who rests within a few feet of a single flower slips into a restful, comfortable sleep, undisturbed by dreams or ailments of the mind. However, if they sleep near a bed they risk falling into a sleep from which they cannot wake (constitution save CL 5) unless magically cured. The petals of the flower are deadly if ingested. Eating only a few of them causes one to go blind (CL 5) and within a few minutes to become witless as the brain numbs (CL 7). For this reason the petals are used as a potent poison. They are plucked, dried and baked. Made brittle, like small flakes of red glass, the petals are turned into a powder, used as a spice or slipped into a drink. In this form it is a Type VI poison.

Rilthwood

Rilthwood trees grow in the Red March, and they provide ideal wood for the construction of bows, especially composite bows, and arrows. The slender Rilthwood trees have stark white bark and shiny, broad green leaves. In the Fall, the leaves turn a brilliant red. Every Rilthwood tree has a unique swirl to its grain. The wood absorbs stain easily, highlighting the natural swirls of the grain. The stains applied typically make Rilthwood bows unique to their owner. Kings often equip their troops with bows stained in the color of their coat of arms. Nobility and adventurers often commission skilled artisans to stain Rilthwood bows with patterns and symbols. Arrows made from Rilthwood also absorb stain, and they seldom snap or splinter unless scoring a deep strike. Men knew Roland's Raiders, an infamous mercenary troop, for their half red, half white Rilthwood arrows.

Composite bows made from Rilthwood are expert items and their range increment is increased by 20 feet. Arrows made of Rilthwood have a hardness of 5, 2 hit points per inch of thickness, and a break CL of 12. They typically cost 20% more than normal bows and arrows.

Staves of Mordius

Through the treachery of her brother, Mordius the Green fell; her blood flowed as a river through the forest of her home. It soaked into the earth and that ground became holy. The plants that grew there flourished like no other. They suffered no blight or blemish; no flaw could corrupt their growth for the power of the earth goddess nourished them. In later days, the druids harvested the fallen wood, the plants, flowers, even the soil of the grove. These they held in great reverence. The wood they harvested from the grove was strong and very magical. They used it to fashion hafts for weapons, staffs, and spears.

Any weapon created from the wood of Mordius trees gains an automatic +1 to hit and any attribute checks. This ability stacks with any other bonus. For example a staff of the woodlands that is fashioned from Mordius Wood gains all its normal abilities as listed in the Monsters & Treasure in addition to the bonus +1. The bonus does not extend

to damage. Furthermore, any clothing fashioned of this wood grants the wielder the abilities to move through a forest without impediment, acting in all respects as if a freedom of movement spell. Such items are 100 times their normal value.

Skrune Juice

A powerful drink the orcs use. It consists of meats ground to a pulp, bled of moisture and mixed with the roots of a scrune bush, boiled and turned into a thick liquid.The scrune bush grows where few other plants can, usually in dry, shallow or sandy areas. its a wiry bush that produces no flowers and small leaves. Scrune juice heals 1d2 hit points per drought, a flask holding three droughts. It also increases one's stamina, doubling what one could normally do.

Sophie's Down

The Sophie Red Bud is a short deciduous tree that grows in moist, warm climes. They grow in deep forests far from the haunts of man; however, their broad root systems tend to choke out other trees and for this reason they are usually found growing alone in the midst of a forest glaive. The tree's leaves are broad, dark and heavy, but underneath they are coated with a light, downy substance. This "down" is prized as an antidote to most venoms and poisons. By scraping the leaf, the down is cultivated and when mixed in a drink or turned into a powder and ingested it acts as a neutralize poisons as if administered by a 5th level ranger.

Suk Tree

The suk tree is a predacious plant found throughout the world of Aihrde. It is a tree that grows 20 feet tall and sports bright, wide white or pink flowers in the spring. Its bark, floweres and sap are valuable

Suk, Bark: The thin, gray, bark of the suk tree, when dried in the sun for 6 hours, provides nourishment. The bark must be fresh and peeling. Once it has sunned, the bark shrinks and lies flat, making a thin wafer like shape. These tasteless wafers serve many as rations. Any given suk tree provides up to 7 days worth of rations when first cultivated. If attempts to cultivate it continue, it provides one day worth of rations every four days. Each day's worth consumed heals the recipient 1-2 points of damage.

Suk, Flowers: The flowers of the suk tree provide a potent sleeping agent. If picked within 24 hours of the petals hitting the ground, and cured properly, they retain the magic of the tree. Later, when boiled in the open air, the flowers put off a scent that lulls those within a 50 radius of the boiling. The scent lingers for one hour. Anyone who smells the scent must make a successful constitution save (CL 4) or fall into a relaxed, comfortable sleep of untroubled dreams. The sleep lasts for a full 12 hours, unless the person awakes by some violent means. Anyone who sleeps thus heals 1d8 points of damage. If forced out of the sleep the victims remain groggy, making all checks and combat rolls at -4. The smell of fresh earth counteracts the scent; those who use the suk flowers regularly often smear a little earth beneath their nose before boiling the leaves.

Suk, Sap: The sap of the suk tree, if drawn properly and in measured doses, provides the knowledgable with curative flakes. Boiling the sap dries it out, leaving a flaky residue. These flakes, placed upon open wounds can cure up to 1d8 points of damage per application. Drawing out the sap is a tricky business, for the sap lies deep in the tree and pulling out too much damages and kills the tree, spoiling any remaining sap instantly. A skilled ranger or herbalist can draw out enough sap for four applications. They can only do this every 7 days or so, but it can be done all at once.

Sweet Grass

Sweet grass grows in small patches in most cold-climate plains. The grass is deep green year round, single-bladed and stands about four inches high. When cooked over an open non-magical fire, the grass puts off a thick smoke and a very sweet smell. When inhaled it heals the bodies of minor aches, pains, sores, exhaustion, thirst, and even hunger. The relief offered by the scent allows one to fully rest, healing 1-3 HP after a night's reset. Sweet grass does not actually replace food and water.

It has extremely long roots and therefore cannot be transplanted. It must be cooked fresh-cut, otherwise it does not work.

Wilson's Elderberries

The wilson bush grows in wild, inhospitable, places far from the haunts of civilization. The bush is a climbing, flowering shrub that drops berries most of the year. The berries are rich in nutrients, affording a grown man a full meal with a single berry. But more than that, eating an elderberry gives anyone greater clarity. Devouring a single berry gives one the abilities of a clairvoyance/clairaudience spell as if cast by a 10th level caster. Furthermore, they gain 2 temporary points of intelligence. The effects last for 1-2 hours. The effects are not cumulative. Eating 4 berries does no more than eating one. The elderberries are toxic however, eating one requires a successful constitution save (CL 10) or the individual is struck senseless for 1 day per berry consumed.

Willows of the Mistbane

The willow trees that grow along the banks of the Mistbane River in the Darkenfold cast powerful sleep spells upon any who come under their branches (CL 5 for a young tree, CL10 for a middle aged tree and CL20 for an ancient older tree). A successful save leaves the character feeling very drowsy and exhausted, desiring sleep. Anyone who succeeds the necessary constitution save can rest normally. Anyone who does sleep under the tree normally heals 2d8 hit points. When they rise, they are well rested, if not a bit hungry. Those who fail, fall into a deep slumber and sleep for weeks, if not months. Once ensnared, the willow casts hallucinatory terrain on the victim; hiding them from any prying eyes (the illusion possesses a CL as above). When the victim awakes, they are well rested and healed, possessing only a great hunger and thirst. The willow does not do this from malice but rather to aid those in need. But being a tree, it thinks like a tree and takes little note of the time that may elapse when they snare someone. A willow will ensnare groups of people, but if a willow already has a victim (2 in 20) then it will not try again and those who find refuge under their eves can rest unmolested. If several members of a party fail their save, but some do not, waking the victims is impossible under the tree and moving them can only be done by overcoming the hallucinatory terrain. Any character that saw the sleeping victim lie down or knew that they were there gains a +10 to the saving throw. Once removed from beneath the tree, waking the victims is easy

Winter Rose

A magical plant found only in the environs of a unicorn's domain, during the winter months only. The winter rose thrived during the Age of Winters Dark. It is now extremely rare, though more common in the Detmold. The winter rose is a rose with white petals and blue stems, covered in a multitude of small thorns resembling ice. The petals of the rose carry strong magic. A drink of wine brewed from the petals bestows one point of constitution in one day. The effects of the winter rose may only be gained once in a lifetime. Such a draught is rarely found on the open market, but if it is, men will pay upwards to 10,000gp.

Appendix F - Economic Tiers

The economy of Airhde is well developed. The thousand year reign of the horned god, Unklar, established an orderly world with both land and sea trade routes that were monitored and managed by the efficient imperial bureaucracy. When Unklar's reign ended much of the efficiency was lost, but nevertheless, the Young Kingdoms adopted some of the commercial sophistication that developed in the Age of the Winter Dark.

Free men do most of the work in Airhde, however, slavery is common in the east and along the southern coasts of all the Lands of Ursal. Airhde is in a pre-industrial stage with craftsman producing the goods. Trade is generally shifting from the southern climes to the more northerly ones. The countries in the north such as the Hanse City States, Avignon, and Aachen, are changing the nature of commerce by producing large quantities of manufactured or luxury items.

Airhde possesses basic market economies based upon barter and monetary exchange. The monetary exchange can be very chaotic as there are multiple countries making coins. In this regard, merchants govern a coin's value by its weight and "cut" them in order to achieve proper weight when traded on the open market. Each country in Airhde is assigned a tier of trade or commercial development indicating the state of its economy and industry, whether it engages in long distance trade, and average taxation. The tiers range from one to five, with each tier being cumulative. Thus, the descriptions of tiers one to four would be applicable to a tier four country. These tiers operate on a state as well as village level. For example, a tier four country may very well have many tier two villages.

TIER ONE: This indicates production of foodstuffs, clothing, and essentials; it is usually limited to local trade.

For the most part, trade within the countries of Aihrde consists of local trade of bare essentials such as foodstuffs, clothing, simple furnishings, and tools. Much of the trade occurs as barter, being confined to a local level. Virtually every country is capable of feeding and clothing itself. Taxes are paid in commodities, not money. Most peasants thus pay their taxes in livestock, bales of hay, or sacks of foodstuffs.

In tier one areas, adventurers will find simple weapons, light armors, leather helms, wood shields, adventuring gear costing 5gp or less, and mounts costing 30gp or less.

TIER TWO: This indicates production of luxury items and raw industrial material; it is usually limited to short to medium distance trade.

Merchants and middlemen become involved in the long distance trade of raw material. The raw materials that make up the bulk of trade include timber, metals (iron, copper, tin), oils, coal, salt, and foodstuffs. It also includes slaves. The trade routes for these items are usually short, with several rare exceptions, due to the high cost of transportation and its necessary substructure of armies for protection, buildings for storage, and general infrastructure. Finished goods are subject to moderate taxation, with traders typically paying in coin or barter.

In tier two areas, adventurers will find simple weapons, light to medium armors, wood helms and shields, adventuring gear costing 10gp or less, and mounts costing 75gp or less. Other goods are rare and generally 10% more expensive than the normal price.

TIER THREE: This indicates production of processed goods and trade goods; it is capable of long distance trade.

This tier generates trade goods, and their trade generates the greatest wealth for the coffers of tier three countries. Trade goods include spices and fine cloths such as silk, wool, cotton, and linen, rare food stuffs (exotic fruits), wines, beers, and finished goods such as weapons, furniture, rope, and fittings for ships. Because these items are relatively easy to transport compared to raw materials the return on investment is potentially high. Hence, these items are traded across the known world and merchants brave dangerous lands to gather them. The high profit margins induce high taxation. The taxing authorities, however, typically accept payment by barter as they are always in need of many of the tier three processed goods.

In tier three areas, adventurers will find martial, exotic (such as 9-ring broadsword) and renaissance weapons costing 100gp or less, medium to heavy armors, steel helms and shields, adventuring gear costing 100gp or less, mounts costing 200gp or less, and special and superior items costing 150gp or less. More refined goods are rare and generally 10% more expensive than the normal price.

TIER FOUR: This indicates production of specialty and rare items.

Tier four encompasses specialty and rare items such as artwork, gold, finely-smithed goods, tapestries, rare animals, books and paper, and large items such as ships, wagons, or elaborate stonework. These valuable items fetch quite a sum, usually being made to order. Vast sums of wealth may be exchanged for these items, and of course, begat high taxation. Taxes on these items are almost exclusively paid in coin.

In tier four areas, adventurers will find all weapons, armors, gear, mounts, special items, and siege weapons.

TIER FIVE: This indicates production of magic items & services.

The final tier includes those countries where the traffic of magic items and specialty services occurs. Specialty services include divinations, healing, resurrections, and other spells, or the practice of sages. Although the sale of magic items or specialty services might occur on an infrequent basis in tier two to tier four countries, only in tier five countries is an active marketplace dedicated such trade be found. Magic item sales attract high taxation. Specialty services are taxed moderately, but religious specialty services, such as healing, are not taxed at all.

A NOTE ON MAGIC ITEMS

Airhde is a magic rich world. Its very essence is bound together by the words of the All Father and the Language of Creation, the Alenerde-ut-Pilt. Magic lies in the grasses that grow beneath the shadow of the moon and the breath of stone giants, in trees and the crafting of forges in holes far beneath the ground. Despite this magic is common. One does not simply pick it up or buy it at the market. It is bound to the Alenerde-ut-Pilt and that language is impossibly complex and unintelligible to all but the most powerful of minds.

Creating making magic items is a difficult and expensive endeavor. It requires the craftsman, whether they are magi or smiths, to put their heart and soul into the work and for this reason they do not make items lightly or cheaply. However, in all the thousands of years that the world has played host to its people and gods, many items of many descriptions have been created. Most are lost to time, buried in deep crypts and dungeons, but those that have surfaced, like those manufactured in the modern era, are guarded and kept close. For these reasons magic should be rare and hard earned, but the rumor of it always there, lurking in the shadows and the whispered prophecy of seers and storytellers.

Glossary

Aalun-Hart-Ra: The City that lies at the Center. The City of the Gods. Where the Val Austerlich gathered before Unklar's Coming.

Alenerde-ut-Pilt: The Language of Creation.

Arc of Time: *Also called The River of Erde*. The river of the All Father's thought through which all things must pass. It is the source and the end of all creation. It begins with the All Father and ends in the Endless Pools. When the last of the river of time has flowed into the Endless Pools then the Gonfod, the End of Days, begins. *See the Rimfelt*.

Avurgen: See Wil-Eloth.

Black Axe: The axe that Dognur VII used to slay Ondluche's guard. It became possessed with the dwarf's own hate and rage. It drank the souls of those it slew.

Bult: Those giants ensnared by Inzaa and take to the inner world. Later they dug their way back into the roots of Eahrtaut in an attempt to return to Aihrde.

Clegerarch: The battle that destroyed the dwarven Kingdom of Grulding-Hohle.

Eahrtaut: See Great Tree.

Ea-Iul: The First Wind, contained in the Vesk, the vessel of the All Father's second thought. Corthain's Fortress of Wind stands upon the Ea-Iul.

Erahmindear: The spear of Corthain. Its haft he took from a fallen oak fed by the blood of Mordius and coated it in the silvery bark of a meuren tree. He set two spurs on its end, with points fashioned of Iergild metal, but its head he made of his will, and nothing in the world proved more unyielding in all the ages of the world. The spear he named Erahmindear, that is, the Righteous. Corthain broke the end off in Ornduhl's heart, pinning him to his throne in the Homeless House. It is said that when the spear is removed from the Red God that the Red God would rise again.

Eternal Pools: These are the pools at the End of Time where the All Father's thought gather. They are watched over by Toth and house the dead who have no place in the Wretched Plains or Stone Fields.

Fael Mur: The plants created by Ea-Raena. They grew under the light of the moon before the sun came to Aihrde. They are rare, for they mostly died out when the sun first shone on the world. During the long age of Winter Dark many of the Fael Mur returned, for the light of the sun was dimmed and these plants saved the world from death.

Fortress of Wind (Iul): Corthain's fortress at the beginning of time. Here he watches the world of Aihrde and marshals his powers for the Gonfod.

Furthnopt: *Also called Huadun's Maw*. The Five Gates of Huadun at the end of the Rimfelt. They guard the way to the Homeless House and the Wretched Plains.

Gegelmesh: These are the five pools upon which the Shadow Realms (Wretched Plains) reside. They consist of the diverted time of the Rimfelt. *See also Rimfelt*.

Gonfod: The final Rin, filled with war and chaos, wherein none shall sleep a restful night. The end of days, said to begin when man masters the Arc of Time. The All Father's last thought shall cross to the Endless Pools, there to be gathered by Toth. During the Gonfod the Red God shall attempt to stop the thought of the All Father from passing into the pools, Corthain shall attempt to stop him by freeing the Vesk, and the Fortress of Iul from its anchorage and sailing the River Erde, the Arc of Time, to confront the Red God, but the Red God shall muster all the legions of the Wretched Planes and empty the halls of the Homeless House to fight, and Ealor shall open the Three Gates and lead the Fleet of the Dead to battle Ornduhl. To counter him, Ornduhl will unleash Huadun, and the five-headed dragon must wrestle the Lord of Seas. In this contest one side must win. That Corthain shall win out and all suffer the desires of the All Father, or that the Red God shall prevail and the rule of the world pass to his evil hand none may say

Great Tree: The Great Tree, or what the dwaven All Fathers call the Vestotomrud, the Cup of Wisdom, or men the Eahrtaut, is the first of the trees. Conceived and fashioned by the All Father, but given life and wisdom by Mordius. The tree's branches grace the heavens, its roots transfix the planes, leading to the Rings of Brass. It is called the Mother and Father of all trees and was the repository of the greater part of the power of Mordius and in which she lives still.

Harkling Hall: The Hall of Mordius. Translated to mean "plentiful."

Homeless House: *Also called the House of Shadows, or the Red Fort*. The fortress built by Ornduhl the Red God at the end of the Arc of Time. It abuts the Endless Pools and stands beyond the Furthnopt. It is a vast fortress of walls, keeps, buildings, armories and so forth. The Homeless House is a place where evil men seek power or council; they make sacrifice in its name, construct temples to mimic its shape, and call on the Red God for a place of power in the afterlife. The Homeless House sits upon the Gegelmesh. *See Gegelmesh*.

Mammoth Scrolls: The histories of the dwarves written down by the All Father's of Gorthurag. They contain all the tales of the beginning; the Days before Days as the dwarves understood them and they are the foundation of all knowledge of the gods upon Aihrde. They contain many references to the runes; however, they do not contain a complete list or catalog. The scrolls are believed to reside in libraries in the ruins of Gorthurag.

Mueren Tree: A line of trees that sprang up from the Grove of the Harkling Hall after Mordius was slain. Given life through the blood of Mordius, the Mueren Trees spread to the south and though very rare, are held as holy trees to the men of the Engale, Ethrum, and the Aenochians.

Nehabak: The name Orenduhl assumed as he lived amongst the Aenochians.

Oranot: The land where the Ethrum settled and is considered the heart of their kingdom and peoples. It is where the living city of Du Guesillon stands now.

Red Fort: See Homeless House.

Rimfelt: That path created by Ornduhl the Red God, that leads to the Furthnopt and the Gegelmesh. It is a small tributary of the River of Erde, the Arc of Time.

Rin: Literally translates to road mark. A rin is an age of the world, when a certain moment, a road mark, is passed upon the Arc of Time.

There are seven Rins counted :

1 **The Days before Days:** The creation of the Val Eahrakun and the world of Aihrde.

2 **Of the Beginning of Days:** The creation of the dwarves, men and giants until the first Kingdom.

3 **The Songs of the Dwarves:** The Founding of Gorthurag to the coming of the goblins.

4 **The Lamentations:** The coming of the Goblins and the Goblin Dwarf Wars. .

5 **The Age of Men:** The Rise of Aenoch and Ethrum to the coming of the Horned God.

6 **Winter's Dark:** The rule of the Horned God until the Winter Dark Wars. The Long Days of the World

7 **The Present Age:** From the crowning of the Empress to the present.

Rirm ot Sul: The Track followed by the sun and moon through the Wall of Worlds that brings them to other side of the world. The path Anderoth found on his journey around the world.

River of Erde: See Arc of Time.

Stodti-ne Plum: Unklar's personal hearth-forge. He set the fire alight with his own breath and nothing can extinguish it, until the Gonfod.

Huadun: Huadun has no end, only a beginning. Her heads are called Taimat's Maw, the Five Caves or the Furthnopt, and they are the gateway to the Wretched Plains through which all the damned must pass. She has grown immense in power and size, so much so that many creatures beyond the damned have settled within the Shadow Realms, relying on her hunger to feed the plane. Beyond her maw the Tvungenos the "demons" and the Tvungen the "devils", and some gods such as Agorl have come to dwell.

Huadun's Maw: See Furthnopt.

Vesk: This is the Vessel of the All Father's Second thought and contains the First Wind, the Ea-Iul and is the beginning of the Arc of Time. The Vesk was ordered by Corthain and resembles a flat, limitless plain of amber grass where the wind is always blowing. Its symbol is a boat, and in it Corthain shall sail the River of Time to the last war.

Vestotomrud: See Great Tree.

Wil-Eloth: The first trees. These were sentient creatures who learned the Language of Creation from the All Father. Also called Sentients, and the Avurgen by the dwarves.

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