

EPIC HIGH FANTASY

Shardar

GUIDEBOOK



WILDLANDS

GUIDEBOOK : WILDLANDS

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THE WILDLANDS

"Make sure you check on the slaves," said the burly man with an accent that marked him as a denizen of the Malakar Dominion. "We can get a good price for those three." He chopped the last bits of carrot into a bubbling stew pot.

A thin, gangly fellow trailed past the three small cages and looked at the captured dwarves inside. "They're locked up tighter than an Olan's Promise." He chuckled. "We'll get no trouble from these three."

His smile died on his lips as the shaft of an arrow buried itself deeply into his skin, piercing the thin leather he wore in a moment. More arrows followed and the camp was soon abuzz with the whisper of the deadly projectiles. Only the big man remained as an arrow clanged off his pot, tipping the contents out and dousing the fire under it.

He swore an oath and pulled his sword from his scabbard.

He didn't notice the shadow behind him until it was too late; as he felt the impact of something heavy against his head and tumbled into the remains of the fire before a boot pushed him off in a cloud of smoke. The other three defenders of the camp lay with arrows in their bodies.

It was a quick attack, an effective attack.

Krysta Wyld waved a hand and adjusted her cloth mask, "Get the cages open, check on the dwarves, and leave the bodies. We've another caravan to raid tonight, and then we head back to Kythros." Her clothing marked her as one of Grayson's Grey Rangers, loose fitting and in shades of brown, green, and gray.

This was the third caravan this month, something big was happening, and Krysta was damned if she was going to let it happen, not in the Wildlands, and not on her watch.

WELCOME TO THE WILDLANDS

We're doing something a bit different for this one, since it's such a diverse place, it'd be hard to do the typical guide-book style you're used to seeing from Shaya'Nor, Galea, and so on. Think of this book as a huge GM toolbox, brimming with ideas, new monsters, random encounters, and information on some of the key places found in Shaintar's Living Campaign - Justice and Life.

You'll also get a decent look at the Grayson's Grey Ranger's city, Kythros, and find some adventure shards there for you to work into your own campaigns.

So grab a sword, a bow, a pen, pencil, or something equally useful and follow us into the unknown, untamed, and wild!

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE WILDLANDS

The Wildlands is the collective name for the group of duchies, small kingdoms, city-states, freeholds, gathers, and mostly unpopulated areas that fall under the collective protection of Grayson's Grey Rangers. It's bordered by the Freelands in the south, Galea to the east, the Elvish Nation to the west, and Olara to the North. It enjoys relative freedom from any kind of fully established rule of law, barring that of the Rangers. It's the perfect place for travelers to come and start a new life away from their old.

Where else can you find goblinish gathers actively supporting human settlements, with elven scouts reporting dangerous enemy activity to an ogre leader? Where can you find comrades in arms from such diverse races, backgrounds, and elements? - the answer: the Wildlands.

Men and women enjoy equal status across the diverse places of the Wildlands, and racism is just idiots' means to deny themselves a trade opportunity, or forge a new alliance. Such attitudes do exist in places - but the offenders usually find themselves quickly dissuaded. Even trade caravans of the Malakar Dominion are tolerated, though watched carefully by the Rangers - with any villainy being countered, and punished severely.

Every small area of the Wildlands has its own rules, regulations, customs, and ways - it would take a huge tome to detail them all, so we're not going to do that; we're going to concentrate on letting you see the wood for the trees and detail those areas we think something might be important, such as a peculiar custom, rather than provide a laundry-list of laws and so forth per place.

Slavery is not tolerated here, and the Rangers punish slavers extremely harshly, usually putting them to work in criminal labor camps, if they survive the release of any slaves they've captured.



QUICK INFORMATION

Capital: None - though Kythros, home to the Rangers, is often used as a central meeting place for regional leaders

Population: Over 420,000, with all races represented in good number

Dominant religion: The Paths of Life are greatly revered here, though churches and shrines to Archanon (the Light) can be found in towns & cities throughout the Wildlands

Government: Almost every form is represented somewhere in the Wildlands.

Even though there are a number of totalitarian domains to be found, the greater part of the Wildlands is given to a level of freedom and egalitarianism not found anywhere else.

The Wildlands are extremely diverse; agriculture and forestry are the primary sources of economic strength, but there's also plenty of mining, manufacture, and other pursuits.

Though humans are the most plentiful race, You'll find a greater racial diversity in the Wildlands than anywhere else in Shaintar.

This is the frontier in more ways than one, where both heroes and dangerous folk can find what they seek in abundance.

COMMON POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY

Elder: Usually the leader of a village or similarly sized location, usually an older man or woman who is considered to be wise amongst the people.

Mayor: The more established towns and settlements will often have someone chosen, voted in, as their official leader. The selection of this candidate can be made by elders, or those with more influence. In cases where the town is larger, or under the rule of a greater entity, that entity makes the choice for the people. Some towns are ruled by a council led by the strongest, who may claim the title of Mayor.

Baron: Larger towns and small cities in the Wildlands might have significant farmland and connected communities, supposedly qualifying them most often for baronial status. In this case, as is very often found in the Wildlands, the leader of the region claims the title Baron. Sometimes a more powerful entity with greater resources comes along and there is either a fight or the Baron is co-opted into the greater power.

Duke: Those with considerable power and resources, enough land, or enough ambition can take the title of Duke or Duchess. This is pretty much the highest title a noble can attain in the Wildlands; it draws a lot of attention, and not always in a good way. The other Dukes and Duchesses of the Wildlands

often move against those who would claim a higher title, it tends to end in plans being drawn for armed conflict. Especially should that person vie for the title of King or Queen, to the rulers of the Wildlands anyone who'd take that title is likely looking to expand their holdings and power.

King: Those who do claim the title King or Queen do so carefully and usually as part of bloodline or tradition. Those without these ties are setting themselves up for conflict with any number of people. In the Kingdom of Erimar there's always been a King or Queen and these monarchs and kingdom have, for the most part, remained strong regardless of centuries of conflict. The current King is but a boy, whose elder sister rules as his Regent.

PUTTING THE WILD INTO THE WILDLANDS

The Wildlands is a great place for GM's wanting to play in Shaintar, it presents a huge area of wild untamed frontier-like landscape, coupled with a diverse and eclectic mix of political, socio-economic, religious, and mundane areas. As previously mentioned, each of these little slices of the Wildlands have their own laws and customs.

Life here is unpredictable and perhaps somewhat unfair; those who work hard to build a community can have it taken away from them in a heartbeat by a monster attack, or worse, by mercenaries of the Maelstrom left over from the War of Flame. The

main force was repelled and scattered, but those who escaped fled into the Wildlands and are causing destruction, havoc, and chaos wherever they go.

Player Characters, regardless of their affiliation with the Rangers (or not) will be targets for Maelstrom forces, as they're notorious for attacking anyone who doesn't fly their colors and given that they tend to follow Ceynara, you get the picture - fight first and likely to the death.

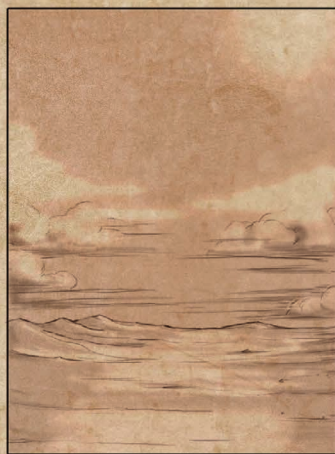
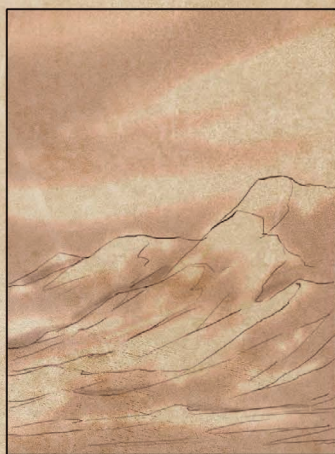
If this isn't bad enough, you have monsters, some of whom lurk in the deepest and darkest regions of the Wildlands, regions even the Rangers are wary of. Unwary travelers can soon find themselves on the wrong end of some terrible creature's teeth or claws as a snack or lunch.

The woods, forests, mountains, hills, and dales of the Wildlands all provide an excellent backdrop for some incredible adventures. There are secrets a-plenty hidden away, old ruins which might lead to an overland treasure hunt where the heroes become embroiled in something monumental. There's a lot of history here and the key to making the Wildlands come alive is to keep in mind the savage nature of the place.

If a village builds a wall, expect something to try and tear it down.

If a child is lost in the woods, expect to face something more deadly than a half-starved wild dog.

A group of slavers or band of agents from Shaya'Nor could be found deep in the shadows. Anything is possible.



WILD ENCOUNTERS

So, we know how much you love tables of random stuff as a GM. So grab some dice, start rolling, and see what happens! Roll a d100% - these are just a smattering of the kinds of things the Wildlands is willing to throw at the heroes. As always, if something doesn't make sense or fit your story, amend, ignore, or just re-roll!

01-10: A group of Grayson's Grey Rangers are found out in the wild, this group is of typical size for the Rangers (around 4-6 members) and is out there for a reason, roll a d6 to discover what it might be.

- 1 - Patrolling the surrounding area.
- 2 - Hunting a known criminal who escaped justice.
- 3 - Under attack from Ceynara's forces.
- 4 - Escorting a VIP.
- 5 - Battling a vicious monster.
- 6 - Hunting food for a local settlement.

11-20: The husk of a ruined/burned village, or a minor settlement, rife with clues to how the people met their demise. Roll a d8 to discover why.

1 - A sign of a raider attack, bandits torched the place, carried away people, and heavy cart tracks indicate there were several wagons laden down with goods or slave cages.

2 - Maelstrom forces attacked the settlement, the bodies of the people still lie where they were butchered - no enemy corpses are present - they either lost no one or they carried off their wounded/dead.

3 - A monster did this, one that left huge tracks or was capable of wreaking mass destruction. The trail is easy to follow, the mutilated corpses of people lie strewn about like fallen leaves.

4 - The shell of the settlement is all that remains, yet curiously there are no bodies. It's as if the village just vanished into thin air. Why? We'll leave that up to you to work out.

5 - The people left the settlement in a hurry, there are a few bodies still where they fell, a mysterious disease killed them - what disease is it, what caused it and where did the people go?

6 - The heroes find a settlement all in silence they can explore, after a few minutes of exploration several of the people lurch out of the doorways, they're no longer human, or alive - the terrible power of necromancy has been used here.

7 - Everything seems normal, the villagers seem pleasant and friendly - yet there's something off, the blacksmith and guards seem on edge - the truth, the heroes have discovered a raider settlement and the raiders are planning how best to ambush them when the heroes' guard is down.

8 - The dead lie all around this settlement; it's obvious after some investigation that the perpetrator who killed them was a skilled warrior. Who this warrior is, and why they did what they did, that's the biggest mystery - perhaps it was a mercenary who was double-crossed by the settlers, or perhaps something more sinister is at work.

21-30: Wild animal encounters. The heroes encounter some kind of animal, roll 1d6.

- 1 - A solitary animal, such as a wolf or a bear.
- 2 - A pack attack, wolves, bears, big hunting cats.
- 3 - The corpses of wild animals, killed by a bigger beast.
- 4 - A Soulbright creature: dog, wolf, deer, and so on. (Page 74-75 Shaintar: Legends Arise)
- 5 - Prey animals, hare, rabbit, squirrel, smaller creatures.
- 6 - Injured animal (any kind)

31-40: Enemy Agent Patrol. A bunch of bad guys are operating in the area, take a d4 and find out to which faction they belong, then roll a d6 to work out why they're in the Wildlands.

The Who!

1. Agents of Shaya'Nor.
2. A small group of Maelstrom Mercenaries.
3. Malakar Dominion Spies.
4. A squad of Kal-A-Nar Empire Soldiers

The Why!

- 1 - Fact finding expedition.
- 2 - Looking for a missing member of their group.
- 3 - Intent on killing a particular target.
- 4 - Hunting the heroes.
- 5 - Split from their unit, trying to get back.
- 6 - Searching for a particular treasure.

41:50: A small group encounter: The heroes happen upon a group of travelling NPCs of a different race. Roll d10 to determine which race, and a d6 to determine the reason they're wandering the Wildlands.

What race?

- 1 - Aevakar.
- 2 - Alakar.
- 3 - Brinchie.
- 4 - Goblin.
- 5 - Korindian.
- 6 - Ogre.
- 7 - Orc.
- 8 - Dregordian.
- 9 - Dwarf.
- 10 - Eldakar.

Why?

- 1 - Looking for a particular person, someone who's been enslaved by a local bandit group.
- 2 - Seeking out the Rangers for their help.
- 3 - Wounded from a recent battle and resting up.
- 4 - Searching for a lost ruin, rumored to be somewhere in the Wildlands.
- 5 - Fighting off bad guys.
- 6 - Hunting to replenish their supplies.

51:60: A caravan or wagon somewhere in the wilderness, what's going on? Roll d6.

- 1 - All clues point to a bandit attack, something important was stolen, and a single box reveals a connection to Olara.
- 2 - The claw marks in the wood and across the paintwork of this supply wagon reveal it wasn't a wild animal attack. Could Ceynara's forces be involved somehow and why was the wagon attacked? What did it carry?
- 3 - There are no signs of a struggle, something seems off about the caravan, and several tracks lead to a small secluded spot in the woods. A small camp is found with a kidnapped Galean scout and two enemies who turn out to be members of the Red Store - what's going on really?
- 4 - An apparent robbery: turns out that the two passengers are Malakaran agents and the 'highwayman' is a member of the Black Lanterns.
- 5 - A slave caravan, broken now, with clear signs it was attacked. The sound of fighting can be heard off in the distance.
- 6 - A caravan races by under attack, agents of Shaya'Nor are trying to bring it to a halt. It carries a Galean spy who has information they'd rather never see the light of day.

61:70: Something wicked this way comes; the heroes encounter a monster in the wilderness. Roll a d8 to determine what kind it is.

1 - A pack of Ratzin is wandering the forests. They can be encountered in small groups of 2-4 or larger packs of 6-8 as well as 10-15. There's a 10% chance a Minotaur is there for backup, if you want to add an extra layer of challenge.

2 - Thratchen, these nasty beasts are more common these days due to the War of Flame. They're in the Wildlands and they're spoiling for a fight. 1-4 is a good number; anything more would be pushing the heroes' luck.

3 - Childer group, a couple of acolytes, and a demon should be more than enough for the heroes and if it isn't, well, summoning always evens the odds.

4 - Ghoul: Bog-standard flesh-eating undead. 10% chance that at least one is a Flesh Render, a nasty variant which can create more ghouls.

5 - Hobgoblin: Found alone, or travelling in a small group, these Corrupted orcs are out and about for no good reason in the Wildlands and the heroes are about to discover why.

6 - Troglodytes: These Corrupted goblins are nasty beasts; they're operating in the Wildlands to recover something which was stolen. The heroes are unlucky to cross paths with them on a good day.

7 - Troll: these bad tempered, Corrupted ogres are very hard to kill. We recommend throwing just one or two into this encounter - the troll is disturbed whilst eating, not good for the heroes.

8 - A group of skeletons with a necromancer is out and about. The heroes witness the necromancer raising the dead from a recent battle.

71:80: A group of Prelacy Paladins is travelling through the Wildlands, they're looking for ways to enforce 'Archanon's Will' - they won't take kindly to encountering 'non-believers' on their patrols.

81:90: A Wraith has been sent to hunt down someone specific, perhaps a former member of the forces of Darkness turned traitor. Or one of the heroes if you think they can handle it.

91:00: A beneficial encounter with a spirit, perhaps a faerie, or a wind spirit, even a clay golem can provide a little bit of respite for the heroes if they've had a rough time of it, and the Wildlands being what they are, this is a rare occurrence and quite wondrous.



Ren's Berry



Silverflower

Swordmoss



Stardust Plant

NATURE'S WHIMSY

"Ye gods man, don't eat that - it's poisonous. Now I can see a city dweller like you not knowing the difference between an orc and a goblin, but out here even the berries can kill ye stone dead." ~ Martha Grennis, Herbalist.

A RANGER'S GUIDE

When you're out and about in the Wildlands, it's not just the monsters that'll finish you off if you're not careful, there's a plethora of herbs, berries, roots, twigs, branches, leaves, and stems which have various effects from the mildly hallucinogenic to the extremely deadly. Those who travel the Wildlands are advised to learn some of these, what effects they can have and where to find sources of nutrition if hunting is scarce.

REN'S BERRY OR RIVER BERRY

This dark colored berry bush can often be found on the banks of rivers, close to streams or around the edges of brooks. It has deep green leaves, which taper to a point and the thin branches have a gray bark. The berry itself is bitter, has an unpleasant aftertaste and creates a laxative effect if more than a handful of them are eaten.

The bark can be dried and ground into a powder used to help bind wounds.

The leaves make a bitter tea if boiled correctly. Chewing the branches is not recommended, it has a similar effect to the berries only quicker.

When regularly applied to proper wound bindings by someone trained in Healing, River (Ren's) Berry powder provides a +1 to Vigor checks for Natural Healing rolls. Preparation of the bark is easy requiring a successful Alchemy, Healing, or Survival roll and requiring a few minutes time. However, those unwise or unwitting enough to eat the berries or chew the bark must roll a Vigor [-2] or suffer a level of fatigue and lose 1 pace for 1d4 hours. The condition can also be quite embarrassing.

SILVERFLOWER

This silver colored thick-stemmed bush is often found quite deep in forested areas, the flowers have five petals which are colored deep silver. Its bark is light brown and has a rough texture. The berries, often consumed by animals can also be eaten by humanoids. They're noted for their curative properties, pleasant taste and sweet aroma when boiled.

The bark is often used to make many curative salves, potions, and tinctures.

The leaves make a strong herbal tea which is excellent at staving off the effects of the cold.

Silverflower berries and leaf herbal tea, when correctly prepared with a successful Healing or Alchemy check, counts as "proper medicine" when treating most common diseases (GM approval). This process can take up to an hour. Extracts from the bark add a +1 to Alchemy for crafting Restorative Alchemical potions or to Healing checks to recover wounds (does not stack with Ranger's Kit or Specialist's Kits).

BLOODFLOWER OR ASSASSIN'S FRIEND

This flower is so named due to the deep red hue of the petals, the berries and the dark red hue of the stem. It's rumored that it tends to appear near places where blood's been spilled, so battles, skirmishes, and other such locations have a preponderance of this flower growing near or on them, depending on the conflict's age. The leaves are arrow shaped; usually dark red, the flower is often described as akin to a pool of blood.

The berries are extremely toxic; a scant handful of them can make a poison which can kill a normal sized humanoid in a couple of hours. Boiling them does not change the lethality; it simply increases the time it takes for the poison to take hold.

The leaves can be ground into a paste which can be used to incur paralysis.

The flowers can cause mild sickness and stomach cramps if boiled, or ground.

The bark can be ground into a powder which will cause blindness. It can also be made into a tea which has a similar effect, only over a longer term.

Raw Bloodflower berries are normally treated as a -4 Lethal Poison with Failure resulting in Death in 2d6 hours. When boiled, however, Failure results in Death in 2d6 minutes. The leaf paste creates a Paralysis Poison while poison created made from the flowers requires a Vigor check at -2. Success results in 1 Fatigue level, failure results in 2 levels. This condition lasts for 1d6 hours. Ground Bloodflower bark is a primary ingredient in Alchemy Blind Formulae

SILVERWOOD TREE

This tall oak-like tree has silver bark, long branches and produces an extremely edible nut which lasts till around the end of autumn. The tree also produces a strong sap which can be used in a variety of healing concoctions, poultices, and salves. The leaves of the tree, grayish in color and with three points, are often used by the Druids in many of their rituals. It often

grows where it can get a great deal of sun, so you'll find it in clearings where there's a lot of light, or at the edges of a forest.

The bark makes an excellent, refreshing, and mind-expanding tea.

The branches can be cut to make stout walking or fighting staves.

An old saying speaks that the Silverwood may well have been touched by the Unicorn herself. This may, or may not have given the trees some supernatural power against the forces of Flame and Darkness.

Proper Silverwood tea requires a successful Alchemy or Healing check to brew and provides a +1 on all Investigation, Knowledge, and Notice rolls for 1d4 minutes. Like many such concoctions, repeated or constant use dulls the effects (per GM). Weapons cut from Silverwood branches add +1 damage against Flame or Darkness in the hands of anyone Chosen of the Horn. Additionally, all rolls to magically enhance Silverwood by a Chosen of the Horn receive a +1 to the rolls. These bonuses do not stack with other inherently magical substances such as Everwood or White Silver.

SWORDMOSS

This clingy dark brown moss has thin sharp-looking sword-like leaves; all clumped together which gives it its name. There's another reason it's called swordmoss - it makes an excellent binding or packing material for wounds on its own or combined with other healing agents, herbs, tree sap from Silverwood, and more.

It's possible to carefully boil it, extract the resulting liquid and use that as part of a purgative which will force vomiting, excellent at ridding a body of ingested poison, but not much fun for the affected.

Swordmoss is most commonly found near the edges of still water, preferring lakes rather than rivers.

Like Silverflower and River Berry, dried Swordmoss is standard in most Healing Kits. When prepared with a successful Alchemy or Healing check, boiled Swordmoss reduces Healing penalties on ingested modifiers by 1. On a raise, the modifier is reduced by 2. Unfortunately, the patient must immediately roll a Vigor check or suffer 1 Fatigue level with weak potion (Success) or 2 Fatigue levels with a strong potion (Raise). This is in addition to any effects of the poison. Unfortunately, boiling and extraction can up to 20 minutes. Fortunately, Swordmoss extract is easy to find at most apothecaries.

STARDUST PLANT

This small plant is most often found sources of rushing water, waterfalls, fast flowing rivers and the like. It has spindly leaves with tiny motes of silver discoloration. The motes of silver give the plant its name, stardust. The stem of the plant is a deep green or brown in color.

The leaves can be chewed, often by Shamans and Druids to expand their minds. The effect is not unlike having your eyelids pinned back, and staring at a rapidly changing colorful orb. Those who take the leaf unprepared have often been unable to blink for an hour after the effects wear off.

The stem is often used to create dyes and powders which can change the color of fabrics. It can also be turned into a paste which smears in slightly different colors, easing headaches and other similar pains on the affected area. It can also stain the face; this hasn't stopped children from smearing it around their faces like warpaint.

Stardust Leaves when chewed add +1 to all Knowledge: Cosmology and Knowledge: Magic for 1d4 hours. However, until the effects wear off, the individual is considered Paralyzed and unable to act or speak coherently. Any revelations must wait until the episode passes. Alternatively, a curative paste from the stem can be used to heal a fatigue level when suffered from Bumps and Bruises. Usually found in Healer's Kits, Stardust paste is readily made with a successful Healing, Alchemy, or Survival check and can be done in a few minutes with minimal tools.

So there you have it, these are just a smattering of interesting flora you can find in the Wildlands, there's a lot more and there's probably a whole bunch of herbs, berries, flowers, trees and the like which can be pulled from their Earth counterparts to add more interest to the game world, such as Rowan, Wild Roses, Elderberries, Blackberries, Dandelions, Thistles, Foxglove, and more.

DANGER IN THE WILD

"If you're planning on taking that path, be warned, stay on it and be wary at all times. There's things in the forest which defy explanation, any explanation, and if you're unsure - run." ~ Janleif Skein of Shan's Ranger Hold.

The Wildlands are a dangerous place, full of monsters and terrible beasts. This is just a small cross-section of some of the more uncommon fiendish creatures to appear in the depths of the Wildlands in

the last few years, many of them are new types of undead, some serve the power of Flame or Darkness directly - all of them should give travelers in the Wildlands pause for thought.

SHADESPIDER

Vainar's Darkness has not been seen since the end of the Betrayal War, but whispers of the Shadow Lord's return are foretold, and of late there are beasts prowling the deepest regions of the Wildlands which seem no more than just a shadow, to those who live to tell the tale.

A Shadespider is a powerful entity, a creature which resembles a large spider (several feet in size), but is formed wholly of shadow. It hunts in the depths of the Wildlands, picking deep forests where there's only some light, enough to cast a shadow. It cannot manifest in pitch black. Of course if someone lights a torch, well, they provide gloriously useful flickering shadows for such a being.

The Shadespider makes physical attacks and is notoriously hard to strike, since it only appears as a shadow striking out at the other shadows around it.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Assassin, Dodge

Special Abilities:

- **Anathema to Life:** Corrupted cannot benefit from any magical healing, except that coming from Necromancy. Normal healing that relies on the use of plants, herbs and similar techniques won't work for them, either.
- **Bite:** Str+d6; Venomous Poison [Vigor check [-2] every round for three rounds.]
- **Dark Protection:** Corrupted are immune to all diseases and poisons.
- **Dark Resilience:** Corrupted gain +1 Toughness.
- **Dark Sustenance:** Corrupted gain Slow Regeneration.
- **Dark Vitality:** Corrupted gain a +1 to recover from being Shaken.
- **Ethereal:** Permanent; can only be affected by magic, can affect real world with physical attacks.
- **Fear**

- **Low Light Vision:** Ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Wall Walker**
- **Weakness:** Corrupted suffer +2 damage from White Silver and Everwood.

CORRUPTED TREE

The powers of Darkness capable of harming more than just the inhabitants of Shaintar. They can also harm the land, and there's no greater sign of such corruption as when a living tree is tainted by the powers of Darkness. A Corrupted Tree can come in any shape or size, from a small nimble nightmare, to a large ponderous beast capable of smashing down a castle wall.

The signs of the dark power's corruption are etched into the tree wreathed in tendrils of inky smoke which dance and writhe like a snake coiling about it.

One tree alone is nightmarish enough, but more than one has been seen of late. No one truly knows how these trees come about, but the answer may soon be revealed.

Corrupted Tree

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 5 (Cannot "Run"); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10

Edges: Brawny

Powers: (use Spirit to "cast," No Power Points rules from Savage Worlds Deluxe): *entangle*

Special Abilities:

- **Anathema to Life:** Corrupted cannot benefit from any magical healing, except that coming from Necromancy. Normal healing that relies on the use of plants, herbs and similar techniques won't work for them, either.
- **Branch Clubs:** Str+d6, and they are not considered unarmed.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken, no additional damage from called shots, does not suffer from disease or poison.
- **Dark Protection:** Corrupted are immune to all diseases and poisons.
- **Dark Resilience:** Corrupted gain +1 Toughness.

- **Dark Sustenance:** Corrupted gain Slow Regeneration.
- **Dark Vitality:** Corrupted gain a +1 to recover from being Shaken.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation
- **Lumbering:** Trees do not move quickly; Pace 5 and Cannot "Run".
- **Size:** Varies by tree (Dogwood 0, Fir 2, Pine 4, Oak 6, Redwood 8); Large Trees (4-7) are +2 to hit, Huge Trees (8+) are +4 to hit.
- **Weakness:** Corrupted suffer +2 damage from White Silver and Everwood.
- **Wooden Skin:** +2 Toughness

CORRUPTED SPIRIT

A Corrupted Spirit is a terrible and dangerous thing. They have one purpose, to spread their corruption across the land and create monsters such as the Corrupted Tree. They appear as twisted versions of their former form, replete with signs of their corruption. It spreads from them like a disease, seeking to snuff out the Light and Life.

Sometimes they can take on the shape of a humanoid or animal, but this form is always shifting, laden with shadow.

It's their touch against the primal life force of Nature, that of Life, which is to be feared - for they can use their power to infuse even an inanimate tree with corruption, to turn it into a servant of Darkness.

Corrupted Spirit

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Powers: (use Spirit to "cast," No Power Points rules from Savage Worlds Deluxe): *despoil*

Special Abilities:

- **"Dark Possession":** Within area under effect of Despoil, Corrupted Souls may merge with local Flora creating Corrupted parodies of Life. Treat as Animation (Wood Object) Power without size restriction (GM approval) with Corrupted Template (see Corrupted Tree). Once merged, the Animated Flora retains the Corrupted Soul's Smarts, Skills, and Fear but loses all other Powers and Abilities. All other Traits and Abilities are

determined by animated vessel. Possession is Permanent; if the vessel is destroyed so is the Corrupted Soul.

- **Ethereal:** Permanent; can only be affected by magic, can affect real world with Powers.
- **Fear**
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation
- **Fly:** Climb 0
- **Invulnerable:** Can only be harmed by magic and Weakness; all other attacks cause Shaken only
- **Low Light Vision:** Ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness, +2 to recover from being Shaken, immune to poison and disease, no additional damage from called shots
- **Weakness:** +4 damage from White Silver and Everwood

PUNISHED SOUL (UNDEAD)

Summon Rank: Seasoned. These are the undead servants of a cruel force, bound by their actions in life to continue on in servitude to a relentless evil. Appearing only where it's darkest, where there's little or no hope, the Punished Soul seeks to crush its enemies with the weight of the chains it forged in life, the ones it made link by link. It's not always the good that perish, evil dies as well, usually at the hands of heroes.

Some of those who are so despicable, so utterly devoid of moral compass and basic humanity are drawn back to torment Shaintar further.

A Punished Soul often appears akin to a wraith or similar incorporeal undead, it's only when the chains are brought to bear that the differences are revealed. A Punished Soul's chains are strong enough to shatter bone, break through objects and obstacles and sunder stone. It's said that a horrible clanking precedes the appearance of one of these monsters.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8 (1); **Toughness:** 8

Edges: Ambidextrous, Two-fisted

Gear: Enchanted Black Iron Shackles (Str+d6; +1 Fighting; +1 Parry; Heavy Weapon; In lieu of gaining an additional 1d6 damage, on a raise, the Punished Soul can alternatively choose to force an opposed

roll (Punished One's Strength versus the higher of the target's Strength or Agility) to Entangle target (per Power); However, breaking free is an opposed roll vs Punished Soul's Strength.)

Special Abilities:

- **Fear:** -2
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation
- **Infravision:** Halve penalties for Dark lighting against living targets (round down)
- **Invulnerable:** Can only be harmed by magic and Weakness; all other attacks cause Shaken only
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness, +2 to recover from being Shaken, immune to poison and disease, no additional damage from called shots
- **Weakness:** +4 damage from White Silver and Everwood

RAVENING BEAST (DEMON)

Summon Rank: Heroic. As big as a horse, this mutated large jackal-like creature lurks in the depths of the Wildlands. It can often serve as an alpha to a pack of wild dogs, hates wolves, and will often try to kill them on sight. No one truly knows where it comes from, though some loremasters speculate it might hail from Norcan Darr, but no one's been able to study a Ravening Beast for long. Come the 13th Hour after one has died or been slain, the body simply vanishes from wherever it's been stored.

It's not long after that reports of the terrible beast begin to circulate again, usually in another dark wood or far off place. Sometimes it's even a village, where the beast may have unfinished business.

They say there's a true way to end the reign of terror, but again, no one has yet to uncover the secret of how to put one of these monsters down for good.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Tracking d8

Pace: 8 (d10 run); **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

Edges: Berserk, Brawny

Special Abilities:

- **Abyssal Nature:** Demons only suffer half damage from non-magical attacks.
- **Bite:** (Damage: Str+d6).

- **Creatures of Entropy:** Demons cannot benefit from any kind of Healing.
- **Demonic Hide:** Demons gain +2 to their Toughness.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Ravening Beasts roll d10 instead of d6 when running.
- **Fear**
- **Infernal Form:** Demons are immune to all diseases and poisons.
- **Infernal Stamina:** Demons gain +2 to recover from Shaken.
- **Infravision:** Halve penalties for Dark lighting against living targets (round down)
- **Keen Sense of Smell:** +1 die type for Notice and Tracking. +2 scent-based checks.
- **Size:** +1
- **Slayer's Bane:** Once summoned into Shaintar, Ravening Beasts remain indefinitely. If slain, by any known means, the body will return to the Abyss during the next 13th hour only to reappear within 1d4 days fully recovered. However, if the inert body is placed in a Consecrated location, it will be trapped there.
- **Weakness:** Flame-blooded suffer +4 damage from White Silver and Everwood.

IMPORTANT PLACES

"Not even the assemble hordes of Kal-A-Nar can breach these walls, and believe you me they've tried." ~ Anna Kantar, Ranger of Kythros.

The Wildlands is home to so many folk, of all races, colors, creeds, and inclinations - there's a whole slew of villages, cities, hamlets, settlements, and towns dotted about this large irregular shaped area. It's impossible to look at every single one, so we've selected some of the more interesting places for this tome and provided a deeper look at Kythros.



FARWATCH

Farwatch is a thriving trade community sitting on a convergence of five roads all of which feed into the city's bustling Trade District where anything can be found for a price. This trade empire is ruled over by the Merchant Council which rebuilt the town's

fortunes after the former lord, Baron Ermengild, and his entire family were destroyed during the War of Flame by Kal agents. Rumors abound that the Ermengilds were deeply corrupted by Darkness and are responsible for the disappearance of the Branowen family of Greenvale. More recently, the local Rangers have begun operating out of the Ermengild Manor, utilizing this key vantage point overlooking the heart of Farwatch.



Otherwise, the town is protected by the Merchant Militia, a quasi-private military funded by and answerable to the Merchant Council. This organization is primarily responsible for the security of the Trader's District, the Central Warehouse, which stores much of Farwatch's goods, the Artisan Square and Merchant's quarter, home to the town's craftsmen, and High Point, home to the town's wealthy. As of 3123, Marken Valarious serves as the Merchant Lord, head of the Merchant Council.

FARWATCH-ECHER'NAUGHT WAYSTATION

After completion of the Farwatch-Echer'Naught road in 3123, a Waystation and remount stable were constructed at a point roughly equidistant between the two towns. Initially just a primitive encampment for work crews and Rangers protecting the road project, the Waystation has grown into a small, but thriving, community, complete with a Ranger compound, stable, smithy, mercantile, and inn, all surrounded by a palisade and dry moat. De-facto community leader, Mr. Elias Smithing, owns and operates the inn, smithy, and mercantile and, with his family, provides food, equipment, and lodging for merchants, Rangers, and messengers traveling along the road.

GREENVALE

Until 3119, Greenvale was governed by the Branowen family. However, tragedy struck when the Lord and much of his family disappeared while engaging the forces of Darkness in nearby Farwatch. The Branowen estate lies just south of the town and is rumored to be haunted. Despite this, the few remaining members of the family dwell there still, keeping much to themselves.

Since the loss of their Lord, the town has been led by the four most powerful families each of which holds a seat on the Economic Council of Greenvale: the Highlands, Lady Jules, The Steele Family, and the Timberset Dwarves. Though each family maintains its own House Guard unit, security in the town is maintained by the City Guard led by Captain Johan Spelt. This force is further supplemented by the Rangers who operate from an L-shaped building, at the base of a small hill, just north and west of the city. This headquarters is equipped with its own training grounds, stables, forge, armory, and barracks.



KORG HUMPS GATHER

Being one of the largest Gathers in the Southern Lands, the Korg Humps Gather is remarkable mostly for its sheer size. In layout, this gather varies from a typical gather only in that it tends to follow the natural contours of the Korg, leading to a meandering warren of roads and paths confusing to all but residents. All along the gather's perimeter are massive ogre-built walls which enhance the natural fortification provided by the Korg's broken terrain.

Mak Torkash to the Korg is a generally well-respected orc, Ergroth. The goblinish of the Korgs are also remarkable in that they allow the Rangers to post a permanent headquarters within their gather. Based out of Gobner's Rest, the Rangers of the Korg work hard to maintain good relations with all the southern gathers and are often consulted on matters involving goblinish.

STONE TOWER GATHER

Just ten miles east of the Farwatch-Echer'Naught Waystation lies the Stone Tower Gather. Founded in early 3124, the Stone Tower Gather, though still rather small, has quickly emerged as an important community in the northern Wildlands. Led by Mak Torkash Grimboe, an ogre and close ally of the Rangers, the Stone Tower Gather provides a key resource in the Rangers' fight to maintain peace and security in the region, often supplying warriors to support Ranger operations.



KINGDOM OF ERIMAR

Most scholars will tell you that Erimar is the oldest of the Southern Kingdoms, though it's never been particularly large. The rulers have always been content however with the rich arable farmlands which surround the main holding on the Howling River. Drenmar to the southeast and Southgate, upriver, long have served as vassal baronies, operating independently in most things. Drenmar broke away a few decades ago now, but Southgate remains part of the kingdom.

Erimar has gotten into a few tussles with Olara and Glean forces over time, mainly due to the fact it maintains trade with both the Prelacy of Camon and Shaya'Nor. The Southgate troops and Erimar's army have protected Camoner and Shayakar river traders from assault. From its very founding, even with a small well-equipped standing army, Erimar provided support for the Rangers - now due to the recent troubles, and upheavals the once largest Ranger garrison in the Wildlands is a mere outpost, and things looks to be getting worse.

With the sudden death of His Royal Majesty Amon Dorne II, his successor, Amon III, displays disturbing tendencies toward securing ties with proven enemies, expanding his domain, and lessening his support for the Rangers in general - this is just the beginning of something more sinister.

THE TRELS

The catalyst for one of the greatest feuds in Shaintar's history began with the unexpected death of Artemus Trel, King of the Vailand. He was a powerful man, and may well have united the Wildlands under one crown. His kingdom spanned from the Northern Hills to the great inland lake known as the Vas'Lok in the south, and from the western edges of the Vaiwood in the east, to the City of Serenity in the west.

Unfortunately it wasn't to be, his heirs were twinborn sons, their mother and the midwife refused to reveal who was born first. This didn't help, and since one was a warrior, one a conniving, cunning, and ruthless politician they were at loggerheads from the first tenuous grasp for power.

Both headstrong, both easily advised by corrupt voices in their ears. It didn't take long for civil war to break out when the king died during a tragic hunting accident. One twin accused the other and that was it - war, decades of war. It sundered the great kingdom into two duchies whilst the other regions could only look on, and go their separate ways.

The Trel Feud, or the “War of the Twins” was active for almost a century and a half, perpetuated by the heirs of the dead twins. The Montrels now hold only the lands surrounding their namesake city, as do the Nortrels, yet the hatred refuses to completely die. Thanks to the vigilance of the Rangers and the depleted resources of the feuding heirs this conflict sits at a dull simmer, rather than a roiling kettle of violence it could be.

SERENITY

One of the greatest legacies of Artemus Trel is the commercial center of Serenity, now a fully independent and self-sustaining duchy in its own right. It sits at the crossroads of the region, serving as a central hub for all trade in the Southern Kingdoms, and many lands beyond.

Almost every nation of Shaintar has some kind of representation in Serenity; the Duke of Serenity gives free reign to all countries here, allowing them to post emissaries within his borders. Most major trade consortiums have huge warehouses here, and anyone who does business beyond their own country’s borders will likely have stationed agents active in Serenity.

Serenity is indeed a hotbed of trade, information, and intrigue. The Rangers and the Council of Rulers maintain a highly active presence here. There’s so much more to Serenity that there’s a guidebook for it.

Liner Notes: Alvaran Ale

Sean let slip something about this that amused me, so I had to include it. Alvaran Ale is one of those drinks, patterned after the almighty Pan-Galactic Gargle Blaster created by the late, very great Douglas Adams and seen of course in the Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy.

It quite simply knocks you on your ass.

If you want to adhere to the traditional treatment of Alvaran Ale, as translated in Savage Worlds terms, just follow these instructions. On the first mug, have the drinker make a Vigor check (Dwarves gain a +2 on these rolls, and Alchemists gain a +1). Failure results in a Fatigue level. A second mug imposes a -2 penalty to the Vigor roll, and each subsequent mug means a cumulative penalty (-4 for the third mug, -6 for the fourth, and so on).

While still conscious, the extremely minor mystical qualities of the ale will cause hallucinations, euphoria, and random exhortations of love for traveling mates and complete strangers.

Have fun...

TRUESTONE

Though each gathering of dwarvish clans tends to its own affairs generally, there are times when a collective effort is called for, mandating a speaker for dwarven interests. The League of Southern Clanhomes is the organization that handles that representation, and the High Chieftain of Truestone has been the traditional leader of that League for many generations now.

The current High Chieftain is Karst MacDourn, and the dwarves of Truestone and the Southern Hills are some of the most prosperous in all of Shaintar.

As well, Truestone is the primary source of one of the most potent drinks in the known world – Alvaran Ale.

LAYLA’S MEET

If you want a dangerous place, a place full of entertainment and every vice imaginable, Layla’s Meet is the one stop for any hero who travels that way. While Serenity might be the commercial center of the Wildlands, Layla’s Meet is the greatest flea market of the land. It’s a massive tent city, packed with all sorts of tinkers, wanderers, independent merchants, and many more.

It was, at one time, more an event than a proper location. It was a month-long festival which featured music, food, trading, and more amongst the many nomadic clans and families. Roving Brinchie tribes, wandering elven bands, great cavalcades (the massive carnivals that wander Shaintar, packed with every entertainment one could imagine), travelling bards, minstrels, acting troupes, tinker caravans, and so many more folk would gather for the Feast of the Festival Moons, marking the end of summer.

Over time, many merchants simply set up more permanent residence, as did the tavern and innkeepers who made vast coin catering to the ever-growing population. Now Layla’s Meet is a fully-fledged city, albeit an eclectic one with patchwork appearance and demeanor.

“SNAKES DEN”

Ah, Snakes Den, or Camden as its proper name. It’s one of the most corrupt, sinister, and dangerous cities in the whole of the Southern Kingdoms. Ruled with an iron fist by a consortium of powerful criminal overlords, this trading port generates considerable wealth via illegal and legitimate trade. There’s a lot more to Camden, in fact, there’s a whole guidebook!

FREEHOLD

Freehold is a fortress city, best known as a headquarters for many famous (and not-so-famous) mercenary companies. You can find master trainers here, in almost all forms of combat, as well as the associated merchants who specialize in arms and armor.

Freehold also hosts a number of tournaments and physical competitions. The most famous of these is the Circus of Steel, held during the penultimate week of the year. Soldiers, warriors, and combatants from all around come together in a series of grueling competitions to determine champions of every manner of combat. More and a few bones get broken when these fighters meet up in the Grand Melee.

SERPENT MARSH

Outside of Dregordia, there is only one place to find a significant population of the reptilian race, and that is in the Serpent Marsh region of the Wildlands. It is unclear how this branch of Dregordians came to reside so far away from their homeland, though some scholars speculate that they may represent a bloodline that was exiled or lost centuries ago.

The Dregordians are firmly established in the Marsh now, and comfortably so. This works out well, as the land would be considered unsuitable for most other races (though there are quite a few fisherman and farmers of specialized skill who do well in the rich and warm environment).

Marsh Hold stands as the primary center for doing business with the Dregordian population, and the Consul who speaks for the Dregordians of Serpent Marsh resides here. Swampside is a far more eclectic place, serving as a fisherman's port for Dregordians and other races alike; the combined cultures of the Dregordians, the human fisherman, and the woods-running elves get along surprisingly well here, but they still have a collectively distant view of outsiders.

SHANNA BRIE STABLES

A few miles to the west of the town of Shan, lays the Shanna Brie Stable. A proud family runs this building, and business, where the Rangers of Shan take first pick of the family's stock. Shanna Brie, a retired Ranger moved here several years ago to work and raises horses, she's assisted by Deralt Brie, her brother and Miklas Brie her son. Her husband perished during the War of Flame and she spends a lot of her time looking back at the wild, yearning to

Liner Notes: Lizards in the Bayou

If you can put an image of Louisiana Bayou culture in a heroic fantasy setting, you can imagine what this area is like. The human and elven inhabitants might evoke "Cajun" like images. The Dregordians are the dominant species here, native to the very swamp itself, which breaks the analogy somewhat.

Still, if you could imagine the gators of the bayou becoming sentient and, mostly, getting along with the other folk, you might have it.

return to her former life. It's only a matter of time before Shanna leaves the stables in the hands of her brother, and heads back to Shan wrapped in her Ranger's cloak.

NORTHWATCH TOWER

Two miles north of Shan, and in sight of the tallest tower of the Shan Ranger's keep lies the Northwatch Tower. It was constructed not long after the formation of the Rangers, serving as an important waystation for weary travelers, Rangers patrolling the Wildlands, and their allies. As Shan was built and the Rangers moved a lot of their operations to the newly constructed keep there, the old Northwatch Tower was used less and less, now today the tower stands as a lonely monument, a stone-clad sentinel waiting to be used once more.

THE TOWN OF SHAN

A moderately sized town in the Wildlands, Shan has become a hub of activity during the War of Flame for the Rangers. The town is built on and around a large hill, with the highest point reserved for the Rangers keep, known as Shan Keep. Shan Keep overlooks the area and provides an excellent vantage point for the Rangers to monitor the local surroundings, upon a clear day and with the right conditions it's possible for a lookout to see for miles.

It still has a good view of the old Northwatch Tower as well.

A road leads down to the east toward the center of town, passing by a small watch house to the north where a few Rangers are stationed at any one time. The watch house contains a few beds, a stash of weapons, and a small fire. A middle aged, stalwart Ranger known as Tanner is often found there to help out newly arrived visitors to Shan.

The center of town is comprised of most of the businesses, the shops, another set of local stables, and the mayor's Town Hall. There's also a large stout, wood and stone building which serves as the town's jail, guard house and headquarters for the Guard Captain: Brin Avaonian, a young Galean woman who serves faithfully and has done so for years, she has a strict moral code.

The Gryphon Inn, the Yard of Ale Tavern, and the Thirsty Sprocket are three of several establishments which can be found near the town's center. They all reside around the large stone-clad well, and on the town square where announcements and other proclamations are made by Herbert Benet, the town's crier, historian, and oldest living resident.

As the road winds down eastwards, it comes to the outer edge of the town where the folk live, there are homes, huts, shacks and all kinds of buildings dotted around. You'll find various farmsteads here, dealing in livestock and crops. The Gate Inn and the Farmer's Rest Tavern are also to be found by the main gate into the town, catching both visitors entering Shan and residents who fancy a quick pint.

These aren't the only inns and taverns, and whilst Shan's not as big or as impressive as Kythros, it's still able to support a large enough population to warrant several establishments.

Shan is ruled under the careful eye of Mayor Norhek Stonehammer, a rough-spoken ally of the Rangers. This dwarven warrior has faced down darkness many times and fought the forces of Evil in the Wildlands for years. Norhek tends to let most of the military decisions fall under the purview of Captain Sithris 'Scale' Vo'Drasta, a Dregordian battle commander, brusque and rough with little patience for fools.

Of late Scale has been listening more and more to Janleif Skein, a senior Ranger who has been in Shan for many years. He's supervised many of the local Ranger operations and is always there to help. Recently he took on three new recruits, a Half Elf wizard Ebrin, and a Brinchie warrior-rogue called Darkmoon.

Shan's chief scout is the Avekar, Aeirasar.

THE CITY OF KYTHROS

"As I travelled up the eastern bank of the Howling River, I first saw Kythros on the horizon. I was immediately struck by just how impressive it looked, not quite in the same vein as the cities I'd seen of the Elves, or the Dwarves, and certainly not as magnificent as some of the Dregordian structures. Yet Kythros had a charm all of its own, like the people of the Wildlands, it was stalwart, resolute, and stood as a guardian over the river passage itself."

This must have been a huge feat, to construct a city on either side of a great river, to span that river with a mechanical bridge which can be raised and lowered. The tall towers of Kythros were emblazoned with the flags and symbols of the Wildlands, none more impressive than that of the Rangers which flew from the tallest tower near the center of the city. I presumed this was the oft-talked about Headquarters of Grayson's Grey Rangers." ~ Damon Alard, rogue, wanderer, scholar.

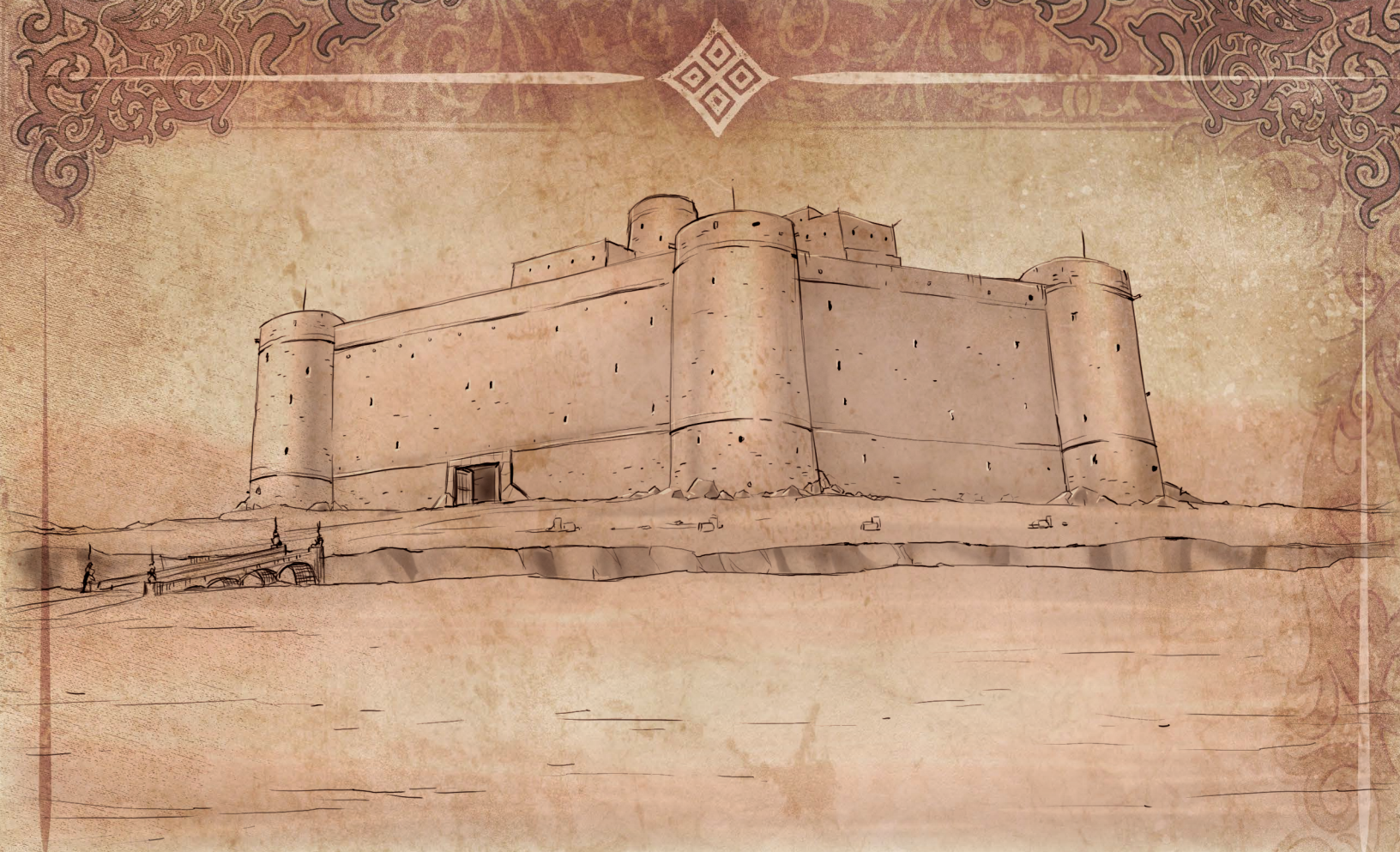
A QUICK HISTORY LESSON

In 2997, Lord General Jeremiah Grayson retired from active duty as leader in Galea's 3rd Legion, also known as the North Guard. Rather than take his reward, he chose instead another offer, that of Baron of Homestead in the Wildlands - this offer, extended by the Duke of the Duchy of Kythros, Kaylus Garr was a blessing and a curse.

Grayson's caravan was ambushed by agents of the Dominion on the way to his new home, they killed Grayson's wife, two youngest daughters and massacred the caravan to a man. Only he and his eldest son, Robert, survived the brutal assault. Jeremiah and Robert assembled a force of mercenaries, and loyal soldiers who'd previously served the General. Their goal was simple; avenge Grayson's family and companions.

They did so, striking deep into the heart of the Dominion and attacking the house responsible.

Once this was done, Grayson did not turn away from his duties. He didn't return to Galea to nurse his wounds, he went back to Homestead and built a force of arms; they would become Grayson's Grey Rangers in the years which followed, a powerful force for good and a story for another time - with more to tell than even possible in this tome.



In 2999 after Grayson's Grey Rangers made a name for themselves across the Southern Kingdoms, Kythros had become quite an impressive place within the Wildlands, one of the most secure places that folk had known.

In 3000, Kaylus died and named Jeremiah Grayson as his successor. Events transpired that led to the expansion of the Rangers and their transformation into what we know today - some say that Saiderin, the Raven, was involved - who knows for certain?

Kythros was eventually restructured as a military holding, with a Lord Commander rather than a Duke. Kythros as a City expanded during this time and has become even more impressive today.

In 3001 the Wildlands changed for good, as the Grey Rangers set about their monumental task.

KYTHROS TODAY

Kythros serves as the headquarters for the Grey Rangers; it's under the command of Lord Commander Valinda Norwood Grayson, a direct descendant of the "Old General." In the tradition of her family, her husbands' taken her maiden name as his own, thus preserving the line and its influence - vital for the Wildlands.

The day to day administration and running of the region is the purview of the Lord Seneschal Markus Reuter.

The Second-In-Command (The Second) is Lord Great Colonel Kesspar no Visstor, a Dregordian who has served in the Rangers for many years, and with great courage, honor, and distinction.

Grand Sergeant Major, Kork Mindrill, is a dwarven fellow who acts as Third-In-Command, highly decorated and trusted, he's the one left in charge when both the Lord Commander and the Second leave.

A QUICK LOOK AT THE CITY

Kythros is a magnificent city, thrumming with life and activity from dawn to dusk. It's a hotbed of its own interesting stories, intrigues, and agendas. Those who want to become immersed in the life of the Grey Rangers can do so here, usually by being in the right place at the right time, or the wrong place, as they say. It's also a very military city, and has become so over the years, what with both land and sea forces gathering due to its unique placement across the Howling River.

The massive central bridge which towers across the two banks, supported by incredible dwarf technology is one of the only swing-bridges in the Southern Kingdoms, perhaps the entirety of Shaintar.

The city is split by the river, with power for the bridge derived by the water, thanks to the ingenuity of dwarven wrights. On the eastern side, known as the Civilian Ward there's a lot more shops, stalls, businesses and such, whilst the western side or Ranger's Ward is given over to military operations.

Kythros would be best described as a walled city-compound with allusions to civilian life. The walls look strong enough to withstand many a siege, the color is of the local deep gray stone, a fitting shade for the Rangers. Most of the towers are round, save for the keep of the rangers set within its own compound, and the towers which serve as seneschals on either side of the bridge.

CIVILIAN WARD

Set on the beautiful eastern shore, this ward of the city is where the non-military and non-Rangers tend to live, though in truth there's a mix of all sorts of ranks and folk to be found. It's got everything a hero might need, a thriving trade community and some excellent outfitters for those who brave the dangers of the wilds. There are numerous taverns, inns, and places where a traveler might find a bit of respite, with the Rangers are often allowed to stop a few nights for free - though most Rangers would rather pay for their bed and board.

The most common places to stay are the Greenyard Inn, the Coin and Glint, the Everglow, and the Wildlands Pride Inn. These establishments provide great service, with varying luxury and quality, with the cream of the lot being the Wildlands Pride.

Owd Tam's Tavern, Briarthorn Eatery, Haven's Tavern, and Throstlenest Tavern are just some of the best places to find a good drink, company, meal, and hear a tale or two in the city. The rowdiest tavern is relegated close to the edges of the trade area, known simply as the Broken Fist. It's a rough and tumble place where soldiers like to hang out, let off steam, and sometimes come to blows. Nothing serious ever comes of these conflicts; it's usually resolved with a friendly drink afterwards.

There are a few guard barracks dotted around and Ranger stations which respond to any potential trouble quickly.

THE HOWLING SPAN

The bridge which sits across the great river has two towers at either end; these towers are usually home to both military soldiers and any number of Rangers. They are closed to the public, serving as important outposts from which the Rangers and their allies can monitor river traffic, bridge traffic and get a towering view of the surrounding landscape.

As mentioned previously, the bridge can be opened to allow ships with taller masts to pass without trouble. A steel chain-mesh can be dropped on both sides to prevent the flow of river traffic and allow Kythros to respond to threats.

RANGER'S WARD

The majority of the smithies, armorers, leatherworkers, bowyers/fletchers, and any number of craftsmen who specialize in battle gear can be found over this side of the bridge. Situated on the western shore, this is a functional garrison, training ground, and more. The rulers of the city reside here; the Rangers have their huge compound at the far western edge of the wall.

There are many barracks and houses for the various soldiers and Rangers, very few civilians come here, but this ward is also where you'll find the best stables this side of Shan. There's also a huge parade ground, a tent city lies just beyond it where visiting military allies can reside.

There are also a few taverns and establishments which cater to the Rangers and their allies, these are the Half-drawn Blade Tavern, the Elder Inn, the Ranger's Respite Inn, and the Marksman's Friend Tavern. All of these cater to the rough and ready nature of military life. They're not for the faint-hearted, but the folk who go in there tend to keep things civil.

It can get a little rowdy when troops from various nations get together, but rarely erupts anything but light-hearted banter.

SHARDS OF ADVENTURE

Kythros is a great place for all kinds of adventures, in this case rather than present you with a bunch of different shards, we're going to put together three which interlink into a larger picture and perhaps begin to lay the foundation for an interesting time for Shaintar, beyond the War of Flame.

A STRANGE FIND

In this particular shard the heroes should discover something that confounds them; it's a piece of material which is utterly mind boggling. It's a golden color and defies any kind of metallurgical study via the dwarf Wrights, or any magical delving. What it is, well, it's a piece of hypertechnology, a gauntlet, it shouldn't even be here - it's supposed to be on the arm of one of Ra's servants somewhere else in the Maelstrom. (see: Suzerain - Set Rising for more information.)

Eventually the heroes are going to have it stolen, or at least an attempted theft.

THIEF OF SORTS

Enter Agent Aman, a strong, capable, and clever agent of the Sun God Ra. Right up until the point they ended up hurled out of the Maelstrom onto Shaintar, and can't get back since the doorway's shut tight. Regardless, Aman is going to eventually track down his gauntlet and want it back - he makes plans to steal it and he will wait until the heroes have let down their guard, picking the most opportune moment.

Thief of Sorts is a chase scene, a short blast which will take the heroes through Kythros at night pursuing Aman, who has rightly stolen his gauntlet back - or tried to. It's up to you whether or not he gets away; he can be a great ally, or a total pain as he tries to get his gauntlet back.

DOMINION UNMASKED

Artifacts like this always attract the attention of villains, and the Dominion doesn't know what the gauntlet is - just that they want it. They fake a caravan raid and the heroes should be assigned to investigate, with or without Aman. They're ambushed when they investigate the caravan, the bodies (agents playing dead) and the hidden Dominion warriors attack. Whether this is part of a larger game, it's hard to say, but the heroes should stop the Dominion at all costs.

If the heroes have left the gauntlet with someone, it's ok, because the Dominion will have used this as a diversionary tactic and tried to steal the gauntlet at its location. In this case, it could turn into another chase, a race against time, or a thrilling manhunt in the wilds surrounding Kythros.

Have fun with it!

