

THE GLORY ROAD

Issue 1

Introduction

ESTARION, CITY OF KNIVES

Estarion sits on the eastern edge of a great empire. Its indigenous people were once nomads in desert and arid lands, serving Astarte as their primary goddess. The city became a caravanserai, then an agrarian center, and eventually a center of trade with the east until it was conquered ruled by the Aquilan Empire, and their gods the Olympians. The city is crowded, hot, dusty, and filled with corruption, merchants, and Imperial outcasts.

The city is rife with schemes, people running from trouble, and ancient mysteries. The sewers and basements of the city are filled with secret tunnels and ruins. And you're just trying to make your way in the world one day, one job at a time, whether it be by crime, mercenary work, or just doing the best you can in a hard, ruthless world.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

- Magic is uncommon. Magic is not just another type of technology, magic items are sparse, and there isn't always a magician to clean up problems you have come to face. Magical cures, curse removal, and resurrections should not be assumed.
- Humans are the norm. While going to see the local elves or contact the local mermaids may be normal in other settings, it won't be in this setting. Being non-human will attract attention, and relations between humans and non-humans may be tense.
- Social stratification, inequality, and prejudice are common. The city is not egalitarian. There are hierarchies by ethnicity, station, and wealth. Slavery is legal and common. While Player Characters may have more mobility around these restrictions, they do so at the cost of being seen as outsiders in Aquilan-run society.
- Everyone has secrets. Dark secrets are very common, and hiding or discovering them is essential to getting a leg up on enemies and rivals.
- The Player Characters are rogues, malcontents, and ne'er-do-wells. The motivation of characters will tend to be survival, acceptance, status or power. You may not be one of the bad guys, but you probably won't be the kind of person people think of as one of the good guys, either.
- Shades of grey. Everyone may be an important ally or a deadly enemy in the right circumstances. And defeating one enemy may give an advantage to another.
- Rotten things lie under the surface. Underneath everything is something truly rotten. Supernatural evil lies underneath the decadence of the city, waiting to devour everything.
- Boldness and ambition can lead to glory. Whatever else is true in Estarion, the adventures of the Player

Characters are the story of picaresque rogues who may, by their pluck and cunning, make something of themselves after all.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CITY

Originally, two towns started in the place that are now Estarion and Selindra. Estarion was founded as Temmuz, a caravanserai for the nomadic people of the region, the Tarquai. This slowly grew into a minor trading outpost for trade between the Tarquai and the Sea Peoples of the near east. Selindra was founded when Tarquai and Sea Peoples settled in near the ocean to plant date and wheat and begin trading in food, beer, bread, and date wine.

Eventually, an Aquilan merchant name Nonus Estarius, exiled from the Empire and seeking his way, found his way to Temmuz, where he introduced accounting and monetary practices, helped streamline trade, and helped the people of the city become true traders.

Estarius built up trade with the West, including the Aquilan Empire, and with the East, including the Empire of Cathay. When Estarion died, the city became known as Estarion, and at its height became known for the trade in Eastern steel and spices, earning the nickname the City of Knives and Spice. Over time, this was shortened to the City of Knives. As the city has it expanded, it has become a fortified outpost on the east of the Empire, a dumping ground for nobles, priests, and soldiers the Empire could not get to fit into society on the edge of the Empire. Forty years ago, the city was incorporated into the Empire. However, under the surface, many factions struggle against each other with a veneer of peace.

GOBLINS

I wanted the feeling of romance and the sense of wonder I had known as a kid. I wanted the world to be what they had promised me it was going to be—instead of the tawdry, lousy, fouled-up mess it is. — Robert A Heinlein, *The Glory Road*

The lowest social caste in Estarion is held by goblins. Goblins are menial laborers, criminals, beggars, and slaves. The goblins of Estarion serve fill the worst jobs and the lowest stations in society. This also means that goblins do other dirty work. Poverty, prejudice, and hard circumstances goblins face have turned some to crime. Goblin thieves, spies, thugs, assassins and smugglers use backwaters, sewers, and slums to do their work.

THE RIVER FOLK

Among the barges of the Riverfront live the River Folk, halfling gypsies who live on covered river barges. Largely treated as vagabonds, con artists, thieves, and criminals, the River Folk are distrusted by others. They are a small and ill-treated minority.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The city watch have heavy patrols in the Old City and the Second City and moderate patrols in the New City and Selindra. They provide sparse patrols in the Riverfront and the Waterfront. There are no patrols in Red Lanterns and Downwind. They are sometimes supplemented by the Imperial Legionnaires that serve

the Prince and serve as heavy infantry for the city's defense.

LANGUAGES IN ESTARION

- High Aquilan: The Aquilan dialect used by the nobility.
- Low Aquilan: Those who speak Low Aquilan understand but do not speak High Aquilan.
- Tarquaian: The language of the indigenous Tarquai people of the region.
- Behdoon: The language of the nomadic Behdoon tribesmen from the northwest.
- Kanian: The language of the seafaring merchants of the near east.
- Farasi: The language of the eastern Empire of Ferisia, a decadent, expansionist nation ruled by a sorcerer-king, the greatest rival to Aquila.
- Cathayan: The language of the eastern empire of Cathay, merchants and bureaucrats.
- Kemri: The language of Western Kemric barbarians, in their far and green land.
- Goetic: The language of Western Goetic barbarians, known as mercenaries, and traders.
- Goblin
- Halfling

