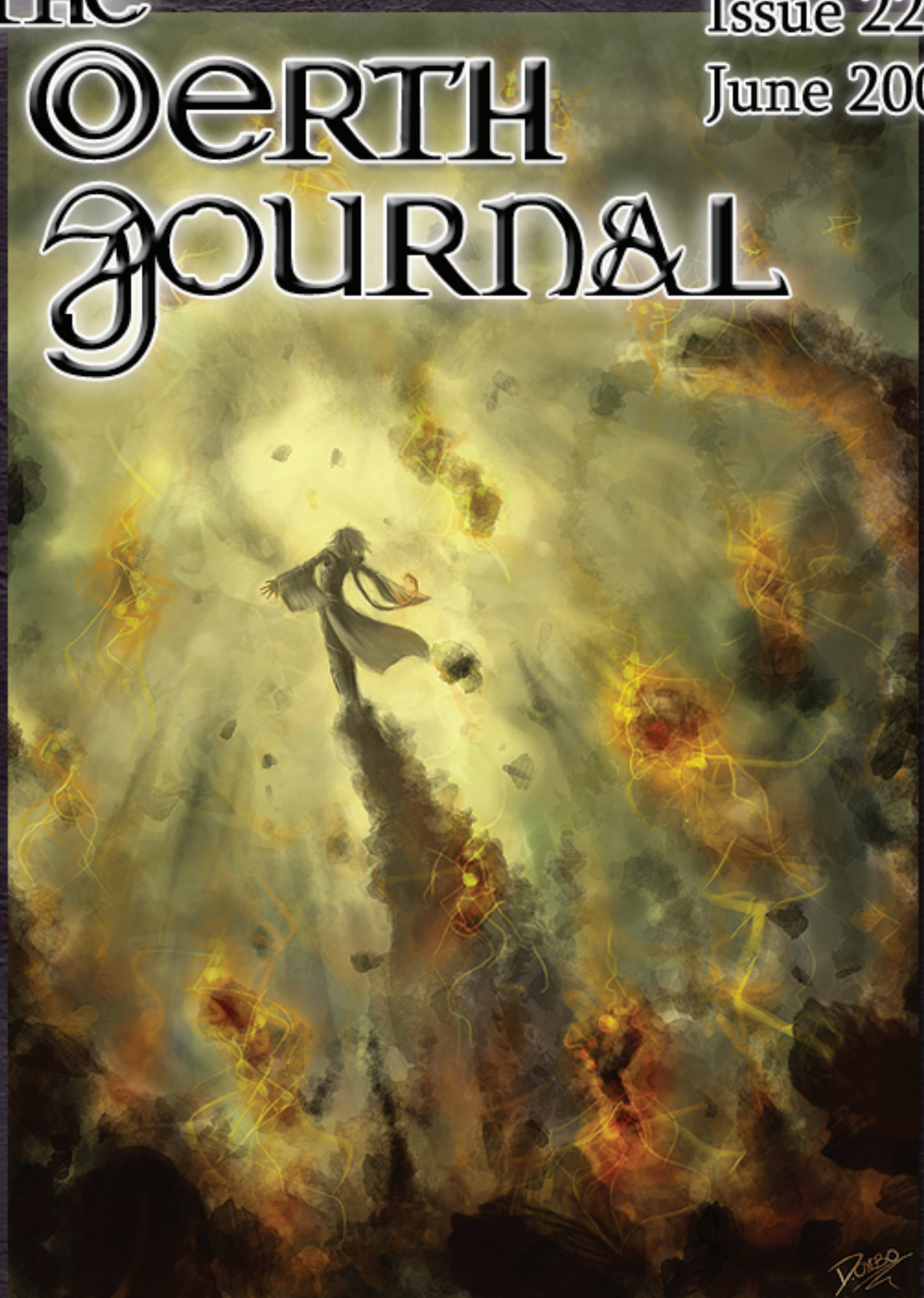


The

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The Oerth Journal

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CHRONICLE OF THE MAD ARCHMAGE

New things are afoot here at the Oerth Journal. With the end of Paizo's license for Dungeon and Dragon we stand at the precipice once more. Will Greyhawk finally be embraced by Wizards of the Coast? Further, will the new Dungeon and Dragon mags hold content for the most stalwart and nostalgic of all settings? Regardless of these answers, the Oerth Journal shall remain. Stone endures!

As of this issue as with all the others we tread new ground to bring you the best in formatting along with a bit of ease on your printer.

Finally, for those who have not heard, Oerth Journal Issue 23 will be a Maure Castle special issue. This issue will feature all new Maure material from its creator, Rob J. Kuntz! We will gladly accept articles on this area from others as well. Make your mark on the depths of Maure!

Until the Starbreak,

Rick "Duicarthan" Miller
- Editor-in-Chief

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On the Cover

This issue Dean Oyebo shows us a new take on the Invoked Devastation in his work entitled, *Calamity*. Dean is a fresh new artist on the scene and this is his first time submitting work for the Oerth Journal.

His art can be seen at <http://www.paleshadows.co.uk/>

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GAZATTEER OF THE FLANAESS

THE DUCHY OF ALMOR

By Brandon Gillespie, John Jenks, and Gary Holian with
Special Thanks to Creighton Broadhurst, Tom Kee, Stuart Kerrigan,
Paul Looby, Troy McNemar, Rainer Nagel and Mike Webster

"Duke Szeffrin's storm was short, but this suffering has a legacy which burns to the core. His hand guided by fiery whisperings, the Duke's armies soared forth. Their dark wings clapped in victory, snuffing the light that was Almor. And now, stepping over the bleached bones of its people I tread this valley, once ripe with vine it smolders from his vile shadow of destruction."

- Excerpt from a letter sent by Otto to Jallarzi Sallivarian of the Circle of Eight

THE DUCHY OF ALMOR

Non-standard Annexed Protectorate

National Alignment: LG (LN)

GP limit: Unknown **Assets:** Unknown

Population: 305,420 (Human 78% (Os), Elf 9% (sylvan 90%, high 10%), Halfling 5% (stout), Dwarf 3%, Gnome 2%, Half-elf 1%, Half-orc 1%, Other 1%);

Authority Figures:

Younard, Duke of Almor; LG; male human fighter 13

Lael Pirlon, Lord in Almor; LE; male human bard 8/
spymaster 3

Vayan Darol, Mayor of Mithat; LG; male human expert
(merchant) 3

Major Towns: Appolled, Blazebone, Bloodcrystal, Castle Von Flessern, Darkwatch, Harskern, Millennium, Mithat, Newtown, Onyxgate, Silverwat, Tirian, Tomkin (note: Narsel Mendred is in Womtham, and Chathold is in the Marchland of Chathold)

Resources: Fishing, Farming, Animal Husbandry, Trade, Wine-making.

Languages: Common, Old Oeridian, Flan, Silberi

Religions: Procan, Beory, Zilchus, Norebo, Celestian, Pholtus [Bright Path], Pelor, Wee Jas, Heironeous, Ralishaz

OVERVIEW

Once a shining and peaceful center of good, known for centuries within the darkening Great Kingdom; Almor was drawn over the edge of shadow and despair by the armies of Duke Szeffrin. Only recently is it starting to see the dawn of a new age, as the heavy mantle of evil is slowly lifted. What remains of this proud land is now divided between Ahlissa and Nyronnd. Its once great cities still lay in ruin. In the north the lion pennants of Nyronnd's third legion snap in the wind over Narsel Mendred, but much of the city remains in rubble, and the outer estates still crouch in fire-blackened gloom. To the south Chathold, once a citadel of light, now lies under a dark cloud of evil. Undead lurk in its shadowy remains, and an unknown blight grows out from the city.

Historically, the earliest people to claim the Harp River valley south of the Flinty Hills were the civilized Lathu Ur-Flan tribe. The Lathu held the region for many years, fighting off the incursions of the Suel and Oeridian, but ultimately they lost their lands to the Oeridian Nehron kingdom. The Nehron lords wrestled with the locals for many years, stopping only when they were conquered by the Oeridian Aerdy kingdom.

Afterwards the two Oeridian kingdoms became known as the Great Kingdom. The lands of Almor were granted to the Aerdy house of Cranden, and named after Prince Almor. Over many years the power of the Cranden's in the Almorian lands slowly bled away, to be held by a Council of Churches. As the Great Kingdom crumbled, the Almorian Cranden's found they were beholden to an independent Council, and held power over their own lands only in name.

This council fostered new heights of political intrigue between religions, primarily Peloran and Pholtan but with influences from Heironeous, Zilchus and others. At their end, the council fought in defense by sending a raiding force deep into the Great Kingdom, hoping to wreak havoc and cause chaos by helping other malcontent regions gain sovereignty. After the raid was finally dealt with, Ivid dispatched the undead Animus Duke Szeffrin with the Great Kingdom's armies to take care of the Almorian problem. The armies were very successful, leaving a swath of unbearable destruction in their wake.

From his summoned demonic perch of Bloodcrystal, Duke Szeffrin ruled the conquered lands and seethed in hatred at Ivid who had ordered him turned into an Animus. His opportunity for revenge came, and in 587CY he disappeared, presumably to the capital of the Great Kingdom Rauxes, which fell into a magical Limbo.

In the Duke's absence, King Lynwerd of the neighboring Nyronnd (the other half of the ancient Nehron kingdom) proclaimed most of the war torn lands a protectorate of his Kingdom. The remaining sliver of Almor to the south of the Harp River was claimed by Overking Xavener of Ahlissa, one of the remnants of the collapsed Great Kingdom. This southern portion of old Almor is now known as the Marchlands of Chathold, containing the infested ruins of Chathold and its surrounding region.

A Brief History of Almor

-300 CY: - The Lathu Ur-Flan is conquered by the Nehron Oeridian Kingdom.

-110 CY (535 OR): Rhiandrel of Solan (Pelor) appointed as provincial governor over the Neurons Almorian Protectorate.

-62 CY (583 OR): Lysmean of Solan (Pelor) assumes

role of governor from deceased Rhiandrel.

-45 CY (600 OR): Dacar Mendhred of Pholtus arrives.

-11 CY (634 OR): Belah Malsi of Solan (Pelor) assumes role from deceased Lysmean.

6 CY (650 OR): Ecumenical Council of Almor created and the first Prelate selected is High Priest Dhalal of Pelor.

252 CY: Cranden's lose courts, military and veto powers in Almor.

450 CY: Almor gains sovereignty.

577 CY: Prelate Kevont is ousted from the Council. Anarkin of Heironeous replaces him.

582 CY: Anarkin retires. Kevont of Pholtus retakes the Prelate seat.

584 CY: 17th of Goodmonth, Chathold is destroyed, Kevont's head is spiked at the gates of Chathold; the council is destroyed and has not met again.

587 CY: Nyronnd reclaims the lands of Almor declaring it a protectorate of Nyronnd.

IN-DEPTH HISTORY

Very little is known about the Lathu Ur-Flan tribe. Their greatest legacies are the many intricately carved ruins found scattered throughout Almor. Many of the Flan remaining in Almor can trace their ancestors to the original Lathu, and a few have managed to maintain some of their cultural traditions including their unique style of stone carving and the long-distance whistled language of Silberi still used by Flan rangers of the area. The Lathu resisted both the Suel and the Oeridian's for years, but were ultimately vanquished by the Nehron Oeridian Kingdom sometime around -300CY.

The Founding of Almor

During the reign of Grand Prince Almor II of house Cranden, the forces of the Aerdyn Kingdom, led by house Rax, vanquished the Nehron Kingdom. The grand battle occurred in -110 CY and became known as the Battle of a Fortnight's Length. In the end, the Aerdyn Kingdom nearly doubled in size, being known from that point forward as the Great Kingdom.

The conquered Nehron kingdom was divided into two portions. The western half was awarded to house Rax, which assimilated the original Nehron ruling class (later taking the name of Rax-Nyronnd). This western region became known as Nyronnd.

The eastern half was retained by house Cranden. At Grand Prince Almor's request, house Cranden assigned governorship of the eastern Nehron lands to Priestess Rhiandrel of Sol (the Aerdyn aspect of Pelor). Priestess Rhiandrel pursued a goal to have a region guided by the clergy of Sol, and built a quasi-theocratic government within the area. These lands eventually came to be known as Almor.

The legacy started by Priestess Rhiandrel developed over the next several decades, with the clergy of Sol guiding the province of Almor with varying degrees of success. The land was arable and farming was prosperous throughout the region as it recovered from the Nehron-Aerdyn war.

The small village Chataen at the mouth of the Harp River had been burned to the ground during the Battle of a Fortnight's Length. The village was said to be built on an ancient Lathu Ur-Flan holy ground. A new citadel dedicated to Sol was raised in its place, named Chathold, and it became the seat of power for the province.

The Aerdyn Cranden's remained as the ultimate authority in the lands of Almor. The Cranden's in Almor were devout followers of Sol, many of them achieving high ranks in the clergy. Because of this, they allowed Solan clerics to govern the lands in their name. Following in the steps of Priestess Rhiandrel, the second governor was High Priest Lysmean, both a Solan cleric as well as a Cranden.

Further from Chathold, there was more resistance to an entirely Solan guided province. Many of the older Nehron deities were commonly worshiped, and some people did not wish to be so focused on Sol (or Pelor as the Nehronese had taken to calling him, using the Flan name).

Lest Not Ye Forget Pholtus

The Pholtan church had slowly gained strength in the courts of the Great Kingdom, their stringent interest in law and order being of interest to any ruling body. However, towards the end of the reign of Grand Prince Ferrend, a politically strong priest of Pholtus known as Dacar Mendhred was making a nuisance of himself to the Grand Prince.

Dacar was disturbed by the increasing power of the Solan clerics in Almor, and wished to have them stopped. Grand Prince Ferrend Cranden was also somewhat disturbed about his family losing its clout in Almor, but was not willing to give into Dacar's insistent requests to hand the governorship over to the Pholtans. Unfortunately for Dacar and despite his political ties, he ended up being banished from the capital in -45 CY. This was not a deterrent, and he simply headed to Almor and established a Pholtan chapel in the small northern village of Narsel on the Harp River. The Nehronese of the area still held too many of their original traditions, and had resisted the push towards the Aerdyn Sol.

Much to the chagrin of the clerics of Sol, the Pholtan flock under guidance of Dacar Mendhred began to grow in northern Almor; bolstered by many of the native Nehron Oeridian's who were still unhappy about the Aerdyn occupation of their lands. The original town of Narsel came to revere Dacar Mendhred. Much later, after an impressively large cathedral was created in his name, the town was renamed to Narsel Mendred.

Six years into the reign of the first Overking (6 CY), the problems between the Pholtans and Solans had to be dealt with. Zealots from both factions were coming to armed conflicts, and even the resident Cranden's were deeply entrenched in the issues. Farms were no longer being tended, crops were faltering and rotting in place, and bands of armed men from both sides were wandering around being a nuisance in the name of Sol or Pholtus.

The Pholtans had been increasing in power throughout the Great Kingdom. They had just been granted the See

of Medegia, and while Overking Nasran Cranden was privately annoyed that they couldn't behave themselves, he also had to deal with the situation in Almor, an area where his family should have been able to take care of matters themselves. Realizing that the Almorian branch of the Cranden's had become too deeply entrenched in the religious matters at hand (at this point some were even involved in the Pholtan hierarchy, as well as the Solan/Peloran), Overking Nasran decreed that the region would be governed by an ecumenical council.

The initial council was composed of members from the local Peloran and Pholtan religions, with the addition of Heironeans (to help bring order back to the region with their military clout) and Zilchans (to help bring organization to the council). The council was ultimately beholden to the Cranden House, and the head of the Cranden House in Almor (referred to as the Almorian House Regent) is granted a veto power for any action of the council, and can appoint people to seats on the council as they desire.

While neither of the original parties was particularly happy about needing to share power, the realization that they had no choice was easily to seen. Political maneuvering and deal making became important in the new council. As is typical for the Great Kingdom, individual personal agendas and ambitions also came to light, as various players on the council strove for personal power. The Pelorans, as the founders of the Aerdy Almor were allowed to choose the first Prelate of the council. The Prelate was granted governorship of Almor, but was still beholden to the council and ultimately the head of house Cranden. The Prelacy, once decided, was granted for life.

Diminishing of the Crandens

In 252CY the Holy Censoriate of Medegia was revoked from the Pholtans by Overking Toran II and awarded to the priesthood of Zilchus. In outrage the Pholtans of Almor rally and consolidate their power, with claims that the next step will be for the Great Kingdom to take power from the Council of Almor. The council decrees that the courts and military of Almor report directly to the council, and not to house Cranden. The Almorian House Regent attempted to veto the movement, but his actions were ignored. From this point forward no other Almorian House Regent successfully exercised veto power, and eventually the position was no longer filled as the individual Cranden's of Almor work on managing their immediate lands.

Insurrection

In 437 CY Ivid of house Naelax in the Great Kingdom has the reigning Overking Nalif of house Rax assassinated. This plunges the Great Kingdom into civil war and turmoil. In 447 CY, following the declaration of independence by Onnwal, the Council of Almor secretly agrees to work towards sovereignty, when the time is right.

This time comes in 450 CY, as Ivid works towards stabilizing his rule. He made deals with both Nyronnd, who desired a buffer state from the Great Kingdom, and those of the Cranden house that were still sympathetic to Almor. The final agreement was to allow Almor's independence, which was declared following the agreement in Patchwall

of that year.

The Fall of Almor

After 25 years as Prelate, Kevont of Pholtus was ousted by a vote of no confidence spearheaded primarily by the Heironeans. The Council felt Kevont was drifting out of touch with occurrences in Almor, and was no longer fit to be Prelate. Few knew he was building and managing a large spy network within the Great Kingdom. He feared the direction Ivid was taking, and believed that Almor would soon become a target of the Great Kingdom's troops. Regardless, Prelate Anarkin of Heironeous was elected Prelate in 577 CY. But his time was short, and in 582CY Prelate Anarkin suddenly relinquished the title of Prelate and retired. Rumors flurried throughout Chathold seeking reasons behind his actions; perhaps Anarkin was in disgrace with Heironeous, or the Pholtans were responsible for his decision, while others claim he saw visions of doom in his future. The actual reasons never came to light.

Events caught up with the Council and before Anarkin was replaced Holy Censor Emasstus Carcosa of Pholtus declared Overking Ivid a Heretic. Ivid had Emasstus Carcosa arrested, and then sends his troops and the Hextorians on a rampage - looting Pholtan temples and killing those clergy who stood in their way. Many fled the Great Kingdom, finding refuge in The Pale, Nyronnd and Almor. The Pholtans on the council were bolstered by their outrage, and Kevont was summoned from retirement and installed as the Prelate to replace Anarkin in their time of need.

Kevont, expecting events to get much worse in the Great Kingdom, pushed for immediate offensive action in an effort to draw attention away from Almor. At the start of 583CY Knight Osson of Chathold was named Commandant and placed over a well-trained army and directed to strike fast and deep into the Great Kingdom. Osson's army quickly worked south through Ahlissa, into Sunndi and northward to Medegia. The Great Kingdom responded slowly, and the bold move seemed to have succeeded. Although the Great Kingdom's troops ultimately destroyed Osson's army in Medegia, afterwards they appeared to linger and focus on the rebelling lands left in the wake of Osson's raid.

Unfortunately, Ivid was enraged by Osson's Raid and did not easily forget. In 584 CY Animus Duke Szeffrin, with the secret aid of the demon Lord Pazrael, attacked Almor upon all fronts. On the 17th of Goodmonth his forces surrounded Chathold. Rather than laying siege to the city, all of the priests and mages within Szeffrin's army called down lightning, fire, acid, poison and all other manner of destruction upon the city. This day became known as the Day of Dust, and is when the backbone of the prelacy was shattered. Duke Szeffrin then marched his victorious army northward, this time the goal being the capitol of Nyronnd, Rel Mord.

Three weeks of battle and pillage later the Duke's army is stopped in its tracks at the Nyronnd citadel of Blazebane, just outside of Mithat, where they suffered losses in the thousands. The long battle is ended only by the Pact of Greyhawk, which, among other actions, ceased hostilities

between the Great Kingdom and Nyronnd.

Duke Szeffrin retreated to Bloodcrystal and consolidated his power. For the next two years he seethed over what Ivid had turned him into, only barely ruling the blasted and malcontent lands of Almor. He exercised his secret alliance with Pazrael nearly publicly. Demons maraud unchecked alongside orcs and other monsters throughout Almor. His situation was shaken in 586 CY when the Crook of Rao banished Pazrael's minions. The Duke's armies were greatly weakened, and in the absence of key demonic officers they fell into disarray and chaos.

Meanwhile, Duke Szeffrin became more and more reclusive, only to disappear later in the same year, presumably having teleported to Rauxes when he learned of an opportunity to exact his vengeance upon Ivid. He is never seen again, as the city of Rauxes fell into a magical Limbo that same day and nobody has ever left the city again.

The Lands Return to Nyronnd

After several months and still no reappearance of the Duke, in Growfest 587 CY King Lynwerd proclaimed the lands west of the Harp River a protectorate of Nyronnd. Three of Nyronnd's Legions are dispatched to hunt down the remaining armies of Duke Szeffrin and bring peace to the war torn lands of Almor. Much initial success is had; within one season Bloodcrystal, Duke Szeffrin's seat of power, is liberated. The Fourth Legion headed south to Onyxgate, only to mysteriously disappear. The Third Legion is posted throughout Northern Almor and down the Harp River, where they are focused on building a long series of outposts to protect from the potential and looming threat of Ahlissa. The First Legion is posted along the coastal areas of Almor and in support of the Navy.

The Council of Almor was destroyed by Duke Szeffrin and has yet to form again. The various political powers of the Council that were fortunate enough to not be in Chathold when Duke Szeffrin arrived had fled to different regions or went into hiding, helping where they could. Many of the Heironeans, including the retired Prelate Anarkin made their way north to the Principality of Innspa. The Pholtans headed west into Nyronnd, and have since re-formed as the Church of the Bright Path, returning with a stalwart mission to revive and help the surviving lands and folk of Almor. Some Pelorians stayed in Nyronnd, others went with the followers of Zilchus and Rao to Goldbolt in Ahlissa.

Most the folk of Almor have welcomed Nyronnd, although there is a subversive tide among the old Nobles known as the Free Almor Movement. The movement exists with declared intentions to return Almor to its sovereign independence (even from the Ecumenical Council of Almor).

In 591CY King Lynwerd declared a homesteading policy in the Duchy of Almor, encouraging Nyronndese citizens to migrate south and re-settle the wasted lands. This has polarized the anti-Nyronnd sentiment, although the original Almorians are finding they are less and less unique over time.

The Council of Almor

The Council of Almor brought ecumenical politics and intrigue to an entirely new level. Even the nuances of how the High Priest of Pelor sipped wine while dining with the Bishop of Heironeous were carefully watched and analyzed for meaning and intent.

The composition of the council changed over the years, including and excluding different religions for various reasons. At its end, the council was composed of several churches, each with a varying number of seats. Prelates were selected by the Council, and ruled for life or until such a time as they wished to retire. The intrigues of the council were at their greatest at the times Prelates were selected.

At 584CY, the seats were distributed as follows:

- (5 seats) – Pelor, Pholtus
- (4 seats) – Heironeous
- (3 seats) – Zilchus
- (2 seats) – Rao
- (1 seat) – Beory, Celestian, Delleb, Zodal

ALMOR AT A GLANCE

Almor is a land of gently rolling fields, broad meadows and fertile river valleys. Once it was considered to be a beautiful country with well-tended hedgerows and a pleasant patchwork of settlements. The folk of Almor were always considered friendly, their good will and trust were virtues of Good espoused wide and far. The loss which has been suffered since those good times is immense. The Great Kingdom's rage brought this land low. Once flowering and fertile valleys now lay sickened and twisted, moldering from blight. Some work has been done to rebuild and reclaim the land from destruction, but this work is hard, and many still cower in the burned ruins that were their homes.

The great Harp River defines the eastern boundary of Almor. Before it was split by Nyronnd and Ahlissa's claims, Almor also included the peninsula south of the Harp River and north of the Bonewood. The western boundary with Nyronnd was the Sword Road, but the new Nyronnd Duchy of Almor has extended this boundary further to the West, but has also taken the Almorian lands north of the Flessern River and shifted them to the Nyronndese Duchy of Womtham.

The northern region around the Flessern River has been well known for its wines. Although most wineries were destroyed, some vines were salvaged and a few are managing to start up again. Farms can be found throughout the entire region, although the area in the northwest is very hilly, a veritable maze of hollows.

One very noticeable feature of Almor is the distinct stonework of the ancient Lathu Ur-Flan of the area. Old ruins can be readily found, with stylized faces and other large carvings cropping out of hillsides here and there. Some of the more unique stonework is well regarded for its artistic style, even by Dwarves, and has periodically found its way out of the region to appreciative aficionados.

Badlands

Throughout Almor there are blighted areas known as

the Badlands. These regions were the sites of great evil battles and massacres inflicted by Duke Szeffrin. They are ghastly and appallingly dangerous, with wandering tormented undead, mindless fiends and twisted magical effects still in force. Those who manage to return from the Badlands give tales of bizarre and deadly occurrences such as foliage which decays under the footsteps of living creatures, drifting clouds of corrosive acid, random smoking fissures and acid filled bogs.

Badlands vary in size from 10 to 100 square miles, with the largest being around Chathold, south of Onyxgate, near Bloodcrystal and near the southern bend of the Harp River. Many expected the effects of the Badlands to diminish over time, but unusually enough, this has not been the case, and some claim the badlands are actually growing. This is most noticeable around Onyxgate, which has been consumed by the Badlands.

The Folk of Almor

The people of Almor have many roots, but are primarily humans of Flan and Oeridian heritage. The distinction of Nehron Oeridian or Aerdy Oeridian has become lost over the years, and they instead just consider themselves to be Almorian. Of these folk, those that remain are some of the most hardy and capable around, having weathered the storm and occupation of Duke Szeffrin followed by renegade humanoids and worse from his collapsing armies, let alone the shifting Badlands and what manages to crawl forth from them. The people tend to be wary of strangers, but once a person proves their trustworthiness they are welcomed, if not immediately given a job in fixing and reclaiming their ravaged but beloved homeland.

While the two occupying Legions from Nyronnd are a welcome sight, the land of Almor is vast and the companies are taxed to the extreme. As other refugees flood into Nyronnd from the depredations of Iuz in the northwest, they are often sent south to Almor where they are welcomed with sympathetic and open arms. This is also assisted by a current policy of Homesteading in Almor.

The Almorian society is complex, tracing much of its nuances to the original Flan and Ur-Flan of the area. This is most prevalent in the foods of Almor, which are highly spiced using many of the local peppers and other unique herbs of the region.

The noble lines of Almor have become a bit confusing. Originally the lands were given to the Noble Cranden's of the Aerdy tribe, dispossessing all of the occupying Nehron lords. Most of the current nobles can trace their lineage into the Cranden line fairly directly, and often also have roots into the Nehron lords. As the Ecumenical council grew in strength, more and more land was granted to the various churches, diffusing the power of the original Nobles. King Lynwerd of Nyronnd has not yet made clear his own views of the Noble's titles.

While some of the old Almorian landholders (both blooded nobility and religious Sees) have tentatively retained their holdings, few titles have been re-affirmed. This has caused a growing unrest among those nobles who remain, causing many to consider an interest in the Free Almor Movement. This movement has found less interest

in the common folk, and is primarily a quiet force within the old Noble houses of Almor.

Humans are the most common race in Almor, but others also have a place. Halflings have their usual presence, and there used to be a large community of gnomes in Chathold. Elves are less common, although many Half-Elves have found acceptance in the region from people needing help wherever it can be found. Half-Orcs are one race that is generally treated with great disdain. Much of Duke Szeffrin's army was composed of Orcs, and their marauding and senseless violence is still a sore wound to many Almorian's. However, a Half-Orc who can overcome the cold glares, refusal of service and other bigotry to prove their worth is often finally accepted as well, and there are a handful of Half-Orcs who have managed to make a home for themselves in Almor.

Among the humans there are some who are distinctly Flan, being able to trace their roots in Almor back for centuries. These Flan live side by side with Oeridian's, but many still preserve their original cultural heritage. Some pass on their secret skills of stone carving, teaching no outsiders. These Flan also have an interesting language of whistles known as Silberi. This language developed over time as a means of communicating over distances in the northern hollows, and is still commonly used by the Flan rangers residing in the area. Somebody well versed in Silberi can carry out a conversation up to one or two miles away, if the proper conditions exist. Of course, this conversation is not very private, unless nobody else understands the language.

Festivals

Any distinctly religious festival ended up being altered and generalized over time by the Ecumenical Council's influence, as it would be inappropriate for any single religion to have too much influence. The two remaining and major festivals of the area are the raucous Light Festival held during Growfest, and the grisly Mantiga, which is held on the 18th of Patchwall.

The Light Festivities are held in many areas throughout the entire week of Growfest, culminating in a grand finale celebration throughout the day and night of Freeday. The Light Festival is a time to celebrate and offer thanks for the blessings of all things. It is a time when the last of winter's stocks are opened and feasting is had all around. A common fare of the time is a succulent brined and roasted mutton. Many of the larger towns also have a masked party on Freeday.

Mantiga shares influences from many cultures, but is ultimately a time to celebrate one's ancestors, as well as provide a sense of protection from the dead. During Mantiga, families will have a large feast at the gravesites of their ancestors, with extra servings for the recently deceased. During this time those who may have passed on during the year are discussed and remembered. It is also feared that this is the time when the spirit world is most accessible, and in order to protect themselves as night approaches, the people don grisly costumes of ghouls, zombies and the like. The belief being that if the dead do come forth, they will not be able to tell the difference

between those alive or dead.

Life in Almor

Many of the survivors and refugees of Almor still reminisce on the old days, where you could travel alone in safety throughout the prelacy, visiting friendly folk everywhere and passing tracts of verdant fields. Settlements are working on revitalizing the land, but all are tightly assembled with at least a palisade wall (if not a greater fortification), and a nightly curfew.

Trade along the Harp is recovering, supported by recently built or refitted military outposts from both Ahlissa and Nyronnd. However, bandits are still a problem, and marauding creatures are an even greater threat, concentrated most strongly along the shores near the ruins of Chathold and around the Badlands.

Several trading companies have taken to banding together in large caravans that cross the lands at regular intervals (absent from this union is the Harp River Trading Company). Most travel is done in great numbers, to avoid problems. Only the most reckless, or confident, travel in small groups.

Power Groups

There are several forces at work within the lands of Almor. Otto of the Circle of Eight has a political presence in the City of Greyhawk, and despite Almor having been his homeland, he has remained unaffiliated in the new power groups of the area, although Lael Pirlon has approached him for support in the Almor Freedom Movement.

Relations with Nyronnd

The Kingdom of Nyronnd claims most of the original lands of Almor, and has backed it up with a strong military presence. Nyronnd's Legions have made great headway in dealing with the remnants of Duke Szeffrin's occupation. Many feel Nyronnd is simply reclaiming lands that were part of the original Oeridian Nehron Kingdom before it was conquered by the Oeridian Aerdy Kingdom. Others do not care about this association, and hold a grudge against anybody occupying the lands of Almor, which they feel should remain independent.

Duke Younard has positioned the First Legion along the Harp River and deeper inland, with the Third Legion covering the coastal regions. A rigorous project has been underway by the First Legion to build a string of outposts along the Harp River, to be ware and able to protect from any further invasion by the Great Kingdom remnants.

Relations with Ahlissa

Overking Xavener has reluctantly accepted Nyronnd's claim to the northern lands of Almor, and only then after a long period of denial. Unfortunately his inability to place troops in Almor forced him to cede the lands to Nyronnd. However, he has insisted Prince Carwend support Marquis Karn Serrand in holding what remains of the Almorian Lands, now known as the Marchland of Chathold.

Almorian Council Remnants

The Almorian Council was destroyed by Duke Szeffrin,

but some of the members (or their second in command) managed to flee the devastation. Since Duke Szeffrin disappeared these factions have resurfaced. The Pelorian and Raoan members have mostly appeared in Goldbolt. The Pholtans are massing in Narsel Mendred. Some of the old Almorian Council have been talking of a new Almor (although it is unclear if it would be independent, or if it would owe fealty to Ahlissa or Nyronnd). Rumors have been started of a holy campaign to reclaim Chathold, but as of yet nothing has been formally announced.

Almor Freedom Movement

The Almor Freedom Movement is politically pushing for a new independent Almor ruled by house Cranden, as it should be. The movement has gained interest among the old nobility of Almor, and has also found some sympathetic ears in both Nyronnd and Ahlissa. Whatever the motivation, the cause is even appreciated by some patriotic peasants. There is also a small following among the Flan rangers in the northern hills.

The leader of the movement is known only as the Sable Phlox, obviously a covert identity for his own safety. Very few know that he is actually Lael Pirlon, who is a true-blood Almorian Cranden.

The Harp River Trading Company

The Harp River Trading Company is one of the older merchant houses of Almor. It is one of the only trading houses which managed to survive the ravages of Duke Szeffrin's occupation, and in fact thrived during that time with several contracts from the Duke for transporting goods. Many people are unhappy with the trading company because of this. They always maintain a lawful presence, are economically and politically strong, and are careful to never associate their name with shadowy activity.

The truth of the matter is the company is a carefully orchestrated smuggling and slaving organization working under a large and prosperous public mercantile front. The occupation of Szeffrin's troops was a huge boon to the slave trade, as a missing refugee here and there is hard to notice. The lands of Almor have become a great hunting ground for these activities, with the 'cargo' mostly being sent north and east into the Bone March and the North Kingdom as well as northwest up to the Empire of Iuz.

The half-elf Zyrrian Thrylanos is the Managing Director of the Harp River Trading Company. She has been the Managing Director since before the fall of Almor, and has no intention of quitting any time soon. One of her most valued advisors is Geal Niholda, who is an Almorian merchant she has known for several years. What she does not know is that Geal Niholda is Lael Pirlon, who uses his quiet position within the trading company as a source of knowledge and an easy way to send private communications throughout Almor.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Appolled

Once a castle for the revered paladin Shrekend, it was destroyed by the forces of Duke Szeffrin. The depths under

its ruins were secretly the home to a band of resistance against Szeffrin, who survived for a period of time only through the use of a magical cornucopia. It is not known what happened to this group, nor the magic items and books they rescued from the keep before it was destroyed, as they disappeared sometime during the occupation of Duke Szeffrin. Since Nyron's Legions moved into Almor, the ruins have been left unoccupied.

Bloodcrystal

This fortress is anchored by four towers; each capped with crystalline cupolas stained the deeper color of venous blood. The fortress was summoned by Duke Szeffrin on the grounds of the final clash of armies, which ended the Battle of a Fortnights Length. Many believe the bleached bones and restless spirits left from the ancient battle were infused into Bloodcrystal. The Duke certainly had abyssal help in the creation of Bloodcrystal, and it strongly radiates magic of several kinds.

With the double blow of his demonic allies being banished by the Crook of Rao, then later Duke Szeffrin himself disappearing, most of the forces in Bloodcrystal fell into disarray. While some stayed behind, many left and still wander the deeper wilds of Almor.

After the King Lynwerd claimed the lands of Almor, he sent his Legions to bring peace. General Basmajenn was given Consular reign over the First, Third and his own Fourth Legion in order to complete this task. Because of his prior lack of success and less than stellar military finesse, many were surprised by the Legion's initial success. Within months the Fourth Legion had pressed all the way to Bloodcrystal, Szeffrin's old capital. After liberating Bloodcrystal, the fourth Legion left an occupying Division to hold the fortress and moved southward to Onyxgate.

However, the declaration of victory may have been premature, as after several weeks the troops moved to an external camp, citing varying problems inside the castle. Periodic patrols are made of the seemingly vacant castle, which result in no problems. However, nobody wishes to stay in Bloodcrystal for long periods of time. Those that have believe something is still there or perhaps that the castle itself is alive.

Chathold

Nestled on the banks of the Harp River and Relmor Bay, Chathold was once the greatest city of Almor. It was the seat of power for the Prelacy and renowned as a pleasant place to visit. The Council of Almor worked hard to present an uplifting and clean city, at least on the surface. Fountains were common, streets were kept clean and the arts - as approved by the Council - were practiced and displayed. Built across several hills, all of the roads led to the Basilica of the Council of Almor.

Originally built over ancient Lathu Ur-Flan holy grounds as a citadel of light for Pelor, the sprawling complex had become both a governmental seat as well as a multi-denominational shrine.

Less than one year after the raids of Ossoon, Overking Ivid's troops led by Duke Szeffrin descended on all of Almor in one mighty wave of retribution. Few had an

opportunity to flee the city before it was surrounded by the Duke's forces, and many expected a long siege. However, the Duke instead directed an army of mages and priests to invoke and call down all forms of devastation on the city, incinerating and destroying all of its citizens and structures. The Duke left only after spiking the head of Prelate Kevont on the opalescent gates of Chathold.

Since that time the unusual blight known as the Badlands has grown strongest around Chathold. Some speculate the blight is a form of fallout from the massive amount of destruction and magic unleashed in these areas, others believe something more sinister is at work. The puzzle has intrigued even the mage Otto, who has spent much of the last few years researching the Badlands.

The ruins of Chathold along with the surrounding lands south of the Harp River compose the Marchlands of Chathold, under the rule of Marquis Karn Serrand of Ahlissa. These lands both blighted and not, are governed from Goldbolt, just over the old Almorian border in Ahlissa. Hierranea, a storm giant priestess residing at Goldbolt, has prophesied that the Marchlands of Chathold will fall into Relmor bay. These events have not yet occurred, and some question if they ever will.

Because of the effects of the Badlands, few stay long. The ruins of Chathold are inhabited primarily by magically based and extra-dimensional creatures, most common are twisted forms of undead derived from the original citizens of the city. Priests of Nerull have been sighted on occasion, and some believe they consider it a new holy ground to their dark God. These things only strengthen the resolve of those Almorian Council remnants, to reclaim their lost city.

Many valuable items and artifacts were left in the vaults of the Council as well as the various temples in Chathold. The Church of Pelor had been guarding a great secret for many centuries in their vaults, and it was widely rumored that this was a great artifact not meant for mortal hands. Before he disappeared, Duke Szeffrin sent several missions to try to find the correct vault, without success.

Goldbolt

Conventional small town

Regional Alignment: LG

Population: 1821; Mixed Human (OFs) 87%, Half-elf 7%, Dwarf 3%, Other 3%.

Authority Figures

Marquis Karn Serrand, male human paladin 13 (Rao).

Important Characters

Hierranea, female storm giant cleric 8 (Stronmaus).

Goldbolt is a magnificent structure with sweeping towers, and tiered courtyards. This citadel was not an Almorian installation, but rather one from the Great Kingdom. It is the governing seat for the Marchlands of Chathold, but only resides near its borders. The Marchlands and Goldbolt are ruled by Marquis Karn Serrand, a staunch Cranden Lord and paladin of Rao. The role of Goldbolt has become bolstered with the fall of Almor, as it is vitally important in keeping the deranged evils from Chathold at bay. The force stationed in the keep is composed of those who are most trustworthy (LG, NG, LN), and has also been a home

to exiles from the Council of Almor (primarily priests of Rao and Pelor).

Harskern

Non-standard village

Regional Alignment: NG/CE

Population: 823; Mixed Human (OF) 91%, halfling (lightfoot) 2%, gnome 2%, dwarf 2%, other 3%.

This inconspicuous village near the Flessern River is notable only in its prosperity and lack of devastation. While much of Almor lies in ruins, Harskern has survived the marauding forces of Duke Szeffrin. This is due to a secret cult of Iuz living among the village. They provided protection to the unknowing residents during the occupation of the Duke, and have covertly remained since then as a key power behind the village council.

Millennium

Conventional hamlet

Regional Alignment: NG

Population: 432; Human.

This black stone castle towers over a rocky cliff top at the village of Seawolf Point. It was built in 107CY by Overking Manshen, and named for his belief in how long the Great Kingdom would reign. It was also one of the last stands of the Almorian military. A portion of Duke Szeffrin's forces laid siege to the keep for three months, ceasing only with the Pact of Greyhawk. The surviving Almorians were allowed safe passage to Nyronnd, where they were eventually assimilated into Nyronnd's Legions.

The dark forces of Duke Szeffrin's army gleefully took ownership of the keep (having already razed the local town). One of the many unmentionable acts inflicted by Duke Szeffrin's forces involved the priests, who used unholy rites to create various undead of the bodies of those slain in defending the keep. So many undead were created, they overflowed the extensive catacomb complex, and were periodically floated up the coast to Mithat in hopes of infecting the people of Nyronnd.

Since Nyronnd returned, the First Legion has reclaimed ownership of the Keep and the surrounding town has begun to rebuild, but the catacombs have been sealed until such a time as they can be dealt with. The keep is manned by a small force, which prefers to stay in the remains of the town, away from the moans and periodic pounding that sometimes escape the depths of the catacombs.

Mithat

Conventional metropolis

Regional Alignment: LG

Population: 37,700 Mixed Human (OFs) 85%, half-elf 5%, dwarf 3%, elf 2%, gnome 2%, halfling (lightfoot) 1%, half-orc 1%, other 1%.

Authority Figures

Duke Younard, male human fighter 13

Mayor Vayan Darol expert 3 (merchant).

Important Characters

Royal Admiral Ramol Hugarnd, male human fighter 13.

This city of nearly 38,000 people has become known as a place of honest and trustworthy folk, surprisingly

in contrast to being a large military base, headquarters to both the Third Fleet and the First Legion. Its shining towers have a tendency to catch the morning and evening light, twinkling from miles away. This has given it the reputation of being the Shining Jewel of Nyronnd or as it is referred to by the locals, Nyronnd's Finest City. It also has a strong religious presence of many deities, its shipyards are renowned, and it is home to many of Nyronnd's most trustworthy trading houses.

Although Duke Younard is lord of the city, management of Mithat has been granted to Mayor Vayan Darol, who was elected by the local merchants, and confirmed by the Duke. The position of Mayor is new for the city, and many consider it a sign of Mithat's return to prosperity.

Originally a General in the Legions, Younard was recently granted the title of Duke by King Lynwerd. He has also assumed the temporary rank of Consul of the Almorian Campaign from Royal General Basmajenn, who disappeared at Onyxgate. As Consul he is in command of the First and Third Legions deployed in Almor, as well as the Third Fleet. Royal Admiral Ramol Hugarnd, head of all three of Nyronnd's Fleets, also calls Mithat home. Despite being from traditionally antagonistic branches of a military structure, the Duke and Royal Admiral have developed a level of respect and trust for each other.

Mithat has a large complex of military fortifications and used to be the southern boundary with the Great Kingdom. These structures include a solid curtain wall around the city and the keep Blazebane half a days ride to the south. The Sword Road leads from Blazebane north to Kurast's Keep, and was the actual border of the two lands. Blazebane was the site of the climactic battle between the forces of Nyronnd and the Great Kingdom, led by Duke Szeffrin. The wizard Ghisellin supplemented the Nyronnd forces holding the tower and together they held off the Great Kingdom for nearly a month. The battle ended only with the signing of the Greyhawk pact. Since the Duchy of Almor was created as a part of Nyronnd, the keep has been maintained, but is little more than an outpost.

Despite the military strength of the city, Mithat has recently been attacked by Pirates funded by Prince Sewarndt, the King's traitorous brother. After a pitched battle involving many of the residents of the city, the forces of the Black Prince were cast out, but it served to put the city on Alert. In addition, it is believed that thieves guilds are making inroads into the city, which has always managed to avoid such overtly organized crime.

Narsel Mendred

Conventional small city

Regional Alignment: NG

Population: 7,500 Mixed Human (OFs), halfling (lightfoot) 3%, gnome 5%, dwarf 2%, half-orc 1%, elf 5% (by the forest), half-elf 6%

Authority Figures

Baron Dano Beltien, male human aristocrat 3/ fighter 2

Royal General Dairo Hanshal, male human fighter 10.

Important Characters

Otto, male human wizard 15/ cleric 3 (Boccob)

Garius Anerolli, male human cleric 7/ consecrated harrier

3/ contemplative 2 (Arch-Bishop of Pholtus)

Zyrrian Thrylanos, female human rogue 3/ fighter 2/
thief-acrobat 5

Lael Pirlon/Geal Niholda, male human bard 8/ spymaster
3.

This ruined city is desperately trying to rebuild itself to the wealthy, well-built and pleasing place it once was. In the past, it had estates for miles around, and was also the second largest city in Almor. However, Duke Szeffrin's troops lay siege to the city and reduced most of it to rubble. The remaining citizens lived in pitiable conditions throughout the occupation of Duke Szeffrin, and gladly welcomed the troops of Nyronnd. The city was named as the headquarters for the Third Legion, which has been building outposts along the entire Harp River. Although originally part of the Prelacy of Almor, after Nyronnd's occupation, borders were rearranged and it is now within the Duchy of Womtham.

Since Nyronnd's occupation, the city has entered a massive era of reconstruction, directed by its newly appointed governor Baron Dano Beltien, an Almorian Cranden who has sworn fealty to King Lynwerd. Since Szeffrin's absence, the notorious mage Otto has also returned to Almor. However, with his residence in Chathold destroyed, he has occupied a townhouse in Narsel Mendred, and has taken a distinct interest in resolving the Badlands puzzle. In his spare time, he visits the college of Culinary Arts he has founded and is sponsoring, in an effort to revitalize the arts in Narsel Mendred.

Much of the rubble not being used in new construction for the city has been pushed over the outer walls, forming a unique sort of boundary. All construction is within the city, and few have attempted to occupy and rebuild the outlying estates. Although nowhere near its pre-war numbers of 35,000, the current population of Narsel Mendred is believed to be nearly 7,500 people.

Despite the seemingly positive air brought on by renewed construction and revitalization, the city is rife with corruption, thievery, black markets, price gouging and layers of political bureaucracy. The First Legion provides what policing it can, but is stretched extremely thin throughout Almor with the loss of the Fourth Legion at Onyxgate. The city watch is a dangerous job, with the Pholtans constantly interrogating for corruption and the dangers of the criminal underground, and most avoid this occupation. The city center is well patrolled, but outside of its immediate environs lawlessness quickly arises. On the fringes of the city in hidden basements and the remaining structures of ruined buildings exists a dark underworld. Smugglers and thieves abound, and there is even a slaving exchange secretly run by the Harp River Trading Company and fronted by clerics of Nerull. Priests of Iuz and Erythnul also have covert followings in the city.

The Pholtan cathedral which the city was named after was destroyed during the siege, but many dedicated priests managed to save much of the holy relics and treasures. Since then the city has also become a home for the remaining Pholtans from the Council of Almor. These Pholtans have taken on a project of rebuilding all of Almor from the decimation that has occurred. Banding together

in their cause they have become known as the Church of the Bright Path.

Furthermore, the Church of the Bright Path has also found and accepted some ancient Nehron Oeridian texts of Pholtus, which other sects of Pholtus consider blasphemous. Because of this, they tend to avoid these other sects, specifically the Church of the One True Path in the Pale and the Valorous League of Blindness. The influence extends throughout much of old Almor and even parts of southern Nyronnd.

Bolstered by an influx of donations for their good cause in rebuilding Almor, the Church of the Bright Path is also reconstructing a greater cathedral temple complex in Narsel Mendred. Native Flan stone crafters have been commissioned to assist in the project, like those who worked on the original cathedral.

Onyxgate

This square keep of elaborate Lathu Ur-Flan design has an immense underground complex delving nearly a mile into the Underdark. It was constructed around -900 CY over the lair of the Gold Dragon Anonbirthach, at his request. The Lathu builders designed it to the specifications of the Dragon, and despite being rebuilt by priests of the Great Kingdom; it still retains the unique entrance shaft for the dragon through its top.

Anonbirthach disappeared sometime around -600 CY, believed to have fallen prey to an evil plot. Since that time the keep has had many owners. The Cranden's claimed the keep, but its remote location and lack of strategic value caused it to be largely disregarded. The renowned mage Schandor claimed it for a period, and is said to have had a lab in its depths, possibly based on the original library of Anonbirthach. Those who know Mordenkainen's lineage believe he may also still use the facility, and that it is warded and sealed so only those of true Cranden blood can enter.

Since sometime in 575 CY the keep came upon its new name; originally it was known as Glamewing. The name change came about because of the newly created gate to the Abyss hidden somewhere in the deep complex. Duke Szeffrin later made use of this Abyssal gate during his campaign in Almor as a means of access for his demonic allies sent by Pazrael. It is believed that since the Crook of Rao was used the gate has been disabled or broken, but could be engaged once again.

Onyxgate is more recently renowned for the loss of Nyronnd's Fourth Legion. King Lynwerd, after reorganizing his military, placed General Basmajenn in charge of the Fourth Legion. There was a fair amount of intrigue surrounding the assignment, as the General used to command all the military forces of Nyronnd before the reorganization. However, to many people's surprise, the General and his Legion had a successful military season, arriving at Onyxgate at the end of a campaign that included the liberation of much of Almor as well as Bloodcrystal, the seat of Duke Szeffrin's reign.

Upon arriving at the keep the Legion found it empty; and inhabited the edifice, hoping to wait out the winter in relative comfort. The Fourth Legion by this point had been

worn thin throughout their drive to Onyxgate, and roughly 3,500 men decamped at the keep and grounds. When the snows melted, however, all had vanished. Searches of the place revealed no evidence of foul play. It was as if the army had never come.

Darkwatch

A new keep being built by the Legions, Darkwatch lies atop a mound where once stood an ancient Suel keep dating to the times of the great migration. The grounds were believed to be cursed, but such a simple thing will not stand in the way of the Legions of Nyronnd. To settle fears, the military commissioned some adventurers to investigate the area, but despite their findings many of the locals still believe a great evil exists on the location. The builders of the keep are forging forward at the direction of Duke Younard, who wants to use it as a central anchor to the long line of outposts being built along the river border with Ahlissa. Younard's concerns of invasion and the good location outweigh any reports of unusual behavior on the site.

The Legions hope the new keep will be as valuable and strong as Blazebane was in the past. It is named in kind with fortifications at the other corners of Nyronnd; namely Mistwatch, Crystalwatch and Seawatch.

Shroudgate

Believed by many to be more of a myth than fact, this unusual mansion moves around and appears seemingly at random throughout Almor. Travelers tell tales of finding the mansion after a storm breaks, and its appearance is usually preceded by a dense bank of fog. The stories have an enigmatic ancient elven host who will provide shelter to travelers, but that things are not as they may seem within Shroudgate. One storyteller would tell of a man who left the solace of the mansion, only to find that two hundred years had passed since he entered. Whatever the case, no recent stories have surfaced of Shroudgate, which could mean it doesn't exist, or perhaps that another traveler is currently visiting.

ARTIFACTS OF ALMOR

Beggar's Coin (Coin of Almor)

Price: -

Body Slot: -

Caster Level: 15th

Aura: strong; (DC 22) enchantment

Activation: see text

Weight: -

Few have actually owned the coin of almor, but it has found a place among the tales of the common people, who often wish it upon tax collectors and other debt collectors ("Mayhap next time he will be given the good coin of almor."). The coin of almor is a platinum coin set with the face of an early Prelate on one side, and the council's Basilica in Chathold on the other.

The coin was created not to harm its owner, but to benefit

those in need. However, if any character who intends to keep it and not share it with others, they must make a successful Will save (DC 22) or be overcome with great feelings of philanthropy. No matter what the character's alignment, he will want to give wealth to the poor and needy. The character will not keep more than 50gp at any one time, holding extra money only until a suitable NPC (preferably a beggar, peasant, etc.) accepts the money as a gift. Such generosity does not extend to the any of the character's items, magical or otherwise. The character's uncontrollable generosity can be ended only by a *remove curse* spell.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *antipathy*, *bestow curse*, *sympathy*.

Cost to Create: N/A

Faithstone of Almor

Price: 180gp

Body Slot: -

Caster Level: 1st

Aura: faint; (DC 22) divination

Activation: 1 swift action

Weight: -

These stones have become quite popular with the folk of Almor. They are most commonly given by Pholtans and sometimes priests of Beory. The faithstone is a palm-sized stone that is intricately carved, usually by the Flan stone carvers of the region. Many faithstones exist and some have magical properties while others are simply traditional folk talismans.

The power bestowed by the *faithstones* varies somewhat, but is most commonly the use of the *guidance* spell once per day. These effects are limited to skill use and saving throws, and may be activated by a command word. The *faithstones* are considered sacred in many areas, and are surrounded with much ritual and process.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *guidance*.

Cost to Create: 90gp, 7 XP.

Medallion of Light (Holy Medallion Of Almor)

Price: 14,000gp

Body Slot: neck

Caster Level: 7th

Aura: moderate; (DC 19) enchantment, evocation, necromancy

Activation: 1 standard action

Weight: -

The medallion of light, also known as the holy medallion of almor, is a golden disk with platinum inlay. It was created in 409 CY by the direction of the Council of Almor while still under the rule of the Great Kingdom. The Council had a sense of a pending evil in the future of Almor, and created the medallion of light to help keep peace.

The medallion is not a holy symbol of any deity, but is limited to being used by those of trustworthy alignments

(LG, LN or NG) who are capable of casting divine spells.

Once per day, the medallion's powers can be used on one humanoid creature within 60ft. The affected creature must make a successful Will save (DC 14) or become extremely nauseated by violence. The mere sight of violence causes the affected creature to make a Will save (DC 14) or become helpless and unable to take action for 1d4 rounds. If the creature attempts to physically harm another living creature, it must make a Will save (DC 14) or suffer the same effect as above. Also, the creature suffers the penalties of a *doom* spell.

Further, if they continue to act violently they must make a Will save DC 16 or be dazed for 1 round. A *remove curse* spell will completely free a creature from these effects. The medallion's effects last for 24 hours.

Within one week of being used, the medallion must be renewed and refreshed through a process of immersion in untainted soil of Oerth and bathed in the true light of Sol. Failure to do so will cause the medallion's powers to become ineffective until the process is completed.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *calm emotions*, *doom*, *order's wrath*, caster must be lawful.

Cost to Create: 7,000gp, 560 XP.

Necklace of Almor

Price: -

Body Slot: neck

Caster Level: 12th

Aura: strong; (DC 21) necromancy

Activation: see text

Weight: -

This necklace is rumored to be named after Grand Prince Almor, the namesake of the Prelacy of Almor. For centuries the artifact drifted throughout the Flanaess, but ultimately the Council of Almor recovered the item and locked it away for safe keeping. The item is rumored to be among the many treasures hidden in vaults below the Basilica in Chathold.

Appearing as a rusted, worthless piece of jewelry, this necklace was created by a spiteful spellcaster who wore it all of his life. Ironically, his peaceful death did not activate its vengeful powers. Other wearers have since used it.

The necklace affects only intelligent creatures who cause the wearers death, at which point nine days after its death the victim rises as a revenant (See City of the Spider Queen 127). The revenant gains regeneration 5, and is immune to holy items and turning. Those who slay the revenant must make a successful Will save DC 21 or contract the curse themselves.

This item is cursed and cannot be removed once it is put on except with the aid of a *remove curse* spell.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *bestow curse*, *create undead*, *desecrate*, caster must be evil.

Cost to Create: N/A

MAJOR PERSONAGES OF ALMOR

Duke Younard of Almor

Duke Younard is a distinguished gentleman typically dressed in finery of the mounted cavalry of Nyronde. The Duke is a thin yet imposing figure with neck-length dusty brown hair fashioned in the style of Aerdi nobility. However, the duke is perhaps best known for his piercing cold-slate eyes which purportedly place many at a disadvantage.

Duke Younard finds himself in a precarious position in the annexed regions of Almor, as a buffer state in between the Great Kingdom of North Aerdy, the United Kingdom of Ahlissa, and the Kingdom of Nyronde. Constantly, receiving appeals and threats from outside parties he keeps the peace in this region. Working to rebuild the devastation wrought during the Greyhawk Wars.

The Duke often travels meeting with nobles, accessing and rebuilding the regions under his charge. The Duke typically travels with his elite cavalry unit, the "Thundering Zephyr Guard", which consists of over 500 regular heavy cavalry and 1,500 conscriptable light and heavy cavalry. Though, on such diplomatic missions this number is cut down to about 25 elite heavy cavalry, the Dukes personal bodyguards.

DUKE YOUNARD OF ALMOR CR 13

Male human fighter 13 (Heironeous)

LG Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** -; Spot +5, Listen +5

Languages Nyronde, Common, Elven

AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 27 *protection from evil*

hp 107 (13 HD)

Fort +15 **Ref** +9 **Will** +12

Spd 20ft.

Melee +4 *shock warhammer* +23/+18/+13 (1d8+1d6+13, crit 20/ x3)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +18

Atk Options Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Trip, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge

Combat Gear *potion of bears' endurance* (x2), *potion of cure serious wounds* (x2), *potion of cure critical wounds*, *ring of freedom of movement*

Abilities Str 17 (21), Dex 13, Con 17, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Feats Leadership, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (warhammer), Weapon Specialization (warhammer).

Skills Balance -2, Climb +7, Diplomacy +10, Escape Artist -2, Handle Animal +4, Jump +2, Knowledge (nobility) +8, Knowledge (religion) +4, Move Silently -2, Profession (soldier) +6, Ride +16, Swim -1.

Possessions combat gear, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *belt of giant strength* +4, *cloak of resistance* +4, locking gauntlet, +3 *mithral full plate of protection from evil*, *ring of protection* +4, +4 *shock warhammer*.

Tactics: Duke Younard favors fighting in groups from horseback in a mounted cavalry unit. When forced into melee, he will make use of his Power Attack and Combat Expertise feats and attempt to trip any opponent.

Lord Lael Pirlon Cranden (Sable Phlox)

Always the consummate gentleman, Lord Pirlon is careful to offend none and always follows proper etiquette and form. Considered handsome by many, his chiseled features are classic Cranden, down to the classic arched nose. Approaching 42 years, he is still capable of charming even the most hardened spinster with his skills in lyric and verse.

Lael Pirlon found himself in a bit of a bind when the Almorian Council fell to the forces of Duke Szeffrin. With some quick negotiations he managed to assuage the Duke by swearing fealty to both him and Overking Ivid V. He was allowed to keep his holdings, but not his military forces. His lands were ravaged equally along with the others in Almor. This dishonorable act poisoned Pirlon towards the Great Kingdom, and although he can often be found visiting others of house Cranden in Rel Deven, he distrusts the new Great Kingdom and Overking Xavener. If asked about his position for a Free Almor, he expresses a mild non-committal sentiment. He has found this to be the best way to learn more about other people's true feelings in the matter.

Ultimately Lael Pirlon is motivated by one thing: to return Almor to the Cranden's and its sovereign rule. He will put this goal before all other things. To add further pain to the mix, were the Almorian House Regent still a position held in old Almor, he would have been in line to receive it. This has caused him no end of strife, and he secretly pines for the day he will rule a free Almor.

Lord Pirlon is always manipulating events in Almor, scheming to return power to the Cranden Lords. Many of his maneuvers are innocuous and inconspicuous, but others have been ruthless and cutthroat. He uses many guises, and only uses the name Sable Phlox with those things that appear positive for Almor. Because of this, the Sable Phlox persona has become somewhat of a folk hero.

Another persona he frequently uses is Geal Niholda, a merchant and adviser to the Managing director of the Harp River Trading Company. Lael is aware of the activities of the trading company (smuggling and slavery), and as long as they do not hurt his chances to reclaim Almor, is content to let them do business as they will.

LORD LAEL PIRLON CRANDEN (AKA SABLE PHLOX) CR 11

Male human bard 8/ spymaster 3

LE Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** -; Spot +4, Listen +4

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Old Oeridian

AC 19, touch 16, flat-footed 18

hp 60 (11 HD)

Resistances SR 13

Fort +4 **Ref** +10 **Will** +9 scrying defense,
undetectable alignment

Spd 30ft.

Melee +2 rapier +10/+5 (1d6+2, crit 18-20/x2) or
masterwork dagger +9/+4 (1d4, crit19-20/x2)

Ranged masterwork dagger +10 (1d4, crit19-20/x2)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +23

Atk Options Combat Expertise

Special Atks sneak attack +1d6, suggestion

Combat Gear *hat of disguise*, scroll of *dimension door* and *stone skin*.

Bard Spells Known (CL 8th; +9 ranged touch, +8 vs. SR):

3rd (2/day) - *crushing despair* (DC 19), *dispel magic*, *glibness*.

2nd (5/day) - *cure moderate wounds*, *invisibility*, *eagle's splendor*, *enthrall* (DC 18)

1st (5/day) - *charm person* (DC 17), *cure light wounds*, *expedition retreat*, *tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 17)

0 (4/day) - *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 16), *lullaby* (DC 16), *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 22

SQ bardic music, bardic knowledge, countersong, cover identity, fascinate, inspire competence, inspire courage +2, magic aura, quick change

Feats Deceitful, Negotiator, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Bluff)

Skills Bluff +21, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +22, Disguise +22, Forgery +9, Gather Information +12, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (nobility) +7, Knowledge (Bardic) +8, Listen +4, Perform (Oratory) +13, Ride +3, Search +6, Sense Motive +15, Sleight of Hand +10, Spellcraft +6, Spot +4, Use Magic Device +11.

Possessions combat gear, +3 *glamered mithral chain shirt* (SR 13), +2 *adamantine rapier*, *cloak of charisma* +4, *ring of protection* +1, *masterwork dagger*,

Tactics: He prefers to work behind the scenes rather than take on direct confrontations. If a situation is turning against him, he will take any opportunity to flee or will simply surrender, and will never fight to the death.

Zyrrian Thrylanos

Zyrrian is a bitter half-elf with long jet-black hair worn in a spiral cut (longer on the left side than the right). She has dark eyes and nicely pale skin, and usually dresses in full body skin-tight brown leathers which rise up to cover her neck, leaving only her head and right hand exposed. She has a nasty scar around her neck from a failed hanging attempt and she's given to unconsciously rubbing the area whenever she is distracted, nervous or preoccupied.

While she originally joined the Harp River Trading Company as a lark, Zyrrian quickly worked her way up the chain of command. The strategic disposal of her rivals aided her advance, while her charms convinced all of her innocence. She now rules the company with an iron fist and carefully considers anyone before bringing them into her confidence. Zyrrian uses the trading company as a useful and legitimate front to cover her far more profitable and entertaining (to her) slave trade. She suspects that Geal Niholda's loyalties are not as strong as she would prefer, but his usefulness currently outweighs this potential problem.

ZYRRIAN THRYLANOS CR 10

Female human rogue 3/ fighter 2/ thief-acrobat 5

CE Medium Humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** -; Spot +7, Listen +0

Languages Common, Elven, Flan, Rhopan

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 13 agile fighting +2/ +3, defensive roll 2/day
hp 56 (10 HD)
Fort +9 **Ref** +14 **Will** +5 improved evasion

Spd 40ft. fast acrobatics, steady stance
Melee masterwork net +12/+7 (-, crit 20/-) or +1 *short sword* +8/+3 (1d6+1, crit 19-20/x2) or +2 *longsword* +9/+4 (1d8+2, crit 19-20/x2)
Ranged +1 *mighty longbow* (+1 Str bonus) +12/+7 (1d8+1, crit 20/x3) or masterwork bolas +8/+3 (1d4/ crit 20, x2)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +7
Atk Options blind-fight, kip up,
Special Atks acrobative charge
Combat Gear *boots of striding and springing, ring of freedom of movement, ring of blinking*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12
SQ skill mastery, slow fall 30ft.
Feats Acrobatic, Agile, Athletic, Exotic Weapon Proficiency

(Net), Leadership

Skills Balance +16, Climb +10, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +7, Escape Artist +18, Forgery +4, Gather Information +7, Hide +8, Intimidate +9, Jump +16, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Move Silently +8, Spot +7, Tumble +16.

Possessions combat gear, *bracers of armor* +3, *cloak of resistance* +3, +2 *longsword*, +1 *short sword*, masterwork net, masterwork bolas, +1 *mighty longbow* with 27 arrows.

Tactics - She is known to use terrain to her advantage and is fond of any dirty trick that will give her an edge.

Further Reading

- GA- Greyhawk Adventures (James M Ward, 1988)
- IVID-Ivid the Undying (Carl Sargeant, 1995)
- TAB- The Adventure Begins
- Nyrond Region Website (<http://www.nyrond.org>)



BAKLUNISH DELIGHTS

BAKLUNISH ARMIES

By Ed Healy

Then came heroes from the west – equestrian nomads hardened by centuries of warfare on the steppes of central Oerik. These warriors trained from an early age in the arts of horsemanship and archery, skills for which they are famous to this day.

- Komali chronicles of the Unogonduri dynasty ⁽¹⁾

At the height of their power, the Baklunish controlled a territory greater than any of their predecessors. Their state structure was less centralized, however, with no standing army. The Baklunish Empire was based on a feudal system, with the Padishah, or "Great King," ruling over an array of lesser shahs, tribal chiefs, and garrison commanders. This affected the structure of the Baklunish military. When the need arose, the Padishah appealed to his vassals to bring their available levies to a given place, at a given time. Towns and border forts were garrisoned by warbands loyal to various tribal chiefs and lords, but these forces were not numerous, and far from united. While levies (*izvenyav*) were sometimes supplemented with foreign mercenaries, the backbone of the army (*yavey*) was always the Baklunish themselves.

It is unlikely that any other people could have forged an empire such as that built by the Baklunish. Nomads from central Oerik constantly threatened their western borders, with orcs and other monstrous races raiding from the northeast. Their southern border was first assaulted by Oerid tribesmen, followed by the Suloise, who were constantly looking for times of weakness in which to launch a full-scale invasion. The rapid mobility of the Baklunish cavalry (*sapahan*) allowed them to meet threats from the Sulhauts to the Dramidj on short notice, thus maintaining

the integrity of their state.

At the core of the Baklunish army was the *astol*, a company of 100 men. *Astol* were combined to form *povastol* (1,000 men), which together formed *naistol* (corps of 10,000). When the Padishah was not present, he would appoint a *yavov*, or supreme commander, chosen from one of the great noble families. The Baklunish carried tribal banners, often featuring dragon motifs – with the imperial standard, bearing the likeness of a shedu, only being flown when the Great King was in direct command of his army.

The Baklunish employed hit-and-run tactics against their foes. They would harass enemy units, often feigning retreat in hopes of inspiring pursuit. Fleeing skirmishers would draw pursuing troops away from the main force, suddenly turning to surround them. This harassment also served to weaken enemy lines, preparing them for devastating charges from the Baklunish heavy cavalry. Infantry was used, but was tactically insignificant when compared with the role played by the *sapahan*.

Battles were furious and chaotic affairs designed to unsettle enemy troops. Great drums created thunderous noise, further accented by Baklunish war cries. Skirmishers charged the enemy lines, turning abruptly to retreat while firing over their shoulders at a full gallop. The air was filled with dust so thick that it cut visibility to a few feet. Finally, out of this choking haze charged the Baklunish heavy horse, shattering the weakened enemy lines and causing them to collapse.

As effective as these tactics were, however, the Baklunish generally sought to end their campaigns as



soon as possible so that their dependents could return to their herds and farms. This was particularly true when the Padishah led the army, due to the constant threat of insurrection at home. The vassal kings (there were often more than a dozen at one time) were very independent, and the decentralized nature of the Empire's structure often encouraged ambitious shahs to take advantage in the Great King's absence. The frequency of these rebellions was the chief weakness of the Baklunish Empire, and the main reason it did not expand further than it did.

Azhour Sapahan

The elite of the Baklunish nobility, their charges were used to break through enemy lines after it had already been weakened by archery. It was the threat of this charge that kept enemy formations together, giving the archers concentrated targets for their attacks. They rode special chargers who were trained from birth to carry their riders in a tight knee-to-knee formation. Rider and mount were armored with scale armor, creating a wall of gleaming bronze. Wielding their heavy lances in a two-handed grip, the azhour did not employ shields. The origins of the Zeifan Spahi can be seen in these noble warriors.

Makmi Paynim

Even after the establishment of the Baklunish state, as some groups settled in the verdant lowlands north of the Sulhauts, these tribesmen maintained the nomadic culture of their Paynim ancestors. These horse archers made up the bulk of all Baklunish armies. Armed with a composite horse bow, they were used to weaken enemy formations in preparation for a concentrated cavalry charge. Made from multiple layers of bone, wood and sinew, their uniquely constructed bows allowed these expert horsemen to shoot accurately at a greater distance, and with greater force, than would normally be allowed by one of comparable size.

- (1) At that time Komal was locked in a war with the Sakuri; whose well-trained heavily-armed troops were clearly outclassing the Unogonduri light infantry. Paynim tribes helped the Komali prevail, displacing the Sakuri from the shores of the Ghayar - a land which the Komali there-after dubbed *Bakhourabar*, "The Land of Heroes." '*Bakhour*' is an Old Komali word, meaning hero. It is the root of the name for the Bakhoury Coast, as well as that of the Baklunish themselves.



Rasahr Echeva

The vast Risari plateau gave rise to a form of infantry rarely seen in the Flanaess. Combining spear and bow, these dual-armed troops were very common in the Baklunish west, and formed the backbone of the tribal infantry levy. Sometimes, these lightly armed warriors also served as mercenaries for foreign lords, particularly in north-western Zahind.

Echeva (named after their distinctive hats, called *tseba*) were recruited from the western reaches of the Baklunish Empire, and the more settled regions of Mur. Peopled primary by shepherds, this region served as the front-line in the Empire's struggle to keep the nomadic tribes of central Oerik from migrating east. Armed with an 8-foot spear and a composite short bow, the *echevan* were very well-suited for this task. They could engage in archery duels or fight as close order troops, which most nomadic cavalry were hesitant to engage.

As part of the larger army, *echevan* were useful for protecting the flanks from skirmishers and light cavalry. Primarily, though, they were used to screen the movements of the Baklunish cavalry. Their versatility proved a dangerous tool in the hands of capable commanders, particularly in mountainous regions, where they proved adept ambushers.

Individually, they were skilled warriors, but were not professional soldiers, and no match for the heavily-armored infantry of the Suloise Imperium. Inherently undisciplined troops, they could not be relied upon to put up an extended fight if the situation was not in their favor.

RASAHR ECHEVAN CR 1

Male human warrior 2

N Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Spot +0, Listen +0

Languages Common

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10

hp 16 (2 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0

Spd 30 ft.

Melee spear +2 (1d8+1/x3)

Ranged composite short bow +2 (1d6/x3)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +3

Abilities Str 13, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 10

Feats Point Blank Shot, Toughness

Skills Climb +3, Intimidate +2, Jump +3, Ride +3, Swim +3

Possessions spear, composite shortbow with 40 arrows, 3d4 gp



SABOTEURS OF GIGANTIC DIMENSIONS

By Mike Johnson

Life in the Geoff has never been too kind. Whether working the mines or herding goats and sheep in the hills, these folks have been forced to become hardy individuals. The worst has occurred when every decade or so, giants have come down from the mountains to raid for livestock and to take slaves. Even a well-equipped army is hard pressed against these monstrously strong invaders. Nonetheless, the people have grown accustomed to retreating and allowing their best and brightest adventurers to chase the giants back into their mountainous retreats with sword and sorcery.

Recently there has been a change. Adventurers are not returning in glory, in fact they are not returning at all. The giants have held the lowlands and the income loss from the dormant mines is starting to take a toll on the ability of Keoland and Gran March to fund further action.

During the most recent invasion, a group of two enterprising individuals traveled to the abode of the fire giants to instruct them on the fighting tactics of humans. These two traitors to humanity (or entrepreneurs as they see themselves) willingly gave the giants all the information would need. Mages would become primary targets. Items were crafted for further invasion. Harriston crafted mighty composite bows for the giants. Fastonaa created magical armors to foil invisibility. Once the giants had stabilized their new lands, the traitors identified and distributed any items the giants could use. The remaining magic was given to them for their services. The two returned to Thornward to trade the multitude of magic items, and riches now in their possession. They returned to the giants, this time enhancing their massive weapons of war. In the process of traveling these now lawless lands they encountered hill giants, ogres and orcs. All were slain as testament to the drive to free this land from the humanoids. Many Geoff and Gran March citizens have begun to revere these two as heroes. They have even been invited to the homes of displaced nobles to speak of one day retaking the land (which they have traded away!)

By the third trip, they were able to convince the frost giants to enter the lowlands. All giant shamans and adepts were instruction on how to magically create areas that could mimic their home environment. Rings of resistance having been purchased through their ill gotten gains and now lie in the hands of humanities enemies.

How long this situation will continue remains to be seen. Unless the giants tire of their usefulness or they are exposed, we can be assured treasures will continue to flow from the conquered lands and into the rest of the Flanaess.

The Giants

The fire giants have been the most aggressive in establishing their new kingdom. In doing so they may have provided the means to their undoing. They are now confident in their ability to hold this land, perhaps overly so. Many of their warriors have begun visiting other towns held by giants enforcing the fire giant rule, leaving their women and children to watch their new bases. The frost giant jarl has brought a white dragon from the mountains and neither of them is content to only hold the land offered by the fire giants. What is uncertain is whether the fire giants or humanity will bear the brunt of their attack.

Tactics

Harriston and Fastona have set their tactics to deal with all types of giantkin. They are aware that their arrangement could turn sour at any moment. Fastona will conjure creatures to keep enemies at bay. She will use *summon monster VI* to summon a large earth elemental. If there are many opponents she will call 1-3 fiendish dire wolves with his *summon monster V*. If she is directly attacked she will cast his *dimension door* or *teleport* spells. All summoned creatures will be stronger due to his Augment Summoning feat. When among the fire giants she uses his energy submission to change his fire spells to cold.

Harriston is much simpler in his approach. He starts ranged combat using his mighty composite longbow from horseback. Once the enemy approaches within 150ft. he will drop his longbow and move into position to charge, making use of Ride-By Attack to avoid the reach of his enemies and prevent them from using full round attacks.

Loopholes in an Ingenious Plot

Fastona has used *leomund's secret chest* to avoid suspicion while traveling. Yet, all is not perfect. While trading with the giants some slaves have seen them. One of these slaves, Adeel has made her way back to the Gran March and informed the military commandant station there. Although word is circulating of the humans that are aiding the giants, one would be hard pressed to indict Fastona and Harriston given their sterling reputations. It may cause some to start questioning their missions.

Fastona and Harriston have been carefully looking to add a rogue to their missions. They are slowly inquiring to find the right individual without guild affiliations.

History

If anyone were able to make a successful Knowledge (local) DC 30 skill check they might be able to learn that Fastona once apprenticed under the infamous conjurer, Evard the black.

FASTONA ABREIL CR 11

Male human wizard (conjurer) 11

NE Medium humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** -; Spot +5, Listen +5**Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Undercommon**AC** 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10**hp** 51 (11 HD)**Fort** +7 **Ref** +8 **Will** +9**Spd** 30ft.**Melee** masterwork dagger +6 (1d4, crit 19-20 /x2)**Ranged** masterwork dagger +9 (1d4, crit 19-20 /x2)**Base Atk** +5; **Grp** +5**Combat Gear** *tan bag of tricks, rod of lesser cold substitution metamagic*, wand of *cure serious wounds* (CL 5, 6 charges), wand of *cure light wounds* (CL 1, 28 charges).**Spells Prepared** (CL 11th; +8 ranged touch, +11 vs. SR)6th - *summon monster VI*5th - *cloudkill* (DC 21), *summons monster V*4th - *dimension door* x2, *evard's black tentacles* (DC 20), *fire shield*,3rd - *dispel magic, displacement, fireball* (DC 17), *sleet storm, stinking cloud* (DC 19)2nd - *glitterdust* (DC 18), *melf's acid arrow* x2, *scorching ray, web* (DC 18)1st - *alarm, lesser orb of fire** x2, *mage armor, magic missile*0 - *acid splash* x2, *detect magic, read magic*+ Complete Arcane p. 146, * Spell Compendium p. 151 or Complete Arcane p. 116**Abilities** Str 10, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 14**SQ** summon familiar, barred from enchantment/transmutation schools**Feats** Augment Summoning, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Extend Spell, Greater Spell Focus (conjuration), Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll[®], Spell Focus (conjuration), Split Ray**Skills** Concentration +16, Decipher Script +9, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Listen +5, Ride +5, Spellcraft +19, Spot +5, Use Magic Device +7**Possessions** combat gear, *cloak of resistance* +2, *murlynd's spoon*, masterwork dagger, spellbook, spell component case.**Mount:** Fastona owns a light war horse- Monster Manual 274**HARRISTON DOLERTUS CR 11**

Male human fighter 11

LE Medium Humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** -; Spot +3, Listen +3**Languages** Common, Giant**AC** 22, touch 12, flat-footed 21**hp** 97 (11 HD)**Fort** +12 **Ref** +9 **Will** +9**Spd** 30ft.; 80ft. on horse with *horseshoes of speed***Melee** +1 *giant-bane greatsword* +18/+13/+8 (2d6+9, crit 17-20/ x2) or+1 *giant-bane greatsword* +20/+15/+10 (2d6+9 +2d6, crit 17-20/ x2) vs. giants**Ranged** masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus)**Base Atk** +11; **Grp** +15**Atk Options** Blind-Fight, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Quick-Draw, Ride-By Attack.**Combat Gear** *horseshoes of speed***Abilities** Str 18, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 10**Feats** Blind-Fight, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Quick Draw, Ride-By Attack, Weapon Focus & Specialization (greatsword)**Skills** Climb +7, Craft (bowmaking) +5, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +10, Jump -3, Listen +3, Ride +14, Spot +3, Survival +3, Swim -3**Possessions** combat gear, +1 *giant-bane greatsword*, +1 *full plate, cloak of resistance* +2, *amulet of natural armor* +1, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str) with 100 arrows, buckler shield, masterwork bowmaker's tools.**Spellbook** prepared spells plus, 0 - All PH; 1st *comprehend languages, identify, mount, obscuring mist, ray of enfeeblement, summon monster I*; 2nd - *fog cloud, resist energy, see invisibility, summon monster II*; 3rd , *summon monster III*; 4th - *solid fog, summon monster IV*; 5th - *leomund's secret chest,, teleport*; 6th - *analyze dweomer*.**Mount:** Harriston just purchased an elite heavy warhorse he named Triumph. The beautiful champion mount, Triumph is a prize stallion and superior to most heavy warhorses.**Triumph;** Elite heavy warhorse; hp 22; Monster Manual 274

DENIZENS OF THE FLANAESS

THE DIVINE SLAADI

By Sam Weiss

From the roiling madness of Limbo, a new threat has appeared on Oerth, although a threat many in the more civilized lands are welcoming. Born from a little known incident that involved the Infinite Staircase, a peculiar plague called the Iron Shadow, and the enigmatic beings known as the True Slaad, a new branch of the Slaadi race has appeared. Employing divine-based spell-like abilities, these slaad still embody Chaos, but with a slight bias towards Good. (As opposed to the slight bias towards Evil that appears among some death slaad.) As a result, they prefer to target Lawful and Evil faiths, particularly that of Hextor, but also those of Syrul, Pyremius, and the more oppressive followers of Zilchus. They are rapidly becoming a plague in the lands of the former Great Kingdom, and many fear they will soon spread to other lands, hunting all Lawful clerics, no matter their moral attitudes. Despite this threat, and the inherently violent nature of the slaadi in general, many leaders of Good faiths see them as a great boon in their battles against the oppression that still lingers in those lands. Followers of Trithereon in particular have been known to summon and set them loose in temples of oppressive faiths.

Cyan Slaad

Large Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar)

Hit Dice: 7d8+21 (52 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 19 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +8 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+16

Attack: Bite +11 melee (2d8+7)

Full Attack: Bite +11 melee (2d8+7) and 2 claws +6 melee (1d4+2)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, swallow whole, rebirth, *summon slaad*

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, immunity to sonic, resistance to acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +3

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 15, Con 17 Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 8

Skills: Climb +15, Hide +8, Jump +15, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Spot +8

Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack

Environment: Ever-Changing Chaos of Limbo

Organization: Solitary, pair, gang (3-5), or pack (6-10)

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral

Advancement: 8-10 HD (Large); 11-21 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: +6

This creature looks like an ogre-sized, humanoid, cyan-skinned bullfrog, with a mouth that appears able to swallow a creature nearly as large as itself. It has a fringe of triangles down its back and tail, and its tongue has many small ridges pointing back into its throat.

Cyan slaadi are as weak as red slaadi. They rarely answer to other, more powerful and often cruel slaadi, preferring solitary lives of wandering to settling in to a lair. Cyan slaadi are found in groups only when they are working for some greater power that has somehow mastered them. Even then, their actions are very individualistic, and they are often not worth the effort of trying to control.

The mouth of a cyan slaad actually unhinges when they swallow their prey. Their tongue, while not particularly long for a slaad, has the tell-tale ridges noted above that aid it in swallowing prey.

Cyan slaadi usually attack only when hungry, or excited. Even when especially hungry, a cyan slaad will typically flee after having eaten its fill.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the cyan slaad must hit a medium or smaller opponent with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple, it establishes a hold, and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Swallow Whole (Ex): The cyan slaad can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Medium or smaller size by making a successful grapple check. Once inside the opponent takes 1d8+2 points of crushing damage plus 1d6+1 points of acid damage from the slaad's digestive juices. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 10 points damage to the slaad's digestive tract (AC 14). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out.



Rebirth (Su): Anyone who takes damage in a cyan slaad's stomach must make a DC 16 Fortitude save every round or be "reborn" 3 days later if it dies within 24 hours of being affected, and is not in the cyan slaad's stomach. (The cyan slaad will typically regurgitate anyone that dies inside its stomach so they will be so reborn.) A creature that is unconscious will automatically fail this save. The transformation may be halted by casting either *remove curse* or *dispel chaos* on the body before it changes.

It retains none of the features, traits, memories, or abilities of its former self, and is a normal yellow slaad in all respects. If the creature was a divine spellcaster, the rot instead produces a magenta slaad.

Summon Slaad (Sp): Once per day a cyan slaad can attempt to summon another cyan slaad with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell.

Yellow Slaad

Large Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar)

Hit Dice: 8d8+32 (68 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 20 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +9 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+18

Attack: Tongue lash +11 melee (2d6+6)

Full Attack: Tongue lash +11 melee (2d6+6) and 2 claws +6 melee (2d6+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Create spawn, spell-like abilities, *summon slaad*

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, immunity to sonic, resistance to acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +4

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 15, Con 19 Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +17, Hide +9, Jump +17, Listen +9, Move Silently +13, Spot +9

Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Extended Reach (tongue – 15 ft. reach with tongue)

Environment: Ever-Changing Chaos of Limbo

Organization: Solitary, pair, gang (3-5), or pack (6-10)

Challenge Rating: 8

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral

Advancement: 9-12 HD (Large); 13-24 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: +6

This creature appears to be yellow-skinned troll-like toad. Its barbed tongue is extremely long, and is crenellated with tens of thousands of tiny barbs along its length. It has a fringe of squarish projections down its back.

Yellow slaadi are harsh individualists to the extent of being solitary survivalists in some cases. They tolerate their only their own or their spawn on travels and create elaborately booby-trapped lairs stocked for sieges that almost never happen. They are often used as short-ranged missile attack groups massed together as a unit on the rare occasions when they are mastered and used for war.

The tongue of yellow slaad stretches a full 20', 15' of which it can reach and attack. The tiny barbs along it break off when the tongue hits. The barbs burrow in and decay, causing slaad rot.

Yellow slaadi attack unpredictably, and almost always using hit-and-run tactics, even when massed as a unit. It sometimes appears that it is not fully in control of its attack with its tongue and occasionally one will actually apologize before fleeing after such seemingly unintentional attacks.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *ethereal jaunt*, *hold person* (DC 13), *stone shape*; 1/day – *chaos hammer* (DC 14). Caster level 8th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

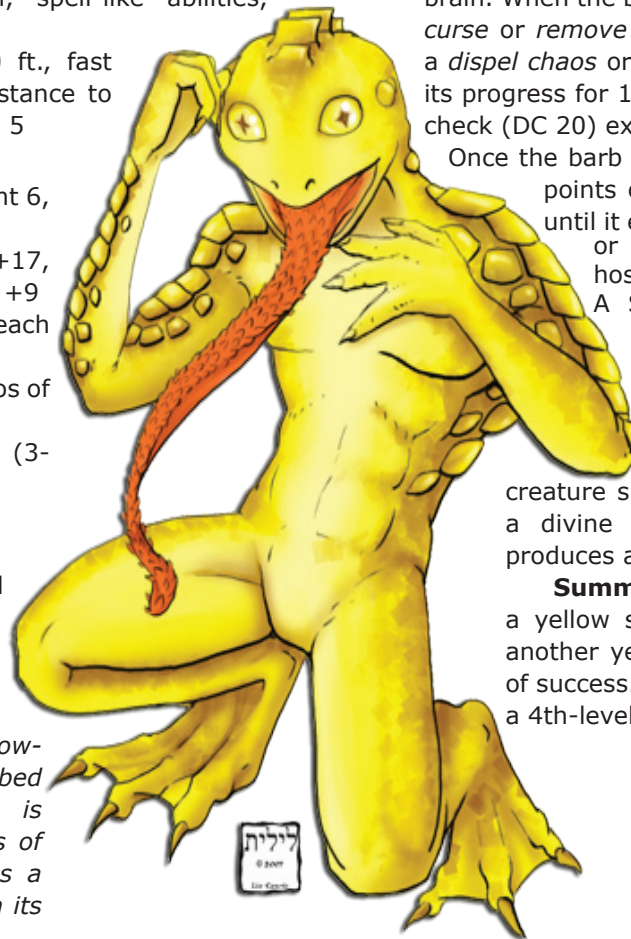
Create Spawn (Su): Once per round as a free action when the yellow slaad hits with its tongue it can inject a barb into an opponent.

Each barb is a Fine outsider with AC 10 and 1 hp. It can be killed with normal damage or the touch of iron. On the slaad's next action, the barb burrows into the host's flesh. (A creature with a natural armor bonus of +5 or higher is immune to this burrowing effect.) The barb makes its way to the host's spine, dealing 1 point of damage per round for 1d4+4 rounds. At the end of that period, it reaches the brain. When the barb is inside a victim, a *remove curse* or *remove disease* effect destroys it, and a *dispel chaos* or *neutralize poison* effect delays its progress for 10d6 minutes. A successful Heal check (DC 20) extracts the barb and kills it.

Once the barb reaches the spine, it deals 1d2 points of Dexterity damage per round until it either is killed (by *remove curse* or *remove disease*) or slays its host (death occurs at 0 Dexterity).

A Small, Medium-size, or Large creature slain by a barb rises as a new cyan slaad 1d6+4 rounds later; a Tiny or smaller creature quickly dissolves into chaos; and a Huge or larger creature simply dies. If the creature was a divine spellcaster, the barb instead produces a magenta slaad.

Summon Slaad (Sp): Once per day a yellow slaad can attempt to summon another yellow slaad with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 4th-level spell.



Magenta Slaad

Large Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar)

Hit Dice: 9d8+36 (76 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 23 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +13 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 22

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+19

Attack: Claw + 14 melee (1d6+6)

Full Attack: 2 claws +14 melee (1d6+6) and bite +12 melee (2d8+3)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities, *summon slaad*

Special Qualities: Change shape, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, immunity to sonic, resistance to acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +6

Abilities: Str 23, Dex 13, Con 19 Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +18, Concentration +10, Hide +9, Jump +18, Listen +12, Move Silently +13, Search +12, Spot +12, Survival +6 (+8 if following tracks)

Feats: Cleave, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack

Environment: Ever-Changing Chaos of Limbo

Organization: Solitary or gang (2-5)

Challenge Rating: 9

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral

Advancement: 10-15 HD (Large); 16-27 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: +7

This creature is a solidly built, magenta-skinned, humanoid toad. Its claws seem almost too large to allow it to manipulate ordinary objects. It has a fringe of pentagons down its back that appear to bear unknown glyphs.

The Magenta slaadi are unable to act freely in most cases. They are usually angry and irritable and frequently strike out at any nearby objects or creatures in an uncontrolled rage. Greatly prized for their prowess, they will at times be formed into a gang by a higher power. The fringe makes these, of all slaadi, most vulnerable to controlling and binding enchantments, and may function in a similar manner for the other light slaadi. This fringe lies flat as impressions along their spines in any altered humanoid form.

Magenta slaadi attack on sight and do not limit their attacks to the living but are often found attacking inanimate objects and mutilating corpses. Typically they begin their attacks with a Chaos Hammer, Castigate or even a Shatter against backpacks expected to be stuffed with potions, before following up with melee attacks before blinding all with a deeper darkness, backing out of the area, and beginning a similar sequence again. They will withdraw if they are greatly damaged and there is no other nearby combat visible to trigger their repressed rage.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *castigate** (DC 15), *chaos hammer* (DC 15), *detect magic* (DC 13), *detect thoughts* (DC 13), *protection from law*, *see invisibility*, *shatter* (DC 13); 3/day – *call lightning* (DC 14),



dispel law (DC 16), *deeper darkness*. Caster level 9th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

* – indicates spell found in the *Spell Compendium*.

Change Shape (Su): A magenta slaad can assume any Medium or Large humanoid form as a standard action. In humanoid form, a magenta slaad cannot use its natural weapons (although a slaad can equip itself with weapons and armor appropriate to its appearance). A magenta slaad remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the slaad reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form.

Summon Slaad (Sp): Once per day a magenta slaad can attempt to summon another magenta slaad with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 5th-level spell.

Slate (Gray) Slaad

Medium Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar)

Hit Dice: 10d8+50 (95 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 24 (+3 Dex, +11 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 21

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+14

Attack: Claw +14 melee (2d4+4)

Full Attack: 2 claws +14 melee (2d4+4) and bite +12

melee (2d8+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities, *summon slaad*

Special Qualities: Change shape, damage reduction 10/lawful. darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, immunity to sonic, resistance to acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +10, Will +9

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 17, Con 21 Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14

Skills: Climb +17, Concentration +15, Hide +16, Jump +17, Knowledge (religion) +15, Listen +15, Move Silently +16, Search +15, Spellcraft +17, Spot +15, Survival +5 (+7 if following tracks)

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Item creation feat (any one)

Environment: Ever-Changing Chaos of Limbo

Organization: Solitary or pair

Challenge Rating: 10

Treasure: Double standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral

Advancement: 11-15 HD (Medium); 16-30 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment: +6

Lithe but sturdy, this humanoid resembles a two-legged frog. Its skin is a dappled gray color, and its fingers are long and clawed. It stands as tall as a human. It has a small fringe of hexagons down its back that splits along its neck, rejoining in a large crown-like hexagon on its head.

A magenta slaad that survives for more than a century retreats into isolation for at least a year. It returns as a smaller, leaner slate slaad and devotes most of its time and attention to theological study. Slate slaadi enjoy crafting magic items to further their own power.

Slate slaadi only rarely associate with other slate slaadi. While they are more than capable of organizing a gang of lesser slaadi, and may rarely be found serving a life slaad, they find their own kind nearly intolerable. Their intense theological inquiries lead them to adopt fanatical views that always lead to verbal confrontations, and too often lead to outright violence. Because most of their spells are useless against each other, they are forced to use their natural weapons to tear into each other in what are often shockingly bloody displays. Perhaps the best way to get rid of a slate slaad is to bring another one into the area. They will inevitably focus on each other to the exclusion of any others present, allowing any of their former targets to escape.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *briar web** (DC 15), *castigate** (DC 16), *chaos hammer* (DC 16), *deeper darkness*, *detect magic*, *identify*, *invisibility*, *magic circle against law*, *see invisibility*; 3/day – *animate objects*, *dispel law* (DC 17), *fly*, 1/day – *power word stun*. Caster level 10th. The save

DCs are Charisma-based.

* – indicates spell found in the *Spell Compendium*.

Change Shape (Su): A gray slaad can assume any humanoid form as a standard action. In humanoid form, a gray slaad cannot use its natural weapons (although a slaad can equip itself with weapons and armor appropriate to its appearance). A gray slaad remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the slaad reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form.

Summon Slaad (Sp): Twice per day a gray slaad can attempt to summon 1-2 cyan slaadi or 1 yellow slaad with a 60% chance of success, or 1 magenta slaad with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 5th-level spell.

Life Slaad

Medium Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar)

Hit Dice: 15d8+90 (157 hp)

Initiative: +10

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 27 (+5 Dex, +12 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 22

Base Attack/Grapple: +15/+20

Attack: Claw +20 melee (3d6+5 plus stun)

Full Attack: 2 claws +20 melee (3d6+5 plus stun) and bite +18 melee (2d10+2)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Stun, spell-like abilities, *summon slaad*

Special Qualities: Change shape, damage reduction 10/lawful. darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, immunity to sonic, resistance to acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5, telepathy 100 ft.

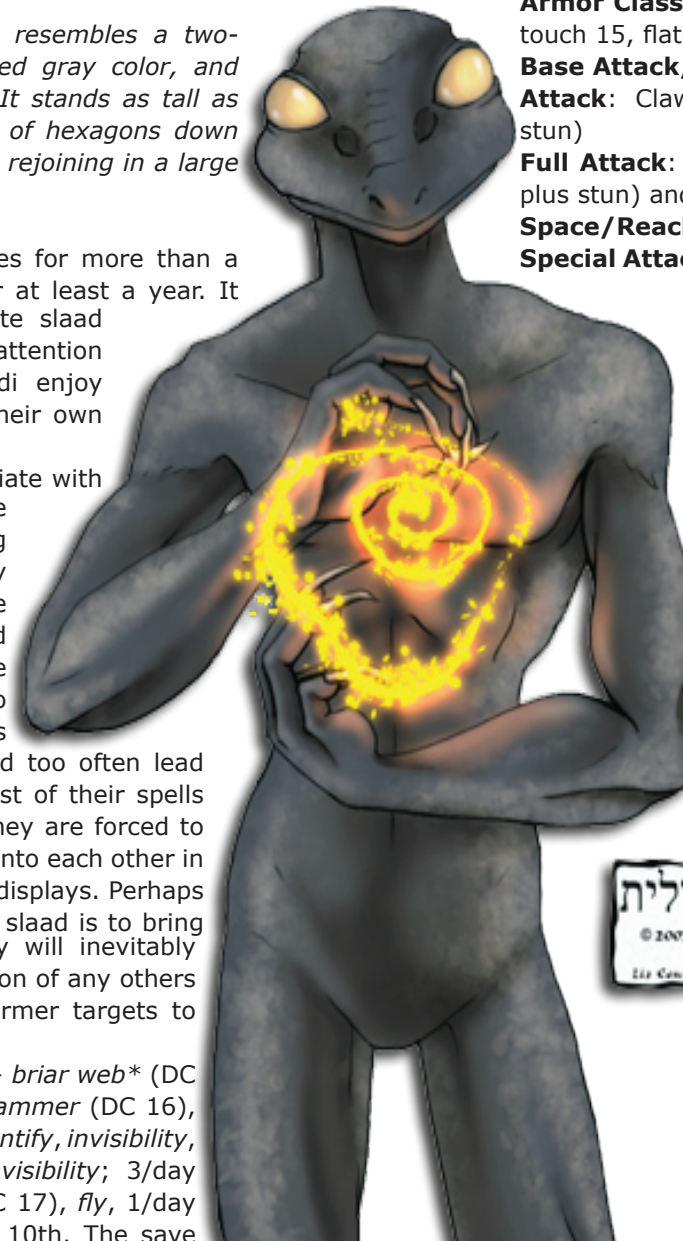
Saves: Fort +15, Ref +14, Will +13

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 21, Con 23 Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 18

Skills: Climb +23, Concentration +16, Diplomacy +22, Heal +22, Hide +23, Jump +23, Knowledge (any two) +22, Listen +22, Move Silently

+23, Search +22, Spot +22, Survival +12 (+14 if following tracks), Use Rope +6 (+8 with bindings)

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Multiattack



Environment: Ever-Changing Chaos of Limbo

Organization: Solitary or pair

Challenge Rating: 13

Treasure: Double standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic good

Advancement: 16-22 HD (Medium); 23-45 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment: -

Lithe but sturdy, this humanoid resembles a two-legged frog. Its skin is a dappled gray color, and its fingers are long and clawed. It stands as tall as a human. It has a small fringe of heptagons (seven-sided parallelograms) down its back that splits along its neck, rejoining in a large crown-like heptagon on its head.

Life slaadi are the opposite of the death slaadi, undergoing a ritual that unlocks potent healing powers. They use these both to sustain others of their kind, as well as go on undead hunts across the planes.

Life slaadi do not seem to inspire the same degree of obedience among other slaadi as do the death slaadi. The race is too chaotic to respect something as transitory as healing, and their sense of obligation is nonexistent, as opposed to their fear of the death slaadi. Life slaadi represent a contamination of pure chaos by good rather than paragons of it.

Stun (Ex): Three times per day, a life slaad can attempt to stun its opponent on an attack with one its natural weapons. If the opponent fails a DC 21 Fortitude save, it is stunned for 1 round in addition to taking normal damage from the attack. The save DC is Wisdom-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will - *animate objects*, *chaos hammer* (DC 18), *cloak of bravery**, *cure serious wounds*, *deeper darkness*, *detect magic*, *dispel law* (DC 17), *fly*, *identify*, *invisibility*, *magic circle against law*, *see invisibility*, *shatter* (DC 16), *undeath to death* (DC 20);

3/day - *vigorous circle** (DC 20), *cloak of chaos* (DC 22), *word of chaos* (DC 21);

1/day - *mass heal* (DC 23), *power word blind*.

Caster level 15th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

* - indicates spell found in the *Spell Compendium*.

Change Shape (Su): A life slaad can assume any humanoid form as a standard action. In humanoid form, a life slaad cannot use its natural weapons (although a slaad can equip itself with weapons and armor appropriate to its appearance). A life slaad remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the slaad reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form.

Summon Slaad (Sp): Twice per day a life slaad can attempt to summon 1-2 cyan or yellow slaadi with a 60% chance of success, or 1-2 magenta slaadi with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 6th-level spell.



WITH BOCCOBS BLESSING

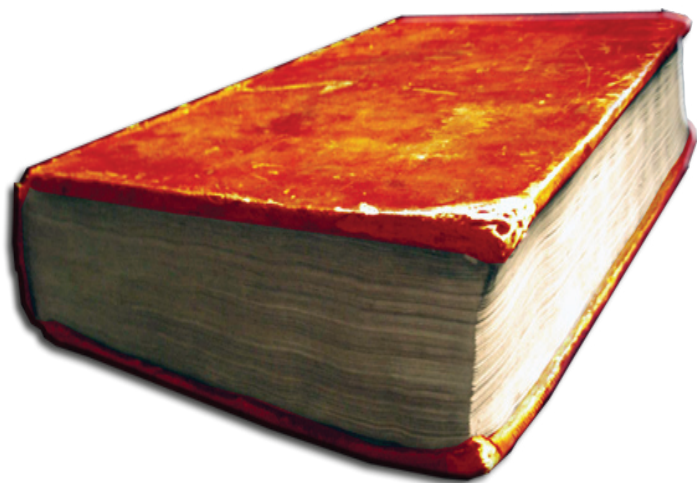
ORIGINS OF THE TWIN CATAclysms

By Rick "Duicarthan" Miller and Denis "Maldin" Tetreault

"It has come to my attention that various spellcasters and factions throughout the Flanaess are seeking to either possess the essence of power magic or to conceal it. Many have hypothesized that the artifact known only as *Xodast's Tome of Research* may very well have survived the Twin Cataclysms.

Upon further research, and with a little bit of outer planar help, I have deduced that the book itself was made from the red and black scaly substance of a creature not of this world. From the notes of an apprentice to Slerotin, I have learned that the creature the substance comes from is commonly referred to as a pyroclastic dragon."

- From a letter discovered in the ruins of Maure Castle by Mordenkainen, circa 566 CY



HISTORY OF THE INVOKED DEVASTATION

The Invoked Devastation was the result of a spell developed by Xodast Xuel-Crix, arguably one of the most brilliant minds of the last two millennia. Xodast's main reference work was an ancient and mysterious tome titled the *Codex of the Infinite Planes*. Within this tome, Xodast discovered the means to temporarily transpose one plane over another, effectively producing a major planar breach. During this breach, properties of the transposing plane could affect a vast area. Early experiments were conducted within the confines of his laboratories, in the ancient Suel city of Suendrako, with varying, though staggering results.

It was not until he tapped into the Gray Wastes that Xodast discovered the true destructive power of such a planar conjunction. He quickly penned several scrolls describing the process and recorded the entire experiment into his spellbook (now known as *Xodast's Tome of Research*). Years later, while pouring over these notes, Xodast developed a wondrous artifact used to enhance the effects of all spells involving extraplanar activity or planar transposition. Fearing the catastrophic implications of using such a device, he quickly secreted the device away within the vaults of the Royal Academy of Magic. He further warned the headmasters that it was not to be used, for it was the "bringer of all doom."

Many years passed and Xodast's work lay all but forgotten until the Suel, forewarned of impending cataclysm, sought out the arcane device. The greatest of all the Suel wizards from each house (listed below) were hastily summoned to the Imperial Council Chamber in the capital city. As the hour grew dim, they finally agreed to remove *Xodast's Tome of Research* from the vaults and to activate the *bringer of doom*. Assembled in the grand Council Chamber, many of the spellcasters used various scrying devices to determine the width and depth of the magical assault they planned. Finally, after much consultation, Xolan began casting the ritual aided by the other eleven wizards. Within minutes, a gout of grey smoke belched from the *bringer of doom* as the spell struck the Baklunish Empire.

On the Baklunish plain thick clouds of virulent grey vapor darkened the mid-day, appearing to taint, infect and rot all living matter they touched. As the decaying nature of the Gray Wastes bled into the Baklunish Empire, all life for hundreds of miles was annihilated and structures began to crumble, leaving no trace of habitation. As the two planes bled into one nightmarish realm, thousands of hordlings from the Gray Wastes suddenly found themselves on the Prime Material Plane along with their master, the god Incabulos, whose realm was within the area. Delighted at the invitation to this realm, Incabulos rampaged through the Baklunish capital of Udrुकankar, leaving a trail of pestilence and death in his wake.

As the nightmarish decay and destruction rapidly crumbled their world into dust, not all Bakluni were paralyzed by the unbelievable horror. Assembling at the ancient site of Tovag Baragu, they gathered and prepared their counterstrike.

The Twelve Suel Mages of Power

1. Slerotin, House Zelred
2. Rellimirck, House Rhola
3. Xiomara, House Malhel
4. Maquel, House Zolax
5. Saeryn, House Neheli
6. Itzal, House Cruski
7. Xolan, descendant of Xodast, House Xuel-Crix
8. Ferrelen, House Shnai
9. Jekova, House Fruztii
10. Mareena, House Lerera
11. Gargerenis, House Linth
12. Kevellian, House Maure

NEW EPIC SPELL: INVOKED DEVASTATION (RITUAL)

Conjuration [Destruction]

Spellcraft DC: 52 or with artifact boost 40

Components: V, S, Ritual, XP

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: (See below)

Effect: 1d6 damage per round (60ft. radius), plus *hunefer rot* or with artifact boost 2d6 damage per round (900 mile radius), plus *hunefer rot*

Duration: 1 round/ level.

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

To Develop: 468,000gp; 10 days; 18,720 XP

Factors: destruction seed (DC 29), Decay (+28 DC), No Spell Resistance (+10 DC), 1d6 Damage/ Level (+1 DC), Range (Long 400ft. + 40ft. / level) (+2 DC), 60ft. radius (+2 DC)

Mitigating Factors: burn 2,000 XP (-20 DC)

Factors with artifact boost: destruction seed (DC 29), Decay (+28 DC), No Spell Resistance (+10 DC), 2d6 Damage/ Level (+2 DC), Extended Duration (+20 DC), Unlimited range on current plane (+200 DC), 900 mile radius (+200 DC)

Mitigating Factors with artifact boost: eleven additional casters contributing an epic-level spell slot (-209 DC), burn 1,000 XP per caster (-120 DC), Major Artifact contributor (-120 DC).

Casting this spell invokes the decaying nature of the Gray Wastes to transpose over the currently targeted area, in this case boosted by the *bringer of doom*, a device rumored to intensify spell effects involving planar breaches from one plane to another (as detailed in *Manual of the Planes* 220).

The spell initiates an incurable decay resembling *hunefer rot* that, over a matter of minutes, completely destroys anything it touches, whether plant or animal. As the two planes touch, a near-invisible gray mist sweeps through the designated area appearing to taint and decompose all living matter. The mist is merely an effect of the planar contact, however, rather than a cause. Protection from gas (or any other type of physical barrier) has no affect. Any target within the area of this spell when it is cast suffers 1d6 points of damage/round for 1 round per level of the spellcaster. While damage (and decay) occurs over a number of rounds, the initiation of the incurable spell affect is instantaneous, and will continue unabated if the victim is teleported away from the area. If the target is reduced to -10 hit points or less (or a construct, object, or undead is reduced to 0 hit points), or reaches 0 Constitution, it is utterly destroyed as if disintegrated.

Hunefer Rot (Su)

Unlike normal diseases, *hunefer rot* requires a victim to make a successful Fort saving throw (DC 35) every round or take another 1d6 points of temporary Constitution damage. The rot continues until the victim reaches Constitution 0 (and dies) or receives a *remove disease*

spell or similar magic. An afflicted creature that dies shrivels away into sand unless both *remove disease* and *raise dead* (or better) are cast on the remains within 2 rounds.

NEW ARTIFACT: THE BRINGER OF DOOM

This metallic, 6-inch-square, box-shaped device is covered in various sigils and engraved with arcane markings and predates the destruction of the Suel Imperium. In fact, the arcane device actually exists across many more dimensions than can be perceived, its appearance merely its representation within normal 3-dimensional space. Its true shape is neither known nor fathomable by mortal minds. It is the very same artifact that was used in the *Invoked Devastation* against the Baklunish Empire. The *bringer of doom*, created by Xodast Xuel-Crix around -618 CY, was crafted with the aid of another even more ancient and mysterious artifact known as the *Codex of the Infinite Planes*. Utilizing the arcane knowledge within the *Codex*, Xodast breached the planar boundaries, allowing for a temporary planar transposition, and from thence the *bringer of doom* was first utilized.

When activated, the *bringer of doom* allows its user to enhance the effects of any spell that involves extraplanar activity. If used with the proper rituals, large areas of one plane can temporarily transpose over another, effectively producing a major planar breach. During this breach, properties of the transposing plane can affect a tremendous area.

Xodast's early experiments were tested within the protective confines of his laboratories. During these conjunctions, denizens of the transposed plane could cross the barrier without gates or portals, effectively existing on both planes at once, though once the spell expires the outsider must choose which plane to stay on (such as in the case of Incabulos and the hordlings released during the *Invoked Devastation*).

Three centuries later, after Xodast's untimely demise during a major planar breach, the artifact was removed from the vaults of the Royal Academy of Magic and used in a rare ritual developed by Xodast himself, called the "Invoked Devastation" (which, ironically, became the name for the actual event as well).

While using this artifact, any spells cast that utilize conjuration or evocation are Intensified, Extended, Enlarged, and Widened. The spell's range extends to Unlimited, as long as the caster can see the target (including scrying) and as long as the target is on the same plane. The spell's duration is extended by 2 ranks, (instantaneous becomes 1 round/level). The spell's area of effect also can span up to a 900-mile radius. Spells cast in this fashion require the aid of eleven other spellcasters to empower the artifact. Each spellcaster must submit an epic level spell and burn 1,000 XP.

Overpowering evocation and conjuration; CL 21+; Weight 5 lbs; Reference *Monster Manual II* (1st-edition) 75, *Star Cairns* 38

HISTORY OF THE RAIN OF COLORLESS FIRE

When the noon sky over Udrukankar began to darken, buildings began to crumble under their own weight, gruesome diseases began to spread like wildfire across the land, and thousands of demon spawn began appearing everywhere and rampaging through the populace, Ilkben and his team rushed to Tovag Baragu with the assembled *ashen staff*.

With the *ashen staff*, Ilkben and six other Bakluni mage-priests performed a ritual combining positive and negative elemental energies into one. At the climax of the ritual, Ilkben inserted the staff into a 2-inch hole at the very center of Tovag Baragu and opened gates to the Elemental Energy planes. Though what occurred next was unclear, it is believed that Dorgha Torgu (greater god of natural elements and demiplanes) emerged from a gate and aided the waning spellcasters. By sacrificing his own divine ranks Dorgha Torgu was able to control (and target) the empowered spell, producing what appeared to be an intensely bright straw-yellow beam that emanated from the center of Tovag Baragu and shot up into the sky.

The searing beam of light reached a thousand miles into the sky before returning as colorless droplets of fire. From the Baklunish capital it seemed to disappear into space, falling back to Oerth over the Suel Empire. The beam was so bright that early Flan mythology from the eastern Flanaess speaks of a night when the moon in the sky briefly brightened three-fold as light from the beam reflected off its surface.

As the beam expanded, unfathomable energies poured into Ilkben, his fellow wizards, and beyond, for the full one-mile diameter of Tovag Baragu. (It has been discovered that energy continues to leak from Tovag because the gates were not properly shut down. Currently, these open portals help maintain the Sea of Dust's present condition. Only by assembling the *ashen staff* again, a very dangerous task indeed, can one shut the gates at Tovag Baragu.)

Though severely drained by their efforts the wizards, unbeknownst to history, did not die. Complex interactions and resonances between the *ashen staff*, Tovag Baragu, energy from the positive and negative energy planes, as well as divine energy from Dorgha Torgu himself, transformed them into the cursed soulless husks called hunefers. Further, since these now-undead demipowers could not be allowed to roam free as a threat to all life, the grieving Istus was forced to place these soul husks into stasis for all time. Rumors purport that these spellcasters were imprisoned somewhere in the lands north of what would much later become Iuz's holdings, somewhere in or near the Howling Hills. Only Iuz knows for sure and he's not telling, as he later discovered them and found a unique use for the husks.

NEW ITEM: THE ASHEN STAFF

The *Ashen Staff* is a three-part collaborative major artifact created by the Baklunish archmage Ilkben and the council of elders using the *Codex of the Infinite Planes*. It has only

been assembled once, on the day that Ilkben called down the Rain of Colorless Fire upon the Suel Empire. Except for an obscure reference in the *Scroll of Dust* (<http://melkot.com/mysteries/scroll-of-dust.html>), there is very little information recorded about this ancient item. The three parts are known as the *rod of ash*, the *great krystal of Askaf*, and the *fire rod of the Suloise*, respectively. Each of these pieces shares the following traits:

- All are immune to all divination, scrying, and detection spells.
- All are made of an unknown material that has been hardened, making it nigh invulnerable.

Collection Benefits

To assemble the pieces of the *ashen staff*, the *fire rod of the Suloise* must be inserted into the hole in the *rod of ash*, leaving approximately a half-inch protruding from the top. The *great krystal* locks onto this protrusion, and over the top of the *ashen staff*.

In addition, the combined pieces grant the user the following abilities:

(At will) - use the effect of the *fire rod of the Suloise* as a swift action

(3/day) - add up to all four metamagic feats from the *rod of ash* to a cast spell, as a free action and incurring the same penalties.

(1/day) - *time stop*

(special) - control Tovag Baragu (the *crystal* alone cannot)

Combining all three pieces grants the user the following abilities in addition to those listed above:

The *staff's* wielder may alter the crystal's planar "setting" by attuning to it; otherwise the staff remains attuned to its last planar setting. Given that the staff has only been assembled once, it is likely a new wielder will find the crystal still has its original setting. It is possible that Quaal managed to change the setting on the crystal, if the nature of the Defiled Glades is any clue (see below).

Inserting the assembled *ashen staff* into Tovag Baragu, the most powerful gate system on Oerth (and an artifact in its own right) opens the gates there for the caster to control at will; however, these gates might remain open unless deliberately closed by the *staff* wielder (and the wielder may be otherwise too distracted to think of doing such a thing). Without fully understanding how to control the *ashen staff* and Tovag Baragu it would likely be a truly unwise action of epic (and continental) consequence to open such portals.

The Rod of Ash

After reading accounts of former apprentices, a sage in Melkot believes that Marchanter Melkotia once possessed this item. However, no one else believes that those sketchy accounts of a white staff refer to this particular item and it has not been used enough times through history for accurate information to have been passed down.



The main shaft (the only portion that is normally referred to as the *ashen staff*) resembles a white, unglazed ceramic staff approximately 5 feet long and 2 inches in diameter, with no markings or decorations. In the top of the staff is a small hole approximately a half-inch in diameter. The staff is much lighter than its ceramic-looking composition would suggest; it is about the same weight as a similarly sized wooden rod. The unglazed ceramic has an almost gritty feel, and the few historical references to this artifact attribute the *staff's* name to that feature. There is no record of this item ever being used for anything special, nor is there a record of its maker.

When wielded, this item functions like a *greater metamagic rod of enlarge, extend, maximize and widen spell*; except that the user may can apply two abilities to a cast spell rather than once. This ability can be used up to three times per day. Activating the staff in this capacity temporarily drains 1 Charisma point per level increased.

(For Example: if the user uses both maximize spell and empower spell, the user is drained 5 points of Charisma. Charisma points lost in this manner cannot be restored by spells and recover at the rate of one per day.)

If a properly prepared "spell template" is inserted into the hole at the top of the staff, its true power is revealed.

Strong (no school); CL 20th; Weight 4lbs;
Reference: [Secrets of the Twin Cataclysms](http://melkot.com/mysteries/cataclysms.html) at <http://melkot.com/mysteries/cataclysms.html> by Denis "Maldin" Tetreault.

The Great Krystal of Askaf

This 6-inch-diameter, perfectly transparent, crystal sphere bears a slight lavender tint. The *crystal* has a 2 inch diameter circular depression in it approximately an inch deep. In the center of that depression is another depression a half-inch in diameter and a half-inch deep.

Spending most of its history inert and undetectable, it is believed that Quaal once possessed the *crystal*. It is unknown what he learned about it, if anything, and the *krystal* has been lost since. After stumbling onto several writings of Quaal during his Vesve campaigns, Iuz has come to believe the artifact could be of great use to him for controlling gates, and currently has several teams searching the Flanaess for it. Unbeknownst to anyone (including Iuz), the *crystal* still contains the psionic "mental signature" of one of Ilkben's special assistants - the assistant that imbued it with psionic energy. Since 545 CY (6060 SD), the *crystal* is no longer inert, and it began "leaking" energy in 584 CY. In the relatively short time since then, the Defiled Glades (WGR4 The Marklands 51) within the Vesve Forest have formed and continue to grow. The artifact's immunity to detection and divination has thus far prevented anyone from discovering exactly what is forming the Defiled Glades.

To attune to the *crystal* the user must make a successful Psicraft or Spellcraft check (DC 30). When attuned to both the user and an existing planar gate, the user can force the gate to open to a desired plane, create planar breaches, and activate planar touchstones (See Planar Handbook 153). The *crystal* is treated as a *master gate-key* (see the Planescape campaign setting for descriptions of *gate*

keys).

The *krystal* is reputed to have both arcane and psionic properties. What is not known is that it can also control the flow of energy through an activated gate, and has indeed only been used once in that function. When assembled, the *krystal* is what provides the primary source of arcane energy by tapping into any nearby gates, and funneling it through the fully assembled *ashen staff*.

Further, once the user is attuned he may use the following spells/ psionic abilities:

(3/ day) *resist planar alignment, false gravity*

(1/day) - *plane shift, seal portal*

(1/week) - *astral seed, gate, greater plane shift*

(1/ month) - *genesis, precipitate complete breach*

Using the *crystal's* gate-key function, or any of its spell-like powers, grants any outsider close to the portal an immediate Spot check (DC 25) to notice the gate and investigate of their own volition. Most good outsiders will not choose to pass through the gate. This acts as a uncontrolled *gate* spell.

Strong (no school); CL 20th; Weight 4lbs; Reference: [Secrets of the Twin Cataclysms](http://melkot.com/mysteries/cataclysms.html) at <http://melkot.com/mysteries/cataclysms.html> by Denis "Maldin" Tetreault.

Fire Rod of the Suloise

This third part of the *ashen staff* is a small ceramic rod a half inch in diameter and 10 inches long. A few ill-informed (and inexperienced) sages believe this is the device that caused the destruction of the Suel Empire, while most others believe it may have been created merely as a pale, albeit deadly, simulation of the event. No scholar doubts that its creator was a wizard of great power and violent tendencies. Ironically, those disreputable sages are correct. In truth this device is the first and true *fire rod of the Suloise*, which has since had many imitators. The rod is rarely bought or sold, since few wizards dare to use it. More often than not, it falls into the hands of an unsuspecting spellcaster who never realizes its full powers and dangers until it is too late.

The *fire rod of the Suloise* actually functions as a *spell template* for the *ashen staff*, and is the item that defines the spell effect that the *ashen staff* produces from whatever energy source that it taps into. Although Ilkben created only a single *template*, it is theoretically possible that a sufficiently knowledgeable and skilled arcane spellcaster (if one had ever existed again) might have since created another.

Unlike the other two parts of the *ashen staff*, the *fire rod of the Suloise* has been passed from wizard to wizard for centuries, having built up quite a long history about itself. While its magical effect is undeniably deadly, it is of limited range and power, and true experts all agree that this could not possibly be the source of the actual historic event. As a seemingly minor item of limited ability, most never realize that it is indeed an artifact, thinking that it is an item that merely has anti-detection properties imbued within it. The last known owner of the *rod* was a mid-level member of the City of Greyhawk's Wizard's Guild. He was killed in an accident that utterly destroyed his residence. The present location of the *rod* is unknown.

The *rod* can summon deadly goutts of hellfire to rain down in a 60-foot cube from a range of up to 400+ feet. The hellfire inflicts 6d6 points of damage per round to all creatures, regardless of protections, resistances, or immunities to normal or magical flame. Such damage cannot be cured by any spell less powerful than a *heal* spell. Furthermore, the fire destroys buildings of less than stone construction and evaporates freestanding liquid to a depth of 1 foot per round.

Objects exposed to the hellfire must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 30) or be destroyed. Note, however, that matter is burned to dust and ashes, not vaporized. Though the fire never affects the *rod* itself, it has a 5% chance of malfunction, in which case the effect is centered upon the user.

The *fire rod* requires three charges to operate and has a minimum duration of six rounds. After this, the user can end the rain by concentrating for a round and making a successful Will save (DC 30).

Each round the *rod* continues to operate after initiation drains one more charge (therefore, the first 8 rounds drains 5 charges). If all charges are emptied, then the fiery rain vanishes and the *rod* appears to explode, engulfing the wielder and everything within 10 feet in a blast that inflicts 20d6 points of damage. In actuality, the *rod* has "short-circuited" the Prime and Elemental planes by contacting the elemental energy planes while recharging and teleports to a seemingly random location within a 1000 mile radius (although it seems to be attracted to other powerful magic, and hence tends to reappear in rather dangerous places). It can be recharged before it is fully drained by taking it to the border between the Elemental Plane of Fire and the Negative Material Plane, forcing a "short-circuit" (and causing the same explosive effect). For an unknown reason, the *rod* always teleports back to a random location on Oerth.

Strong evocation; CL 20th; Weight 1lb; Reference: Greyhawk Adventures hardback 75.

NEW EPIC SPELL: RAIN OF COLORLESS FIRE

Conjuration [Destruction]

Spellcraft DC: 54, with artifact boost 71, with artifact boost and divine empowerment 80

Components: V, S, Ritual, XP

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Long 400ft. + 40ft./ level

Effect: 6d6 damage/ round (60ft.-radius) or with artifact boost 15d6 damage/ level per round (2 mile radius without Tovag, 900 mile radius with Tovag)

Duration: 1 round/ level.

Saving Throw: Reflex for half

Spell Resistance: No

To Develop: 486,000gp; 10 days; 19,440 XP

Factors: *energy seed* (DC 19), No Spell Resistance (+10 DC), Extended Duration (+20 DC), 6d6 damage per round (+19 DC), Range (Long 400ft. + 40ft./ level) (+2 DC); change rain to globules of positive and negative energy (ad hoc +24 DC)

Mitigating Factors: backlash 10d6 damage (-10 DC), burn 1,000 XP (-10 DC), increased casting time to 10 minutes (-20)

Factors with artifact boost: *energy seed* (DC 19), *weather seed* (DC 19), Vaporization (+10 DC), No Spell Resistance (+10 DC), Extended Duration (+20 DC), 15d6 damage per round (+48 DC), Unlimited range on current plane (+200 DC), 900 mile radius (+200 DC); change rain to globules of positive and negative energy (ad hoc +24 DC) = 566 DC

Mitigating Factors with artifact boost: six additional casters contributing an epic-level spell slot (-114 DC), backlash 20d6 damage to each contributor (-140 DC), burn 1,200 XP per caster (-84 DC), Major Artifact contributor (-120 DC), specified location (-25 DC)

Factors with artifact boost and divine empowerment: *energy seed* (DC 19), *weather seed* (DC 19), Vaporization (+10 DC), No Spell Resistance (+10 DC), Extended Duration (+20 DC), 15d6 damage per round (+48 DC), Unlimited range on current plane (+200 DC), 900 mile radius (+200 DC); change rain to globules of empowered positive and negative energy (ad hoc +110 DC), lingering effects (x2)

Mitigating Factors with artifact boost and divine empowerment: deity sacrificing 1 divine rank per caster [1 DR = 5] (-729 DC), six additional casters contributing an epic-level spell slot (-114 DC), backlash 20d6 damage to each contributor (-140 DC), burn 1,200 XP per caster (-84 DC), Major Artifact contributor (-120 DC), specified location (-25 DC)

This spell summons a swirling thunderstorm that rains positive and negative globules rather than raindrops down upon the designated target and everything within a 60ft. radius of that target. Everything caught unprotected or unsheltered in the deluge takes 3d6 points of positive energy damage and 3d6 points of negative energy each round. A successful Reflex save halves this, and must be repeated each round. The planar energies destroy all organic matter, leaving behind a sooty grey dust. The fiery storm is stationary and persists even if the caster leaves.

DENIZENS OF THE FLANAESS

FELL DENIZENS OF THE DREADWOOD

By Adam Daigle

Beneath a darkened canopy the constant buzz and cries of nature ring out. This cacophony whistles through the trees and screams through the brush reaching the beings that inhabit the far edge of the Dreadwood. The wild poetry changes them. It reaches into their civilized souls and pulls up primal fears.

For the Olve and experienced woodsmen, these fears are largely unfounded, but despite the efforts of the elves and the Dreadwalkers, great and wicked evil exists in this deep forest. Strong efforts have been in place to drive some of these evil creatures from the forest, but with some of these monsters it is best left to isolate them from the rest of the world and attempt to outwit them at every turn. Even, on good days and outings, hunt them. These are just a few of the concerns for the good folk of the Dreadwood.

These three creatures are merely a few of the dangerous monsters that lurk and hunt beneath the thick canopy of the Dreadwood. Many more unique and fierce inhabitants threaten the balance that the druids of the forest strive so hard to preserve and occasionally these monsters leak out into the Sheldomar Valley.

Ghaptwystan

This is the name given to a dangerous hunter of the wood. A twisted creature, this beast is reported to attack from above the canopy, dropping clumsily upon its prey and lashing out with claws, tentacles and a number of razor-like jaws. Its mordant scent is often the only warning.

This beast is a fierce blend. Ghaptwystan is a Chimera, but instead of a lion's head, a displacer beast's alien, feline head juts out on a sleek neck. The dragon's head is lined with tall spines webbed with membrane and its scales are a deep olive hue. The goat's dark, shaggy head sports ivory colored horns and the beast has near white eyes whose horizontal pupils narrow when aggravated. The creature's body resembles a very stout panther with olive wings sprouting out between two dark black tentacles ending in horn-ridged pads and a lithe tail that constantly whips through the air. Its muscular legs end in enormous paws concealing vicious claws.

The Dreadwalkers are constantly hunting this predator, not only because of its vile nature, but rather because it seems to be hunting them. Ghaptwystan has been responsible for the death of more scouting parties than any other hazard. It keeps a wide range of hunting grounds and prefers to hunt at night. Its den has not been located as of yet.

GHAPTWYSTAN CR 9

LE Magical Beast

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60', low-light vision, scent; Listen +7, Spot +7

Languages Common, Draconic

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 20 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +11

natural) displacement (50%), dodge, +2 bonus vs. magical attacks (barring ranged touch attacks).

hp 90 (9 HD)

Fort +10 **Ref** +8 **Will** +3

Spd 40ft. (8 squares), fly 50ft. (poor)

Melee dragon, bite +15 (2d6+6, crit 20/ x3) and goat headbutt +13 (1d8+6, crit 20/ x3) and displacer beast bite (1d8+6, crit 20/ x3) and 2 tentacles +13 (1d6+6, crit 20 /x2)

Space 10ft. **Reach** 5ft. (10ft. with tentacles)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +19

Atk Options class abilities + combat Feats

Special Atks Breath weapon (acidic gas, 20ft. range, Fort save DC 21 or suffer 3d8 damage, usable every 1d4 rounds)

Abilities Str 22, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ unused class abilities

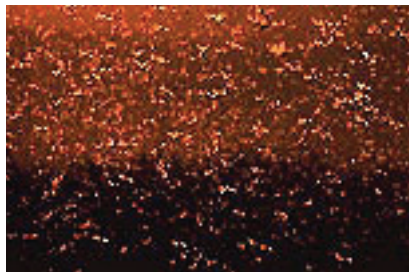
Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Alertness, Dodge, Hover, Multi-attack

Skills Bluff +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +5, Spot +7

Displacement (Su): The subject of this spell appears to be about 2 feet away from its true location. The creature benefits from a 50% miss chance as if it had total concealment. However, unlike actual total concealment, displacement does not prevent enemies from targeting the creature normally. True seeing reveals its true location.

Swarms of the Hool Marsh

In the south where the Hool Marshes butt up against the forest is a deep grotto of broadleaf trees surrounding a shallow pond. The hum of mosquitoes is ever present and clouds of gnats undulate just above the surface of the dark, stagnant waters. Birds dart through the canopy snatching up insects.



This area is rumored to have the largest concentration of stirges of any other location above ground. On the right evenings these tiny, blood-thirsty creatures coalesce into a buzzing swarm. It is a vile congregation in search of nothing but blood. The few sages and druids to witness this and return swear that fey influence is responsible.

STIRGE SWARM CR 10

Monster Manual 236-237

N Tiny Magical Beast (Swarm)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60ft., low-light vision; Spot +6, Listen +6

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+2 size, +4 Dex)

hp 78 (12 HD)

Immune targeted spells, critical hits, and flanking

Fort +2 **Ref** +6 **Will** +1

Spd 5ft., fly 40ft. (average)

Melee swarm (1d6) plus attach

Space 10ft. **Reach** 0ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** -

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Wingover

Special Atks attach, distraction (DC 16), blood drain, wounding

Abilities Str 7, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6

SQ swarm traits

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Improved Toughness, Weapon Finesse^B, Wingover

Skills Listen +12, Spot +12

Attach (Ex): If a stirge hits with a touch attack, it uses its eight pincers to latch onto the opponent's body. An attached stirge is effectively grappling its prey. The stirge loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and has an AC of 12, but holds on with great tenacity. Stirges have a +12 racial bonus on grapple checks (already figured into the Base Attack/Grapple entry above). An attached stirge can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove an attached stirge through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the stirge.

Distraction (Ex): Any living creature vulnerable to a swarm's damage that begins its turn with a swarm in its square is nauseated for 1 round; a Fortitude save (DC 10 + ½ swarm's HD + swarm's Con modifier; the exact DC is given in a swarm's description) negates the effect. Spellcasting or concentrating on spells within the area of a swarm requires a Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level). Using skills that involve patience and concentration requires a DC 20 Concentration check.

Blood Drain (Ex): A stirge drains blood, dealing 2d4 points of Constitution damage in any round when it begins its turn attached to a victim. Once it has dealt 4 points of Constitution damage, it detaches and flies off to digest the meal. If its victim dies before the stirge's appetite has been sated, the stirge detaches and seeks a new target.

Wounding (Ex): Any living creature damaged by a stirge swarm continues to bleed, losing 1 hit point per round thereafter. Multiple wounds do not result in cumulative bleeding loss. The bleeding can be stopped by a DC 10 Heal check or the application of a cure spell or some other healing magic.

Gresaril the Hunter

It is extremely rare for the faerie to consort with giants, so Gresaril is a unique case. It has never been fully understood why the fey choose "children" but with him brute force is an obvious answer. It is rumored that he was born in the Axewood and has been making his way across the valley, following the winds, since he was young. The winds have led him to the Dreadwood where he hunts among the dense foliage.

This powerful creature is mostly benign; however his chaotic, unpredictable nature makes him dangerous regardless. Gresaril considers himself a ward of the wood and incessantly hunts the Dreadwood for evil humanoids. The druids and Dreadwalkers do not fully understand this,

yet they dare not question the motivation for his effective methods.

Gresaril was first encountered, and given the name The Hunter by a group of rangers after they had fought a clutch of goblins and chased down the stragglers only to return to the site of battle to see a huge, looming figure stringing the goblin corpses on a rope with a sharp spike like a fisherman would string his catch.

He is a truly strange sight indeed. Despite standing nearly eighteen feet tall with a lithe but muscular frame, The Hunter is quite adept at hiding. It has been noted that his silence, stillness and coloration aid in this. Gresaril's skin is a light chestnut color and he has deep topaz-like gems on the backs of his hands and in ridges around his eyes, cheekbones and chin. Greenish matted locks frame his face and trail down his back and chest like stretching vines. Thin dragonfly wings that he keeps tucked close to his body point down from his back. Gresaril is outfitted like a scout in loose clothing with a minimalist amount of survival gear excepting a massive greatsword.

GRESARIL THE HUNTER CR 15

Male half-fey forest giant scout 3

Fiend Folio 87, Monster Manual II 110

N (NE) Huge Fey (Giant)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60ft., low-light vision; Listen +13, Spot +13

Languages Giant, Sylvan, Common

AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 24 uncanny dodge (-2 size, +2 dexterity, +3 armor, +11 natural)

hp 176 (16 HD)

Immune enchantment spells/ effects

Resist cold 20

Fort +14 **Ref** +9 **Will** +9

Spd 50ft., fly 100ft. (perfect)

Melee masterwork huge greatsword +20/ +15 (2d10+22, crit 19-20/ x2)

Ranged +1 *huge returning dart* +21 (1d10+12 plus poison)

Space 10ft. **Reach** 15ft.

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +28

Atk Options Awesome Blow, Brutal Throw, Flyby Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack

Special Atks poison darts, rock-catching, rock throwing, skirmish (+1d6, +1 AC)

Combat Gear tanglefoot bag x3, acid flask x2, antitoxin x6, wand of heightened *silence* (DC 16, CL 11, 21 charges), potion *cure moderate wounds* (CL 5), potion of *heroism* (CL 5), scroll of *purify food and drink*, *bless water* (CL 1)

Spells Prepared/ Known (CL 16th; +11 ranged touch, +16 vs. SR): At will: *charm person*; 3/day: *detect law*, *protection from law*; 1/day: *hypnotism*, *mass invisibility*, *faerie fire* or *glitterdust**; *sleep* or *enthrall**; *tasha's hideous laughter* or *suggestion**; *confusion* or *emotion**; *eyebite* or *lesser geas**; *dominate person* or *hold monster**; *geas/quest* or *mass suggestion**

All saves are Charisma-based; *When there is a choice of two abilities, he can choose between these abilities each day.

Abilities Str 33, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 25

SQ trackless step, trapfinding

Feats Awesome Blow, Brutal Throw, Flyby Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Flight, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack

Skills Balance +6, Climb +14, Jump +18, Hide +18, Move Silently +18, Perform (harp) +8, Sense Motive +8, Survival +12, Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +10.

Possessions combat gear, +1 *huge returning dart*, masterwork huge greatsword, backpack (modified for winged creatures), 200ft. silk rope, brass mug with jade inlays (350gp), small electrum crown (3000gp), adamantine skinning knife, ironwood harp with ivory inlays and mithral strings (800gp), 112 pp.

Poison (Ex): Forest giants coat their arrows with poison (Fortitude save DC 22). The initial and secondary damage is the same (unconsciousness for 4d4 rounds).





THE GOOD OERTH THE CONSTELLATIONS OF GREYHAWK

By Andy Miller

“Throughout history, man has watched the stars in fascination, speculating on their meanings, conjuring images and pictures in their shapes and position, sometimes even worshipping them. Though the earliest documented star charts are Suloise, even before them the Oeridians were apparently enamored of the sky, measuring the positions of the luminaries with amazing accuracy. They invented the zodiac before the rise of the Suloise Empire. Though the names we use today for most of the individual stars in the sky are Suloise, the original titles of the zodiac and even some of the ‘lesser constellations’ are still remembered by their Oeridian names.

“The Flan peoples also noted the movements of the heavens, especially of the wandering stars, now known to be planets. Some Flan societies constructed whole buildings dedicated to Edill, the brightest of the ‘wandering stars.’ They recorded the sky of ancient times on books made of tree bark. Sadly, few of these exist today. Only fragments of books survive but they prove the ancient Flan had learned to predict solar eclipses and the path of Edill. One Flan calendar is even more accurate than the Suloise dating system which we use today.

“The Stars themselves were once thought to be large, blast-furnace planets, balls of burning gas, or holes to the elemental plane of fire. Since the advent of travelers from beyond the Oerth and of our own people exploring the depths of space, we have learned that they are impossibly huge gems glowing with their own radiance. These facts do not diminish the awe one feels when gazing at the night’s sky.”

- From a lecture given by Hiram Macksenian, Professor of Astronomy and Astrology and Observatory Tutor, Grey College, Greyhawk; Harvester 6, 585 CY.

OVERVIEW

Oerth has as wide a variety of stars as any world, including our own. The signs of the zodiac, mapped by the Oeridians, and other constellations named by the Suloise before the fall of that empire, are as common to residents of Greyhawk as Ursa Major or Minor are to us.

Presented here are over two dozen constellations and almost half that many individual stars visible in the night sky in the northern hemisphere of Oerth. Since play in the World of Greyhawk normally takes place in the Flanaess, the article focuses on the stars visible from there.

THE ZODIAC

The twelve lairs of the zodiac coincide closely with the twelve months of the year. The ancient Oeridians chose the twelve constellations that lay most prominently on the ecliptic, that belt of sky where most of the moons, planets, and sun move. Each sign of the zodiac represents one month, while single stars represent the festival weeks (see below). As Liga (the sun) moves around Oerth, she passes through each series of constellations, entering the area around a different one each month. If the stars could be seen during the daytime, the sun would appear to be in or around the constellation at that time. Thus, the constellations don’t appear in the night’s sky during the month which represents them.

The barbarian northern folk of the Wolf and Tiger nomads, as well as those who live on the Thillonrian Peninsula, use the names of the zodiac to actually indicate their months. The peoples of the Rovers of the Barrens and other Flan of eastern Oerik also use the animals of the zodiac to represent the changing lunar cycles, though the original animals in the zodiac are thought to be Oeridian in origin. This “barbarian” year actually begins on Planting 1 just after the Vernal Equinox, as does the zodiac calendar.

The Oeridian prophet, Kelendren Farseer, used all of the animals represented by the zodiac in his famous fables, written over 1,200 years ago. He claimed that the stories themselves were as old as the zodiac, even going so far as to say that the original stories and the zodiac itself were both more than 7,000 years older than he was at the time.

Most signs of the zodiac may confer some boon or bane to anyone born on Oerth, while others do not. Every PC birthed on the planet has a 5% chance of actually receiving a boon based on their birth date. This should be rolled up during character creation. A simple method for determining random date of birth is a d12 roll (for the month) followed by 1d12+1d20-1 roll for the day of the month. Any rolls over 28 should be considered festival

the festival) followed by a d8 roll for the day (ignoring rolls of eight).

Likewise, each star or constellation may have a general affect when it is most prominent in the sky (determined by using the star chart, below). This effect only happens 5% of the time and can be checked as often or as rarely as the DM wishes. Once a certain effect takes place for a PC, it should be noted for that character and used when his star is highest. A PC can only have one other effect.

Rapa (The Frog)

Dates: Planting 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 1st

Origins: In Oeridian mythology, the frog represents the rebirth and renewal of the world. Rapa held Spring in its large mouth, greedily refusing to let it out until he was tricked by Veterator (the fox) into laughing.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Jump or Swim skill checks.

Of some interest is the fact that both grippli and bullywugs seem influenced by the group of stars. When Rapa is at its highest and lowest in the night's sky, activities of both of these races (and sometimes even lizard men) are more violent than usual. Whether or not the constellation has some effect on the creatures or if they are influenced by something else has yet to be determined.

The constellation is formed by 9 stars, the three most notable being Diamad, Rana, and Onis. These three luminaries are sometimes called the Pyramid Cluster.

Testuda (The Turtle)

Dates: Flocktime 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 2nd

Origins: Testuda (the turtle), the second sign of the zodiac, represents the turtle who tricked the fox in the ancient story. Though Veterator is often seen as the cleverest of the animals in most of Kelendren's Fables, Testuda actually manages to win a race with him by trickery. As can be seen in the night's sky, the turtle still runs before the fox.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Disguise or Sense Motive skill checks.

The constellation is formed by 6 stars in close formation, offset by the bright Candi (sometimes erroneously called the Sugar Star).

Veterator (The Fox)

Dates: Wealsun 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 3rd

Origins: Veterator (the fox) was seen as the cleverest of animals by the Oeridians. His sign is most notable in the night sky in the first few months of the common year. As a trickster, Veterator does his best to confuse navigators today. When Veterator is visible, let the navigator beware.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to Bluff or Open Lock skill checks.

The main star in the cluster of 13, Noseptemt, or the False Compass Star, is as bright as Acus Magnetis (see below) but points the wrong way. The star cluster is one

of the few that represents a god: the native Flan god Red Fox, once prominent among the former Rovers of the Barrens, is thought to be shown in the cluster, at least by the remains of these people.

Anguis (The Snake)

Dates: Reaping 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 4th

Origins: Anguis (the snake) begins its month just after the Summer Solstice. It chases Veterator around the ecliptic, as always searching to avenge himself on the fox that constantly makes a fool of him. An old superstition holds that when this sign is high in the sky, snakes are more prevalent and dangerous. This has yet to be proven.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Disable Device or Sleight of Hand skill checks.

Of most interest in this cluster of 10 stars are the pairs of twins. The largest stars in the cluster, Discind Alpha and Beta are almost parallel to the two, slightly smaller red stars Lingu I and II. The four stars form the snake's head.

Seiurus (The Squirrel)

Dates: Goodmonth 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 5th

Origins: Seiurus (the squirrel) is unique in that it is the only sign of the zodiac that is actually part of another constellation (in this case Arbororis). The squirrel, always seen as the level-headed provider in the fables, is the sign that winter is coming and food must be put away. Some who actively follow the zodiac view the entire cluster as one symbol but, traditionally, Seiurus is the only part that represents the sign.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to Gather Information or Handle Animal skill checks.

The small cluster of only 7 stars is supported by largest two in the cluster: Ramus and Bracki.

Verress (The Boar)

Dates: Harvester 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 6th

Origins: Verress (the boar) is the fifth sign of the zodiac. The constellation shows the face and tusk of an angry boar that actually plays a very small part in the fables. Usually Verress simply watches as the tales unfold. In the few tales where his anger is roused, calamity follows for those who raised it.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Intimidate or Survival skill checks.

The cluster is formed by 9 stars, the three brightest representing the eye and tusks of the angry boar. Two of the stars, Euroz Un and Eurozta, are remarkable in that they are named in the Flan tongue. The two stars, which each bear the word "orc" in them in Flan, if sighted along, point directly to the star Gruumsh (see below). Wereboars are known to celebrate when this constellation is visible in the night's sky.

Lepusoris (The Hare)

Dates: Patchwall 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 7th

Origins: Lepusoris (the hare) begins his month just after the Autumnal Equinox. The star group represents the hare, fastest of Kelendren Farseer's animals. The constellation is made of 7 stars, only one of them of exceptional brightness. The star Candens is bright red and sometimes confused with Gnibile (see below) in the night sky.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Escape Artist or Hide skill checks.

Vendito (The Hawk)

Dates: Ready'reat 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 8th

Origins: Vendito (the hawk) represents the only bird of the zodiac. This constellation is one of the widest in the ecliptic with only Anguis and Idis being as large. Like Seiurus, this set of stars is (almost) connected with the group Accumulo (see below). The story says that the hawk sacrificed a single feather of his beautiful plume to save the daughter of a great hunter of birds, forever gaining the man's gratitude.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to Spot or Use Magic Device skill checks.

The constellation is headed with the star Verus, which represents the hawk's eye. Other stars in the group include Pennae, Alayus, and Brachiu. Pictures of the hawk always portray it looking at Focus (see below) and some wonder if this constellation is not meant to represent the hunter stalking his prey. Most astrologers scoff at this theory, pointing out that the hawk is obviously focusing on Lepusoris.

Quirull (The Wolf)

Dates: Sunsebb 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 9th

Origins: Quirull (the wolf) is the most vicious of the zodiac animals. No wrong goes unpunished by this animal, and no crime is too small to feel the wolf's wrath. The constellation is the last sign of the zodiac before winter.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to Balance or Move Silently skill checks.

The small formation of only 5 stars is also one of the brightest. Justus, the red Wolf's Eye-Star, as it is sometimes called, is almost as bright as the Compass Star, though its color keeps it distinct. Close to this star lies Naris, almost as bright as the Wolf's Eye Star, but more orange in color. Finally, the small white star Stillo, which represents the drop of spittle from Quirull's mouth, is only infrequently seen at the edge of the horizon at times when this constellation is thought to be at its most powerful.

Some sages have noted the similarity between the cluster's name and Kurell, god of vengeance, who is also sometimes represented as a wolf. In support of their theory, they point out that if a line is drawn from Justus to its nearest star across the ecliptic (represented by the wolf's right ear) the line exactly intersects the body of Miles, the Warrior (see below). When compared with the story of Kas, this does give some credence to the theory as the warrior did take the ultimate revenge on the most

powerful person of the time.

Idis (The Tiger)

Dates: Fireseek 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 10th

Origins: Idis (the Tiger) is the largest full-faced sign of the zodiac. Some astrologers support the theory that of all the signs of the zodiac, this is the most powerful and influential, pointing out that if the rest of Diagra's body were drawn out to scale, it would dwarf every other constellation. Many born under this sign seem to become great statesmen and leaders of men. Idis plays little part in Kelendren Farseer's fables, however. He is more of an observer than a participant.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Diplomacy and Tumble skill checks.

The most striking stars of the 12 in this cluster are the Omen stars, sometimes called the Cat's Eyes. These bright yellow luminaries have the unnatural tendency to occasionally disappear at inconsistent intervals, making the constellation appear to wink or even blink over the space of several hours. While many claim that this indicates ill-omen (or good omen, according to a few), most astronomers and many priests of Celestian claim that this is simply caused by the largest of asteroids from the Grinder moving between the stars and Oerth. The fact that terrible things do seem to happen when Idis has both eyes shut has not lessened the astrologer's arguments.

Ursus (The Bear)

Dates: Readying 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 11th

Origins: Ursus (the bear) is another influential star cluster, and revered in the northern lands, where it is seen as a symbol of strength. Clerics and followers of the god Llerg especially acknowledge the sign, often seeing its appearance in the night sky as a signal for them to prove their strength. The constellation represents Ursus (sometimes called Booh) in his fabled quest for food.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Climb or Heal skill checks.

Another large constellation, Ursus's 13 stars are all closely packed around the Bear Star, Fero.

Leonis (The Lion)

Dates: Coldeven 1-28

Sign of the Zodiac: 12th

Origins: Leonis (the Lion) is the last symbol of the zodiac and sees out the old year "with a roar" as the old saying goes. The king of the beasts is given the last bow, stressing his importance among the other animals. Often taking part in Kelendren's Fables, Leonis is represented as wise and brave, sometimes testing those who wish something from him. Leonis is also the group that most great kings are thought to be born under.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Listen and Search skill checks.

The constellation is composed of 9 stars, the most striking being Aureas, a beautiful golden star sometimes called Brachen Dor or "The Lost Mine" by the dwarven folk.

Legends claim that the richest mine of all Oerth was once held by greedy dwarves who lived close to the surface. After thousands of years of defending it from others who would steal their gold, they finally beseeched Abbathor to hide it where none could ever reach it. Thus was the mine placed among the stars, forever out of reach of even themselves. However, some dwarves claim that the mine was simply abandoned for some reason, and Brachen Dor somehow holds the secret to its true location.

OTHER CONSTELLATIONS

In addition to the zodiac, there are several well-known constellations in the heavens above Oerth's northern hemisphere. The ancient Suloise named most of them, though other cultures sometimes gave them other names they are now known by. Though the most well-known, these by no means account for all the stars in the sky. New stars are discovered every year, many too dim to see with the naked eye.

Like the birth date boons above, those born at certain times of night will have specific constellations in their astrological houses. Depending on that time, any PC has another 5% chance of having a boon or bane that corresponds with which star most prominent in the sky at the time of his birth (see the star chart below). Birth time can be found by a 1d12 roll for the hour with a 50/50 chance of it being a.m. or p.m. "Other effect" works in the same way as the zodiac.

Fanum (Holy Place Of Western Gods)

Origins: Most commonly called "The Baklunish Temple," this cluster of stars vaguely resembles one of the towering holy places used in the Baklunish Dynasty before the Invoked Devastation. The constellation seems to spin end over end as the year and the night progresses, starting the evening upright only in Harvester. The most important star in this cluster is Acus Magnetus, the Compass Star (see below). The Temple is an excellent way to locate this star and is often used expressly for this purpose.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Profession (astrologer) skill checks.

Belorissan (The Dragon)

Origins: The name of this grouping of stars is lost in the tides of history. The large constellation was supposedly not a fixture in the night's sky until some 12,000 years ago according to certain Oeridian texts. The most notable stars in the grouping include Anguis (the "Dragon's Eye"), Turgum, and Pes. The latter two are notable in that they line up almost perfectly with the Compass Star.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Spellcraft skill checks.

Strangely enough, the word Belorissan does not translate from any human tongue. The closest similar term is an ancient elven word meaning "First One."

Corann Rex (King's Crown)

Origins: The ancient Suloise claimed that those born under the sign of Idis or Leonis with Corann Rex strong in their house were destined to be kings, if not emperors.

The original Suloise Empire's Emperor's Crown, a minor artifact crafted of platinum, steeped in magic, and adorned with priceless diamonds the size of turtle eggs, was said to have been made to resemble Corann Rex. Suel legend has it that when the Rain of Colorless Fire fell upon the Empire a thousand years ago, this constellation vanished from the sky for a year and a day.

This small cluster of stars is significant for its symmetry of bright and dim stars, and for the two bright white luminaries, Adamus Major and Minor, or the "Diamond Stars." Most of the stars in the constellation are likewise white, and some of the brightest of their magnitude in the sky.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Concentration skill checks.

Ferrum (The Sword)

Origins: Sometimes called Ruby Pommel, the Bent Sword, the Gilt Sword or the Guilt Sword, this cluster of 7 stars includes the large red star Carbunct, just above three yellow stars that give one the impression of the hilt. The name of the constellation is Oeridian and it was significant to them in that the sword appeared first in the night's sky and was above the crown, stressing to these people that the actual ruler of any land stood below those who wielded weapons for him. The ancient Flan called this cluster the For-Tenni which translates into "Red Rose."

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Craft (weaponsmithing).

Jacere (The Anchor)

Origins: Often called Ospem's Anchor or Xerbo's Anchor, this constellation is most useful to sailors in that it is visible in the night's sky year round and always points directly to the Compass Star. The distinctive blue Aequor, or Anchor Star, is almost as bright as the Compass Star and easily seen on all but the cloudiest of nights. However, it is also sometimes confused with Edill (see below) which appears only on the ecliptic and can aim a sailor at Noseptem instead of true north.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Use Rope skill checks.

Figmentum (The Chimera)

Origins: This group of stars, when totally visible, consists of 12 stars of varying brightness. When pictured as a whole, they form a chimera breathing fire from its draconic head. This constellation was originally named by the Suloise. Though some claim the sign follows Colexoeis through the sky, it should be pointed out that its tail actually moves towards the Elvish Ship.

Boon: +5 competence bonus to all Ride skill checks.

Colexoeis (The Elvish Ship)

Origins: This group is sometimes called the Ship of Fools, but only by non-elves. The elven named group represents one of their fantastic ships sailing through the night sky. Though the cluster has no especially bright stars, it does contain more than any other cluster or group. The "Bright Sea Nebula," a small grouping of tiny, indistinct stars, also

a part of this group, lends the illusion of foam breaking under the bow of the ship.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Profession (sailor) skill checks.

Corvus Glandarius (The Blue Jay)

Origins: This compact constellation is unique in that all of the stars in it are blue. This constellation has special significance for winged elves and some of their legends claim that the greatness their people enjoyed before the coming of man to the Flanaess would someday be restored by the blue jay. Ancient Flan warriors admired the blue jay for its courage and audacity, especially when one of the thieving birds would swoop down to steal food right off a plate or even from a spit over a fire. Today, some warriors of the Ice Barbarians still venerate the constellation and many paint their bodies blue or mark them with blue jay sigils before battle.

The brightest three stars in this constellation include Caeruleus, Cyane, and Melanco.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Knowledge (local) skill checks.

Venificus (The Mage)

Origins: This constellation is also called the Lich or sometimes Vecna. It is said that Invisus, the brightest star of the grouping, once had a mate that was almost as piercing. According to legend, that star disappeared some time near the beginning of the 4th millennium Suloise Dating. Coincidentally, this is thought to be the same time Vecna was destroyed by Kas. The star formation soon became commonly known as Vecna, though it is still referred to as Venificus by astronomers.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to Knowledge (arcana)

Milés (The Warrior)

Origins: Like Venificus (above) this cluster has two names, and is sometimes called Kas, after Kas of Tycheron, destroyer of Vecna. The figure of the warrior does, indeed, seem to be cutting one of the wizard's hands off. The two constellations are sometimes thought of as one grouping. The brightest star in the cluster (sometimes called the "Belt star") is Proditor.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to Craft (armorsmithing).

Poculum (The Goblet)

Origins: Also called the "Everful Goblet" or "Drunkard's Love," Poculum depicts a goblet, tipping over to spill out its contents. The brightest and most unusual star in the constellation is Vinum or the "Wine Star," which is the only purple star visible in the night sky. It is said that those born with this star high overhead are gifted with an endurance and love of drink that borders on the legendary.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Craft (alchemy) skill checks.

Tundatt (The Harp)

Origins: This Oeridian named group of stars is sometimes also called the Fan for its resemblance to such. The brightest star in the cluster is Psallo, a white star that

forms the base of the harp. Other stars of note are Carina and Collum, two yellow stars of some brightness. Those born when Psallo is highest in the sky are said to be blessed with musical talent.

Boon: +5 competence bonus to all Perform skill checks.

Cautharus (The Tankard)

Origins: The Cautharus cluster resembles nothing so much as a mug full of beer. Only one star has notable brightness, the golden colored Cerevisia, which forms part of the tankard and its handle. The constellation is topped off by the "Foam Nebula" and those few dwarven cultures who actually stargaze usually set aside times for great feasts when this group is at its height.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Profession (brewer) skill checks.

Vekklzim (The Suloise Emperor)

Origins: Also called the First Emperor or the Sorcerer-King, this cluster of stars supposedly appeared soon after the death of the first Suloise Emperor, Vekklzim I of the house Nehell-Arztin, in the year 99 SD. Pre-Suloise tales of other cultures indicate that the stars were all in place even before this. Early Oeridian stargazers called this group Cyclopiis. The constellation depicts a standing figure, topped off by the brightest star in the group, Summus, which burns a bright orange. The figure apparently wears a sword topped off with the blue Derindis or Pommel Star.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Decipher Script skill checks.

Flecto (The Elven Bow)

Origins: This cluster is also called The Bowl and even Zagyg's Crooked Smile. The constellation, named by the elves, has only 4 stars, all of various colors and brightness. The most distinctive thing about the group is that on the morning of the 1st of Patchwall, it is very bright in the eastern sky just before the sun rises. This is thought to be a sign that Zagyg approves of Laughing Day.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Craft (bowmaking) skill checks.

Securis (The Broken Axe)

Origins: This minor constellation has some significance to the dwarven people or at least those few who actually note what goes on in the sky above their heads. The group is said to represent the great Axe of the Dwarven Lords before it was broken and reforged into a lesser weapon. The cluster is most often represented as a double-headed axe with a broken handle. Many dwarves note that it lies above and behind the Elven Clipper as though it were chasing the ship through the sky. Many elves are quick to point out that it hasn't caught the ship yet.

The constellation is composed of eight stars, six of which are quite bright. The primary star of the group, a yellow luminary called Ascia by the Suloise, isn't the brightest, but occupies the center of the cluster. Dwarves call it Dorexxorn, the "Golden Gem".

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Knowledge

(geography) skill checks.

Utor Inimicus (The Conjured Demon)

Origins: This group of stars is only entirely visible just above the horizon a few weeks out of every year. The cluster is composed of five yellow stars, topped by 5 red stars. Over all of this looms the red star Malum, often called the Eye of the Fiend (and sometimes even Vecna's Lost). Finally, above this blood red star hang two slightly dimmer orange luminaries.

The constellation is most visible in the month of Coldeven, when it lies to the south. During this time, it is thought to be easier to cast summoning spells, especially those that might bring some evil into the world. Though the constellation was named and revered by ancient Suloise wizards, it was also well thought of in the last hundred years in the Great Kingdom. Secret rites are still often performed under the malevolent light of this group of stars.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Knowledge (the planes).

Fatoranus (The Hydra)

Origins: Another large group that is only visible for a small part of the year, Fatoranus has 15 stars in its cluster. Over half of them represent the various eyes of the beast, including Vereor, which is bright red. The second brightest star in the group is called Conficus and represented the beast's tail. The Hydra is represented with most of the heads looking straight at the stargazer and some have complained that they feel as though the stars are actually staring at them with some malevolent intent.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Knowledge (history) skill checks.

Abororis (The Treant)

Origins: This constellation is unique in that it is also part of the zodiac grouping of stars Seiurus (above). The ancient Oeridians kept this cluster as a separate group though those mapmakers of the Suloise always connected it with the zodiac. The constellation's brightest star, not including those in Seiurus, is actually green, and called Radiculin. Only one other green star has ever been seen over the Flanaess (see the Elf Star, below). This constellation is one of the few whose name is Flan.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Knowledge (nature) skill checks.

Accumulo (The Fallen Feather)

Origins: Below Vendito, Accumulo is most often called the Fallen Feather, though some call it the Necklace. The three brightest stars in this compact cluster are Gemmena, Gemmend, and Gemmenc, often called the Diamond Star, the Pearl Star, and the Quartz Star, respectively. Distinctly visible in the southern sky in the Spring, the cluster was often thought of as an indication that great wealth lay in that direction. Many ships and explorers sought the riches that Accumulo seemed to promise in the uncharted waters and lands south of the Flanaess or Suloise Empire. Few returned.

Boon: +5 circumstance bonus to all Appraise skill checks.

Kellest (Celestian's Shield)

Origins: This small cluster of stars exactly matches Celestian's holy symbol and is a holy constellation to priests and followers of that deity. The Shield is thought to be Celestian's sign among the stars, a celestial signature of the god of the heavens. It is also interesting to note that the shield stands exactly between the dark star Tharizdun (see below) and Oerth as though Celestian were protecting the world from that evil one. The brightest star in the constellation of 7 is called Peregrinit, and burns a bright blue. The two secondary stars are known as Delenna and Fortassi, while the four least stars are called simply Kellest Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta. **Boon:** +5 circumstance bonus to all Knowledge (religion) skill checks.

SINGLE STARS

Though thousands of stars spin around Oerth, only a dozen or so are easily and readily recognized by most people. Described below are the most common individual stars of the night's sky. Unlike the constellations and signs of the zodiac, not all individual stars offer a boon.

Acus Magnetus (The Compass Star)

Thought to be directly above the north pole of Oerth, this star is visible year round and always lies to the north. Aided by the fact that it is one of the brightest stars in the night sky, this single star is responsible for more accurate navigation than any other and easily found at the tip of the Baklunish Temple. Several other stars in the constellations also point to the Compass Star, most notably Aequor in the constellation of the Anchor.

Lavall Major (The Pixie)

This semi-bright, blue-green star seems to orbit its sister, Lavall Minor, throughout the year, as both try desperately to catch up to the Elven Clipper. The star is so named because it not only seems to spin but also bobs up and down in the northern sky throughout the year and the night.

Lavall Minor (The Sprite)

Another semi-bright star, this one of orange hue, the Sprite is slightly dimmer than its sister. Like Lavall Major, the star seems to spin around the sky, dipping down towards the horizon but never really going anywhere.

Praedo (The Pirate Star Cluster)

This bright white star, only slightly dimmer than the Compass Star, seems to perpetually follow the Elven Clipper. Investigation has proven that this luminary is actually a small cluster of tightly grouped stars, only visible individually with a powerful (x20) telescope. The "star" is sometimes mistaken for the Compass Star by those not familiar with the night's sky (or missing their navigation rolls), causing no little confusion at times.

Gruumsh (Gruumsh's Eye)

This blood red star is most prominent around Growfest, hanging in the zenith like some malevolent eye. Many orcs claim the star is either Gruumsh's lost eye or his good one, depending on which orcs you talk to. The speculation rages (literally) and has led to no fewer than 45 recorded wars between the humanoids as to the truth. Whichever it is, when this star is highest in the sky, great festivals and debaucheries are common among the orcs.

Tali-Bini Alpha & Beta (The Dice Stars)

Also called Snake Eyes, these two small stars are identical in size, intensity, and color and thought to be lucky for those who gamble, especially with dice. The scarlet stars point almost a direct line to Invisus, in the Venificus (or Vecna) constellation and are the closest relevant stars to the Fireball Nebula.

Fireball Nebula

This large grouping of gasses and small, dim stars (most of which are red) was long ago dubbed the Fireball Nebula. Earliest Suloise records on this nebula have all been lost though it is thought not even to have existed until around the time of the Rain of Colorless Fire.

Nanus (The Dwarf Star)

This small white star stands in a fairly empty part of the sky. The Dwarf Star was supposedly discovered over 7,000 years ago by a rare dwarf astronomer whose name is lost to history. The star keeps the same name he originally gave it, perhaps even his own name.

THE FESTIVAL STARS

(Debeus, Augao, Itis, & Concitor)

Each festival week has one star that is most prominent in the southern sky. These four "Festival Stars," all of them almost on the ecliptic, are thought to be as important to zodiac as constellations that represent the 12 lairs. Each star is fairly bright and easy to pick out of the night sky due to the corona or haze that seems to always fill the immediate sky around them. This is still unexplained as telescopes and even those using magic to travel to the stars report neither nebula nor tiny star clusters around the four.

Locus Opacit (Passage To Darkness)

This dark red star is only visible a few months of the year and always appears on the very edge of the horizon. The legend states that this luminary is actually a gateway to some other plane or world. It is said that the Locus was closed but not what closed it, how, or if it will ever open again. It does hint that the Passage of Darkness will someday open yet again "when all hope is lost and will be so." The star makes its appearance in the summer months, late at night or early in the morning and for only a few hours. Many claim that it is visible during the Blood Moon Festival around midnight, low in the eastern sky, but this is patently impossible.

Focus (The Hearth Star)

This small star is a rosy reddish yellow that reminds one of nothing so much as a good, warm fire. It is a favorite star of the halflings.

Tharizdun (The Dark Star)

This dull, brooding little star is only visible at certain times during the year, most notably towards the end of Ready'reat, when it appears for a short time near the eastern horizon. Followers of the god it was named after claim that he is somehow trapped in the star and sometimes pray to it. The star seems to twinkle excessively and the more superstitious claim that to see the star is an evil omen.

Pumalli (The Elf Star)

This bright green star is one of only two like it in the sky and is said to be a passage to lands where the elven gods play. Only the elves seem to know how the magic is created to open various gates to other realms using ceremonies dedicated to this star. When it is high in the sky, it is said that the walls between the worlds are at their weakest.

Incendacies I &II (The Fire Eyes)

These dual stars are most prominent in the southern sky, just on the horizon during the months of Ready'reat and Sunsebb. They are thought to be the eyes of some great, black beast; the creature that actually makes the night sky and upon which all the other stars and planets are simply birthmarks. This creature comes straight out of ancient Suel myth and will supposedly someday fall upon the world and destroy it. Since the Suel Empire was to be the only group to survive the assault and it is now gone, the legends should be taken with a grain of salt.

The Wandering Stars

Once thought to be five more stars in the heavens and still important to astrology are the five "wandering stars." Exploration of the crystal sphere by intrepid wanderers, astronomers, scientists, and even mathematicians has proven the five stars to be planets. In addition, three other worlds were discovered, too far away or small to even be seen by the most powerful of telescopes. It is of great interest to note that though spelljamming has only been prevalent to residents of Oerth for some 30 or so years, the earliest astrologers and astronomers used the same names for the "wandering stars" that the planet's residents still call them. This hints that either visitors from beyond the world came to Oerth thousands of years ago or travelers from Oerth went to the stars.

Another note of interest is the apparent location of the planets in the heavens on midsummer night, 3365 SD (the year 0 FT) when all of the wandering stars, the sun, and both moons lined up perfectly. The Great Syzygy and Planetary Conjunction, as it has come to be known, was a time of great upheaval and disasters throughout Oerik. Earthquakes, tidal waves, and great storms rocked the planet and many thought it was the end of the world. Most astronomers still follow Flannae Time, noting this occurrence as the most significant planetary arrangement

in the history of Oerth.

The Sisters

Once thought to be the most chaotic of the wandering stars, the Sisters proved to be 9 separate astronomical phenomena, bright enough and close enough together to appear as one body. From Oerth, they appear as a single star, orbiting perpendicular to the ecliptic and taking an amazing 33.3 years to come full circle. The orbit is not perfect, however, changing some 30° with every rotation and taking the luminaries into a new sign of the zodiac each time. Due to the length of time it takes to make its circle and since it was sometimes completely invisible to the northern hemisphere, the star was thought very prophetic indeed. Presently, it can be seen just above and to the right of Bellesnus (about 301° around the sky's circle if Richfest marks 0°). It will be visible in northern Oerth's night sky for another six years, disappearing beneath the sign of Vratann in late 597 CY. It is nearly the slowest of the wandering stars, moving only about .9° every month.

Edill

This bright blue planet appears to be a second magnitude star and is the fastest of the wandering stars, taking some 40 months to complete its circuit through the zodiac. Edill is the sister planet of Gnibile in that they have about the same intensity. In Richfest of 591, Edill is approaching Verill from the area of Debeus (about 180° around the sky). It moves 9° a month along the ecliptic.

Gnibile

Almost identical in intensity to Edill, this red planet moves slower around the ecliptic, taking 64 months to make its way full circle. It is much slower than its sister planet and the other world has lapped it over 100 times in the last 1,000 years. In Richfest of 591, the planet almost eclipses the third bright star of Bellesnuss, moving towards Chiktak, at about 292° around the ecliptic. It moves 5.62° per month.

Ginsel (The Wobbling Star)

This odd world, shaped like a crescent moon, long puzzled Oerthly astronomers with its wobble. Barely visible from our world, this planet appears as a white 4th magnitude star that takes 180 months to pass through all the lairs of the zodiac. For many years, it was thought of as Olidammara's Drunken Star. As of Richfest of 591, the planet lies along the ecliptic almost directly between Vratann and Singgess (at about 119°). It moves some 2° every month.

Wink

Also called the Spectre, this flat world rotates along its horizontal axis, much like a tossed coin. From Oerth, this "wandering star" seems to wink, appearing and disappearing every few hours. As much a mystery to early astronomers as Ginsel, Wink was thought to be a vanishing star, disappearing in a set pattern. The planet takes 450 months to touch all of the lairs of the zodiac and, in Richfest 591, stands between Seiurus and Zent,

moving towards the latter (at about 335°). The planet moves slightly slower than the Sisters, at about .8° a month.

The Sixth Star

It is interesting to note that there were once, supposedly, six wandering stars, one of which apparently disappeared in 201 CY in a flash of fire that lasted almost two days. It was thought by many that a new, brighter star had replaced the dull gray one which had often been used by astrologers to predict great calamity. This "star" apparently burned out after that time, and the gray Doom-Star was gone as well. Some sages speculate today that the sixth star must have been the planet Borka, destroyed by the elves in the Inhuman War. The explosion of that planet itself fell within an astrological sign (or created one — sources vary) which predicted that in the year 582, revenge would be had by those born in a certain time of the year. That this date coincides with the (supposed) beginning of both the Greyhawk Wars and the Second Inhuman War is a fact that is not lost on most people.

NEW FEATS

Zodiac Boon [General]

Prerequisite: Character 1st level

Benefit: With this feat, the character can randomly roll his birth date and automatically gets the boon for that zodiac sign.

Star-Crossed [General]

Prerequisite: Character 1st level

Benefit: With this feat, the character can roll randomly for the time and date of his birth and automatically gains a boon or bane from the constellation or star most prominent in the sky at the time and date of his birth.

Star-Touched [General]

Prerequisite: Character 1st level

Benefit: With this feat, any time the DM checks for "other effect" by a star or constellation, the chance is increased by 5% for the character. This feat can be taken more than once but cannot be taken after 1st level.

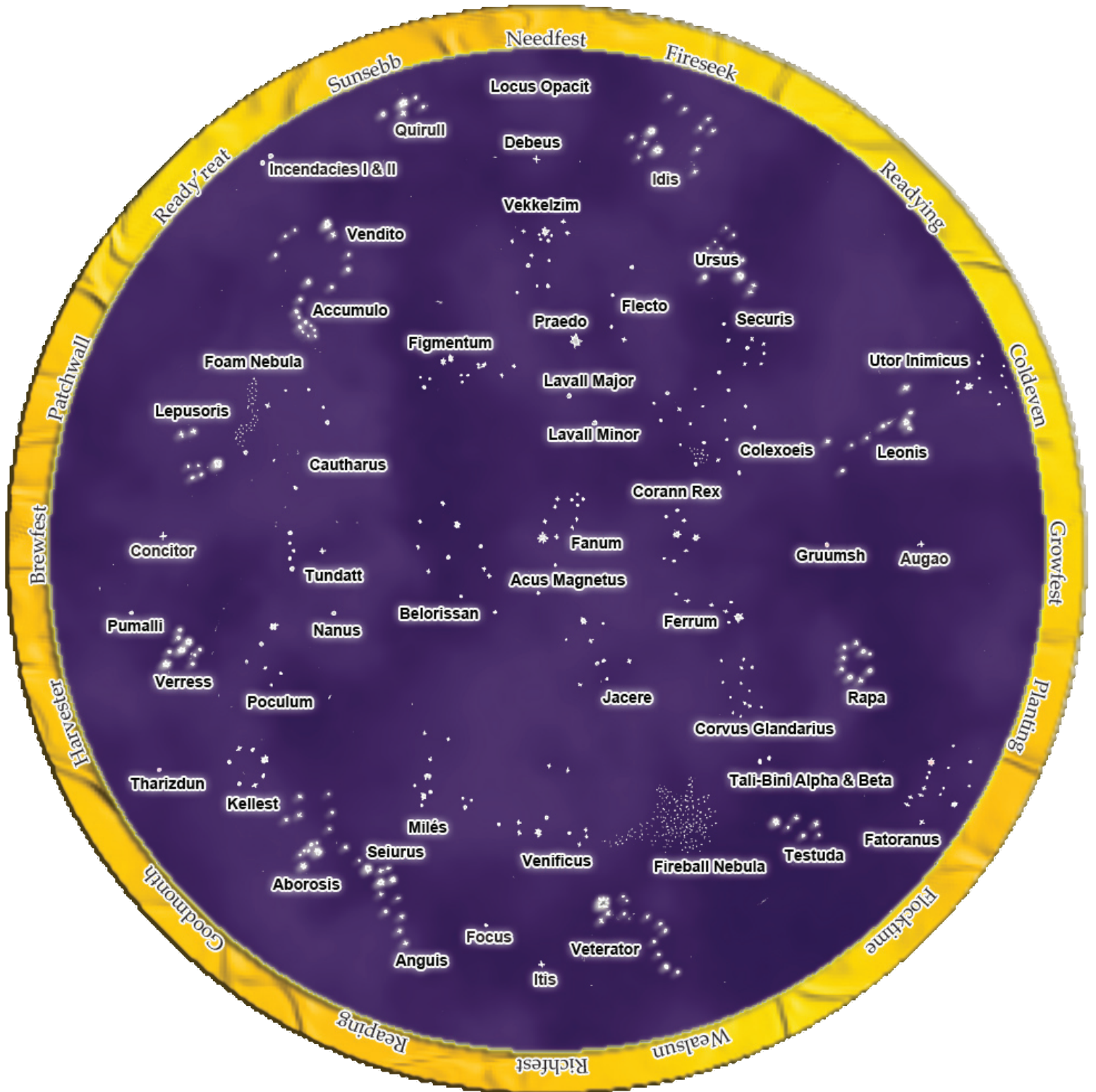
Note: Some of the boons are not particularly helpful to certain characters (for instance, Belorissan only affects dragons and their kin). In that case, the feat is essentially wasted unless the PC gains the prerequisite.

Afterword

Any DM running a World of Greyhawk campaign should be able to find much of interest here. The star chart provided can be photocopied to give an accurate view of the sky at any time of year. The sky can be illustrated by finding the current date and turning the map so this date lies at the top. In this position, the bottom of the Northern Horizon Circle corresponds to the northern horizon, with the stars and constellations in the circle visible in the night sky above the northern horizon around 9 p.m. on that date. The upper edge of the horizon circle reaches nearly to the zenith while those stars directly above this appear in the southern sky. To find the map face for other times of night,

use 15 days earlier on the date scale for the present date for 1 hour earlier, 30 days for 2 hours, and so on. For later times, use 15 days later as the present date for 1 hour later (10 p.m.), and 30 days for 2 hours, adding another 15 days for every hour difference.

The map is made for 40° north latitude, but this can be adjusted by moving the northern horizon circle to the actual latitude (noted on the map).





GAZATTEER OF THE FLANAESS

ZA'AITH RUAALA

THE OLVEN KINGDOM OF ASTERNYX

By Sam Weiss

The Za'aith Ruaala, sometimes called the Kingdom of Asternyx, was one of the four nations the Olvenfolk established when they divided the Flanaess amongst themselves following their arrival just over five millennia ago. Its lands spread from the shores of the Nyr Dyv to the Solnor Ocean, from Relmor Bay to the Yol River. Four grand cities served as the centers of research, faith, culture, and government: Airaruaa'er where the Yol joins the Artonsomay, Airaruaa'ari where the southernmost peak of the Rakers thrusts out into what is now called the Gamboge Forest, Airaruaa'en on the shores of the Nesser, and the greatest of them all, the capital Airaruaa'aro, rising in the midst of the great Adri Forest. For four millennia, it stood as a bastion of calm and stability among the rising and falling Flan and Ur-Flan states, until it was finally destroyed by the Ruaathanis Darnakurian at the start of the war against the Tirasqi Maitia-Utha.

As with the other Olven kingdoms, the lands ruled by the Ruaala'lyth represent the extent to which various Olven clans acknowledged their rule rather than lands they controlled exclusively. Although the great forests of the Adri, Celadon, and Gamboge, the preferred homes of the Olve, covered a much greater area at the time, indeed the border between them only existed on a map, their population was too small to occupy it exclusively, and many Flan lived within its borders, forming their own nations. Two of these, the Tirasqi and the Lytha Tae e Nu (who would call themselves the Lytha Ath Hadar after the fall), would be involved in the death and aftermath of the Za'aith Ruaala.

As with the other Olven kingdoms, the first centuries were spent establishing the nation, claiming lands from the beast races, and establishing boundaries with the Flan around them. Little is known of those times, with most records lost to time or destroyed by the Olve themselves to preserve their secrets. The earliest continuous accounts of the kingdom begin two millennia later, when the Ur cults began to seize control of various Flan nations, expanding them into powerful and dangerous empires. As these Ur-Flan empires grew, the records of Ruaa'la began to focus on their dealings with them. Where the Za'aith Celene and Za'aith Luna found themselves drawn into the wars of the Ur cults and the other Flan, Ruaa'la remained peaceful. Their leaders would mediate between rivals where possible, remain neutral if they could, and fought only when necessary. As a result, they became a haven for the Flan within their loose borders, who adopted many of their values, and developed a unique faith. They also became a crossroads for trade between their neighbors, despite the periodic conflicts that erupted.

As the Kingdom entered its fourth millennium of existence this dynamic changed. In the space of a single

Olven lifespan, the neighboring Ur-Flan nations collapsed. First Sulm was destroyed by the curse Scorpion Crown, and then Tostenhca was laid low by Keraptis, who passed up a chance at immortality for vengeance. Finally the Eastern Oeridians, fleeing the Thundering Horde, and searching for a new home to the east, arrived and began fighting the Mage-Priests of Woe in their. Little of this affected the Kingdom of Asternyx though, as the loss of trading partners more than made up for by the absence of sometimes violent neighbors. (Tostenhca under Keraptis had been a very dangerous rival, and war was imminent when he was finally overthrown.) Their only remaining neighbors were the peaceful Kingdom of Ehliissa, and the growing realm of the Tirasqi along the river of the same name that fed into the Solnor Ocean.

It was here that their doom was born. A cadre of necromancers, led by the dreaded Krevell of Nerull, had seized control of the tribe, and soon ruled the lands from the Gull Cliffs to the Blemu Hills. For many years the Kingdom of Asternyx watched their expansion, but deceived by the traitorous High Olven clans that had set the Tirasqi on the path of conquest, they took no action. It was only when Krevell and his followers turned their eyes to Ehliissa looking to conquer their last Flan rival that the plans of the traitors came to fruition. Krevell felt he would need more power, and heeding the advice of the Olven traitors, he sought to find it in the magical lore of the Ruaala'lyth. Their emissaries made polite requests, offering great wealth and many concessions in exchange. Zarualia Sharafare refused them, seeing their intentions despite their words, and on learning of the rejection Krevell unleashed his followers and their undead hordes on the Ruaala'lyth. At the same time the traitorous clans revealed themselves, turning on their kin and seeking to usurp control of the nation. The defenders were divided and betrayed, allowing the Tirasqi to drive deep into the forest, and lay siege to Airaruaa'aro. The Grey Olve outside the city knew they had to relieve the siege but could not do that and contain the traitors at the same time. They were forced to recruit a clan of Wild Olve, the reclusive Olve infamous for their ability to hunt their own people, setting them on the traitors. They were only partly successful, destroying three of the four clans that had turned, but unable to eliminate the final one before the survivors fled beneath to the Underoerth. The armies sent to break the siege also fell short of their goal. The war against the Tirasqi dragged on, the siege continuing for years, as the armies of Sylvan Olve fought their way forward foot by foot beneath the towering canopy of the depths of the Adri Forest. In his despair, believing no relief would ever come, Ruaathanis Darnakurian created the unspeakable weapon known only as Hunger, and when it seized control of him

he slew both the invaders and his own people, breaking the siege, but destroying the majority of the Grey Olven nobility, including the entire royal family, at the same time.

With that, the Za'aith Ruaala came to an end. The Grey Olven nobility gone, the High Olven dead, exposed as traitors, or fled in cowardice, and their families devastated by losses in the war, the Sylvan Olve clans had little interest in maintaining any pretense of a kingdom. They turned to their own clan leaders who kept them on their lands as the chaos around them grew. And grow it did. Although the Tirasqi were broken at the City of Summer Stars they were not destroyed. They retreated to their own lands and began to rebuild, though not in time to pose a threat to the Sylvan Olve that remained in the Adri Forest. Instead they would plague the new invaders who moved into the area over the next two centuries.

The Suel came first, moving along the southern shore of the Nyr Dyv, then following the Nesser River to the Franz and Duntide Rivers, and spreading through then central lands of the falling kingdom. The Suel enslaved the majority of the Lytha Tae e Nu they found there.

The surviving Flan fled to the forests to seek the protection of the remaining Sylvan Olve, who welcomed them to help defend their borders against the rapacious Suel. It was in those dark days that the surviving Flan began to call themselves the Lytha Ath Hadar, in memory of the time before the Oeridian and Suel invaders when they walked freely across the land.

The Oeridians were next, as the Aerdi tore through the region, battling the Suel until they fled north and south. The Aerdi pursued the ones who fled to the south, driving them past the Adri Forest before settling along the Flanmi. They would later destroy the Tirasqi, recording them in their histories as the Necromancers of Trask, as they reckoned the name of the river. In their wake the Nehri found the lands from the Nesser River to the Harp River open to them. The western shore of the Nyr Dyv, which had been claimed by the powerful wizards that formed the Suel House of Maure, would become their main trading partner, and several smaller tribes of Oeridians unwilling to accept the rule of the Nehri settled there.

The surviving Flan fled to the forests to seek the protection of the remaining Sylvan Olve, who welcomed them to help defend their borders against the rapacious Suel. It was in those dark days that the surviving Flan began to call themselves the Lytha Ath Hadar, in memory of the time before the Oeridian and Suel invaders when they walked freely across the land.

THE OLVEN PEOPLE

Grey Olve: Rulers and Mystics

Four Clans of Grey Olve ruled the cities of Asternyx, the Latherythari, Latherytharo, Latherythen, and Latheryther, with a single royal family, the Ruaonna, being outside the clans. They dwelled exclusively within the cities, leaving only rarely on quests revealed by their studies, or on embassies to other countries. They worshiped an aspect of Celestian, and constantly searched the stars for insight

into the mysteries of the Oerth. Few survived the last war, following which they fled to refuges in the Kingdom of the Sun, and they number fewer than one hundred today, with no children having been born in more than two centuries. They are well aware this is their last generation, having read the signs long ago, and having come to terms with their end.

High Olve: Balance, Betrayal, and Rebirth

A dozen clans of High Olve once served as the administrators of the Kingdom of Asternyx, overseeing villages, and coordinating the efforts of the Sylvan Olve as required to provide for the needs of the Grey Olve. They followed the Old Faith, worshiping Beory and Obad-Hai, and embracing the Balance. This distant faith gradually alienated some of them from both the people they served and the people they ruled, and four clans gradually turned to darker faiths, seeking fulfillment in power rather than in service. Their betrayal reached its apex when they began teaching the Tirasqi the secrets of necromancy, raising them up to challenge their own people. When this was discovered, the Wild Olve were unleashed on them by their own kin, tasked to excise this taint from the body of the Olven people. Between that and the last war, the High Olve of Asternyx were nearly wiped out. Three of the clans of



betrayal were destroyed, the survivors of the fourth fleeing into the underdark. Four loyal clans were destroyed in the last war, slaughtered by the Tirasqi, or murdered by their own kin. Three clans were nearly destroyed, but fled before the last war ended. They sought refuge in the south, settling the Spindrifft Islands in the middle of the Asperdi-Duxchan chain, and avoiding their kin on the continent for fear of reproach for their cowardice. The last clan retreated to the depths of the Gamboge Forest, shunning contact with the Sylvan Olve out of shame for their failures. It was many centuries later before they would again acknowledge their responsibilities to their kin, and with a renewed fervor. Most now follow very militant versions of the faith of Ehlonna and Trithereon, and when they emerge from the refuges to lead their kin in battle they do not hesitate to unleash powerful magics to destroy those enemies. They have abandoned their old clan name, and now call themselves the Besmil'ruil.

Sylvan Olve: Hunters of the Great Forest

The Sylvan Olve have always been the most numerous people of Asternyx, divided into scores of clans spread throughout the land. They were hunters and small tillers, worshiping Ehlonna and Trithereon for the bounty of the lands and success in their hunts. Their lifestyle has changed little since the last war, only the forests are smaller, and they travel between them less often. A number of significant cultural differences have arisen between the various groups. The clans of the Adri, five small clans of less than 500 members each, are much less militant, and primarily concerned with caring for the forest. The clans of the Gamboge, the most numerous with over twenty clans with as many 5,000 members each, are the most militant, defending their borders against any incursions, be they by the humanoid filth of the Bone March, or the religious fanatics of the Pale. The clans of the Celadon, about a dozen with about 2,000 members each, have been the most secure over the centuries, protected by Nyron and Urnst. A small number have recently begun embracing the new faiths of Mayaheine and Gauthomin, joining their Flan neighbors in this new faith that promises to help them reclaim their homeland. Many outsiders would be shocked at the hidden monastery where they train as knights and monks in the fighting styles of their new patrons.

Wild Olve: Kinslaying Outcasts

Only one small clan of four families, less than 1,000 in all, living in the deepest part of the Gamboge Forest, remain as a legacy of when the Olve of Asternyx warred against their own people. The chosen tools of the rulers of Asternyx, the Wild Olve, were tasked with destroying those High Olve that had turned to the worship of fiends and study of dark magics. Their success has tainted their descendants to this day, as the other Olve shun them out of fear they may decide others have embraced the darkness and unleash another wave of killings. For themselves, the Wild Olve consider their task unfinished, and they stoically maintain a watch for the descendants of those that escaped their ancestors, keeping themselves ready should any return, or if they should discover a clue as their

whereabouts so they might complete their mission. They are content to remain apart from the other Olve as long as they are left in peace, although some of their leaders worry about their diminishing numbers, and fear the time is fast approaching when they must seek the aid of their estranged kin to maintain their ranks. Some are said to be investigating the new faith to see if it may serve as a bridge between them, as the ideals of defense and justice are similar enough to their own. Such an alliance would join the experience of the Wild Olve with the numbers of the Sylvan Olve and Flan, and bring both much closer to achieving their goals.

Translation Guide

Za'aith Ruaala – lit. Royal-Home Stars Night; fig. Kingdom of the Night Sky

Airaruua'er – lit. Home Stars Winter; fig. City of Winter Stars

Airaruua'ari – lit. Home Stars Spring; fig. City of Spring Stars

Airaruua'en – lit. Home Stars Autumn; fig. City of Autumn Stars

Airaruua'aro – lit. Home Stars Summer; fig. City of Summer Stars

Ruaathanis – lit. Star of Dawn; fig. Prince

Tirasqi – (not Elven) Flan name of a tribe living on the Trask River

Maitia-Utha – lit. Death Magic Wizards; fig. Necromancers
Ruaala'lyth – lit. Stars Night People; fig. group name of the people of the Kingdom

Lytha Tae e Nu – lit. People of Love and Hope; fig. free-soil anarchists

Lytha Ath Hadar – lit. People of the Free World; fig. communal nomads

Zarualia – lit. Royal Star Mistress; fig. Queen

Latherythari – lit. Night Sky Children Spring; fig. Clan of Spring Stars

Latherytharo – lit. Night Sky Children Summer; fig. Clan of Summer Stars

Latherythen – lit. Night Sky Children Autumn; fig. Clan of Autumn Stars

Latheryther – lit. Night Sky Children Winter; fig. Clan of Winter Stars

Ruaonna – lit. Star Keepers; the royal family name

Besmil'ruil – lit. Oath Bond Noble; fig. Constitutional Monarchs, a clan name

UNTIL THE STARBREAK

By Rick "Duicarthan" Miller

EPIC LEVEL (21ST & UP), DUNGEON CRAWL, PLANAR

After surpassing 20th-level many characters find themselves in a conundrum. What to do when they've done everything? Many retire, though some continue to seek out powers long forgotten, treasures too great for even a dragon's hoard, challenges beyond the ken of the mortal planes. Ages ago the elves held dominion over much of the world, their kingdoms holding sway over those around them until the rise of other humanoid races. Many of these kingdoms fell into obscurity or have faded from the world gracefully, though the most infamous was overtaken by evil from within and without. In the fallen City of Summer Stars, a frozen apocalypse slumbers. Will you risk unleashing it to thwart it forever?

"Until the Starbreak" is a D&D adventure designed for four 21st-level characters, although it can be adapted for player characters of higher or lower level as detailed in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. It is likely that at some point during this adventure your PC's will gain enough experience to reach 22nd level.

Adventure Background

In the pre-history of the world, in the age when elves blended magic and nature as one, elven cities dominated the woodlands. Over time such cities have disappeared, one by one, but none has a history as tragic as the City of Summer Stars within the Adri Forest. Once a glittering city of two-thousand or more gray elves, it's once proud structures of marble, silver, ice and living woods have disappeared. All that remains now is a single keep surrounded by perpetual winter.

The tale of what is now called the Coldwood is a bitter one. The gray elves were once an introverted, studious and mystical society that lived harmoniously with nature; they sought no dominion within or without their homeland. They were very unlike the Ur-Flannae necromancers of Trask who repeatedly sent silver-tongued emissaries to the elven city, yearning for the magical power of the elves, until the day Fey Queen Sharaferre banished them from her court. In a jealous rage, the Ur-Flannae brought to bear their magical might upon the city. Conjuring fiends, undead, and elemental forces from the outer planes, they laid siege to the city, night after night. Fire, acid and lightning erupted from the skies and the forest screamed in anguish, beckoning both forces to end the conflict.

After watching his homeland become fouled by the Ur-Flannae siege for more than a fortnight, Darnakurian could take no more. A peerless artificer of magical weapons, he sought out knowledge from across the planes. Darnakurian discovered a dark abomination composed entirely of ice called a Xixecal. Bolstered by his own pride, Darnakurian assumed he could control this creature once it reached his plane. Thus, the Xixecal communed with him, tempting him

with promises of power to obliterate the Ur-Flannae and redeem the elven kingdom. It gave him the knowledge to create a vessel it could possess once on this plane. Finally, frustrated and exhausted, Darnakurian opened the gate that allowed the Xixecal into this world, permitting it to inhabit the appalling sword the elves named Hunger. It was not the Xixecal's plan to be locked in the sword for long however once it had reached the Prime Material Plane. The Xixecal's plans however were foiled when Darnakurian rushed off to the Palace of the Heavens to present the blade to his mother as the instrument by which the elves could banish the Ur-Flannae.

The blade seethed with evil, cloaked under an enormous compulsive magical power. The blade whispered to the Queen, promising her the destruction of all her enemies. In this moment, Sharaferre knew the blade was malevolent and ordered Darnakurian to destroy the foul thing before it consumed them all in its malice. Angered and appalled by his mother's presumptuous behavior, Darnakurian finally snapped and the sword took control, forcing him to slay her. Darnakurians' spirit broken, he fled to the forest and came upon a conclave of the enemy necromancers, where the import of his actions took full hold. Darnakurian fell into a fugue state while the sword took control laying waste to friend and foe alike.

Darnakurian slew thousands in a matter of hours. The great swathe of destruction his sword brought about ended in the horrific deaths of all he encountered, as he expunged the Ur-Flannae from the Coldwood forever. Finally, the elf prince took himself back to his own broken keep, killing any of his brethren he encountered, forcing every gray elf alive in the City of Summer Stars to either perish or flee, never to return.

In a last act of desperation a small band of elves devoted to the teachings of Obad-Hai entered the keep while Darnakurian rested on his throne. With no time to waste, they cast a spell to bind him using temporal magics until they found a means of destroying the cursed blade. Since this time centuries have now passed, and today the very same elf who cast the spell of binding is now dying. The ancient lore of the elves has faded and heroes must be found to deal with the threat before the sword known as Hunger is loosed upon the world once more.

Adventure Synopsis

After being contacted by a patron and traveling to ancient elven ruin of Erianrhel in the Adri Forest, the PC's are briefed by several luminaries who are aware of an evil awakening in the Coldwood.

As the last scion of a centuries old elven kingdom lie dying, the PC's must enter the Coldwood, defeat the mad prince Darnakurian, and destroy his wicked blade

Hunger before he is loosed from his century's long slumber. The adventure takes the PC's from Darnakurian's keep Bitterness lying deep in the frozen wasteland of the Coldwood to the Plane of Fire.

Fortunately for the PC's, the spirit of Queen Sharaferé still dwells within the keep, eagerly awaiting those who might challenge and defeat her mad son. The destruction of Hunger will bring to an end the cataclysmic events of the region and bring peace to the Queen's spirit. By following Queen Sharaferé's final requests the PC's gain a fighting edge against the Xixecal. Upon destroying *Hunger* on the Plane of Fire, the PC's finally encounter the Xixecal that drove Darnakurian to slay his own people.

Adventure Hooks

The following hooks provide multiple starting points for your campaign. Several hooks may be used for different PC's in an adventuring party.

Allies of Mordenkainen: If the PC's have gone through Maure Castle, it is likely they have attracted the attention of Mordenkainen, even if they have not already borrowed the *silver key of portals* from him in that adventure as well. Mordenkainen's friend and ally Gwydiesin of the Cranes and the elves of the Adri Forest fear that a horrible terror from ancient times that claimed one of the first elven kingdoms may be about to awaken. Unable to directly intervene, Mordenkainen implores the PC's to investigate the rumor.

Legacy of the Elves: Few elves remain that can tell the story of Darnakurian, or of the fall of the Kingdom of Summer Stars. Those that do remember do not speak of it, for it is one of the darkest pages in elven history. If the PC's have an elf among their ranks, they will be contacted by Rowena Silverbow, a member of the Silverbow Sages of Lendore, a group of elves whose origins date back to the first elven kingdoms. Rowena asks that they embark on a journey to the Adri Forest to combat a growing threat in the region that centuries ago was responsible for the fall of an ancient elven kingdom located there. She requests that the PC's regain two ancient elven relics that once belonged to the royal family- the elven Ring of Summer Stars once worn by Queen Sharaferé, and an ancient elven blade named *Auralen* that once belonged to the crown prince of the kingdom.

On the Writhing Trail: If the PC's have been through the Age of Worms, they will be contacted by Manzorion's (Tenser's) aide Cymria of the Celadon, who passes along to the PC's that she has been informed by Immonara of the Adri that an ancient evil responsible for the destruction of an ancient elven kingdom is about to be let loose upon the world. Cymria beseeches them to make haste to the ancient elven ruin of Erianrhel in the Adri Forest where they will meet up with Immonara to learn more about the peril that threatens the Adri.

Whispering Winds: As the PC's pass a distant forest a small bird lands near to them and delivers a sung missive from the legendary bard Gwydiesin of the Cranes, a long-time protector of the woodlands. In his missive, he tells the PC's of the ancient city of Summer Stars, and of the foolish elven Prince Darnakurian who summoned forth

a horrid evil from beyond the planes, which ultimately destroyed his kingdom and now hungers to destroy once more. Gwydiesin urges the PC's to meet him at the ancient elven ruin of Erianrhel in the Adri Forest, where he will further explain the peril that threatens the Adri.

Path of the Divine: After a meeting with Agath of Thrutch (high priest of Celestian) and Immonara (Archdruid hierophant of Obad-Hai), a player character paladin's/cleric's church has requested that they travel to the ancient elven ruin of Erianrhel in the Adri Forest. There they will be debriefed on an important matter regarding an ancient evil held in check by the elves for several centuries.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

Unbeknownst to the PC's, the Sentinels have opened up a hole in their defensive grid of the Coldwood to allow travel to Erianrhel. If the PC's do not have the means to transport themselves, for the sake of expedience their patron will either transport them there themselves or provide them with a scroll of *greater teleport*.

Once there, they are met by a cabal of druidic leaders, including the Archdruid Immonara, Gwydiesin of the Cranes, and an ancient elf named Aryth Thandyr. After brief introductions, Aryth shuffles towards the party with a reproachful eye. Retelling the story of Darnakurian and the fall of the Kingdom of Summer Stars, Aryth elucidates that it was he and a small group of gray elven wizards of power that cast the spells that locked Darnakurian and the entire Coldwood in stasis. They had hoped to find a means to extricate their prince from the grasp of the Xixecal. However, centuries have passed and they have found no means of releasing him and have instead devoted their time to keeping intruders from awakening him or the abomination trapped within his magic blade through constant patrols and dimensional lock spells. As Aryth explains with a croup, their time has run out. The stasis holding the prince is fading, as are his own days on this plane. Aryth advises that expedience is of the utmost importance for he will hold the prince at bay for as long as he can so the PC's can cross the Coldwood to infiltrate Bitterness; dealing with Darnakurian and the Xixecal is up to the PC's. With somewhat of a closing smirk, Aryth notes that numerous relics and artifacts of repute still remain in the keep itself, which are ripe for the taking.

If the PC's have any questions regarding the Coldwood, Bitterness, Darnakurian, or the like, Aryth will answer them to the best of his knowledge. He knows Bitterness rests upon a magical node that inhibits all scrying and will tell the PC's this if asked. Aryth does not know what monsters lurk within, though he can inform the PC's that if they come upon certain elven brooches (he will describe them) they may be used to bypass many of the keeps defenses that might still be active.

If asked, Aryth will inform the PC's that the *dimensional lock* over the Coldwood can be removed if they wish to travel to a location directly to outside of the keep. He will however note that Bitterness itself bears a similar ward and such magic will not work once inside its walls should the wards still be active (thus granting the PC's a tactical

advantage in Area 1).

CHAPTER ONE: THE COLDWOOD

The Coldwood is an unnatural arctic forest. Within five miles of Bitterness however, the temperature dips to a level that is virtually unbearable. All vegetation is frozen, killed by the bleak inky permafrost which blankets the ground. Spells or magic items implementing *endure elements* (cold) are powerless to negate the effects of this gelid environment, as the level of cold here causes immediate cold damage. More powerful protective magics are required to combat the severe cold here (such as *resist energy* and greater magics).

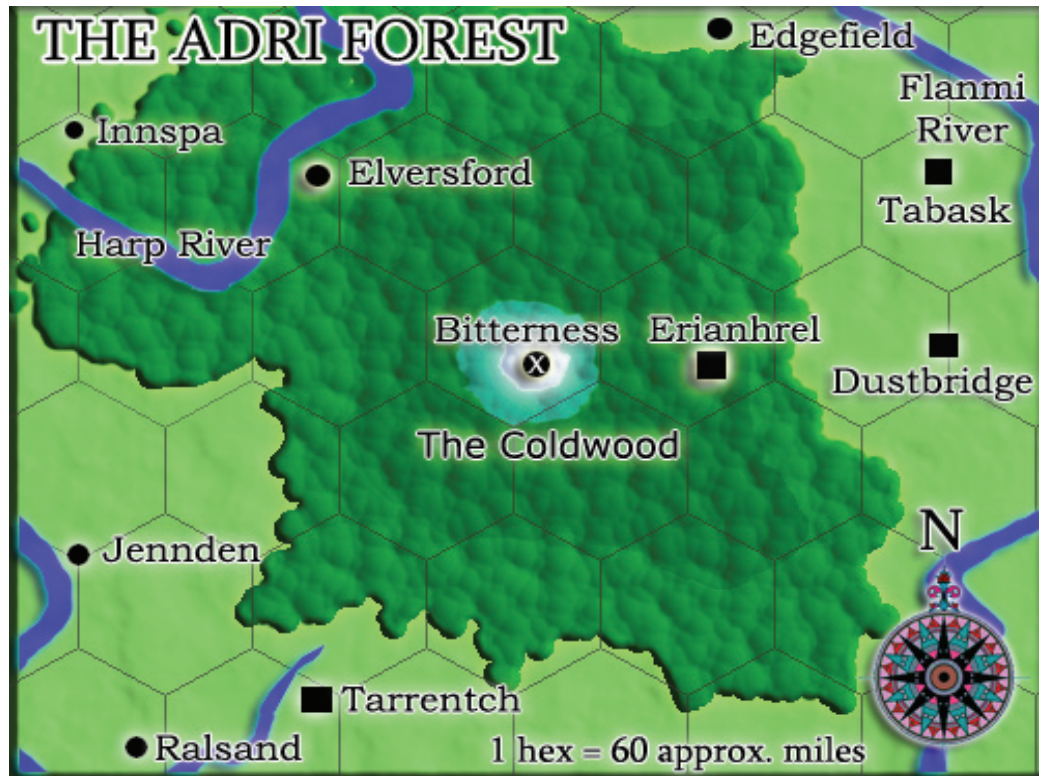
The entire region of the Coldwood is patrolled and protected by the Sentinels, and a special perimeter was constructed around the woods centuries ago and is maintained by the elves to this day. The perimeter grid is lined with special white marble placards every 40-feet. Each placard is concealed so that only a Sentinel knows their exact location. The placard is part of a powerful ward maintaining a *dimensional lock* spell to keep intruders out of the Coldwood. In addition, each Sentinel uses spells that allow them to detect incoming travelers that arrive even miles away from their location. Using these abilities, they approach any travelers and warn them not to enter the area, though the wandering monsters and aberrations within are often threatening enough to keep those who don't listen from continuing.

Due to the PC's strength and the handy-work of the Sentinels, many of the wandering dangers of the Coldwood will give the adventurers a wide berth. However, the frozen guardian will not. If the PC's dally for more than one day in the Coldwood, the frozen guardian will attack at night, while they rest.

Bitterness

Bitterness sits on a magical node that prevents any and all scrying attempts. The elves of the Coldwood had tapped into the node, allowing them to control the weather for miles around their great city. This changed when the Xixecal took control, encasing Bitterness in ice with its dire winter effect. Any caster who wishes to change the weather here must first make a caster level check (DC 36); doing so suppresses the effect for one minute.

The keep itself is tilted and partially sunk into the ground, and is encased in a shell of ice. The keep is made of polished, ivory-white marble and is surrounded by various ice-shrouded trees whose roots form the keep's foundation. The main gate to the keep is now covered in a thick coating of ice.



Wall of ice; 3ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 540; Break DC 50; Climb DC 30)

PROPERTIES OF THE KEEP

Unless otherwise noted, the following features are consistent throughout the keep.

Passages/ Corridors: All surfaces are made of polished marble and are covered in a shell of ice. All ceilings are 40ft. high. All surfaces are 12ft. thick (10ft. marble, 2ft. ice).

Doors and Hinges: All doors are made of polished white marble and each depicts a single image of an oak tree, roots and all. The doors open into adjacent rooms. All hinges are on the interior of the adjacent room/ corridor. The door frames are decorated with an interwoven vine pattern, decorated with flourishing silver flowers. All doors are considered unlocked, unless stated otherwise.

Silver-embedded marble door; 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; 60hp; Break DC 28.

Secret Doors: All secret doors require a successful Search skill check (DC 35) to locate. The doors are voice-activated and open only when the words, "star break" are spoken aloud. This riddle can be deciphered as the doors bear stars falling through the sky, shattering as they descend. A Decipher Script or Knowledge (History) DC 35 reveals this.

Lighting: The corridors/ hallways of the tower are dimly lit with silver lanterns ensorcelled with a *continual flame* spell (equivalent to torch-light). Daylight does not reach the keep due to a constant state of cloud cover. The exception to this is the grand hall which is continually lit by the silver *continual flame* lanterns at night, and by day through the icy sunroof.

Environment: The keep is frigid and any who dwell here suffer the effects of a *dire winter* spell. In addition,

any potions brought into the keep must make a successful Fort. Save DC 30 or be destroyed, as they freeze and burst their containers. Characters walking on ice must spend 2 squares of movement to safely enter a square covered by ice, and the DC for Balance and Tumble checks increases by +5. Characters in prolonged contact with ice may run the risk of taking damage from severe cold (See DMG 302 for rules on extreme cold.)

Furnishings: All of the furnishings throughout the tower are made from carved wood, silver, or marble—all sheathed in a thin layer of ice. All sculptures are of sculpted ice.

Windows: What few windows there are in the keep are covered in a 1ft. thick layer of ice.

Sounds: Sound travels little within the interior of the keep, or to any area outside of it. Any Listen check within the keep suffers a -5 terrain modifier.

Spell Effects: The entire keep radiates an effect similar to *unhallow* and *dimensional lock* spells, which bars creatures from entering.

In addition, all turning checks to turn undead suffer a -4 penalty, while turning checks to rebuke undead gain a +4 profane bonus. Spell resistance does not apply to this effect. All evil creatures within the keep gain a +2 deflection bonus to AC and a +2 resistance bonus to all saves against attacks or effects created by good creatures.

Lastly, the *unhallow* effect also grants *protection from energy* (cold) to all constructs and evil creatures within.

Art and Finery: Unless stated otherwise, all art and finery taken from the keep, and that is then restored, is worth (1d10 x 100gp)

1. Courtyard to the Keep (EL 23)

The permafrost-covered, shattered cobblestone courtyard is dotted with blighted trees covered in icicles, while the crumbling walls are a testament to the amount of time that has passed here.

A huge remorhaz patrols the area surrounding Bitterness, often venturing out into the Coldwood for prey. If the PC's have not already encountered the remorhaz, it will be waiting here. As soon as it senses the PC's, it rushes to attack.

THE FROZEN GUARDIAN CR 23

Spellwarped paragon remorhaz

Monster Manual 214, Monster Manual III 162, Epic Level Handbook 209

N Huge Magical Beast

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60ft.; **Spot** +25, **Listen** +25

Aura heat

Languages Common

AC 36, touch 18, flat-footed 26

hp 280 (7 HD) damage reduction 10/epic, fast healing 20

Resistances fire and cold 10; spell resistance 48

Fort +35 **Ref** +30 **Will** +25

Spd 90ft., burrow 60ft.

Melee bite +47 (2d8+45, 20/x2)

Space 15ft. **Reach** 10ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +26

Atk Options Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Special Atks improved grab, spell absorption, swallow whole

Abilities Str 45, Dex 30, Con 40, Int 24, Wis 27, Cha 25

Feats As above.

Skills Appraise +17, Balance +20, Bluff +17, Climb +27, Concentration +25, Diplomacy +17, Disguise +17, Escape Artist +20, Hide +12, Intimidate +17, Move Silently +20, Search +17, Sense Motive +18, Survival +18

Heat (Ex): An enraged remorhaz generates heat so intense that anything touching its body takes 10d10 points of fire damage. This is usually enough to melt non-magical weapons, but magic weapons get a Fortitude save (DC 31).

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the remorhaz must hit with its bite attack. If it gets a hold, it automatically deals bite damage and can attempt to swallow the opponent.

Spell Absorption (Su): Whenever a spell fails to penetrate a spellwarped creature's spell resistance, the creature gains one of

the following benefits, chosen at the time the spell resolves.

- **Might:** +4 enhancement bonus to Str.
- **Agility:** +4 enhancement bonus to Dex.
- **Endurance:** +4 enhancement bonus to Con.
- **Life:** Gain temporary hp equal to 5x the lvl of the failed spell.
- **Speed:** Base Spd increases by a number of ft. equal to 5x lvl of the failed spell.
- **Resilience:** Resistance 10 to one energy type (acid, cold electricity, fire, sonic)

Swallow Whole (Ex): A remorhaz can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Large or smaller size by making a successful grapple check. Once inside, the opponent takes 2d8+12 points of crushing damage plus 10d10 points of fire damage per round from the creature's blazing gut. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by using claws or a Small or Tiny slashing weapon to deal 25 points of damage to the remorhaz's gut (AC 20). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. The remorhaz's interior can hold two Large, four Small, eight Tiny, sixteen Diminutive, or thirty-two Fine or smaller opponents.

Tremorsense (Ex): A remorhaz can automatically sense the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with the ground.

GROUND FLOOR

2. Vestibule

Entering the keep does little to stem the chill in the air as is evident by the crunch of hardened frost underfoot. An icy layer covers the length and breadth of this once elaborate chamber cluttered with several smashed marble benches and two toppled tree-shaped cloakracks.

Development: Whether or not the PC's are taking

measures to move silently through this chamber, the demons in the adjoining room may hear them- roll a Listen check (DC 25) for each demon. If either hears the PC's, they both will prepare spells and tactics.

3. The Statued Hall (EL 21)

Centuries ago a great battle was fought here between the elves, the necromancers of Trask, and summoned creatures called forth by both sides from the planes beyond. All that remains now are the frozen bodies of the dead whose souls moved on long ago. Towering over many ice statues depicting the bodies of fallen elves and angels are several ice statues of demons. The elves summoned creatures to affect their escape, many giving their lives so others might live. The frozen forms of the demons remain trapped in a silent vigil.

Shortly after the PC's enter the doors to the keep, the magic binding the demons in their icy forms is dispelled. The demons will immediately move to massacre everyone in sight.

Demon, Balor; hp 290; Monster Manual 40

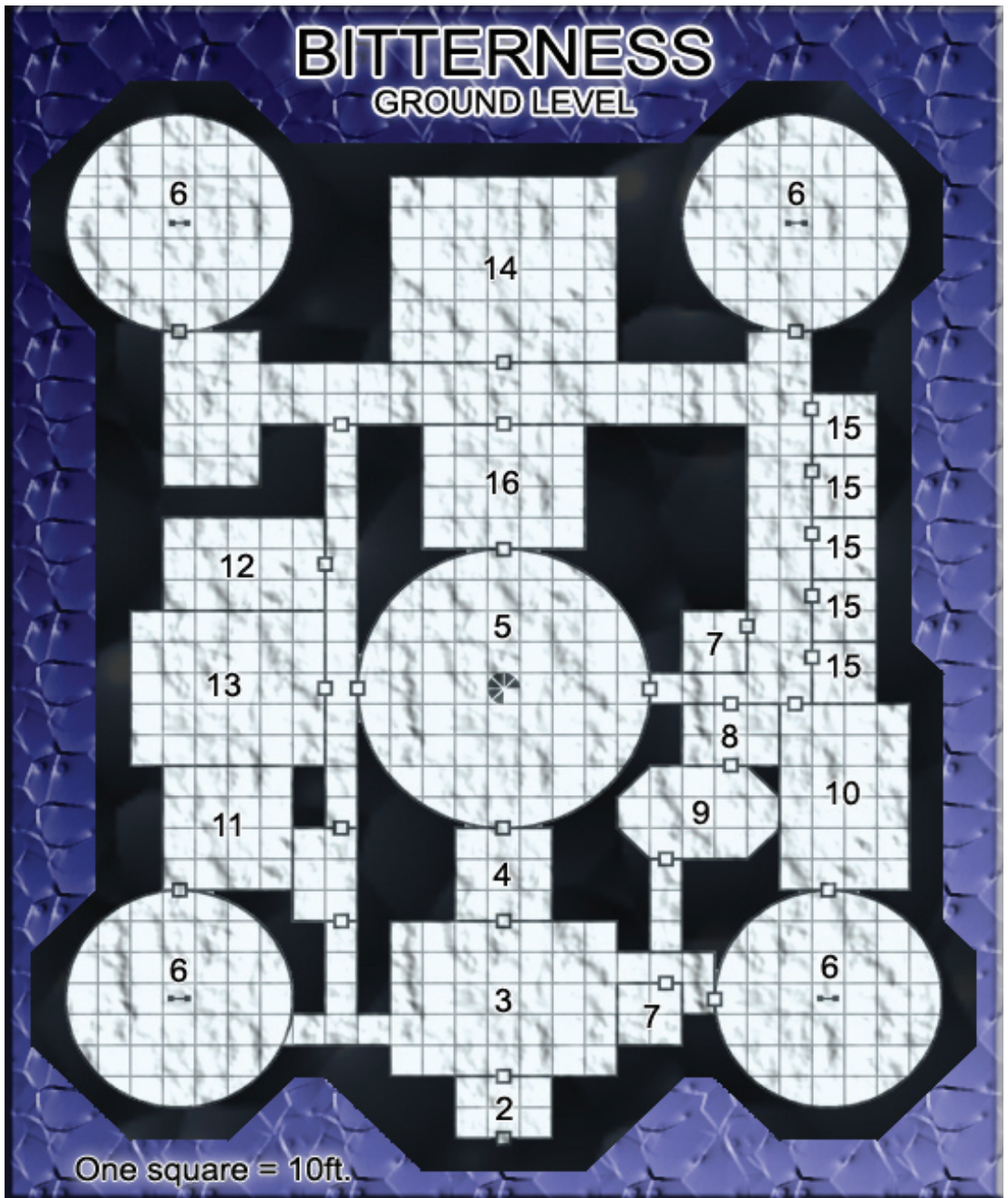
Demon, Marilith; hp 216; Monster Manual 44

Demon, Hezrou (5); hp 138 each; Monster Manual 44

Treasure: On one of the frozen elven corpses is a *brooch of shielding* (21 charges) that also is a key which can disable the tower traps.

4. Sitting Room

Though faded, the surfaces of this room are covered with huge murals of the once great City of Summer Stars, Asternyx. Images of once great marble citadels rise up into the treetops, reached from natural stairs carved into the trees themselves, while crystalline and silver bedecked observation domes open to the skies above. To either side of the room are cracked marble benches carved with elven



weave patterns and script.

Treasure: Under each of the benches (Search DC 25) is a *brooch of shielding* (25 charges) that is also a key which can disable the tower traps.

5. Great Hall (EL 20)

This huge circular chamber has at its center a large tree that has been shaped into a staircase leading upwards. Though covered with ice, silver filigree embedded into the rails is still visible. Ten-foot wide support columns of fluted marble flank the walls of the grand chamber.

Two nightcrawlers skulk here, waiting for the PC's to approach. These creatures were gated in during the fall of the City of Summer Stars and have since become the guardians of the keep. If the PC's spot them, they attack.

Nightcrawler, Nightshade (2): hp 212 each; Monster Manual 195.

6. Towers (EL 18)

The walls of the tower are appointed with all manner of elven bows, words and suits of armor, which are encased in a thick layer of ice. At the center of the room is a ladder leading up to a trap door in the ceiling.

As these rooms were once the access area for the keeps guards, each is protected by a potent trap. In times of peace, the guards would place an elven brooch into a secret compartment in the doorframe, to keep the trap from activating.

Secret doorframe compartment: Search DC 35

Iron trap door; 2in. thick; hardness 10; 60hp; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 38 (28 if ice is removed); Bypass with elven brooch.

Trap: This trap activates if the PC's attempt to gain access to the trap door.

Virulent Cloud Trap: CR 20; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (maximized *acid fog*, (18/ acid damage round for 25 rounds, 20ft. radius centered on the floor, no save; 25th-level wizard), spell effect (maximized *cloudkill*, Fortitude Save DC 30 for partial; 6 Constitution damage/ round for 25 minutes, 20ft. radius centered on the floor, 25th-level wizard), spell effect (maximized *incendiary cloud*, (36 fire damage round for 25 rounds, 20ft. radius centered on the floor, DC 30 Reflex save half damage, 25th-level wizard); Search DC 40; Disable Device 40

7. Storage Closets

These small areas are filled with the decayed remains of stored goods. Each has a small marble font, several sconces, and marble pegs used for hanging linens.

8. Kitchen

Large wooden tables scattered with piles of various frozen materials dominate the center of this chamber. These tables are flanked by fireplaces or fonts used in food preparation.

9. Dining Hall

This grand chamber is bedecked with the remnants of the finest of elven furniture. At the end of the room is a large fireplace and mantle while the walls are flanked with carved sideboards and marble benches. An elaborate wooden chandelier, still alight with continual flame torches hangs in the middle of the room above the huge marble dining table.

Treasure: The dinnerware in this room is all made of fine porcelain inlaid with platinum embellishments (300gp

worth). The silverware (200gp worth) is pure silver and etched with ancient elven script and designs.

10. Melodic Refuge

Floating in the air of this sparsely lit chamber are several ghostly instruments playing a continuous melody from an ancient time. The room is decorated with violet and gold-flecked furnishings. The ceiling is a wondrous array of murals depicting many musicians playing wondrous instruments. The walls are decorated with tapestries, each depicting some famous elven bard or musician from ages past.

11. Baths

Several icy pools of clear water surround a large frozen waterfall that cascades from the ceiling of this room. The walls are covered in a mural depicting an idyllic forest scene. Within easy reach of the bathing pools are small sconces filled with exotic soaps and bathing oils that have been set into branches of the trees within the mural.

12. Dimensional Plane Galleria (EL 24)

The huge mural covering the walls and ceiling of this room depicts a maze-like picture of multi-tiered stairs and labyrinthine passages. The flagstone floor here is similar to that of the rest of the keep, though it lacks the icy veneer common elsewhere.

Along the left wall is a concealed doorway that exits this area. A successful Search check (DC 38) discovers this well concealed portal.

The mural holds its own secret- one of the doorways depicted in the mural is keyed to a series of magical oubliettes that function similar to an *imprisonment* spell. Imprisoned below this chamber is an Ur-Flannae necromancer named Leglecia. She was imprisoned here prior to the war between the Ur-Flan necromancers of Trask and the elves of the City of Summer Stars. Leglecia was an ambassador to the elves who, after being banished, attempted to assassinate Queen Sharafere. To punish this treacherous act, the Queen had Leglecia imprisoned here so that her cohorts could not resurrect or otherwise retrieve her. Opening a tiny door panel (Search check DC 35) in the mural will free Leglecia.

LEGLECIA **CR 24**

Female human sorcerer 6/ cleric 4/ true necromancer 14

Libris Mortis 51

NE Medium humanoid

Init +13; **Senses** -; Spot +5, Listen +5

Aura zone of desecration (10ft. radius)

Language Abyssal, Ancient Flan, Elven

AC 36, touch 22, flat-footed 31

hp 244 (24 HD)

Resistances -; **SR** 25

Fort +21 **Ref** +19 **Will** +27 evasion

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +5 *wounding light mace* +19/14/9 (1d6+6, 20/x2)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +14

Atk Options planar turning

Special Atks death touch 1/day (+14 melee, 4d6 damage); rebuke undead 4/day (+5, 2d6, 16th)

Combat Gear *staff of necromancy* (27 Charges)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 18, +18 ranged touch attack, +18 vs. SR):

9th (3/day) - *plague of undead**

8th (5/day) - *horrid wilting* (DC 25), *trap the soul* (DC 24)

7th (7/day) - *control undead*, *finger of death* (DC 23), *waves of exhaustion*

6th (7/day) - *disintegrate* (DC 21), *eyebite* (DC 22), *symbol of fear* (DC 22)

5th (7/day) - *blight* (DC 21), *cloudkill* (DC 20), *magic jar* (DC 21), *summon undead V**

4th (7/day) - *fear* (DC 20), *locate creature*, *phantasmal killer* (DC 20), *summon undead IV**

3rd (8/day) - *arcane sight*, *fly*, *halt undead* (DC 19), *summon undead III**, *vampiric touch*

2nd (8/day) - *command undead*, *scare* (DC 18), *see invisibility*, *spectral hand*, *summon undead II**

1st (8/day) - *charm person* (DC 16), *chill touch* (DC 17), *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *summon undead I**

0 (6/day) - *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *ghost sound* (DC 15), *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 16)

X pre-cast spells; * *Libris Mortis*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 16, +18 ranged touch attack, +16 vs. SR):

8th - *discern location*, *polymorph any object^D* (DC 23)

Unholy Aura^X

7th - *blasphemy* (DC 23), *destruction^D* (DC 23), *regenerate*, *repulsion* (DC 22), *symbol of weakness* (DC 23)

6th - *anti-life shell* (DC 22), *blade barrier* (DC 21), *heal*, *mislead^D*, *word of recall*

5th - *break enchantment*, *commune*, *dispel good* (DC 20), *slay living^D* (DC 21), *spell resistance*, *true seeing*

4th - *air walk*, *cure critical wounds*, *death ward^{Dx}*, *discern lies* (DC 19), *freedom of movement*, *tongues*

3rd - *cure serious wounds* x2, *dispel magic*, *magic circle against good*, *non-detection^D*, *prayer*, *protection from energy*, *speak with dead* (DC 19)

2nd - *aid*, *calm emotions* (DC 18), *cure moderate wounds* x2, *death knell^D* (DC 19), *desecrate*, *silence* (DC 18), *summon undead II*;

1st - *bane* (DC 16), *bless*, *cure light wounds* x2, *deathwatch*, *disguise self^D*, *remove fear*, *sanctuary* (DC 16)

0 - *detect magic* x6

D domain spell; **Domains** Death, Trickery; **X** pre-cast spells

True Necromancer Spell-like Abilities (CL 18th, +18 ranged touch attack, +18 vs. SR)

2/ day - *create undead*, *create greater undead*

1/day - *energy drain*, *horrid wilting* (DC 25), *wail of the banshee* (DC 26)



Abilities Str 12, Dex 20, Con 22, Int 14, Wis 20, Cha 20
+5 inherent bonus to Wis and Cha

SQ spontaneous casting, summon familiar

Feats Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Improved Initiative, Improved Toughness, Lightning Reflexes, Negotiator, Planar Turning, Spell Focus (necromancy), Superior Initiative.

Skills Bluff +30, Concentration +31, Diplomacy +14, Disguise +10, Heal +10, Hide +20, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (history) +3, Knowledge (religion) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +3, Search +7, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +29

Possessions +5 *wounding light mace*, +5 *mithral buckler*, *ring of evasion*, *ring of protection* +5, *amulet of health* +6, *incandescent blue sphere ioun stone*, *cloak of elvenkind and resistance* +4, *gloves of dexterity* +6, *boots of the winterlands*, *monk's belt*, *bracers of armor* +8, spell components, spell component case, holy symbol of Nerull.

Development: Time has not passed for Leglecia, and should she be released she will immediately attack any elf that she sees. Leglecia does not speak Common, but she can be conversed with any other language she knows or via a *tongues* spell. If the party dissuades her from violence, she will join the party, but only to retrieve elven artifacts and books of magic. Once she learns of the power of Hunger, Leglecia will seek the blade for her own and will use any means to get it.

13. The Forge of Evil (EL 19)

Splintered wooden furniture and crushed stonework cover the floor of this blackened marble chamber. A black metal forge along the back wall and four chipped statues in the form of elven princes in each corner are the only intact things that remain in the room.

As the PC's enter the room, a *greater dispel magic* is activated, a trap set by Darnakurian himself, to protect spellcasters from interrupting him as he worked on Hunger.

The four stone statues are stone golems deceptively acting as support pillars for the ceiling. Should anyone but Darnakurian enter this chamber, the golems attack.

Greater Dispelling Trap; CR 8; magic device; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; spell effect (*greater dispel magic*, instantaneous, 20ft. radius centered on the door), 25th-level-wizard); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31; The *greater dispel magic* can only be disabled by dismantling the forge.

Greater Stone Golems (4); hp 271 each; Monster Manual 137

14. Armory (EL 21)

The glint of metal reflects the lighting in this room so that the entire chamber can be seen clearly. Built into the walls of this chamber are various stands bearing ancient arms and armor. In the center of the room on a raised dais is a large mithral statue covered with icicles and black permafrost.

Most of the elven chain armor here is made of mithral, though most of it has succumbed to ravages of time or the preceding violence with the necromancers of Trask. Many of the suits of armor were in need of repair even in ancient times, but given several weeks of work some of the armor may be fully repaired. The DM has the final authority on how many suits of armor can be salvaged.

The mithral golem in this chamber was programmed ages ago to attack anyone other than the gray elves who lived in Bitterness. Therefore, as soon as the PC's enter this room, the mithral golem attacks.

MITHRAL GOLEM CR 21

Epic Level Handbook 193

N Huge Construct

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60ft., low-light vision; Spot +0, Listen +0

Languages Elven (understands)

AC 42, touch 16, flat-footed 38

hp 238 (36 HD) damage reduction 15/ adamantine and epic

Immunity construct traits, magic

Fort +12, **Ref** +16, **Will** +12

Spd 40

Melee 2 Slam +39 (4d10+14)

Space 15ft.; **Reach** 15ft.

Base Atk +27; **Grp** + 49

Atk Options alacrity

Abilities Str 39, Dex 19, Con -, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 1

Skills Jump +18

Alacrity (Su): Once per round, the mithral golem may take an extra standard action (either before or after its other actions in the round).

Magic Immunity (Ex): A mithral golem is immune to all magical and supernatural effects, except as follows. A slow spell negates its alacrity for 1d4 rounds; while a haste spell restores 1d6 hit points per level of the caster (maximum 10d6) or restores its alacrity, if previously negated by a slow spell. Multiple slow spells simply extend the duration of the effect.

Sealed within the mithral golem's torso is an adamantine box, which may be found if the PC's search the golem's remains (Search check DC 30). The key to this lockbox is on the body of Sharafere.

Adamantine lockbox; hardness 20; hp 40; Break DC 30; Open Lock DC 40

Treasure: Inside the lockbox is a marble tablet that bears research material for a *safe time* spell (*Epic Level Handbook 85*), a ring of evasion, a vibrant purple prism ioun stone, and three silver scroll cases (100gp each). The contents of the scroll cases are as follows: scroll of *mind fog* (CL 9), scroll of *analyze dweomer, dimensional lock* (CL), scroll of *mass suggestion, magic jar* (CL 11).

15. Servants Quarters

These plain rooms are filled with several oak bunks fitted with moss-mattresses, each with an accompanying chest. The chests are all opened and cast aside, some even tipped over as if someone fled here in a hurry. The walls of these rooms are covered in beautiful tapestries of waterfalls and bubbling brooks amid a calm forest.

16. Shrine to the Elven Gods (EL 18)

Upon entering this room, strong drafts of air stir up the hoary dust that has settled over the ages. At the far end of the room among the crumbled and smashed benches is a marble altar embellished with tarnished silver filigree. In the center of the altar, plunged into the stone itself is a gleaming blue bladed longsword.

A successful Knowledge (religion) check DC 20 confirms that the altar is an ancient relic of the elven gods, the sword at the center signifying Corellon Larethian. Should the blade be pulled free of the altar, it splits into four shimmering force swords that attack anyone in the room.

After disabling or avoiding the trap in this room, the PC's may make use of it as a place to rest or to recover.

Maximized Force Sword Flurry Trap; CR 14; magic device; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; spell effect: (*mordenkainen's sword* x4, 21 round duration; Atk

+36 melee; 4d6+3/ crit 19-20, x2), 21st level wizard); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32. Cost: 73,750gp, 5,880 XP.

UPPER FLOOR

17. Observatory EL 21

The actinic smell of ozone fills the foggy ruins of this once proud observatory. At the center of the room is the lofty canopy to the tree staircase. From here what remains of the city can be seen through the ruins of what used to be the roof of this area. Looking down from this vantage point, the frozen, ash-covered wasteland of the scorched and putrefied city can clearly be seen for miles around.

A mated pair of old white dragons dwell here. Once natives of the Corusk mountains to the north, they found their way to the keep in a freak snow storm several centuries ago. With no adventurers hunting them and no natural predators in the area, the pair quickly made the observatory their home. Within a small crater in the floor filled with solid ice is the pairs' treasure hoard.

Old White Dragon (2): hp 276 each; Monster Manual 77

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 13; +29 ranged touch attack)

2nd (7/day) - *bear's endurance, eagle's splendor, invisibility, mirror image, see invisibility*

1st (7/day) - *alarm, expeditious retreat, mage armor, protection from good, shield*

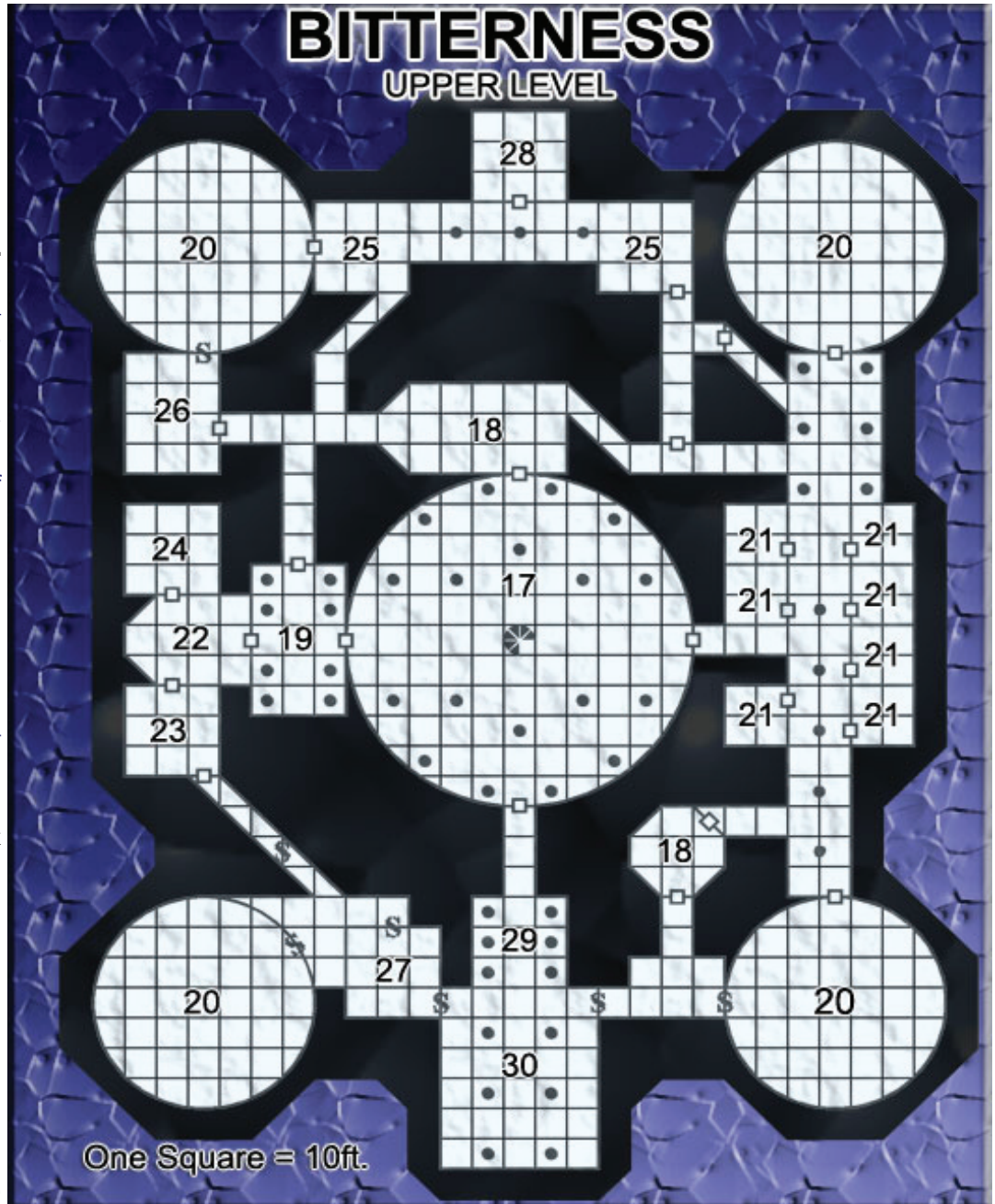
0 (6/day) - *acid splash (DC 11), arcane mark, detect magic, ghost sound (DC 11), light, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*

Wall of ice; 4in. thick; hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 28

Treasure: 25,000gp in assorted gems, 5,000pp, a *ring of freedom of movement*, and several pieces of ancient elven art and finery worth 7,500gp.

18. Study

Wondrous tomes once filled the marble shelves of this



chamber, though all that is left of them now are tattered and charred remnants. Two sofas with small tables set by them fill out the room which is lit by the blue-crystal chandelier slowly swinging overhead.

The shelves of this chamber once held great tomes of elven lore and magic. However, if a *make whole* spell is cast upon any of these books it will restore them their original, legible condition. The contents of the books are left to the DM's discretion.

19. Arcanum Magnifica

Various tomes, scrolls, and baubles bedeck the numerous oak shelves of this once grand library. Carved tables are set about the room with accompanying padded chairs. Each table bears a silver candelabrum and several smaller votive candles. A small shrine covered with the ash of burnt incense is set along the back wall.

Among the hundreds of books in this chamber are copies of Darnakurian's spellbooks, a *manual of bodily health +2*, a *tome of clear thought +5*, a scroll of *epic mage armor* (CL 27, See Appendix I), and two scrolls of *freedom* (CL 17).

20. Upper Towers

Frozen to the floors and walls of this chamber are the bodies of several elves. Blast marks, crumbled marble, and bits of destroyed gear clutter the room. The arrow slits in the outer walls remain intact, indicating these elves were slain by somebody inside the keep.

21. Guest Quarters

These exquisite chambers are adorned with finely carved armoires, a small writing table, a padded chair, a canopied bed, and a small chest for personal effects.

All of the chests and armoires are bare.

22. Royal Antechamber

Comfortable sofas abutted by crystal tables occupy this chamber. In a corner is a tree-shaped coat rack.

23. Darnakurian's Quarters

This room is decorated in the finest of elven furnishings. An elaborate armoire, canopied bed, small sofa, carved wooden tables, and a small chest complete the chamber's furnishings. Mounted on the wall in a gem-covered scabbard is an exquisite elven longsword.

The sword *Auralen* was Darnakurian's before he forged Hunger. The blade is an elven relic dating back to the first rulers of the Kingdom of Summer Stars.

Treasure: *Auralen*: +5 holy spell-storing adamantine longsword sheathed in a scabbard of keen edges. In the chest are four potions of *cure serious wounds* (CL 15).

24. Sharafere's Quarters

This room is decorated with the best furnishings the elves have to offer. A silk canopied bed, feather down sofas, and a carved wooden armoire and chest are arranged throughout the room. A small dresser with a crystal and silver mirror, in front of which is a padded chair, sits next to the door.

Treasure: Between the chest, dresser, and armoire a total of 7,500gp worth of elven jewels and finery can be found.

25. The Weather Font

At the center of this chamber is a crystal font carved with elven glyphs and sigils. Filling the font is a silvery-liquid used in scrying.

The well is used for scrying outside of Bitterness, and was once used by the elves to predict and control the weather around the Coldwood area.

26. Arcane Laboratory (EL 21)

Locked in large glass cases in this room are various creatures, many of which were captured or brought to the elven city for study. Many of the cases are now cracked and timeworn, the magic that bound these creatures having faded much like it has elsewhere in the keep, while others still hold occupants. The creatures seem to be in some sort of suspended animation. Most of the marble tables in this chamber are coated with thick layers of ice, dust, and litter, indicating that the area was left in haste; anything not of value being left behind.

Though the mind flayer and the aboleth were captured in the Underdark during an excursion taken by Darnakurian, the demon was captured by Aryth, now the leader of the Sentinels, while fending off a border raid of rogue necromancers, days before the war.

The prisoners will observe the PC's until they are all searching the room or seem preoccupied. A successful Spot check DC 29 detects the ruse.

Glass Prison; hardness 5; hp 40; Break DC 25.

Aboleth Mage; hp 177; Monster Manual 8

Zazandra; Demon, Marilith; hp 216; Monster Manual 44

Tyqulyq; Mind Flayer Sorcerer; hp 109; Monster Manual 187

Tactics: As the PC's examine the room, the mind flayer uses *detect thoughts* while remaining invisible to see if they have detected the ruse. If not it communicates with the marilith, who casts *blade barrier* while the aboleth and mind flayer cast defensive spells from their prisons. If the spell is successful, she frees the mind flayer who proceeds to attack any human or elven PC immediately.

27. Vault of the Gray Elves (EL 21)

Numerous locked adamantine chests are set along the walls of this room, above which are sconces filled with various scroll cases. Cradled atop a pedestal at the far end of the room is a white crystal sphere. In the center of the room is a large mithril statue.

The mithral golem in this room is programmed to attack anyone bearing the royal crest of Summer Stars. As the PC's enter this room, the mithril golem activates and attacks. The sphere is made of a whitish-blue tinted diamond.

diamond.

Other than for Darnakurian, anyone touching or removing the sphere from the pedestal triggers an *imprisonment* trap.

Mithral Golem; hp 238; See Area 12

Adamantine Chest; 4in. thick; hardness 20; hp 120; Break DC 35; Open Lock DC 45.

Imprisonment trap; CR 14; magic device; touch trigger (*alarm*); spell effect (imprisonment; Will save DC 31 or be entombed in a state of suspended animation in a small sphere far beneath the surface of the earth, 25th-level-wizard; Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33.

Treasure: The scroll cases are filled only with dust aside from a large basalt tablet which contains research notes for an *epic mage armor* spell (*Epic Level Handbook* 79).

In the chests are a *cube of force*, *staff of earth and stone* (11 charges), *ring of chameleon power*, *matttock of the titans*, *shrouds of disintegration*, and two elixirs of *heal* (CL 20). On the pedestal is the *white orb of dragonkind* (*DMG* 281).

28. Aviary

Battered cages and riding gear identifies this room as an ancient aviary where elven flying cavalry were barracked. Several stalls still exist for large flying creatures with an accompanying trough for water and baskets that once held fruits and grain.

29. Audience Chamber

A large crystal chandelier hangs above the main floor of this chamber. Along each wall are elaborate sofas and round tables set with bowls that were once filled with pleasant pastries and fruits. At the far end of the corridor is a large mithral door engraved with the royal crest of the kingdom.

The door leading to Area 30 is locked with an adamantine cryptex lock and warded with the spells *arcane lock* and *globe of invulnerability* (CL 27).

Mithral door; 4in. thick; hardness 20; hp 120; Break DC 38; Open Lock DC 45.

30. Throne of the Bitter Prince (EL 25)

The magnificent domed ceiling of this chamber has been crafted of clear crystal, depicting the sky on a clear summer night, and is covered in jagged icicles. Lying in the center of the floor is the ice-shrouded form of a slain elven maiden, frozen in time. At the far end of the room on a raised dais is a throne made of solid silver and ice adorned with diamonds and sapphires. Sitting on the throne is a brooding elf dressed in dark-grey robes. A black-bladed sword rests across his lap.

Darnakurian has been sitting lost in thought since the PC's entered the keep. If he hears any disturbances on



this floor, he prepares spells ahead of time, and falls back into a catatonic state until they enter the throne room. When the PC's enter the grand hall Darnakurian rises from his mothers throne, her body lying still at its foot. He immediately attacks anyone who approaches her body or attacks him first.

DARNAKURIAN CR 25

Male gray elf fighter 2/wizard 10/elritch knight 12
CE Medium Humanoid (Elf)

Init +12; **Senses** low-light vision; Spot +5, Listen +5

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Gnome, Goblin, Sylvan

AC 31, touch 21, flat-footed 23

hp 277 (24 HD, currently 290 – *false life*) damage reduction 10/ adamantine

Immunity cold, sleep effects

Resistances fire 20

Fort +26 **Ref** +20 **Will** +19 +2 saves vs. enchantment
Spd 30ft.

Melee *Hunger* +29/+24/+19/+14 (1d10+10 plus 1d6 cold, 17-20/x2)

unarmed strike +23/+18/+13/+8 (1d3+5, 20/x2)

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +21

Atk Options Combat Reflexes

Special Atks Lord of the Keep (allows him the ability to turn the wards on/off in Bitterness, this is move-action)

Combat Gear – *Hunger** (see sidebar), *cube of frost resistance*, *winged boots*

Spells Prepared (4/7/7/7/6/6/6/6/4/4/2; epic -2): (CL 25th; +29 vs. SR)

epic – *extended gate, quickened repulsion* (DC 27)
 9th – *prismatic sphere* (DC 30), *quickened teleport, time stop, wish* (DC 30)
 8th – *maze, mind blank, quickened dimension door, superior invisibility* (Spell Compendium 125)
 7th – *banishment* (DC 28), *delayed blast fireball* (DC 28), *insanity* (DC 28), *limited wish* (DC 28), *prismatic spray* (DC 28), *spell turning*
 6th – *acid fog* (DC 28), *chain lightning* (DC 27), *contingency**, *disintegrate* (DC 27), *greater dispel magic, mislead*
 5th – *break enchantment, cloudkill* (DC 27), *extended stonesskin, mind fog* (DC 26), *passwall, teleport, waves of fatigue* (DC 26)
 4th – *confusion* (DC 25), *dimensional anchor* (+23 ranged touch), *greater invisibility, phantasmal killer x2* (DC 25), *stonesskin*
 3rd – *displacement, dispel magic, fireball* (DC 24), *fly, hold person* (DC 24), *lightning bolt* (DC 24), *protection from energy*
 2nd – *darkvision, false life**, *invisibility, levitate, mirror image, scorching ray, web* (DC 24)
 1st – *charm person* (DC 22), *endure elements, expeditious retreat, magic missile x2, obscuring mist, shield*
 0 – *acid splash x2* (DC 22), *detect magic, read magic*
 *pre-cast spells

Abilities Str 20, Dex 26, Con 24, Int 32, Wis 16, Cha 16

+3 inherent bonus to Int., +2 to Con.

SQ summon familiar

Feats Combat Reflexes, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Efficient Item Creation, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Extend Spell, Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Improved Spell Capacity (10th), Magical Aptitude, Practiced Spellcaster, Quickened Spell, Scribe Scroll[®], Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Penetration, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)

Skills Climb +10, Concentration +34, Craft (alchemy) +19, Decipher Script +26, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +8, Jump +15, Knowledge (arcana) +38, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +19, Knowledge (geography) +21, Knowledge (history) +21, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +16, Knowledge (religion) +14, Knowledge (the planes) +31, Ride +15, Search +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +42, Swim +10.

Possessions combat gear, +1 *mithral buckler, amulet of health* +6, *belt of giant strength* +6, *bracers of armor* +8, *cloak of resistance* +5, *ring of major fire energy resistance, headband of intellect* +6, *gloves of dexterity* +6, *ring of protection* +3, spell component case, spellbooks.

Darnakurians Spellbooks: spells prepared plus, 0 – All PH;
 1st – *alarm, burning hands, comprehend languages, feather fall, identify, mage armor, protection from evil, reduce person, sleep*; 2nd – *bear's endurance, bull's strength, gust of wind, knock, protection from arrows, see invisibility*; 3rd – *arcane sight, clairaudience/clairvoyance, keen edge, non-detection, vampiric touch*; 4th – *dimension door, greater invisibility, hallucinatory terrain, ice storm, locate creature, scrying, wall of ice*; 5th – *cone of cold, contact other plane, dismissal, telekinesis*; 6th – *legend lore, repulsion, true seeing*; 7th – *sequester, greater teleport*; 8th – *antipathy, dimensional lock, polymorph any object*; 9th – *gate, imprisonment, weird*.

Tactics – If Darnakurian has time to prepare, he casts *superior invisibility* (If you don't have the sourcebook containing this spell then replace it with a quickened *greater invisibility*), *mind blank, extended stonesskin, false life, fly, and contingency* (*protection from energy* – electricity). On the first round of combat he casts a quickened *repulsion* and *prismatic sphere*. On round two, he casts *maze* on any melee class (fighter, paladin, etc.) that breaks through either barrier; if this doesn't occur he opens up with offensive spells. If engaged in combat, he will fight until reduced to ¼ of his hit points. At which point he will cast a quickened *teleport* or quickened *dimension door* and retreat to either area 23 or 27 to retrieve the potions there.

NEW ITEM: HUNGER (SIDEBAR)

+5 *keen dancing spell-storing icy burst adamantite bastard sword* (Intelligent Weapon)

Senses: blindsense 500ft., *deathwatch* (on user only), Telepathy 1,000ft.

Languages: Abyssal, Common (speech)

Skills: Bluff +22, Knowledge (the planes) +11

Abilities: Int 12 Wis 8 Cha 34 **Ego:** 37

Spell-like abilities: (CL 25th; +29 vs. SR)

(3/ day)- *disintegrate* (DC 27, 20d6), *haste* (on wielder), *true seeing, vampiric touch* (10d6); (1/ day) – *extended wall of ice* (around wielder)

Special Purpose: Defeat/slay necromancers.

Overpowering various; CL 25; *Weight* 6lbs.

Destroying the Blade: Hunger can be destroyed if someone can successfully take control of the sword and cast it deep into a volcano at the border of the Plane of Earth and the Plane of Fire. It may also be destroyed by a *mordenkainen's disjunction* spell though this solution may bear penalties up to the DM's discretion.

Sharafere Returns (EL -)

Once Darnakurian falls, the air grows bright and warm as a light spring breeze blows over the remains of the elven woman frozen to the floor. As this occurs, a bright white beacon of light erupts from the corpse as an apparition of a gray-elven woman tranquilly floating in the air with a penitent expression appears before the PC's. The elven maiden is Sharafere, Fey Queen of the City of Summer Stars.

After regaining her bearings, Sharafere's apparition curtsies and thanks the PC's. She speaks through a shared telepathy with all who are present. Sharafere can answer many of the PC's questions about the keep, the elves, or the Ur-Flannae invasion. The most important information she can impart, however is the fact that Hunger is a possessed weapon inhabited by an outer-planar abomination called a Xixecal. Whenever Sharafere speaks of her son Darnakurian, her features soften and crystal forms appear where tears would be. She regretfully explains that the blame was not entirely his. She should have foreseen the dangers. She was too slow in acting. Until Hunger and the Xixecal are destroyed, she cannot rest, and she presents her services to assist them in this task.

Queen Sharaferere should be used to fill in any information the PC's may not already have about Darnakurian, the gray elves, the City of Summer Stars, Bitterness, Hunger, or the Xixecal itself. She does not know about anything that has transpired since her death many centuries ago, nor the fact that the surrounding land is a frozen wasteland. Her final wishes are to see Hunger, the Xixecal and Bitterness destroyed, and to see that she and her son are interred within the land they so loved.

Ghost of Sharaferere; Queen Sharaferere, though considered undead, is incapable of being harmed or harming others (though an anti-magic field disrupts her form so long as it is in the area), she cannot change location and is bound to the body that bears the elven symbol of royalty, the ring upon the left hand of her mortal form.

Treasure: Sharaferere's royal crest (*ring of shooting stars*), key to the lockbox in room 14.

Ad-Hoc XP Award: For each task completed for the Blessings of Sharaferere award xp for a CR 16 encounter.

THE BLESSINGS OF SHARAFERE

As long as the PCs continue to attempt to destroy Hunger, Sharaferere will bind herself to her ring so that they might leave the keep to destroy the blade. If they abandon the quest to destroy the blade or attempt to keep it for themselves, Sharaferere's spirit dissipates within one month until she finally absconds.

Once the PC's destroy Hunger, Sharaferere's spirit manifests as an overpowering aura of protection against the Xixecal. Sharaferere's spirit stays with the PC's until they have destroyed the Xixecal inhabiting Hunger, at which time her spirit dissipates. While Sharaferere's spirit accompanies the PC's they gain the following blessings:

Blessing of the Adri: The PC's gain immunity to cold and a +20 luck bonus to Armor Class against the Xixecal. This blessing is gained by destroying the bastion of Bitterness.

Blessing of the Queen: The PC's gain a +20 luck bonus to all saves vs. the Xixecal's attacks. Spellcasters also gain a +20 bonus to overcome its spell resistance. This blessing is gained by laying Queen Sharaferere's body to rest in the Coldwood.

Remembrance of the Fallen Prince: The PC's gain a +20 insight bonus to melee and ranged attacks made against the Xixecal. This blessing is gained by laying Darnakurians' body to rest in the Coldwood.

The Queen's Retribution: The Xixecal suffers the following penalties: its natural armor and all of its special attacks suffer a -10 penalty, while its melee and ranged touch attack spells suffer by -35, and its saves suffer a -20 penalty. This blessing is gained by destroying Hunger.

DESTROYING BITTERNESS

As soon as Hunger has been controlled or contained the keep of Bitterness quickly begins to thaw, the ice giving melting away to become a mire of mud. Even though the destruction

of Bitterness should be an easy task for adventurers of this caliber there are tools at hand that may aid them in this task. If the PC's found the *staff of earth and stone* and the *mattock of the titans* in Area 27, these may be employed to rip up the foundations and tear down the heavy stone walls.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PLANE OF FIRE

If the PC's have found the *well of worlds*, they may use it to travel to the Plane of Fire, or alternatively they may *plane shift* themselves. This encounter takes place on the volcanic mountain Phlogiston on the Plane of Fire, where the PC's may take Hunger and plunge it into the molten metal and blue flames at the mountain's core. A few minutes after Hunger has been cast into the core of Phlogiston, the essence of the Xixecal exits the blade and manifests at the very peak of the mountain.

Properties of Mt. Phlogiston

Environment: Creatures on the Elemental Plane of Fire suffer 3d10 points of fire damage and risk catching fire so long as they remain on the plane. The mountain is surrounded by a thick layer of burning ash that deals an additional 1d10 points of fire damage per round and acts as a thick fog providing 20% concealment to all within.

Terrain: The rough loose flaming coals and ash of the mountain halves the movement of burrowing and land-based creatures, just as the constant waves of heat and the rain of flaming ash halves the movement of all air-based creatures.

Lighting/ Visibility: The Plane of Fire is continually bathed in light. However, due to the amount of heat and the smoky atmosphere, the normal sight range of a creature that is not native to the plane is 120ft., though, magical vision granted by spells and items may extend that range up to 240ft. Darkvision does not function on the Plane of Fire.

Sounds: Due to the crackling of constant fires any Listen check suffers a -2 terrain modifier.

Spell Effects: Spells and spell-like abilities with the fire descriptor are both maximized and enlarged (as if the Maximize Spell and Enlarge Spell had been used on them, but the spells don't require higher-level slots). Spells and spell-like abilities that are already maximized or enlarged are unaffected by this benefit.

Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create water (including spells of the Water domain and spells that summon water elementals or outsiders with the water subtype) are impeded. To cast a spell with this descriptor the spellcaster must make a successful Spellcraft skill check 15 + level of the spell to be cast.

Revenge is a dish best served cold (Modified EL 27)

After being released from Hunger, the Xixecal immediately attacks those who released it, going on a rampage and attempting to use its dire winter ability. Each round it will attempt to slay an opponent with its devastating critical attacks and its Constitution drain. If multiple PC's are making successful attacks the Xixecal will summon white dragons to assist. If the PC's have the white orb

of dragonkind (DMG 281), each dragon must make a successful Willpower save DC 25 (+ the user's WIS/INT/CHA bonus depending on their class) or be charmed.

If the Xixecal fails in casting *dire winter* it suffers double damage for being on the Plane of Fire. It will use the peak of the mountain to gain the advantage of higher ground. If the Xixecal slays a PC, the PC's body and gear must make a Fortitude save each round or be consumed by the ambient flames of the plane.

XIXECAL CR 36

Epic Level Handbook 167

CE Colossal Outsider (Chaotic, Cold, Evil, Extraplanar)

Init +5; **Senses** blindsight 500ft., telepathy 1,000ft.; Spot +76, Listen +70

Aura cold, *dire winter*

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Elven Infernal

AC 58 (-8 size, +1 Dex, +55 natural), touch 3, flat-footed 57

hp 1,686 hp (72 HD) damage reduction 20/ good or lawful, epic, adamantite; fast healing 30; regeneration 30

Immunity abomination traits, cold

Resistances spell resistance 48

Fort +55 **Ref** +47 **Will** +39

Spd 140 ft.

Melee 2 claws +95 (2d8+28, 17-20/x2) or bite +89 (4d6+14, 20/x2) or stomp +89 (4d6+14, 20/ x3)

Space 50ft. **Reach** 50ft.

Base Atk +76; **Grp** +116

Atk Options Blinding Speed (haste, 20 rounds), Devastating Critical (On critical, Fort save DC 58 or die),

Special Atks - breath weapon (300ft. cone, 12d6 cold damage Reflex DC 58), constitution drain, rend 4d8+42, spell-like abilities, summon white dragon

Spells-like Abilities (CL 36th; +36 vs. SR)

At will - *blasphemy* (DC 29), *cone of cold* (DC 27), *desecrate*, *dominate monster* (DC 27), *greater dispel magic*, *greater invisibility*, *hold person* (DC 25), *true seeing*, *unholy aura*, *wall of ice* (DC 26);

(5/day) - *haste*, *polar ray* (+73 ranged touch attack)

Abilities Str 66, Dex 13, Con 40, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 34

SQ fire vulnerability, non-detection

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Dodge, Epic Toughness, Epic Weapon Focus (bite), Epic Weapon Focus (claw), Epic Weapon Focus (stomp), Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Overwhelming Critical (claw), Power Attack, Spell Stowaway (*greater invisibility*), Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Focus (stomp)

Skills Climb +103, Concentration +90, Hide -9, Jump +28, Knowledge (arcana, religion, the planes) +76, Search +76, Spellcraft +76

Abomination Traits (Su): Divine Rank 0, Abominations are immune to polymorph, petrification, or any form-altering attack. They are not subject to energy drain, ability drain, or ability damage. They are immune to all mind-affecting and detection spells and effects including (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), and are immune to one of five energy types (specific to the abomination).

ability damage. They are immune to all mind-affecting and detection spells and effects including (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), and are immune to one of five energy types (specific to the abomination). Abominations are not subject to death from massive damage, and they have maximum hit points per Hit Die.

Breath Weapon (Su): Cone of cold, 300 feet, 3/day, damage 12d6, Reflex half DC 61. The DC is Constitution-based.

Cold (Su): A hit from a Xixecal's melee attack induces numbing cold. The opponent must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 58) or be affected as though by a slow spell for 10 rounds. The DC is Charisma-based.

Constitution Drain (Su): This effect permanently reduces a living opponent's Constitution score by 4 when the creature hits with a slam, bite, or rend, or twice that amount on a rend or critical hit. The creature heals 20 points of damage (or 40 on a rend or critical hit) whenever it drains Constitution, gaining any excess as temporary hit points. These temporary hit points last a maximum of 1 hour. The attack allows a Fortitude save (DC 58). The DC is Charisma-based.

Dire Winter (Su): A Xixecal always stands at the center of a permanent *dire winter* (epic spell) spell effect. If dispelled, the effect returns 1 minute later—the only way to permanently remove the effect is to slay the Xixecal that generates it.

Rend (Ex): If the Xixecal hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 4d8+42 points of damage.

Summon White Dragon (Sp): Five times per day a Xixecal can summon an old white dragon.

Note - A Xixecal's natural weapons are treated as epic, evil, and chaotic-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. Xixecals take normal damage from Lawful weapons, and double damage from burning or fiery weapons.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

After the PC's return to their home plane, Immonara will contact them via a sending spell to inform them to return to Erianrhel. Waiting at Erianrhel is Immonara, who is performing the funerary rites for Aryth as Gwydiesin plays a funerary dirge. Among those in attendance are Mordenkainen, Cymria, Rowena, Agath, and several gray elves representing the last of the Sentinels. As the PC's arrive, they all begin to disperse and the Sentinels carry off the body of Aryth. The funeral attendants quickly make their way to the PC's, one by one congratulating them and offering them their individual rewards.

Immonara offers any of the PC's a small swathe of land to nurture in the recovering Adri Forest, while Agath, Gwydiesin and Mordenkainen offer the PC's spellcasting services for free, or several scrolls of spells they know. Rowena offers any elf or half-elf membership to the Silverbow Sages of Lendore, while Cymria offers any good-aligned PC's membership to Manzorion's Citadel of Light.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

Until the Starbreak is designed for a group of four 21st-level PC's, but can easily be adapted for use by higher or

lower level parties. All monsters and NPC's should have their class levels/ hit dice adjusted to reflect changes in average party level.

17th -20th: Remove the spellwarped template from the remorhaz in Area 1. Increase the bonuses from the Blessings of Sharaferre by 5 for every 2 levels below 21st.

22nd and above: Replace the mithral golems from Areas 14 and 27 with Adamantine Golems. Intensify the effects of all traps, rather than maximizing them. Increase the age category of the old white dragons in area 17. Reduce the bonuses from the Blessings of Sharaferre by 5 for every 2 levels above 21st.

GREY-COMIX: THE HUNGERING

Apologies to Stephen King & Carl Sargent



A great and majestic city once stood. The City of Summer Stars received emissaries from the Ur-Flannae but Sharaferere saw the lust for magical power and sent them away. In their rage and desire to possess the magic of the elves, the Ur-Flannae brought their own magic to assault the city.

Darnakurian could take no more. A peerless enchanter, he called on many sources of power. From corners of the void dark voices came to him, seducing him with the promise of power.



HELLO DARNY.
COME PLAY WITH US...
FOREVER AND EVER...



Darnakurian grew gaunt and sleepless, barely ceasing his work to prepare more spells he needed in his race against time.

Finally, he crafted the appalling sword the elves named, *Hunger*. The instrument by which the elves could triumph and banish their evil foes.



I AND THE OTHERS HAVE COME TO THINK THAT YOUR HEART IS NOT IN THIS - THAT YOU HAVEN'T THE BELLY FOR IT!

JUST GIVE ME A CHANCE TO CORRECT THEM... MR. NERULL. IT'S ALL I ASK.



Sharaferere was appalled. The weapons evil was apparent to her. She ordered him to destroy the malign sword, at which Darnakurian was aghast. Driven half-mad with bitter anger at what was happening, he raised the sword and slew her.

Looking down at her body, the enormity of his crime came over him and the elf-prince was plunged into madness, his mind broken.



HERRRE'S DARNY!



REDRUM!
REDRUM!

He fled into the forest and came upon the Ur-Flannae and drove them in terror from the forest. Finally, the elf prince took himself back to the city. So weak was he by now that the sword controlled him utterly. Every elf alive in the city fled, never to return.

The Coldwood is unbearable, all vegetation is frozen. Darnakurian's form is still alive - in a sense. A powerful temporal stasis imprisons him. He still holds Hunger on his lap as he sits frozen, staring out blindly.



EXIT

I HATED IT!

INDEED!
THE BOOK
WAS BETTER!