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Winter, December 2019

# DEATH JOURNAL

AN ADLER  
15

**Issue #31**  
Vol 3, no.4

**NEW  
FACTIONS  
GUILDS  
CABALS  
& MORE!**



**ESPIONAGE AT THE  
ROYAL OPERA HOUSE**  
BY "THE OPERA GEEK"

**ALLIANCE OF DEFIANCE**  
The defeat of the ToEE!!

**Greyhawk's Guild  
of Lamplighters**  
by Jason Zavoda

**REVEALED!**  
WHO GATHERS THE  
CORPSES OF THE NIGHT!

**CULTS OF  
SCYTHE AND STEEL**

**NEW FICTION: THE CASTLE**

**BLOOD RAVENS AND BLACK SHEEP**



# Librarian's Chronicle



Last issue, I talked about how I, as Editor of the OJ, have a privilege previous editors didn't—using social media to find authors, artists, and contributors to help with the magazine. And how that allows me to put out the magazine in a different way than they did.

This month brings that point even more to light. The OJ is a fan-created magazine. Because of that, we only have “so” much time to dedicate to it. But, because we are able to gather content faster than ever before, it allows us to publish even faster.

The *Oerth Journal* has had breaks and lulls over the years. And sometimes, it stopped altogether for a while; almost five years at one point. But, this issue is fast on the heels of the Autumn issue, which itself rapidly followed the previous two. I'm proud to note that it's never happened before that any editor has been able to have so many fans willing to help that they've had the OJ see publishing four times in one year ... neither a calendar year, or even a 365-day span. Publishing quarterly has been a challenge at times, but it's something I think the community deserves. There's so many people out there creating, I want nothing more than to see them get to share their creations with other fans. As the 11th Editor of the OJ, and as the steward of a 25-year-old institution of the online community of Greyhawk fans, I can't rave enough about the people who've contributed to the OJ in the last year.

Not just authors and those who've helped editorially. Artists help make the magazine look as great as it does. Without art, the OJ wouldn't be as appealing for fans to want to read. And in this day and age where there's so much demanding our attention, something which grabs the eye is supremely important. Every page turned has to make us stop and want to look at it! So, even more thanks!

On a second note: At PAX Unplugged earlier this month (December 2019), I got to sit down with Erik Mona, of Paizo Publishing, who was the Managing Editor of *Oerth Journal* #1. We've known each other online since the old days of the AOL TSR boards in '96, and have connected in person many times in the last 9 years at PaizoCon. It felt both rewarding and heartwarming to stay in touch with not only another fan, but also a previous editor and a publisher. We talked about where the OJ has gone, some of the challenges we faced, and the variety of ways the community has (and hasn't) changed over the years. I got to give him a copy of the print edition of OJ #28—the first time the OJ was ever in print. I'd reserved it for him when it was first published, and had cherished the idea of giving it to him. Together, we “celebrated a fandom renaissance”. Many thanks, Erik.

**'Til the starbreak!**

**Kristoph Nolen**  
Editor-in-Chief

# THE OERTH JOURNAL

Volume III, no. 4, issue #31

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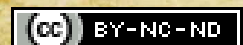
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# DESIGNING AND DMing FACTIONS IN GREYHAWK

## How to make and use Factions for your home campaign

by Allan T. Grohe Jr. (*grodog*)

[\*Grodog's Greyhawk\*](#) and [\*From Kuroth's Quill\*](#)

The World of Greyhawk setting is known for its wheels-within-wheels layers of secrets, with those secrets driven by a multitude of mysterious sects, guilds of magi, thieves, and assassins, and orders of knighthood, among many such power groups. The Scarlet Brotherhood, the Doomsayers of Tharizdun, and the Circle of Eight are three prominent examples of cabals active and operating behind the scenes and the thrones of the Flanaess. They represent the mere tip of this topic's potential opportunities for player characters to run aground on the black-iceberg-like depths of factional complexities which lurk below the seemingly-placid surface of quotidian events.

### What is a Faction?

To the world at large, a faction and a secret society may well be synonymous, and, depending on the style of gameplay which you and your players enjoy, that level of granularity may suffice nicely. Most secret societies remain secret for a reason, with many such reasons keeping them out of general public awareness because society would not approve of their goals and would stamp them out with extreme prejudice! With secrecy comes the benefit of clandestine freedom of action, but also the reciprocal risk of attention and exposure, which some groups will seek to avoid at all costs. This is the perfect setup for good gameplay and underlies many of the classic Greyhawk adventures, where the players and their characters seek to discover and expose the secrets of the drow, Kyuss, or Iggwilv across the long arc of a campaign.

Greyhawk is rife with such factions, with some sectional differences grounded in the AD&D rules themselves: druids and monks must battle their superiors in order to advance in levels; alignment drives the game and its alliances, such that paladins will not associate with non-good adventuring companions, save in dire need and for a limited time; bardic colleges rise in standing and power as levels are gained; demi-human and human races are often at odds with one another due to racial antagonisms or the vagaries of history; the Great Druid, Grand Master of Flowers, and Grandfather of Assassins are pinnacle positions each held by a single individual, and the turnover from one title holder to another may inherently bring conflict within and across the orders each master represents. Similarly, name-level characters will eventually establish themselves and their fortresses somewhere in the world, and the very act of planting a flag in the ground may place these PCs into opposition with already-established local inhabitants and power groups (even ignoring any rivalries which may have arisen during the years of play leading up to name-level!).

Factions can also operate at one level deeper—as cliques within a group, where each is pitted against the other in conflict. The five cults of Elemental Evil are the classic example of such contending factions in Greyhawk—each ostensibly in service to the Greater Temple, but each loyal to their own elements, demonic leaders, and agendas. While the TOEE cults are violently opposed to one another, opposition across intra-group rivalries does not necessarily need to be violent in expression—good groups striving

within an alliance, faith, or simple party of NPCs may espouse different end-goals which place them in conflict without necessarily descending into battle to resolve their differences: debate and persuasion, seeking the blessings and authorization of powerful allies, and positioning sectional goals as the best common ground are all tools in environs of such detente-driven diplomacy.

Identifying relevant factions as possible rivals, allies, or undetermined neutrals, and deciding where and how to draw them out in play, are among the main decisions a Dungeon Master must make in the greater management of a campaign. I find divine (and infernal, et al) powers particularly apt for designing factions, due to the nature of such worship: a deity in AD&D has a specific alignment, and a set of worshippers defined by a (usually somewhat broader) range of alignments, while clerical followers must hew more-closely to their deity's alignment; worshippers may also span many different human, demi-human, humanoid, and monster races in the game. All of which is fertile soil for the growth of complex relationships within and across the various groups.

### **Wee Jas – the Exemplar for Sectarian Factions in Greyhawk**

Wee Jas is an excellent example of these principles, in part due to the design changes made to her portfolio and alignment as they developed throughout her publishing history, but primarily because her followers were developed with built-in sectarian factions. Classically in AD&D, Wee Jas is introduced in Gyax's 1983 World of Greyhawk boxed set as a LN Suloise greater goddess of magic and death. When detailed beyond her name for the first time by Lenard Lakofka in Dragon Magazine #88 (August 1984), her alignment is changed to LN (evil)—note the lower case "e" in evil—with worshippers who span all three lawful alignments, and sects devoted to each among her clergy. Carl Sargent's 2e From the Ashes boxed set reduces her divine rank to an intermediate goddess, but does not otherwise alter her. With the advent of D&D 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition in the Living Greyhawk Gazetteer (August 2000) and "The Gods of Greyhawk" in Living Greyhawk Journal #3 (February 2001), Wee Jas is reinforced as an intermediate goddess, her alignment shifts to LN (LE)—note the capital letters—and her portfolios expand to include Magic, Death, Vanity, and Law. (I'm not familiar with any substantive changes to Wee Jas' portrayal in 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Edition).

Wee Jas' evolution offers DMs many opportunities to foster conflict among her faithful and clergy in gameplay. Some examples include:

- Lakofka presents Wee Jas' clerics as lawful within each church or sect, and across the sects their alignments vary between Lawful Neutral (50%, grey robes), Lawful Evil (30%, white robes), and Lawful Good (20%, black robes), with each type of clergy wearing differently colored robes as signs of their membership
- While Wee Jas' priestesses tend to match her primary alignments of LN or LE, in AD&D 1e her worshippers include "highly intelligent lawful figures" regardless of alignment ethos; 3e's changes may skew the above distributions further, perhaps to 50% LN, 40% LE, and only 10% LG, or even less depending on how a DM defines Wee Jas in the campaign
- In my Greyhawk campaigns, Wee Jas is served only by female human clerics, and while males may worship her or serve in her temples as wizards or paladins, they cannot join her clergy

Further possibilities include exploiting Wee Jas' relationship with undead and dragons, with different approaches to each among her faithful. In AD&D, Wee Jas may summon lawful undead (wights, wraiths, mummies, spectres, and ghosts) to serve her; she can also command chaotic undead into unwilling servitude. These capabilities suggest a complicated relationship between her priestesses and undead, perhaps manifesting as varied turning abilities based on the sect of the cleric, and the alignment of encountered undead:

- Perhaps some sects of LE clerics of Wee Jas revere undead, to the point that they ally with and actively

create them; perhaps the animuses of the Great Kingdom are the first fruits of this faction's machinations to dominate the Flanaess

- Perhaps some LN priestesses of Wee Jas judge all undead as abominations that break the bounded limits of life and death, and seek to destroy any undead they encounter, regardless of alignment or intention; other LNs may leverage Wee Jas' entire portfolio of allies and servants to spread her faith, and pragmatically view undead as one more useful tool in the box
- Perhaps some LG sects of Wee Jas pity undead and work to reverse the evils they wreak in the world, with their faith granting special magics of rapport and communion to end such creatures' cursed existences by bringing them peace in this world so they may move on to the next (this role ties nicely into Wee Jas' role as a psychopomp in the Suel pantheon)

In addition to undead, Wee Jas can summon the lawful dragons—blue, green, bronze, silver, and gold. Given that her worshippers include the broadly-defined lawful "figures" perhaps Wee Jas is worshipped by dragons in addition to humans. An adaptation of the *Forgotten Realms*' "Cult of the Dragon" (Ed Greenwood's *Dragon Magazine* #110 article, or the 1998 2e supplement of the same name by Dale Donovan) could provide another set of factions among her faithful, with some focused on humans, others on undead or dragons, and some few on the undead dragons of FR infamy (along with D&D's original undead dragon, *Dragotha*, mentioned on Erol Otus' 1980 map in the orange-covered expanded reprint of *S2 White Plume Mountain*, and further detailed in several later publications, including the *Age of Worms* adventure "Into the Wormcrawl Fissure" by James Jacobs in *Dungeon* #134). Perhaps some of these Wee Jas dragon cults would actively sponsor adventurers to locate and loot the hoards of chaotic dragons and transfer them to their lawful draconic allies, while others might see dragon worshippers as a corruption of Wee Jas' mission, hunting them as heretics even beyond undead (who were, after all, at least human once).

## **Faction Templates for the Flanaess**

While the two lists below are far from exhaustive, they should serve as a good start for DMs thinking about how to create and define factions for play in *Greyhawk* or other AD&D settings, as well as in RPGs in general. The listings are not intended to accurately represent the complexities of real-world cultural relationships, or to cause offense by inclusion or exclusion of these game-based definitions of groups.

The two tables are grouped as:

**Types of Groups**—characteristics which cause peoples to come together or to define themselves as distinct from one another; some of these types are grounded in real-world demographics, and others in the game mechanics which drive AD&D rules

**Group Attributes**—attributes within a single group which help to define it relative to other factions within a larger group, or relative to other groups

## **Group Attributes**

- **Name:** the official name of the group, and any nicknames used internally or externally which PCs may encounter in play
- **Visibility:** how well-known the group is to the public at large
- **Leaders:** names and notes about the leaders of the group
- **Notable Members:** important non-leader members of the group, and why they're important
- **Goals:** long-term and short-term
- **Values and Priorities:** how the group defines itself and its mission
- **Loyalties:** what bonds keep the group (and its allies, if any) together

## Types of Groups

**Age-based:** the longer-lived races (elves, gnomes, dragons) vs. shorter-lived ones

**Alignments:** the axes of Good and Evil, Law and Chaos, bounded by active Neutrals

**Class-based:** this covers all PC and NPC class-based groups, such as Bardic colleges, Sages guilds, Thieves or Assassins guilds, etc.

**Climate zone:** tropical, sub-tropical, temperate, sub-arctic, arctic; different zones may exist in alternate Prime and inner/outer planar settings

**Cultural:** clans, tribes, and other groups

**Divine:** faith-based groups, regardless of alignment, race, etc. (demons and angels and everything between belong to this category); atheists could be placed within or outside of this group

- Cult
- Sect
- Religion
- Pantheon
- Cross-Pantheon

**Elemental:** including para- and quasi-elements

**Gender-based:** female-only priestesses of Wee Jas, Amazon Cavaliers of Hardby, etc.

**Geographical zones:**

- Local
- Provincial
- National
- Regional: the Sheldomar Valley, the Thillonrian Peninsula, the Marklands, etc.

- Continental
- Planar
- Cross-planar
- Multiversal

**Guild-based:** this covers groups organized for business that are not grounded in PC or NPC character classes

**Governmental:** the AD&D DMG lists 19 types of governments

**Knowledge-based:** groups aware of secret or uncommon knowledge

**Natural**

**Magical**

**Mercantile:** this covers all trade-based groups not dictated by PC/NPC class membership: smiths, theatres, wainwrights, etc.

**Military**

**Psionic**

**Racial**

- Human: Baklunish, Flannae, Oeridian, Olman, Rhenne, Suloise, Touv
- Humanoid: Celbit, Eiger, Euroz, Hoch Jebli, Jebli, Kell
- Demi-Human: Dwur, Hobniz, Noniz, Olve

**Status-based:** societal striation by wealth, power, and influence; in AD&D this can be modelled as social class, but social class can be defined in alternate schemas unrelated to wealth (by birth, by caste, etc.)

- Upper class (nobility): UUC, MUC, LUC
- Middle class (mercantile): UMC, MMC, LMC
- Lower class (serfs and peasantry): ULC, MLC, LLC

**Terrain-based:** land-based, sea-faring, avian, aquatic, Underdark, etc.

- Membership Requirements: what it takes to join the group, if possible
- Allies: affiliated groups, which may or may not know the true aims of the group
- Resources: what tools and talent the group bring to bear when working toward its goals
- Secrets: what does the group know that no one else knows?
- Fears: what does the group fear, and what possible losses drive its contingency planning?
- Enemies: who is working against the group, and why; how does this conflict manifest—in battle, in the boardroom, or in between?

## Faction Maps: Bringing It All Together

I first saw faction maps used in the 1990s to help represent the complex rivalries among the kindred of **Chicago by Night** in **Vampire the Masquerade**, as well as in the internecine plotting among the families of the Courts of Amber and Chaos in the **Amber Diceless Roleplaying Game**.

A faction map is a visual representation of the relationships between various factions. In RPG game terms these maps are usually rendered to illustrate very general relationships—which factions are connected to or allied with one another, for example. In real-world social network analysis and leadership coaching, the natures of each group relationship (with both the group and its leadership) are as important as which factions are allied or opposed, and deeper analysis often drills down into the priorities, goals, and perceptions driving a single goal or issue across multiple stakeholder groups which may or may not initially appear to be connected to one another at all. This makes a far richer environment for gaming, in particular among playgroups who enjoy political machinations in multi-layered plots.

Once you've identified and scoped your

relevant factions (in the city, in the guild, among the minor noble houses, or whatever), then consider the natures and types of the relationships at play between the various groups. This is where the mapping of factions can be particularly useful:

**Duration:** The length of time a relationship has existed is often an indicator of its importance among its stakeholders, although in some cases a multi-generational enmity may be more important than a long-standing alliance

**Flow:** One-way vs. Two-way; a one-way relationship is exploitative or deceptive on the part of at least one participant; a two-way relationship is mutual, above-board, and in-the-open/all cards on the table

**Formality:** Informal vs. Formal; relationships between guilds and governments are often defined through formal charters, contracts, and treaties of alliance, while those between individuals are often unwritten and driven by personal or familial interactions and history

**Preference:** Preferred, Goodwill, Tolerance, Neutral, Antipathy, Hatred; the spectrum ranges for cross-racial preference as defined in AD&D

**Reaction:** Enthusiastically friendly/immediate acceptance, Friendly/immediate action, Uncertain but 55% prone toward positive, Neutral/Uninterested/Uncertain, Uncertain but 55% prone toward negative, Hostile/immediate action, Violently hostile/immediate attack; the range of individual responses to encounters as defined in AD&D (and further modified by Preference, above)

**Stakeholders:** the number of parties in relationship—and note that some groups may be unaware others are acting in concert against them; for example, one of the groups within a trilateral relationship may unknowingly be in a one-way alliance (on their part) with two other parties who are allied together (two-way Flow) against the first “partner”

Preference and Reaction are derived from the AD&D Racial Preferences table from the Players Handbook (page 18), and the Encounter Reactions table from the Dungeon Masters Guide (page 63).

## Using Faction Maps in Play

By better defining and understanding the nature of factional relationships among, within, and across the various groups in your campaigns, DMs can provide a richer campaign tapestry in which your players’ characters can interact—pulling at threads and connections enmeshed and rippling throughout the worlds. Through research and exploration of the campaign’s background details, these connections should eventually be revealed, in part or in whole, to attentive players. Discovering and then leveraging such complex, multi-layered relationships is critical to successful play in the classic TSR adventure D3 Vault of the Drow, but such skills will prove usefully portable in political campaigns based in George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Frank Herbert’s *Dune*, and many other settings.

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Such careful attention should also sometimes reward players by allowing them to manipulate factional relationships to their advantage—through inciting further animosity among enemy factions to play them against one another, or, once faction dynamics are well-decoded, perhaps to find allies among traditional “enemy of my enemy” groups. Clever players may be able to thread the needle among competing rivals to unite foes in otherwise-unlikely common cause against an existential- or other massive, common threat.

Allowing these factional relationships to evolve during and in response to gameplay is even more important



than defining them ahead of time. As groups engage with the PCs—whether in battle or through more-subtle manipulations—they will suffer attrition which will change the membership’s internal power dynamics and relationships, and their leadership and goals may accordingly alter over time. Players may find themselves wishing, at some point, for old foes now long-since slain to have remained in control, for the perspective their leadership brought to a faction’s internal and external relationships....

Lastly, please also keep in mind the inherent patchwork smorgasbord D&D is built from—a veneer which is painted using a five-aligned color palette. As with all aspects of this article, feel free to update and modify the content to your preferred game mechanics and/or campaign requirements.

# RAAT OF A MALCONTENT

## A Recruiter for Keoland

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### An example of how to recruit PCs to a Faction in-game

By Nathan Doyle - *Attention Deficit & Dragons*,  
[@deficitdragons](#) [/r/deficitdragons](#)

#### ***Fellow Keoish!***

Please, I implore you, heed my words! For far too long have we allowed a great evil to grow unchecked! For far too long have we ignored the plight of others for our own selfish benefit! I know that in the past Furyondy has been our enemy, but this rivalry has been part of our sin!

I know you’ve seen them in our midst, the so called “faithful quartermasters of luz” humble merchants merely buying food for their homeland. These miscreants are agents of our own destruction plying our greed for coin into fuel for their own war with our former enemies! It is well known that Kimbertos, who doesn’t even share blood with our last king, king Trevlyan III, allows them to operate here because of bad blood between luz and Furyondy! I mean, have you seen the quartermaster of luz that operates in the village of Saltmarsh down south in the Salinmoor?! She has *horns* for the love of Cuthbert! And *red skin*, more like a red *flag*! The forces of luz have conquered the Shield Lands and occupied the Bandit Kingdoms, many of which happily joined with luz! And I know that many of you believe that the westerlings revere luz in secret and plot to invade as soon as the opportunity presents itself!

luz is the enemy! We need to put aside our dislike of Furyondy and cast out those who represent true evil in our realm. I call upon you, fellow Keoish, rally together and demand it of our viscounts and our barons and yes, even demand it of our king! These faithful quartermasters of luz in our midst plot our subjugation while smiling at us with sharpened teeth and handing us silver and gold for the work of our hands! Hands that they mean to shackle or slash in some blood ceremony to their wicked half-god!

I stand here in Nirole Dra, the Old Dragon, a city untouched by war and urge you to take the steps necessary to keep it that way. We must as Keoish people not allow these interlopers to scheme our demise. We must do something about the growing strength of luz! .... even if it means working with the *Furyondians*!

# THE NIGHT MERCHANTS

## The Bearers of the Dead

Those who remove the unfortunate from the city streets

By William "Giantstomp" Dvorak

For every gleaming and fabulous location in Greyhawk, there is a seedier counterpart where life holds only as much value as its worth is in coin. During daylight hours, most of the shadier locations hide their dark deeds behind closed doors and wait for the nighttime. Once the sun goes down, corpses which are a natural by-product of deals gone wrong, violent crimes, or assassinations are dumped into the alleys. Some of the poor souls who wind up bleeding out in the gutters are the result of tavern brawls turned deadly, or the revenge taken by a sore-loser who lost at cards. Regardless of how they end up there, it's the job of the Night Merchants to collect the bodies who meet their untimely ends after dark.

During the daytime, the job of collecting dead bodies goes to the cities licensed knackers, men and women that collect the bodies of dead animals from city streets and allies. Knackers are usually just common citizens, mostly butchers looking to make some spare coin. These knackers are ill-equipped for the dangers which come with collecting corpses after dark. Unwilling to let bodies lay about until the morning, the city sought out those who were willing to take risks and collect them, and thus the Night Merchants were born. Because Night Merchants work in some of the most dangerous parts of the city, they are almost always armed, and a fair number of them are also priests of deities of death like Nerull and Wee Jas. These men and women soon banded together for their own safety, and from this unity, the guild of the Night Merchants was born.

To become a Night Merchant, interested parties must first buy a license from the city, which costs 10gp for a year, and then apply to the guild for membership. Having a license does not guarantee membership to the guild, however, and the candidate must first go through a trial period. During the trial period, the candidate is partnered with an established Night Merchant and works as one of his assistants. At the end of the trial period, of which there is no set duration, a decision is made whether they will be allowed to join the guild. Only once a member has been accepted into the guild will he get to see his fellow members without their mask on. Night Merchants also gain access to the guildhall, it's crafters, and training from more experienced Night Merchants, as well as access to a shared pool of resources collected off the corpses.

It is possible for the knackers who work during the daytime to also collect corpses during the night, but those who chose to go this route find the Night Merchants are not very accommodating. Often Night Merchants will shadow these people and hamper their ability even to find corpses, or simply begin following them everywhere they go. This would include having members of the Night Merchants following the person during the day, and the social ramifications of Night Merchants following you during the day are substantial.

After collecting corpses from the streets, Night Merchants will turn them into the City Cemetary or the Common Crypt for burial. After delivering a body, the Night Merchant will receive a voucher they turn into the city at a rate of 1gp per corpse delivered. Night Merchants are supposed to turn over all the recovered belongings along with the bodies, but most will keep the choicest items for

Art by William Dvorak



themselves. It is even rumored some of the corpses find their way to local necromancers who pay well for a fresh body. While the purchasing of unclaimed corpses is legal, there is a limit to the number of bodies a necromancer can purchase. These dark wizards find the scrutiny by the city bothersome. They prefer to sidestep all this trouble by working with the Night Merchants, especially since the worst the necromancer will suffer is a fine. The Night Merchant could lose their license if caught, but since the necromancers generally pay five times what the city offers, many risk it.

Because of the gruesome nature of their business, the Night Merchants have bad reputations and are feared like boogie men. It is a common urban myth they even murder people to turn their bodies in for the coin. While this is a widely accepted myth, only one Night Merchant has ever been caught doing so and was hanged for the crime.

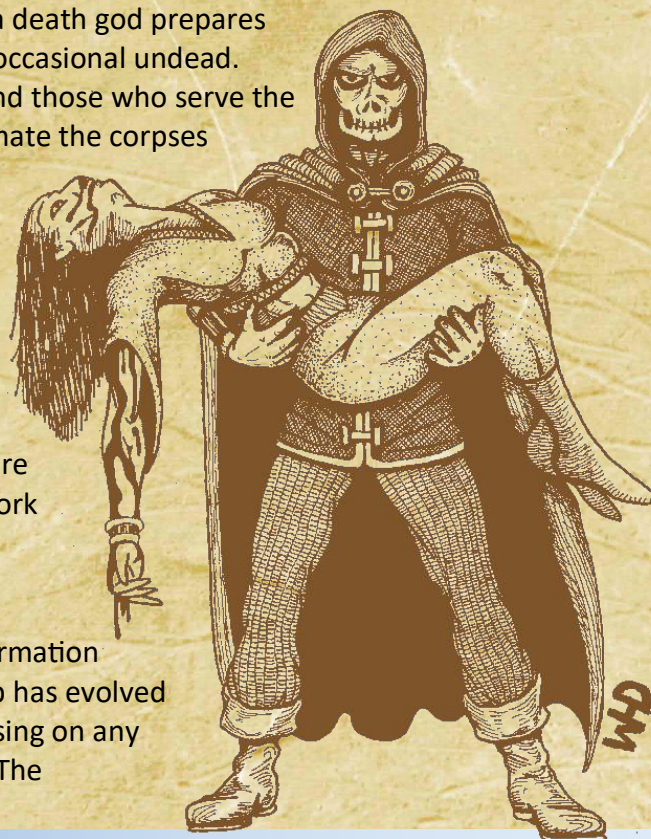
The business of being a Night Merchant can be quite lucrative, and despite working as part of the same guild, competition between rival Night Merchants is not uncommon. Because of this, Night Merchants, which the city employs only about twenty at any one time, generally travel with several assistants. These groups will usually travel the streets in highly decorated wagons with paintings of the afterlife and the undead. Worked into these paintings and murals are almost always wards and glyphs of protection against the undead, a common hazard in their line of work. Besides a mode of transportation, the wagons also serve a practical tool for delivering the bodies they collect.

While those who become Night Merchants don't have a uniform, most have taken to the habit of wearing masks. These masks are usually of skulls, demons, devils, and other scary creatures. The tradition goes back to the earliest of the Night Merchants and their desire not to be recognized while doing their work. Being known as a Night Merchant tends to have an ill effect on one's social life as they are considered murders and supernatural killers. At first, Night Merchants simply covered their faces with scarves, but over time the tradition evolved into masks playing off of the natural uneasiness people have towards them. Night Merchants find that playing up their reputation keeps others from interfering in their work. When working with assistants, the trend is for all of them to wear a similar mask.

A surprising number of Night Merchants are also followers of Nerull or Wee Jas, with the latter being more prevalent. Since the job deals with the dead, being a priest of a death god prepares them for what they will encounter, including dealing with the occasional undead. Because of this, two camps have formed within the guild around those who serve the two different deities. The followers of Nerull regularly will animate the corpses they collect, putting them to work as labor during their nightly runs, while those of Wee Jas restrain from such acts.

The locations for where a Night Merchant will work within the city are established through a system based upon seniority. The older, more experienced Night Merchants getting the more lucrative locations, which also happen to be the more dangerous locations to be working after dark. Once an area is assigned, it is awarded for the life of the Night Merchants tenure within the guild, or until they retire from active collecting to work primarily at the guildhall.

A side business of the Night Merchants is the collection of information which is discreetly passed onto the city guard. This relationship has evolved between the two organizations, with the Night Merchants passing on any information they find which might be of use to the city guard. The



Art by William Dvorak

information is always given to the city guard through a third person messenger, and in code. Payments for the information is deposited directly into an account for the Night Merchants to collect at their leisure.

The Guildhall of the Night Merchants is an imposing and isolated mansion which is set back in the woods from the Wharves district of the city. A narrow lane lined with old and gnarled oak trees leads back to the two-story building. The house is painted black, and all the windows are either covered by drawn shutters or painted black. Massive black hounds patrol the grounds, and hooded gatekeepers will greet anyone who comes to the iron gates which are always closed and locked. The appearance of the building is purposefully designed to look imposing and spooky to bolster the guild's reputation.

Every night, four hours after sundown, the procession of the Night Merchants wagons sets out from the guildhall, traveling the road which runs through the wharves and the Cargo Gate into the city. After passing through the gate, the procession splits up as the different merchants go to make their rounds of the city.



Art by William Dvorak

# THE CULT OF STEEL

## Devotees of Arms and Armor



### It's Not the Gods that Give Them Power!

By Jason Zavoda

579 CY - The Shield Lands are hard pressed. The Horned Society are pushing from the north and west. The Bandit Kingdoms, with mysterious support, are pushing from north and east. The Nyr Dyv is filled with pirates and raiders. From the turmoil, something new has arisen.

In the Shield Lands the faith of good men and women has been tested and the strength of the gods has been found wanting. A belief in the power of armor to protect and a keen edge to avenge is growing, has taken hold, and the new faith is in the Cult of Steel.

Warriors and Blacksmiths, Dwarves and Humans, the power of Steel has enchanted more men than metal, but all cultists, from the lowliest new recruit or apprentice to the master-smith and high priest, bears some graven blade or piece of armor blessed and dweomer-crafted with some enchantment.

Steel Cultists keep their beliefs secret and their membership hidden, even among themselves. In their hidden forge-shrines they are cowled and often helmed or masked only showing their marks of rank to each other. In the outer world they serve as soldiers, blacksmiths, thieves, adventurers, and

mercenaries but can reveal themselves to other Cultists through the emblem of hammer and blade.

Cultists seek weapons, armor, and items of enchantment. These are brought to the Priest-Smiths who will reform them into enchanted weapons and armor specifically crafted for the individual cultist. A cultist grows in rank through achievements as well as acquisitions. The higher the rank, the more powerful the armor and weapons, and the greater feats of daring and hard won victories required. Cultists' armor and weapons are kept hidden from non-cultists and only worn on missions and quests or within the forge-shrines.

As the cult grows, some members choose to renounce their former lives and dedicate themselves entirely to the cult. They will then mask or hide their features permanently and openly wear their armor among the uninitiated in the wider world. In the Shield Lands such cultist are no longer a rarity and the cult is spreading outward across the Flanaess.

Editor's Note: The Author, Jason Zavoda has told us he was inspired to write this article by a recent show he watched! It's none other than *The Madalorian: Episode 3, The Sin*. We'll not give spoilers or other details of the show, here, but needless to say, there's a faction which bears similarity to the Cult of Steel!

You can find more of Jason's work on his blog, the Hall of the Mountain King, which is also continuously archived and updated on his page at Greyhawk Online. Jason is also the original author of the Encyclopedia Greyhawkania, which is a collected work of years and years, which is an index compiled from every named Greyhawk source. It was recently taken up and converted by Eric Johnson, who now continues to supplement Jason's work. Johnson has converted the Zavoda Index into an XLS, and occasionally puts out updates to the content, adding more and more references.

# THE BLACK SHEEP

## Adventurers of Great Renown

### A closer look at an adventuring party from the Greyhawk Channel

By James "AvatarOfWrath" Belk

*The faction called the "The Black Sheep" are a group of adventurers played in the "Rise of the Dark Queen" on "The Greyhawk Channel" livestreaming on Twitch.tv. They are a group of friends who've entertained many Greyhawk fans for quite some time, and will continue to bring us humor, drama, and adventure in the Spring!*

The Blacksheep mercenary company has a hidden history more than a century long, but have mostly remained in the shadows in that time to avoid notoriety, depending on the leadership of the time. Based primarily in the Free City of Greyhawk, the core moto of the group is "If the coin is there, we don't care," implying almost any job might be accepted but for the proper amount of compensation. Recent times have seen a rise in the fortunes of the Blacksheep. Some would point to the captainship of Lagavulin ip Ekbir, but in truth the core leadership of the faction is comprised of four very capable individuals, and "the Captain" was elected as leader in a landslide vote and thusly properly punished with responsibly.

#### **Captain Lagavulin ip Ekbir** (aka "Pendulum")

**Position:** Captain (unwilling) / Company Cleric

**Background:** The half-elf Lagavulin claims to be from the far northwestern and dry Baklunish kingdom of Ekbir, but tends to wear far more traditional woodland dress. A charismatic elf, he always seems to wear a smile, either one of amusement or condescension. To a close observer, one can tell he is constantly thinking, evaluating, observing, and analyzing. It has been remarked that the divine has robbed the arcane of a keen mind.

A senior Priest of Boccob the Uncaring, Lagavulin is a talented practitioner of the divine spellcasting arts. Known for his laissez faire leadership style and cool-headedness. Although refined, he is unencumbered as to with whom he spends his time with and how he spends it.

#### **Lieutenant Danluar Eryvre** (aka "Dancer")

**Position:** Enemy Infiltration, Gathering Intelligence, Target Acquisition & Elimination

Danluar Eryvre has been with the company around two decades, and has recently risen to the role of company Lieutenant. Noble of birth, tight-lipped Danluar has withheld the bulk of his past from his traveling companions, having spent the last 20 years in hiding from his Aunt a Viscountess of Sunndi.

Growing up in one of the Noble Houses of Sunndi was not a life of ease or comfort as would be expected. While his childhood started as a period of calm, which would soon come to an end. The Eryvre family head is the viscountess Haeronwen (High-rohn-wehn), the full-blooded grey elf whom controls one of Sunndi's largest platinum mines and shares blood relation with His Brilliant Majesty, Olven Count Hazendel I the Defender of Sunndi, Protector of the South. The Elders of House Eryvre are full-blooded grey elf descending from the supporters of Count Turentel Esparithen. Within the house line of Eryvre are also several half elf lines, to include Danluar's, which also has a closely kept secret mingling of drow blood.

Early in life Danluar trained in song and dance, as well as history and acting, alongside his childhood friend Gwilwileth (Gwill-will-ehth), niece to Olven Count Hazendel. As they became older and Danluar began learning the art of fighting



Art by DSRabbit

and swordplay, he became aware of the beauty of his childhood friend. Amorous feelings developed and it soon became obvious he had begun to reach too high for his station. Danluar, not pure of blood enough to wed into the royal family, felt slighted when Gwilwileth's hand was promised to his cousin, heir of the Viscountess. Young and brooding, Danluar was noticed and selected to be trained away from Sunndi to become the deadliest of swordsmen, fighting every moment for survival in the edges of the UnderOerth, left for a sure death in the savage conditions of his drow heritage. The young duelist became a viscous wielder of the rapier, learning to carve his own from the world, never forgetting the early cruel lessons of the dark realms and living by deception and stealth.

Upon returning to the surface and realm of light, Danluar carried a shadow within his heart, and discovered Gwilwileth had already married before his return. Years too late, she had already begun her family, now a mother herself. The shadow in Danluar's heart deepened to that of night. He left his family behind, unable to forgive them for the betrayal, and forged a path of blood forward as mercenary swashbuckler to usher souls to the arms of Nerull. As the years passed, Danluar led several disparate lives, as Metolius the duelist assassin, as singer-actor-dancer Binc Grosby, and traveling eventually with the Blacksheep known as the warrior Miles Teg. Danluar still hides from his family and his past, tormented still by his love for Gwilwileth and now her children, returning in secret to check on them from afar.

### **Lieutenant Arnuk Stormhammer** *(aka Grudge Bearer)*

**Position:** Soldier

The brute force of the company is the dwarf known as Grudge Bearer. Crude, vulgar, with hygiene to assault your olfactory senses, Grudge Bearer is the front-line anchor for our Blacksheep, armored to the tooth and wielding the magical flaming adamantine mithril composite axe Brian, he chops his way through most problems and hacks his way through the rest.

Never talking about his past with even the closest of companions, it is not until present we find out in Irongate after his escape from the mines, his true name is Dolgan Snowmountain, former Captain of the Dwarf King's Guard. Falsely imprisoned, with wife and son, years were spent at labor in various mines, until escape was one day possible. Dolgan Snowmountain had died in the mine with his best friend, so that day Grudge Bearer was born, reforged from the wreckage. Traveling and adventuring with the Blacksheep the last few years he has been instrumental in the quick rise of the mercenary company.

### **Lieutenant Wurm** *(true name Zefeos, although few alive today remember)*

**Position:** Company Wizard / Brewmaster

Longest current member of the Blacksheep, with a tenure of over fifty years, Wurm is the quiet beta of the leader echelon. Happy to while away the days in the study of a rare scroll or text, he is beyond a normal class of literary snob, a level of elite, judging the grain of the pages pulp, quality of inks... vibrancy, longevity, binding techniques, and the materials of the cover. Not only a historian but connoisseur of the book itself, thus Wurm though few in words spoke, is instead deep of thought. Versed in the old lore, Wurm is the Blacksheep's primary source of written knowledge.

Wurm doesn't talk about his background. Something to do with luz, the army, and a pissed-off high priest and a burning library. He is fiercely independent and not quick to trust, mostly as few have accepted him during his life. He does remain loyal to his crew however, those which might just now be the closest thing he has to a family.

Wurm is captivated by things magical, but also broods to understand people. He worries about the gods, and probably has an opinion on each of them. He enjoys drinking, brewing, and playing cards as hobbies, although he has no skill with cards, only luck and cheating.

Wurm's career path has taken him from chronic lay about to drunk slacker. When needed, he can be manipulated into unleashing magical mayhem. He admits he lacks the various skill talent possessed by many, but he doesn't really care, because he is good at what he does... as treasure finder, people finder, sometime bounty hunter. Also, he is far from a frontline tank, but he is sturdy enough to stand near the front hunkered behind his shield and bang away at the enemy. He is one tough little bastard.

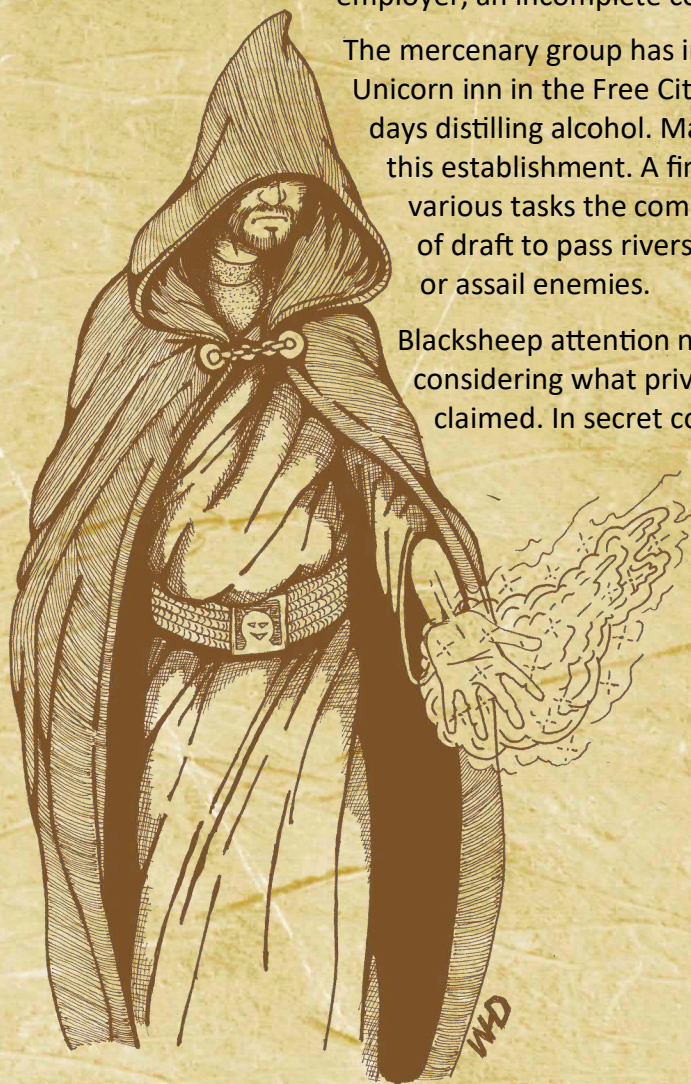
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The past year has seen the labors of their campaigning bear fruits of fortune and power, having survived both the temple ruins of the ancient elemental evil eye, witnessing a replaying time loop of the destruction of Imperiosis with the blowing of the Herald's horn to summon Shothragot, and the destruction of the rain of colorless fire. Speaking with Corinast the specter, former Priest of the Black Brotherhood of Tharizdun, the Blacksheep learned the long-forgotten god sought to destroy all that is of the world, and now his followers hoped to set him free.

After looting the temple and retrieving lost magics for their mysterious employer, a darkly queen, the group was set to a new task, taking them to the Sinking Isle, through lore traced back to Rel Astra in CY 155. Beset by harpies, sahuagin and kraken, the Blacksheep gained entrance to the court of Uglatto Eternal Lord of the Deeps, exalted among the aboleth, and keeper of the venerated library beneath the waves. Only through great fortune the Blacksheep survived, managing to return another coveted treasure to their employer, an incomplete copy of the Demonomicon.

The mercenary group has invested its wealth into their headquarters, the Vulgar Unicorn inn in the Free City of Greyhawk, where Wurm tends bar and spend his days distilling alcohol. Many questionable deals can be made beneath the roof of this establishment. A fine prize, a trade ship the Green Turtle is suited to the various tasks the company can undertake; hold enough for cargo, but shallow of draft to pass rivers, with weapon mounts and armaments able to defend or assail enemies.

Blacksheep attention now turns to the burgeoning Greyhawk Wars, considering what privateer bounty and adventurer glory lays offer to be claimed. In secret council with Lord Mayor Cobb Darg it is decided a local stronghold will serve as base of operations for our heroes, as The Blacksheep now enter a new era.



Art by William Dvorak



# THE BLOOD RAVENS

## Adventurers of Great Renown



### A closer look at an adventuring party from The Greyhawk Channel

By Calvin Gearhart

*The small but growing faction known as "The Blood Ravens" are brave heroes in "Anabasis" run by Laura Bennett on "The Greyhawk Channel" livestreaming on Twitch.tv. Grand adventurers to the last, they will be airing again in all new adventures in the Spring!*

**Gruda**, Son of Nalla (Bear Totem Barbarian): created and played by James Belk

Nalla (Gruda's mother) originally came with the forces of Rary and Robilar to the Bright Lands, before Rary's tower. As a witch she was a spiritual guide, healer and protector of the home, worshiper of Luthic the orc deity of fertility, medicine, females and servitude. She is the wife of Gruumsh and mother of Bahgtru. Her sacred animal is the cave bear. Her symbol is an orcish rune meaning "home." Luthic is described as a matronly orc with very long claws. She fights bare-handed with her claws because only the males of the community are allowed to wield a weapon. She may also use powerful spells, as such arts are not considered manly in orcish culture. Growing up on these stories, Gruda held a strong connection to the Bear totem long before he became a Bear Totem warrior. Growing up around the nomad tribes and warbands has made Gruda both tough and knowledgeable about survival in the desolate waste of the Bright Empire. Eventually spending time campaigning in the military, he has since moved on to merc work with other ex-soldiers. The Blood Ravens are his latest companions and they seek their fortunes together and crush their foes without mercy, woe to the foolish who stand against the Ravens...

Tattoos of the symbols of his clan are displayed in viney patterns down his arms.

Gruda pays homage mainly to:

*Ilneval* is the orc deity of warfare. He lives in the orcish realm of the nishrek in acheron. For the basic D&D setting Ilneval was known as Karaash.

*Shargaas* is the orc deity of darkness, night, stealth, thieves and the undead. His symbol is a skull on a red crescent moon. He lives in the realm called The Night Below on the plane of Gehenna.

*Bahgtru* is the orc deity of strength and combat. The son of Gruumsh and Luthic, Bahgtru has been described as a huge orc with bulging muscles and dirty tan skin. His eyes are dull green, and his glistening white tusks protrude from either side of his mouth. Bahgtru lives in the orcish realm of Nishrek.

*Gruumsh*, also known as Gruumsh One-Eye, is the patron deity of orcs, who regard him as the **god** of Conquest, Survival, Strength, and Territory. His symbol is his missing, unblinking eye. Gruumsh appears as a powerful orc with one eye. A figure of fury and driven cruelty, Gruumsh rules his pantheon with brute power. His favored weapon is the spear.

**Goals:** Gruda has just begun his dream of an Orc haven and hopes to one day become a wise war chief, built off his new foundation in the Gnatmarsh.

**Jandor Lance** (Oath of Vengeance Paladin): created and played by Phillip Spence

Jandor was a foot soldier in Rary's army. He followed orders blindly, until one day he was betrayed and sent to his death alongside many other soldiers. He was pulled off the battlefield inches from death by Gruda. At that time he saw a vision from his deity that he must destroy the

power of the mage lords and became a paladin of vengeance against mage lords.

Jandor primarily worships:

Istus who is the most powerful of the Baklunish deities, but aloof from mortals and immortals alike, concerning herself only with the fate of the universe. She is depicted in three different ways: The first is as an old crone, the second as a mature and haughty noble dame, and the third as a cold and unfeeling young maiden. She carries a golden spindle (her holy symbol), with which she spins the future into the present, thus weaving the web of fate.

**Khazud Darkmoon** (Order of the Lycan Blood Hunter): Created and played by Calvin Gearhart

Khazud is the bastard child of Lady Clearmoon and a barbarian warlord. He was born with the family curse of Lycanthropy, so when the full moon is out he would shift into a giant, furry murder machine. The family had been cursed long ago and no known cure had ever been found even with the use of magic. As was tradition for the cursed children he was sent off to be trained in the ways of the Blood Hunters in the Order of the Lycan. So from the time he was very young to his 18th birthday he was trained how to fight and how to control his transformations so he could hunt his enemies. When he turned 18 his father sent three retainers to collect him and bring him back to their tribe in the Bright Lands. His father paired him up with many other warriors but none of them trusted him when he transformed so most refused to work with him. It went this way for over a year until he met Gruda and Jandor who were more than happy to work with him, Gruda because he loves the monster Khazud becomes and Jandor loves the violence he can cause.

Khazud primarily worships:

Sehanine Moonbow the elven goddess of the moon.

the other mercenaries either died or refused to work with such a violent pair of warriors. Grudas constant preaching of Gruumsh and Jandors seething hatred for mages made most people uneasy, especially in the Bright Lands, since they are ruled by Archmage Rary. Not sure how it was going to go Khazud joined them and they went on their first mission: Clear out an oasis for the tribe. The information about the numbers of enemy soldiers was horribly inaccurate and there were three times as many enemy soldiers in the oasis. With no other choice Khazud was forced to transform in order to survive. Excited by the giant murder monster his new ally had become Gruda erupted in a monstrous rage of his own and was joined by the gleeful violence only Jandor could produce. Beaten, battered and bloodied the three somehow survived the fight and claimed the oasis for their tribe. Delirious and his bloodlust satisfied Gruda had a vision of a raven covered in bloody remains picking at the dead with the three warriors victorious and the Blood Ravens had found their company name. Jandor is the face of the Blood Ravens, Gruda is the Muscle and sometimes spiritual guidance, Khazud is the specialist and ever vigilant lookout.

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*Notable Achievements of the Blood Ravens (within the Bright lands)!*

- Claiming Durha Oasis.
- Holding the Brass Hills against centaur hordes.
- Hunting wandering dead from the Necropolis of Unaagh.

*Adventures outside the Bright Lands:*

The Blood Ravens were sent on a mission to the Gnatmarsh to find a magical item of importance, but first they stopped at the town of Callistor. While there, Jandor was able to find other missions to complete while looking for the item they were sent to retrieve. The town was in need of some heroes to take care of a lizardfolk threat to the north and the Blood Ravens were just the heroes for the job. After a few fights with lesser denizens of the swamp, the Blood Ravens made their way to the lizardfolk stronghold and

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The Blood Ravens formed officially once Khazud had joined Gruda and Jandor. Gruda and Jandor had been together for almost a year but most of

was able to kill everyone from the outpost and made their way to the main stronghold. While at the main stronghold, the Blood Ravens wiped out over 30 enemies including three green hags and had identified a night hag. With the evil night hag driven off, the Blood Ravens made their way back to Callistor to collect their reward and to celebrate, and celebrate they did.

Gruda sent a message to his mother in hopes of her aid finding the escaped night hag and he hoped she could help him set up a new Orc stronghold in the Gnatmarsh. While the group waited, they collected information and worked on their own business ventures of utilizing some of the Assassin Vine berries to make wine. After only a few weeks Nalla arrived and helped the Blood Ravens locate the night hag and they left immediately to rid the swamp of this vile threat.

Expecting only the night hag, the Blood Ravens were surprised to find her protected by two ettins. They were not swayed. The Blood Ravens waded into combat slaughtering the Ettins, the Night Hag and sent back the summoned elementals the Night Hag had called forth to aid her. Once again the Blood Ravens returned to Callistor victorious and now with powerful magic items to utilize or sell.

Although this chapter of the Blood Ravens is over, they have plans for taking out a werewolf threat in the swamp and getting their business established so they can make Callistor their base of operations in the Gnatmarsh.

## **The Raven's Nest!**

The Blood Ravens base of operations is near to the village of Callistor. Their base is about a half day from the village and the land was gifted to them by the village as well as the temple in town for taking care of so many threats to the well being of the village.

The Raven's Nest is a multi building compound covering 250 acres with more room to grow. The Raven's Nest is a collection of 5 buildings: a house, a barn, a winery, an armory and a chapel.

The house has 6 rooms for sleeping and a large kitchen/dining room. The house also has a planning room which also double sas a lounge during down time. There is also a fenced off area right outside for when Jandor and Gruda drink too much and have to settle their differences.

The barn is for the basic farm animals kept and maintained by Grudas clansman while also being eventual food for the plants which grow the wine berries. The primary plant used for wine is a large group of Assassin Vines used for their berries to make a bitter and rare wine.

The winery is where the magic happens with turning the berries into the Assassin Wine which The Blood Ravens are also known for. Inside is everything you would need for a wine operation plus Khazud has his Alchemist/Herbalism lab set up for improving the wine among other projects for the groups needs.

The armory is where the group keeps their weapons and armor for down time training purposes as well as repairing the non magical weapons they have. If the group has a more serious problem they need solved the armory is also used for settling that with the assistance of necessary healing on hand.

The chapel is where everyone prays to their respective gods and where services are held on a fairly regular basis. No god is specifically worshiped in the chapel because each member of the group worships a different god or goddess. The Blood Ravens are very respectful of each others beliefs because they need to be able to trust each other in life or death situations.

# GUILD OF LAMPLIGHTERS

## The Bearers of Lamp and Torch

### A Guild of the Free City of Greyhawk

By Jason Zavoda

Gerrod Smallfire raised his ladder slowly and with a twinge of pain on each rung climbed to the base of the streetlight and opened the reservoir. From below his former apprentice, now Journeyman, Carddoc Highflame raised the small container of oil up to the Master's waiting hand.

"You should be letting me do this, Sir," said Carddoc.

"You'll be doing this soon enough," replied the older man. "This is my last harvest and I won't be doing another winter."

"You make it sound like we'll be burying you," laughed Carddoc. "You'll be running the Guild next."

"Sitting on my arse you mean," grumbled Master Smallfire.

"My Grand-da mostly sleeps," Carddoc laughed again. "And he complains about the cold in the Guild Hall. When you step down from the lighting I know he will step down from the Chair."

"That is as may be," the Master said as he closed the reservoir and handed down the half empty flask, "But Guild Master is no reward, its a burden. Wait till your arse is cold and numb from sitting in that chair."

Stepping down the ladder was easier than the climb up. The old Lamplighter handed Carddoc the oil container and then exchanged the ladder for a pair of long handled tools. The first turned a valve which lowered the lamp wick within the glass chimney and the second produced a small magical flame at the end of six-foot bronze tube with the touch of the lamplighter's thumb upon a small rune. The magical fire seemed to pass through the glass and the wick began to glow a deep orange then red.

"If we had some of those magic light stones they use in the noble's quarter we wouldn't need that oil or the ladder," said Carddoc.

Master Smallfire turned and pushed the two lamplighter tools into Carddoc's hands. "You watch

what you say. Those noble's have broken with tradition and they'll get what they deserve one day. May the Dark take them."

"Sorry Uncle," Carddoc bowed his head and apologized.

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The Guild of Lamplighter's is as old as the streets of Greyhawk. From their most humble beginnings when crude torches were used and carried by the lowliest of residents to light the way of their betters the guild has existed. Its earliest form was a rough group of mendicants who joined together for the handful of coppers offered for their services. Each street had its assigned torchbearers and it was death for any who sought to light a street if they had not sworn allegiance and more importantly paid their dues of membership to the nascent organization.

As the City of Greyhawk grew so did the Guild. Before the final walls of the Old City were raised the first street lamps had been set and within a few years the Guild of Lamplighters and Torchbearers was recognized and chartered and most importantly, taxed.

Long before the beggar-thieves war the Lamplighters fought the Thieves Guild who preferred dark streets for dark business. The Mayor and the Nightwatch preferred the light, at least among the better streets or near the Watch's favorite inns and taverns, and the Thieves were made to understand, after a suitable number of casualties, the lamps would remain on and unbroken and the Lamplighters unmolested.

The guild is numerous and the streets are assigned a journeyman and apprentice to maintain the lights and turn them on and off at dusk and dawn. For the most part these assignments are by the street but in the case of short pathways or long avenues these Lamplighters have a number of lamps under

their care which may cover several streets or part of a particular long street such as the Processional.

Old City still has the vestige of ancient street lamps but the Guild, in agreement with the Thieves, no longer services them, and these lamps are referred to as "The Lost" among the Guild. Each streetlamp has a given name and the Guild keeps a book called "The Light" which records the name and history of each lamp.

Recently the Henways of the High Quarter (called the Nobs or Noble Quarter by the Guild) have removed the oil lamps on many streets and replaced them with enchanted stones which are kept shut during the day and their container opened at night. The Nightwatch has been assigned to each lamp to make sure they aren't broken or stolen. This is seen as sacrilege among the Guild, especially the older members, and at first they broke and stole these enchanted stones as soon as they were placed. The Masters in the Guild talk about "Doing Something" but so far they have voiced no actual plans.

The Guild is paid a tithe by the city for their services. This payment is worked out on the number of lamps (even "The Lost" from the Old City and the new enchanted stone lamps in the High Quarter). They also receive monthly supplies of oil, wicks and repair supplies for the lamps (which the guild claims greater amounts than used so they can sell the surplus).

The old profession of "Torchbearer" has become more symbolic than actual and guildmembers perform the 'Carrying of the Torch" as ritual at certain times of the year, parading down the city streets in full regalia at dusk and lighting every avenue and alley in the city. A sizable force to put down the resulting fires marches with them.

Nobles and rich merchants will, from time to time, pay the guild for torchbearer services and it is in their city charter that any service requiring more than two torchbearers must be composed of Lamplighters.

The Guild maintains two of the city towers and trains as a militia group to man them or be called out for emergencies. While they are not experienced fighters they are all trained in the use of at least a single weapon and the wearing of light leather armor. Since the Guild is both prosperous and tenacious they

all have a decent set of leather armor and an actual weapon, rather than an iron bar or wood-axe as some poorer guilds manage.

Lamplighters wear a three-cornered hat with a candle in the brim when they are out and about. The Thieves Guild wont bother anyone wearing such do to ancient agreements between Guilds.

The Guild is open to both men and women and the Master's Council usually composed of eight members and the Guild Master is normally split evenly between men and women.

There is a secret faction in the Guild recruited by the Thieves Guild who help with burglaries in the city. The membership is small but contains elements in every quarter of the city.

Lamplighters, Guild of (City of Greyhawk)[GLD]

COG:FFF - 34

COG:GOTF - 43

FTAC - 14

PGTG - 30

TAB - 78



Art by Zuul Ramsey

# CULT OF THE RED SCYTHE

## Death Cultists of Nerull in Western Oerik

### The History of the Cult and its Leaders

By Kristoph Nolen, [GreyhawkOnline](#)

Stories abound of ancient evils coming from centuries past to wreak havoc or enact revenge. There are even more stories of the restless dead rising to revisit those who caused their deaths or wronged them in some way. Even more are the tales of cults dedicated to unknowable evils and dark gods. The Cult of the Red Scythe is all these things.

In the far reaches of Western Oerik, centuries ago, there were ancient tribes of horsemen known as the *Baklien* in the time before Old Ferrond was even a nation; in the time when Saint Kargoth first fell and his fortress was razed.

They saw the natural world around them, and they knew everything eventually dies. Death was the only thing in the world which held power over all of existence. In order to gain even a tiny portion of that power, they gave themselves over to the worship of Death. Ritual murder, blood sacrifice, poisonings,

dismemberment, and causing mayhem in settlements of all kinds by drugging and abducting people, wreaking havoc without being seen, and even burning towns to the ground.

As would be expected, these actions were never acceptable in civilized places and the worship of any such deities wasn't permitted. If

anyone was caught bearing holy symbols of a Death cult, they were outcast immediately, if not outright killed on the spot by whomever discovered them.

Taking their name from **Nerull the Reaper's** blade, *Lifecutter*, they called themselves the "**Red Scythe**". This cult knew not to provoke hatred amongst the populace and hid from civilized society, worshipping in dark hidden places and only rarely revealing their secret to one another. They wouldn't carry a scythe openly and took a ritual dagger as their favored weapon. Commoners carried daggers for utility, magic-users had an *athamé*, and even farmers used them.

They continued their reign of evil for decades, even centuries. In secret hiding, they worked to bring death's blessing to the world. They conspired to end governments, they murdered people whose deaths they believed would sow even more strife and difficulty. They disemboweled humans and animals alike on their altars to Nerull. They enacted brutal revenge killings against those who persecuted them.

Just after the end of the first millennium, about 1005 (by western reckoning), a vile man named **Petrus** came to the Red Scythe. He'd sought the secrets of the inner circle of the Shield Mother, wanting to have divine power. His face was horribly scarred and an eye sliced open by the High Priest when he broke into the sanctum, leaving him blind in one eye. He escaped the wrath of the Church but was a wanted fugitive.

Petrus met a cultist while living in the shadows as an escaped outlaw. Petrus took their promises of power and revenge, and the cult smuggled him out of the Thalish provinces, all the way to the foothills of the eastern mountains where the cult held sway.

In those dark lands where the landscape was withered and wights wandered the domain, Petrus' dark soul had found its niche. He quickly took oaths



Art by Matt Cavotta, courtesy of WotC

of destruction and vows of murderous intent and soon, with astounding alacrity, he became one of the cult's principal leaders. Of course, he used assassination, poison, guile, and lies to get there. In this land of the Red Scythe, evil priests brought the dead to serve them openly, malevolent spirits and tormented souls were set free to kill the living as punishment, and those who opposed the rule of the Red Scythe had their flesh stripped from their bodies and their remaining skeletons imbued with dark energy and forced to serve the cult.

Petrus was second only to the most privileged inner circle of priests. Then, the unliving fiend known as Ahmut came. Ahmut had been a warlord three centuries before who had united the tribes. He was treacherously slain in his sleep by an assassin's blade opening his throat. Centuries later when Stratis, a god of War and brother of Hextor and Heironeous, was felled Ahmut was given unlife as the god's spear pierced this warlord's corpse where it had rotted in an unrespected grave beneath a battlefield. But, when this gruesome thing called Ahmut tore itself from the grave, dread and horror grasped the world.

Nearly immediately, Ahmut was brought to cultists of Nerull, the Reaper. They mistakenly thought they could direct and control his murderous, raging, hatred. But, with the mere touch of Ahmut's bone-fingered hand, the High Priest of Nerull fell instantly dead, proving Ahmut would not bow to the Red Scythe. And the Cult of the Red Scythe was, thus, usurped by an ancient evil. With the power of Stratis' spear which had raised Ahmut's soul from where it'd been trapped for 300 years, he commands life itself and Ahmut demands their worship and loyalty and is served as the Death God's emissary on Oerth.

Petrus, however, was cunning and knew to follow Ahmut and not to oppose him. Without the high priest in his way, Petrus became the most prominent general in the army of the dead commanded by Ahmut. But, Ahmut is clearly insane with his desire for revenge. Petrus is able to execute his station often without the attention of Ahmut. And he uses that to his very great advantage. He has even disregarded Ahmut's command and secretly defied him by gathering artifacts and keeping them for his own power, knowing one day he'll destroy Ahmut.

Another lieutenant plots just beneath Petrus' footing, though. An enormous man named **Bolkart** born of a wicked and unholy ritual forced upon a human woman by an orc who served the Red Scythe. He is a cruel and formidable combatant and he believes Petrus would not be able to stand beneath the might of his tremendous sword.

Ahmut for his part, is unconcerned with any petty rivalries which might attempt to seize his sovereignty.

He knows Death eventually comes for every living thing, and he has an immortal eternity to wait for them to die, and he already has enough power to slay the world.



# CELENIAN SUSS FOREST KNIGHTS' WATCH

## Defenders of the Realm



### A unique knighthood from a popular game

By Jay L. "Lord Gosumba" Scott, [LordGosumba Channel](#)  
cartography by [Mike Bridges](#), [Greyhawkey](#)

The Kingdom of Celene has faced challenges to its freedom and independence, which can be dated back to its official founding in C.Y. 461. Within the first few decades of recognition, Celene would ally with the Ulek states, Veluna, and demi-humans in the Kron Hills, to jointly drive humanoid from the Lortmil Mountains. This occurred during the Hateful Wars of C.Y. 498-510. However, with success in these Wars came unintended consequences; the most serious being some humanoids fled southeast to the Suss Forest, and then to the Pomarj, where they discovered a superior refuge. These locations turned out to be even better than their original homes in the Lortmil Mountains.

Humanoids would be able to constantly raid into Celene under the cover of the blanket of the Suss. Also evil organizations would use this to their advantage, and those with exceptionally charismatic leadership, such as the Dark Brotherhood, would be able to harness these forces to do their personal bidding. This would continue to be a major challenge, as the Sorrowful Wars began, in C.Y. 579. Celene would be on the brink of defeat, and possible extinction, during the Battle of Sorrowful Death in C.Y. 582. The Humanoid elite armies would push deep into Celene, with thousands of Grey and High Elves slaughtered in this battle.

Also, The Suss Forest holds wonders, and horrors, within its tangled depths. Rare sightings of albino-like Humans, which will attack unprovoked, have been reported, rumored to be from the fabled Lost City of the Suloise. Cultists of vile religions, such as Incabulos, have plagued Elves in some of the more secluded communities of the Suss and Welkwood, to acquire a madness to slay their own friends and family.

Recently, armies and fanatics of Erythnul have been attacking trade routes from the Principality and

County of Ulek to Celene, from an unknown base. Add to this a number of bandit groups from the Gnarley Forest and Wild Coast that raid into these forests, and maintaining a secure border can be seen as extremely challenging.

However, Celene has not stood idly by and let this transpire without confrontation. As the humanoid raids began to increase after the Hateful Wars, a new charter knighthood was formed with the Blessing of Lady Rhalta, Yolande, The Celene - Suss Forest Knights' Watch. This organization would be tasked with the protection of the Kingdom from the eastern border along the Jewel River. This would include the Kron Hills and Gnarley Forest to the North, and the Suss Forest and Welkwood to the South and East. Due to the chaotic nature of Elven resources, such as few organized armies, limited population, and some bickering between the Noble Houses of Celene, the initial charter for this Knighthood would limit the cap of members to only 12. Seven of these Knights were to come from Noble Houses, three from Lesser Houses; one was to be from the indigenous lands of the Welkwood itself. However, most surprising to many, was that the 12<sup>th</sup> and final position was to be held by a Human; this would be an individual deemed to be a "True Friend" or "Hero" of Celene and its Elven populace. This was to facilitate mutual trust, cooperation, and alliances with other races and governments, as was done during the successes of the Hateful Wars.

Above all, The Suss Forest Knights' Watch is tasked with vigilance along Celene's borders. All members have the authority to lead local militias, command estate forces, and declare a state of invasion, if necessary. The Knighthood has been in conflict with humanoid forces of differing sizes for decades, and they have been successful in thwarting raiding parties, and in awakening Celene to major threats



with time for preparation. It was the Suss Forest Knights' Watch that alerted the Kingdom to the attack that precipitated the Battle of Sorrowful Death. Without this early warning, all hope of a timely defense may have been impossible. Also, to date, this was the last occurrence of a Knight being killed, as four members permanently lost their lives in this epic battle.

A majority of the Knights are class wise, either Cavaliers or Rangers; classes with acuity in patrolling, tracking, and/or missile fire. The Commander is Baron Dreckden of House Kesilak (CG, GE M, Cv 11). He provides the Knights with one main precept; a Knight cannot notify those in need from danger if he/she is deceased. While all members of the Order are of the utmost character and bravery, forethought, and preparation are recommended above foolhardiness in all but the direst situations. Attacking at range with Long Bows, or retreating to fight another day is not considered cowardice, especially if the threat is deemed to be overwhelming, and a larger force needs to be gathered in defense. These Knights are known to be thoughtful and persistent, and they are not above gathering an Adventuring Party to lead or travel with to deal with a lesser threat, such as bandits, cultists, or monster horrors in the Suss Forest.

In further cooperation, The Celene - Suss Forest Knights Watch works jointly with Order of Ulek forces in the area, out of the town of East Vesper, near the South Welkwood Bridge that crosses the Jewel River. The Order of Ulek in Celene is led by their area of influence Regional Commander, Timperal Lakeslan (CG, 1/2Eg F, Ftr 10/Cl 10). She is an East Vesper and Celenian native. Both Orders will share intelligence information, patrol into the depths of the Suss Forest in joint groups, and create Adventuring Parties comprised of members as necessary to complete a mission or goal.

The frontier like borders of Celene along the Jewel River and into the daunting depths of the Suss Forest remains extremely dangerous. However, the Elven Kingdom of Celene can rest a bit easier, knowing the Celene - Suss Forest Knight's Watch will be there to defend its interests against many truly evil and vile threats.

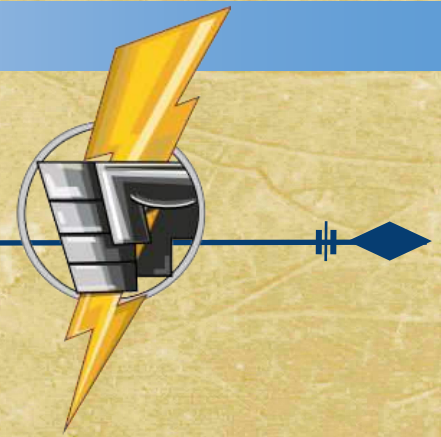
Adventures about the Order of Ulek Campaign in Greyhawk, and its Allies, Mercenary Groups, and Enemies, may be seen on [www.twitch.tv/lordgosumba](http://www.twitch.tv/lordgosumba).



Cartography by Mike "@Greyhawk Mike" Bridges

# CHURCH OF HEIRONEOUS

## The Followers of the Archpaladin



### Information and In-game Stats!

By Thom "Oronir" Vandevenne, [@TheGreyLeague](#)  
Art by floor4productions

**Symbol:** Heironeous is called the Invincible, the Valorous Knight, and the Arch-paladin. His symbol is a white or silver hand clutching a white or silver lightning bolt.

### Overview:

Heironeous expects his followers to uphold the highest ideals of chivalry and justice and to treat adversity as a challenge to be met and overcome, just as evil should be overcome. The world is a dangerous place where those who fight for justice and who protect the weak and the innocent face a never-ending series of challenges. He exhorts his followers to act honourably at all times, and to uphold the virtues of justice and chivalry with deeds, not just words. Only those who face danger with certainty and calm will prevail against evil.

The church is supported by numerous religious-military orders, some of which can trace their origins back to the church armies of the Great Kingdom (though none swear allegiance to the Malachite Throne or its successors today). Most paladins join orders like: Order of the Shining Sword, Knights of Holy Shielding, Brotherhood of the Lance Unbroken, The Sacred Order of the White Paladins and the Copper Crusaders amongst many others. The order can each be found in a particular area of the Flanaess but the church is strongest in Furyondy, Veluna and the Shield lands.

The church always attempts to become involved in the politics of any region where it has established temples. Using political contacts to gather information about any evil that taints the local nobility, who view such interest as meddling. However, it also garners favour with those who can fund expeditions and field armies to root out threats to the land.

Services and holy texts such as "The Book of the

Code" and "The Book of Penitence", are all in the Old Oeridian language. Services include triumphant battle hymns, offerings to copper statues of the god, and the sharing of hearty, strengthening foods.

### Beliefs:

**Duty to the People:** This pertains to mercy, courage, valour, justice, protection of the weak, and fidelity to church superiors and officers of just law. Included in this part of the code is the willingness to give your life to save another.

**Duty to the Archpaladin:** obedience to Heironeous, devotion to the church, championing good against evil, generosity, and obeying the needs of the faith/ church above that of mortals.

**Duty to a Lady:** courtly love, devotion to a

Affiliation Modifiers:	+/-
One time: Base attack bonus +6 or higher	1
One time: Knowledge (military) 5+ ranks	2
General: Complete a mission	1 to 3
Brings a serious lawbreaker to justice	1
Converts a new member (NPC lvl 3*)	1
Spearheads the revision of an unjust law	2
Serve as military advisor to officers in a mission	1
Save the affiliation from a major setback	2
Lead a unit to defeat evil and succeed	1/CR4
Lead a battalion to defeat evil and succeed	3
Lead an army to defeat evil and succeed	10
Thwarts a plot of Hextor's church or minions	2
Slay CR 8+ evil minion of Hextor	3
Fails in combat against Hextorites	-4
Associates with evil people/ creatures	-4/-10
Break the law	-1/-3

particular lady and after her all other ladies, with a general respect toward all women.

### Goals:

- Travel the world on church orders to seek out and destroy evil.
- Free the shield lands.
- Work as strategists, military instructors, or judges.

### Enemies:

All that is evil. Hextor especially receives special treatment.

### Member traits:

Must follow the faith of Heironeous and be of good alignment. Must spend 1 month/ year within a temple praying and training. This is usually done in week-long stints every season rather than all at once. Priestly vestments include chain mail and blue robes with silver trim.

**Ranks:** Novices (rank 1) are known as the Squires while all others are called the Valorous

### Example of an Order:

### Knights of the Holy Shielding:

**Description:** This elite band of mounted knights was once the core of the army of the Shield Lands. Shield Knights were noble lords from the Shield Lands who came together for their mutual protection. As symbols of honour they always make their presence known to help bolster the morale of the common soldier and intimidate the cowardly minions of evil.

**Headquarters:** The Shield Lands were left in ruin during the Greyhawk Wars, the capital (and the knights' headquarters) of Admundfort was seized, and the knights were left with nothing to defend. Critwall is now mainly their HQ.

**Leadership:** Since the capture and death of Holmer, Earl of Walworth, his cousin Countess of Walworth and Shield Commander Katarina (Hm female Pal15) has taken his title and stepped in to lead the knights.

	Rank name	Insignia	Renown	Other requirements
1	<b>BLESSED</b>	Lightning pin	1	Heironian believer (any class)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are effectively the squires of the order.</li> <li>• Free boarding at the churches</li> <li>• participate in faction events</li> <li>• Level-Training available at temples</li> </ul>			
2	<b>KNIGHT</b>	lightning pendant	5	Lawful; Least one victory against CR 8+ evil.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• -25% normal equipment</li> <li>• gain a higher-ranking contact</li> <li>• Diplomacy +2 with enforcers of the law</li> </ul>			
3	<b>MARSHAL</b>	Gauntlet pendant	20	Helped a good government against evil, at least once
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can acquire magical items at a cost</li> <li>• to help in missions can get (3/year) a 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl Fighter for 1 mission.</li> </ul>			
4	<b>BANNERETTE</b>	Helmet with holy symbol	35	9 <sup>th</sup> lvl; advanced the influence of the church in an area
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You gain a squire, a personal assistant of 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl.</li> <li>• Get three knights (4/year) to help on any church mission: one 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl cleric and two 4<sup>th</sup> lvl Fighters.</li> </ul>			
5	<b>COMMANDER</b>	Silver-white mantle	50	12 <sup>th</sup> lvl; led an army to victory over evil
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You gain the services of 4 church members (various classes of 7-9<sup>th</sup> lvl). These are to serve your needs for as long as you hold rank within the organization.</li> </ul>			

Host.

**Mission:** Reclaim the Shield lands and, within the Shield Lands, act as traveling arbiters of law, providing the swift and even-handed justice.

**Membership:** Need a recorded history of heroic

deeds and be 7<sup>th</sup> lvl. Follow the code:

#### Code of the Shield bearers:

*Honour is our conscience.*

*Valour is our blood.*

*Justice is our soul.*

*We uphold the law and protect what is right.*

*We offer all that we are, in the service of the Shield Lands.*

*For as long as we draw breath!*

**Ranks:** Add **shield** to the rank attained within the church.

## The Sanctum of Heironeous in the Free City of Greyhawk

### **Description:**

This building, located in the Garden district, looks less like a temple and more like a large mansion. The Greyhawk Oligarchy doesn't want a temple of a war god in their city, as they claim it will attract more problems than anything else (especially with its many laws against the use of weapons). But during the Great War the Sanctum was granted an extension to their, now large, mansion. A temple to Heironeous is usually a self-contained fortress, even within a well-fortified city, but this was not allowed by the Oligarchy. The current High Priest Jaikor Demien, however, made sure the bricks and mortar became as hard as steel and the doors reinforced elegantly, so as not to disrupt the street atmosphere. Although they have been given an extension, they have not been granted any political power in the Free city.

### **Mission:**

The Sanctum thus tries to gain more power and responsibility in the Free city with the sole purpose of being able to defend it. Although Greyhawk is not the centre of the Flanaess, it is a busy crossroad and the Sanctum is a place where members of various orders to Heironeous will cross paths or meet to exchange information.

### **Membership:**

The sanctum is open to all who worship the arch-paladin, the Fist of Valour, and during holidays the worship hall is open to its members and all those who follow Heironeous in some way. Amongst them are many City Watch officers and mercenary captains; in

fact, Captain-General Nurev is even an honoured member.

### Current occupants:

- Bannerette Jaikor Demien (Human male F7/Pr7): Warden of the Sanctum
- Marshal Fernando: (Human male Pr6/Pa3): High priest of the Holy hall of the sanctum
- Shield Knight Robert (Half-elf male Pr5): Ambassador for the Knights of the Holy shielding
- Knight Adelaide (Human female F3/Pr3): Religious teacher of initiates
- Knight Marcia (Human female F5): Teacher of the initiates
- There might be anywhere between 1-6 Blessed and 1-4 knights at the Sanctum at any time.

### Servants:

All servants are initiates

There are about 20 initiates at the sanctum at all times

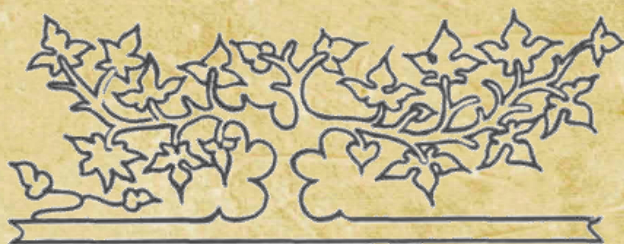
### **Floorplan:**

When arriving at the Sanctum by horse, a member or honoured guest can make use of the stable before entering the Sanctum.

On the ground floor, one can find the dining hall for the current senior officers and an attached kitchen with pantry keeps the whole sanctum fed. The eastern wing of the ground floor houses the hall of worship and the personal sleeping quarter of the Warden of the Sanctum, a small library is available to any 'rank 2' member.

The second floor has rooms for novices and senior members as well as the armoury, mess hall and sparring room.

The small top floor consists of a war (map) room behind a sturdy and locked door.





# THE CASTLE

## Deep Within the Terror of Spinecastle

### A Story of a lone Valiant of the Knight Protectors of the Great Kingdom

by David Leonard

Shrieks echoed, mingling from near and far. Human, orc, gnom. The gnolls were the worst; theirs was a twisted, hideous, laughter. Don't listen, he thought, desperately trying not to. But ... how could he not hear? Philbin pressed himself into the wall, but for all his desire to be one with it, its surface wouldn't yield to his need.

Move, damn it, he thought. But his body betrayed him. Coward! You bloody coward! Some Knight Protector you turned out to be!

But Marquis Clement never said it would be like this, did he? He spoke of honour and chivalry

and protecting the weak, of orcs and gnolls and bandits, and even of Ur-Flan wizards, but he never once said anything about walls that flowed and bled like they were torn by .... By what? Darkness? Colour? That nauseating, undulating blend of colour that defied any description short of the emotions that mirrored it: sickness, hatred, horror? It smelled as much, too: if sick and iron and rot. And what of the noisome cacophony that flowed with it? It rends the soul to hear such a thing.

Beads of sweat rolled from his brow. They stung his eyes. He closed them. Wiped them. And opened them again to the rippling ink and colour that threatened to unhinge him.

Okay, he thought, said, whispered, and made to move his foot. He actually heard it scrape the floor.

"Shhh!"

He stopped, having hardly shifted.

Philbin squinted and a shape resolved in the darkness. A figure with the hint of a finger to its lips. "Shhh," it repeated, quieter than Philbin would have imagined possible.

The darkness and colour faded, leaving only the seemingly pale light from those sconces that remained lit. Only then did the figure move, becoming a man. Philbin saw what must be tusks rising from its lower lip. Not a man! A half-orc!

Philbin lifted his sword, but before it rose more than a few inches, an iron hand gripped his. He all but screamed. But the blade that pressed against his throat cut short any breath that might have rushed from it. Its pressure pulled him in, taut.

"Don't you fuckin' dare," was whispered in his ear, its breath as hot as his was quavering.

The half-orc stepped out of the shadows. "Just cut his throat and be done with it," it hissed. It held a blade in hand. A dim thing that didn't reflect what little light the smoky sconces threw.

"No," the whisper behind him said. "I think not. You know how it loves the smell of blood; one



Art by Kalman Andrazsofszky, courtesy of WotC

drop and it comes running. So, we mustn't tempt fate. Besides, he's okay now," it breathed, "aren't you?"

Philbin nodded, and the blade left his throat, and the hand his sword.

"Good," the voice said, so lightly Philbin had to strain to catch its words.

"You don't know that for sure," the half-orc whispered. It was tall. Thin for its kind. What its kin might call a whelp and cull at birth.

Philbin, shifted to defend against the beast and its companion, and saw the shadow of a silhouette behind him shrug.

"Damn it," the half-orc said, exasperated. "Look at him! He'll just give us away. You should've just cut his throat."

Philbin tightened his grip on his sword.

"What's your name, boy," the voice asked.

Philbin swallowed, surprised he could muster up enough spit to moisten his tongue, let alone his throat. He whispered "Philbin" once he was able.

"Aloysius, meet Philbin. Killing him now would just be impolite." The voice stepped into the feeble light. Not a half-orc. Human. About the same height as Philbin, if sprightlier.

Even in this low light Philbin could see that he was somewhat tan of skin. His hair appeared black, his face sported a tanned moustache and pointed beard. There was something familiar about him. But Philbin couldn't quite place him. "You're one of the delegates?" he asked, his whisper rough as sandpaper. There were so many of them about lately, from Rauxes, from the Herzog, some from as far away as Nyron and Ratic. Too many to remember them all. And of course, the Knights Protector. All there to discuss what was to be done about the orcs and gnolls that were flowing out of the Rakers like a malevolent tide. They might have saved their breath, Philbin thought, for they agreed on little. And all their guarded words divided them further.

"Yeah," the man said, "I suppose you could say that," inexplicably. "I'm Malachi," he said, gesturing towards himself. "You've already met Aloysius."

Aloysius? Odd name for a half-orc. Odd attire, too. High collar. Tailored coat. A shoulder sash that bended into the background. The same sort of attire Malachi wore.

"Can you find your way back," Malachi asked Aloysius.

The half-orc nodded. "We may have to take some detours, but it shouldn't take too much longer. We'll be out of here and back on the lake in no time."

The lake? What lake? They were in a mountain pass!

"Good," Malachi breathed, "I've been among these *gadje* too long."

*Gadje?*

Malachi paused, as though considering.

"Would you like to get out of here?" he asked Philbin.

Philbin nodded, a little too eagerly, he realized. He felt shame rise to his throat. It tasted of bile. He swallowed it. He had no call for shame, he reasoned. It's not like he'd been fighting orcs or gnolls! Just darkness and colour and lightning fast tentacles of ebon smoke that couldn't be pierced or cut. His companions had tried. Their oath, their dedication to courage and honour, demanded such. But they were all dead now, weren't they? So much for courage and honour.

The past hours had been a blur. There were tremors at first, sounds of conflict, distant screams, the call to arms. Have the hordes come to the walls? Have we been breached? I don't know, was the best answer given. We must have been, because there was fighting reported in the foundations. But how was that possible? The walls were too tall, too thick, too strong, raised to withstand the Fruztii for a thousand years. But they hadn't been fighting Fruztii; they'd been fighting orcs and gnolls in the pass, and they were too stupid and savage to break or scale the castle walls, perched as they were on such high cliffs.

They didn't have to: The doors had been thrown open to them by those clambering to get out. Heedless of danger, those who fled took no heed of the spears waiting for them. Such was their terror. And with the gates open, the humanoids had rushed in, and laid waste to all who stood against them.

But those who fled had been blessed with a clean death. Unlike the humanoids' who'd carried the day. Philbin shuddered at the memory of their howls and screams. Their insane laughter. From down corridors. Echoing off walls.

He and those few he fell in with had rushed from the shrieks here, only to rush towards those there; finding crazed humanoids everywhere, they'd

been forced to take refuge in the castle's dark depths, hoping to find the rumoured bolt hole there. And that's where they encountered the ... elves? Their skin was black as darkest night. Eerie eyes. Hair like halos. Death sprang from their hands and those unlucky to have been the first down the stairs were cut down. Then everything went black. Philbin panicked and recoiled back up the stairs with those able to follow, most bleeding, back to stores, probably one of the most defensible spots within the castle walls. Where they barricaded themselves in.

They thought they'd be safe. They weren't. Their ears filled with a buzz and clamour. It rose to a din. Then the walls flowed. They undulated. Breathed! Patches disappeared. And reformed where they'd not been moments before. One materialized right on top of the poor soul beside him. Philbin saw the terror in his eyes just before they disappeared within the curtain of stone and mortar. His outstretched arms grasped and shuddered, suddenly limp.

If not for what happened next, Philbin surely would have retched.

He saw, and heard ... the colour. It burst forth, flaring with angry, throbbing, brilliance. An ebon pitch that he could only imagine was the colour's maw twisted within it. The din threatened to unhinge him. He clawed at his ears and his eyes, and pressed himself into that newly resolved wall that likely saved him. He drew his sword. It seemed a pitiful thing to pit against such malevolence. It hung limp from his lifeless hand.

Ethereal tentacles snapped out of the blinding blackness, and the first of his companions were impaled, and plucked into it before they could even draw breath, before they could screech or cry.

Philbin cried, Heironeous forgive him, he cried as he never had before. But silently. Frozen. And one by one, those smoky, gossamer tentacles snapped in and out of the colour with unimaginable speed, snatching away those who'd stood and fought what couldn't be fought. Their steel rang out against those ghostly tentacles. Then rang out again as they fell to the flagstones in singular clatters. Philbin cried. He pled for his life to whomever might listen, to Heironeous, to Hextor, to Nerull, he cared not who.

The last of his companions disappeared into the blackness behind the brilliance, and just as

abruptly as the melee began, all sounds of combat ceased. The buzzing, throbbing clamour paused, waited, listened, as though inhaling.

A drop of sweat rolled from Phibin's brow. Into his eye. It stung. He let it sting.

He feared to breathe. He too waited. For how could one fight colour?!

The buzzing cacophony faded. The brilliance faded to the pale imitation of light that remained. The sconces sputtered, oblivious to the carnage around them.

The carnage that surrounded them still.

"Okay, then," Malachi said. "Let's go." And Aloysius led the way. As silent as can be. Malachi shouldered his pack and followed, as nimble as a cat. Then, shouldering his shield, Philbin too followed.

His heart lurched as the half-orc began to sing. Shut up, his soul cried! You'll bring it down on us! But as the melody washed over him, his soul soothed. He became calmer, more confident, quieter, if that were possible. Malachi accompanied him, their voices blending as beautifully as the colour's cacophony had not, and Philbin believed just then that they were going to be alright, that they were all but invisible to any who might seek them. He began to believe that they just might make it out of that hellish place alive.

It was then that he remembered where he'd seen Malachi. He was the musician! That vagabond dandy who'd arrived just as the delegates had, and played such soothing tunes on his lyre and sharm that the gathered had requested he play at each and all of their negotiations. Who'd invited him, they wondered, but upon hearing his most mesmerising tones, any thought of asking who'd vetted him had slipped their minds.

Like cats, they snuck up down one corridor after another, keeping to shadows that Philbin both yearned for and cringed from, remembering how those black elves had been one with them, and could command them. His heart pounded. So loudly he marveled that the others didn't spin about to remonstrate him. Or worse, leave him and his tell-tale heart to their fate, to betray his presence to the colour, or to those impossible elves, or just to wandering orcs. His throat closed. His breath shuddered and rasped. Silently, apparently.

"Who are you," Philbin asked after they were far enough away from the carnage and when what



passed for courage could be roused.

Malachi gave him a sidelong glance. "Why do you care, so long as we get you out of here?"

"Because I do. Because you saved my life."

"Did we? No matter. Either way, we may need your sword." Malachi gave him a hard look, then. "You are a knight, aren't you?"

Philbin chose his next words carefully. "Almost ... I'm a supplicant."

"A what?"

"I've pledged my life, but I haven't been chosen yet."

Malachi chuckled, shaking his head. "Just my luck."

"So," Philbin asked, "who are you?"

"Riverfolk."

"Riverfolk? *Rhennee*? There are no *Rhennee* around here." Philbin paused, pondering. "Why are you here?"

"You're a curious one, aren't you," Malachi said. "Okay, I'll tell you; I was sent to find out what you were planning to do about the orcs."

"Why do you care what happens here? We're nowhere near the Nyr Dyv." The meaning of Malachi's words revealed themselves to him, then. "You're a spy!"

"Keep your voice down," Malachi hissed. "Spy is such an ugly word. I'm on a fact-finding mission. It's not like you invited us to the table, did you? We need to know what you plan to do so we can prepare."

"Prepare? Prepare for what?"

"For betrayal."

Aloysius stopped, and threw up a warning hand. Ahead, the clash of steel and the howl of gnolls sounded against the roar of what could only be orcs. It waxed, it waned, the combat rushing down other halls. And faded. Silence swelled to fill their ears, broken only by the sound of water dripping, the scuffle of rats. Only then did they creep forward again.

After untold twists and turns, and downward spiraling stairs, Aloysius paused again, calling Malachi up. He gestured forward. Unbidden, Philbin crept forward too, and he too saw the dazed gnoll that slumped against the wall at the bend ahead. Its head remained fixed, its chest rising and falling with each tortured gasp. It laughed its tittering laugh between each.

Malachi unsheathed his rapier and dirk and inched forward, slipping into the darkness between what meager light pooled from the guttering sconces. And only slipped back out of it when close enough to shave the chin of that hapless beast.

Malachi waved them forward.

"Nothing to worry about," he said, his rapier waving a finger's breadth from its glazed and milky eyes. It took no heed of its obvious danger, fixated blankly into a distance it could not see.

"Why," asked Philbin. He had half a mind to end the thing, but he stayed his hand, remembering what Malachi had said, how the least drop of blood called the colour down on any injured soul.

They stepped over the pathetic beast.

It reached up and grabbed Philbin's leg.

He hollered. Gods, help him, he hollered. It hollered, too.

"Fuck," Aloysius snapped, darting forward, all pretence of stealth laid aside.

Malachi almost sprang after him, but after a moment's hesitation, he turned and crushed the gnoll's head in with the pommel of his dirk.

"Leave him!" Aloysius yelled.

The gnoll slumped, and Philbin was free.

They waited but a moment, listening. And watched as blood rolled from the gnoll's skull.

The faintest of buzzing irritated Philbin's ears. Tears welled up with it. No, he cried, silently.

"Run," Malachi said. He bolted as if his life demanded it.

And Philbin too ran. For he knew that it did. But in his heart, he knew there was no hope of escape.

Footfalls echoed everywhere, his, Malachi's, Aloysius', but others too. Many others, and they sounded swift, far swifter than theirs. And beneath them all, a buzzing that irritated his ears. The distant cacophony of horrors swelled. It pressed down on his heart. His breath became forced and ragged. He knew they'd never be able to outrun them. It! The pursuit and the horror were almost upon them.

Aloysius gestured to them from an alcove ahead. "Hurry," he called, looking behind them, panic clear in his eyes! "Faster!" The alcove led to a stair, and down they went, the mortared stonework giving way to rough-hewn walls. Darkness engulfed them, and Philbin's knees almost buckled. Malachi sang a

desperate refrain, and light flared overhead, shredding it. They reached the base, a wide span of drainage, and Aloysius gasped, "Almost there." He looked spent. Malachi, too. He, himself, could barely keep up, let alone keep on. But still they did, making for a dimmest hint of light, and of hope, at the tunnel's end. Their feet splashed too loudly, but they did not care. Freedom lay within sight. But Philbin realized their footfall's resonance did little to drown out the pursuit, the horror.

He risked a backward glance. He imagined movement in the darkness. Did he? Was there? He slowed and then stopped, sure now that it was hopeless to continue. His wind had left him and he could run no more. His shame returned. Coward, he thought. He drew his sword. He'd be a coward no more.

Malachi slowed, he turned. "C'mon!" he yelled.

Philbin knew then that he couldn't run. His shame stayed him. He'd already forsaken his oath, he'd cowered in the face of Evil, and as the full force of that admission weighted upon his conscience, he recalled Lord Clement's words: "We are the Vanguard against the coming of Night, and it is our solemn Duty to stand firm against it lest the Darkness rise up and overwhelm us, for if we do not stem the tide Evil, who will?" He must be dead now, Philbin realized. He choked back tears.

"C'mon" Malachi yelled, "we're almost clear!"

Philbin waved him on. "Go!" he yelled, "We'll never make it," for indeed, the clamour of the colour was almost upon them. "I'll hold them off!" And he turned to do just that.

The black skinned elves poured out of the stairwell, boiling out of the distant darkness, fanning out into the tunnel. Dozens of them. Then, monstrous unions of them and giant spiders spilled out, blotting out the ceiling and walls.

Philbin calmed, and felt his resolve stiffen. He crouched and set his shield as a torrent of bolts rained down on him. They clattered and snapped. He gripped his sword tighter; and rising, he rushed them. More bolts struck his shield. One plunged into his leg. He almost staggered, but this time his legs held true.

He swung, he slashed, he held the space between the Evil and freedom.

Then the colour burst out of the stairwell. The

sound! It raked his mind. His war cry thrust his fear aside. The colour washed over him. And still he slashed!

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Revelling in the breeze that rustled his hair, Malachi inhaled the river as its water lapped the keel. He loved the water. How sweet those sounds caressed the ear. Celene was kind, her new face cloaking their escape as their skiff sped downriver.

Malachi patted Aloysius on the shoulder. "Thank you, brother," he said, leaving Aloysius to man the tiller as he moved forward to ready the sail. He inhaled Liliana as he reached the mast. There were better scents than those of the river.

"So, husband," she asked as she switched positions with him, brushing him as she passed, "what happened in there?"

"You don't want to know," he said, peering past Liliana's glorious silhouette as the spires of mighty Spinecastle slowly disappeared behind the bend. It was supposed to last a thousand years. It didn't last half that.

She gave him a stern look, one not to be denied.

"Nothing," he said. "No, not nothing...."

Damn fool, he thought, picturing that brave bloody fool as he threw himself into those monstrous half spiders, half elves. Damn stupid bloody fool.

"We may be alive now because of a *gadjo*," he said, shaking his head. "He was just a boy, but he sacrificed himself so we might escape."

"Really?" she said, tossing her head as she too looked upon their final glimpse of the spires as they slipped out of view. "A *gadjo*? I'm surprised he should do such a thing. I suppose one in a thousand may not be all that bad, then, after all. What was his name?"

"No matter..." he said. "... Philbin," he said.

He gave the moon-bathed hills one last long hateful stare before turning away, wishing he'd never come to that castle's once hallowed and now haunted halls.

Thank you, Philbin, he prayed, gods' speed.

# ORIGIN OF THE HORNEDED SOCIETY

## Dreaded Fiend-Worshippers



### The History of the Founding of the Cult and its Leaders

By Jason Zavoda

Toszar Khan is the name the Rovers of the Barrens give to a Shaman-Chieftain from their distant past. The people of the more civilized southlands know little of him. He united the tribes of the Rovers into a single warband that dominated the central-northern lands of the Flanaess.

That the Rovers discovered a vast city of stone is undisputed. The broken towers and weed-choked streets were half-sunken in the marshy river land on the banks of the Veng and it is here that the tale of the man Toszar Khan ends and the history of the Horned Society begins.

Within that broken city Toszar Khan found a temple and a passage that lead to a weak point between this world and the Nine Hells. What entered that temple was a man, but that which came forth was no longer Toszar Khan. The horned helm that marked him as chief was now fused to his body and seemingly empty, though the darkness that could be seen through the eye-slits was filled with an evil malevolence.

During the rule of the shaman-king, the chieftains of the Rovers were dragged from their tents and adorned with the horned helms of Toszar Khan. These were his war leaders, his strongest guardians and the greatest shame of the Rovers who abandoned Toszar Khan and his city which became Molag the heart of the Horned Society.

The fate of Toszar Khan is unknown. He descended into the temple at the heart of Molag and was never seen again, but three of these horn-helmed chieftains have survived the centuries and the disappearance of the shaman-king. They are now the guardians of the temple and the gateway to the Nine Hells. What power the present day Hierarchs have over these founders of the Horned Society is unknown but they protect the temple and drag to the Hells any unworthy who would violate its precincts.

Once there had been more than a score of these

horn-helmed chieftains but now only three remain.

**The Bear**, the oldest of the three. His helm is topped with the skull of a bear and his face masked by a cross of bronze, His body is marked with the old symbols of his achievements and power. He was a shaman-king himself and he wields unholy magic as well as martial power. His helm not only animates his cold, dead flesh (as all the helms will do) it allows him to summon the spirits of dead beasts to fight for and serve him,

**The Corpse-King:** The youngest and one of the last chieftains to be taken by Toszar Khan. His flesh is unmarked, though a sickly cold green-blue with the dark-slime that runs through his body instead of blood, the same as his brethren, and his helm is graven with the markings from the old pre-human foundations of the city. His face is masked by the bronzed breast-bones of a man. He is the most skilled with weapons of his brethren fighting with a southern longsword in one hand and a short-sword from the old southern empire in the other. He can summon all those he kills to fight for him though their bodies rot quickly and within a week collapse into a pile of putrid flesh and bones. Animals detest him and flee from him. Undead animals will attack him on sight unless controlled by his brethren.

**The Ram.** Once a Rover but in the end a Bandit-Lord, he was captured by the Rovers and given to the Shaman-King. His flesh is inscribed with the marks of a chain. Once he was enslaved by the Suel and fought in their arena of death. Somehow he returned to the north and claimed leadership among the outlaws and bandits of the northern mountains. His helm has the skull of a ram upon it and he can summon the elementals of earth and stone to serve him.

# ESPIONAGE AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

## Informants, Spies, and Political Intrigue

### The Hidden Spy Network of Aestrella Shanfarel

By Kelli "TheOperaGeek" Butler

The laughing woman strode through the crowd, all of them jostling for her attentions. As the clear, bell-like tones of laughter pealed out, her masses of dark hair flew behind her. She greeted as many of her admirers as she could see in the press of the crowd, all pushing for an autograph or word.

"Adina! Adina! Look my way!"

As she reached the door of her dressing room, she spun halfway around, her green eyes sparkling, as she blew a kiss to the throng. "My darlings! Thank you all so much for coming. I cannot tell you how much it means that you all want to hear me sing for you! Alas. I am exhausted and the champagne is calling me to my rest. Until the next we meet, dear ones!"

On the final word, she slipped through the door of her rooms and slammed the bolt home. Leaning against it, she sighed wearily, the smile and playful demeanor slipping away like a mask being removed. She surveyed the opulent suite before her, its

curtained windows, cozy fire, well-stocked bar, and luxurious furniture bringing a wry grin to her face. How far she'd come from the back alleys and her lowly beginnings, singing for scraps of food and the occasional coin in taverns! As her gaze slid over the scene before her and she began to remove her cape, something in a draped and darkened corner caught her eye. She laughed quietly.

"Ah...I was wondering if you would be here." Adina stepped forward and dropped a low curtsy to what would

seem, to the casual observer, to be an empty corner. "My lady."

The tapestry rustled aside as a small figure, wearing an elaborately embroidered cloak, stepped forward. "Oh, Adina, do get up. We know each other well enough at this point." As she extended her hand, she flipped back the hood of her cloak.

Adina took the hand of the petite woman before her and stood. At her full height of just under six feet, she was more than a full head and more taller than the diminutive diva who stood before her. Aestrella Shanfarel, the grandest diva of the Royal Opera, shot her a brilliant smile. "There we are then, Adina. After all we have been through together, I think we can dispense with the formalities, can we not?" Aestrella unfastened her cloak and draped it over the back of the couch, walking to the bar. Adina followed her with her gaze, noting the way the firelight reflected off Aestrella's dark grey clothing, making it appear almost like steel.

After retrieving two glasses of wine and handing Adina one of them, Aestrella lounged on the chaise. Though most would consider her harmless, Adina knew all too well what would become of any evildoer who crossed the path of the Grand Diva. *That* had certainly been an education.

Sipping from her glass, Aestrella waved her hand. "Well? Don't stand there, sit down. Give me a report."

Adina sat, taking care not to spill any wine on the seats. They had cost a small fortune. "It is as you suspected, Aestrella. The Baron has indeed been turned. Whether by money or pure commonality of ignorance and hateful ideology, I can tell you for certain - the Brotherhood now has a base in the Free



City.”

Aestrella growled, the resonance of the sound seeming much too large for a small half-elf to make. “Those damned genocidal maniacs. They aren’t content to stay in their little peninsula, no. They won’t be happy until they have destroyed the world to remake it in their image. Never mind they already got one Empire destroyed.” She stood up and began to pace the carpet, her long, blonde hair wisping in the air each time she turned. “Can we get proof of this?”

Adina reached into the top of her gown, retrieving a small sheaf of papers. “This was all I had time to retrieve, my lady, after the concert. I was only able to evade the Baron’s handlers for a few moments. As is, they found me in his study.” Aestrella hissed sharply between her teeth. “Do not worry. I wore the mask you’ve taught me to wear well. They thought nothing beyond the vapid yet beautiful diva, getting lost in a new manor. But these papers...they clearly lay out correspondence occurring between the Baron and some very high members of the Brotherhood.”

Aestrella grinned, the smile baring teeth that seemed just a bit too sharp for the rest of her appearance. “Ah. Well then...I believe that the Watch may be

## **The Network of Aestrella Shanfarel**

*by Krissy Dominy*

The Royal Opera House, much as is to be expected, is a hive of political maneuvering, deception, and intrigue. Unbeknownst to most, however, is that there is much more going on than even the most well-versed spymasters of all the countries of the world know about.

Aestrella Shanfarel keeps a very, very deep secret. She is one of a very rare breed—she’s a Greyhawk Dragon! The Free City of Greyhawk is very dear to her and, as she makes her home there, she considers it under her personal protection. Behind the scenes, she works surreptitiously to bring evil-doers to justice. She doesn’t act outwardly, and rarely lets anyone in on the secret of what she truly is, and the few who do know can likely be counted on two hands (depending on how many claws or fingers one happens to have).

interested in these.” Reaching to her belt, she lifted a mask and secured it to her face. With one hand she reached for the papers while adjusting her hood back in place. “Let us see that they get them. You’ve done well. I know the tedium of idle chatter bores you to tears, but you are one of the best ways we have to gather information. Soon, you will see action.”

Adina stood and bowed. “I am always at your service, my lady.” She pulled the rug back from in front of the fireplace, revealing a trap door. She pulled the latch and opened it. “I am scheduled to sing at the Baron’s home again in a fortnight. Shall I keep the booking?”

Halfway down the hidden stairs, Aestrella paused. “Yes, if the manor is still standing. It is so very sad how flammable such places can be.” She disappeared silently into the darkness below as Adina closed and latched the trapdoor, re-arranging the rug over it.

She allowed herself a smile. Flammable, indeed.



Art by William Dvorak

While Aestrella is known for attending many social events like charity functions with regularity, her "extra-curricular" activities are more notable.

She uses her magical abilities to discern when there are foul goings-on or political skullduggery in the city (through spells such as detect thoughts, detect evil, ESP, or know alignment), and works to put obstacles in the way of evildoers and chaotic people who seek to disrupt life in the city. She investigates suspicious persons, and then uses her charm and enthrall abilities to coordinate efforts to subtly push people to take action which would interfere or stop the plans of the evildoer. Sometimes, it's as easy as using a suggestion. Other times, she simply uses mundane

methods like informants and her agents.

She is very familiar with the City of Greyhawk's legal code, and quietly arranges situations which lead to the discovery of their plots and guilt. She sometimes sends tips to the City Watch, either mailed in secret, delivered by a courier, or dropped off at Watch Houses. The City Watch does not know either the identity of the tipster or of her as a dragon.

As is the case with most spymasters, it is not known how many agents she has, or precisely whom they are. Of themselves, however, it is known they use masterfully executed disguises and alternate identities to perform their infiltration and information gathering.

### Using Aestrella in Your Game

Most any game can benefit from using an NPC. Especially urban encounters or urban games most often have spymasters, but, Aestrella can be used in a great variety of ways.

Because she's not a "known" source of information, she can be placed in a manner that wouldn't turn a game *into* an espionage campaign, and can be used without the players necessarily knowing who she is. Information gathering is almost always something D&D games include before the party heads out to their next adventure. She doesn't *have* to send her tips to the City Watch, sometimes, a more indirect route is called for—especially when it's something the City Watch wouldn't necessarily be within their purview to handle.

If no one gets the important information to be able to take action, then nothing is done. So, Aestrella ensures her information reaches the right people. And she can act as an unknown patron to the party, if she believes they are the right ones. Or, if she believes they're the *wrong* ones, perhaps she (or her agents) are actually gathering information on the party and is using the "patron" bit to fool them into letting her in on their plans. If the PCs are doing things that are somewhat, shall we say "shady", she may very well take exception to their action in the Free City and want them stopped!

The key to using Aestrella is that she's unknown.

Leaks, tips, and justice can never be linked back to her, and all of her agents know they cannot under any circumstances use her name openly for favors or influence. They are devoted to her utterly, and would never willingly give her up. Many lesser agents don't even know who she is! They are skilled individuals who know how to act alone within their abilities, and not expect to be rescued by other agents, or by Aestrella herself.

Aestrella doesn't take direct action, if she can help it. Information typically rolls downward through her lieutenants to agents, but sometimes she gives direct missions to certain agents (like **Adina** in the story above). When confronted with immediate or powerful need, however, she doesn't hesitate to use her magic or draconic abilities. She would not, however, transform into her draconic form under normal circumstances. That would reveal her secret identity and she would lose not only her cover, but likely her profession and home, as well.

Inspiration for things Aestrella might get caught up in could include shows like: *24*, *Nikita*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Burn Notice*, *Bridge of Spies*, and others.

If playing in 5e D&D, or in the Forgotten Realms, a similar network (though on a much different scale) is the Harpers. If a DM runs an adventure which otherwise would include the Harpers, they could easily change a few details or goals and substitute agents of Aestrella, instead.

# THE ALLIANCE OF DEFIANCE

## Victors over Zuggtmoy

### The “official” group who put the Temple down!

By Cal Scrivner

Many years ago, the Temple of Elemental Evil was put down on at least two occasions by a “brave band of adventurers” who were needed to stop the strange goings on there.

The details of the culmination of the adventure *Temple of Elemental Evil* were only ever referred to in hindsight, and specifics were never given as to the identities of the heroes themselves.

... except in one source.

From 1991 to 1993, TSR put out a series of [AD&D Trading Cards](#) with NPCs on them. There was one special series in 1993 called the *Alliance of Defiance* in which the heroes were finally named.

They were:

1. **Sir Duane Govindana**, LG mh, 7th level paladin
2. **Ahlaege**, CN mh, 9th level Thief
3. **Shadow**, CN me, 9th level Wizard
4. **Sheerah Nissassa**, N fhe, 10th level druid
5. **Captain Gahlatine Bascher**, LN md, 9th level cleric
6. **Dorian**, LN fh, 9th level wizard
7. **Draga**, NG mh, 7th level fighter
8. **Arant Quovant Garday**, LN mh, 9th level Monk
9. **Charissa**, NG fh, 9th level Illusionist

They are an unusually Neutral bunch. Only one member isn't Neutral in at least one aspect of Alignment. None are Evil. Some of them have history together for years, but, some are newcomers.

Shadow and Ahleage are very close friends.

Arant saved Charissa's life at the Temple by jumping in front of her to fend of foes. He is now one of her dearest mates.

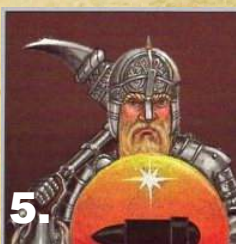
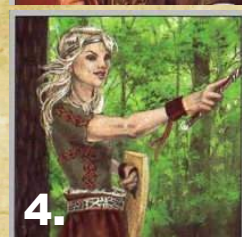
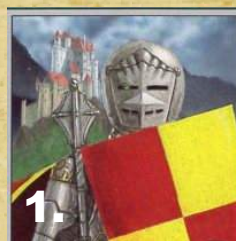
Bascher is the most recent member of the group, having been in the Velunese Army prior.

Draga was one of the first members of the Alliance.

Each has personality quirks or something else which makes them unique people.

Sheerah is a druid and is concerned with repairing the damage to the environment by the presence of the Temple, which had corrupted the very ground it was on.

Shadow is dark and mysterious, and tends to be moody. Though he rarely lets humor show, when he laughs, it's a characteristic, hoarse cackle.



Art courtesy of Wizards of the Coast

# GREY COLLEGE OBSERVATORY

## And the School of Astromoy

### A minor building and it's staff on the outskirts of the Free City

by Andy Miller

Grey College has long had a school devoted almost exclusively to the study of the heavens and heavenly bodies, most especially the stars that hang over the Flanaess. In addition to charting stars to aid navigation, with the advent of limited spelljamming on Oerth, the idea of visiting other astronomical bodies of the planetary system (those long-thought "Wandering Stars") is also in the venue of the department. However, they have yet to acquire any kind of spelljamming ships for the exploration of wildspace or other spheres. The school also dabbles in astrology, in addition to its commitment to astronomy.

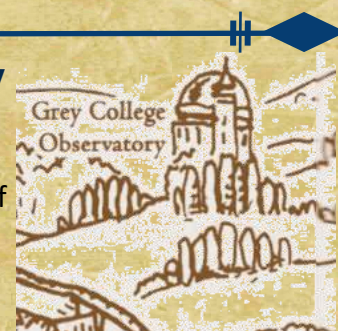
The College Observatory was constructed in 442 CY, a hundred years after the college itself was founded. At the time, astronomy was not considered terribly useful except for navigation, and the rough instruments used to observe the skies did little to magnify them. The school had been founded the year before thanks to an anonymous donation of a great deal of gold amidst some controversy. Some thought the school a waste of time. Others feared the donation came from rascals or villains hoping to tarnish the college's reputation. Neither proved, inevitably, to be the case.

Though the Astronomy School at the college today remains rather small (consisting of only Dean Limryl, Professor Karol Zagan who is the Observatory Tutor, and two assistant professors), it has close ties to the School of Geography, mostly in terms of navigation classes. The school is also in charge of the College Observatory, which brings in a goodly amount of money as the building is often used by sages, astronomers, astrologers, alchemists, nobles' students, and even faculty of other colleges. Those not directly associated with the college are charged a nominal fee for its use.

Dean Limryl, author of the *Lexicon of Lesser Astrography* amongst other works, oversees the small department as well as being a professor in his own right. Limryl is 53 years old (in 591 CY) and is a sage of no small repute. He is a worshipper of Delleb, dabbles in wizardry, and takes his duties as a teacher and sage very seriously, especially when it comes to the stars and the heavens above. He has spent most of his adult life studying the skies and has taught at Grey College for the last 30 years, being promoted to dean in 570 CY. A slim and surprisingly healthy man, he has a well-trimmed white mustache and beard and generally wears either a skullcap or a pointed wizard's hat around campus and at the observatory.

His immediate subordinate and only other astronomy (and astrology) professor at the college is Karol Zagan, the Observatory Tutor for the last five years. Zagan, a priest of Celestian, took over the job when her predecessor, Hiram Macksenian, retired and moved away. Zagan is a talkative, middle-aged, friendly woman who has a way with the students and manages the observatory, among her other duties.

Two assistant professors are also part of the department though they only teach a few classes and mostly act as assistants for Limryl and Zagan. They are responsible for keeping the observatory clean and orderly, as well as seeing to the various telescopes and camera obscura owned by the school. Metius and Tycho are twins who have been with the university for the last 10 years, though their own education was insufficient for either of them to take over when Macksenian left. Both men have dark hair and eyes, and because they don't spend much time outside during the day, they have notably pale skin. Both are afflicted with unfortunate pockmarks from a disease in their

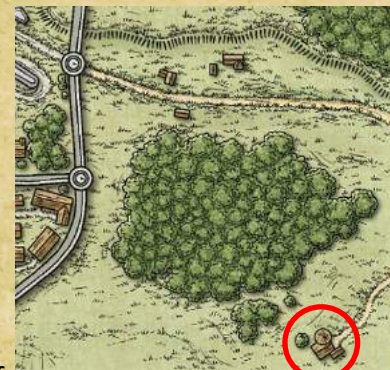


Cartography by Denis Tetreault



youth, for which they were unfairly teased by being called things like “the crater twins”.

The College Observatory is located off the High Road southeast of the Duke’s Gate about 300 yards from the city to avoid spillover of light from the walls and towers. The observatory has changed little over the last three decades. It consists of a two-story building with a short single-floored wing on the southeast side and a tower on the north. The domed tower is four stories high with several windows in the large, uppermost chamber. These high apertures are built with various shutters, louvers, and blinds allowing various amounts light to enter the chamber as well as giving the various telescopes owned by the college views of the heavens. There are several telescopes here, all with finely ground glass lenses and rotating stands. As some of these are quite expensive, several magical alarms and locks are installed in the building. A watchman hired by the college is usually here as well, armed with a truncheon and a shrill whistle.

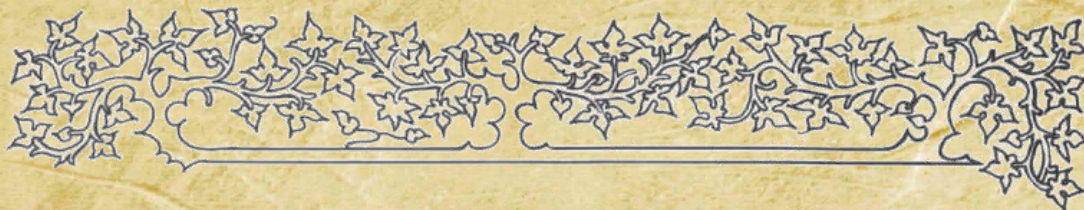


In the nearly hundred and fifty years since the construction of the observatory, the school has acquired half a dozen powerful telescopes, most of them of Oeridian design, as well as various camera obscura. Of the telescopes, at least one is enchanted to allow more accurate readings and a higher magnification than can be acquired with normal glass cutting techniques of the time. Additionally, at least one of the camera obscura boxes contains a lens enchanted in such a way as to allow the stars themselves to be viewed within the box. With some patience and a steady hand, a piece of parchment placed in the box can be used to trace the stars as they appear. Though this means the star chart must later be modified, as the camera obscura turns the image upside down and backwards, it makes for incredibly accurate charts. Several of the shutters in the upper floor have louvers that can be replaced with a mechanism to hold the camera obscura in place, allowing it to be easily used.

Those outside of the college who wish to use the observatory must pay a small fee which has proved a boon to the school and the college. Followers of Celestian have several holy days reserved for their use as well, as they practice certain ceremonies on those days. To date, the observatory has never been robbed or ill-treated by anyone using it, probably as the telescopes are distinctive and would be hard to fence or sell in any case. There was a raid by various masked assailants in 589 CY during the observation of certain phenomena by students, but it was thought merely to have been a college prank, possibly by students of one of the other schools at the college. Nothing was taken or damaged though several observations that evening were ruined.

The School of Astronomy also works at the nearby Stone Ring by the Druid’s gate on occasion. Though constructed by ancient Flan and one of the oldest known stone rings in the Flanaess, the plinths and standing stones still accurately mark various astronomical events by the sun, moons, and even other planets of the solar system. This makes the circle of great interest to the School of Astronomy and they are very careful not to damage or move any of the stones in the circle. That the ancient Flan could have constructed a device that, to this day, accurately predicts the movements of the sun and moon is nothing short of amazing and Dean Limryl has been trying to track down various Flan stories and legends that relate to the Stone Ring and why they might have done it. The fact that the circle also protects those within from divination magic begs the question: Did the Flan fear something from ... *out there*?

Editor’s Note: In the article on the following page, the reader can find a treatise by Dean Limryl himself, excerpted from his Lesser Lexicon of Astrography *regarding one of his many astute observations of the planetary system.*



# On The Path of Liga and Phases of Luna From the *Lesser Lexicon of Astrography*

By Dean Limyrl of the Grey College Observatory

by Kristoph Nolen

It has been observed over the years, by many notables in the field of Astronomy, to include many notable sages of Greyhawk, that there are peculiarities of the phases of both Kule and Ranei (the scientific names of the two moons of Oerth, popularly known Luna and Celene), as well as the orbital period of Liga (the sun).

One of the great difficulties in academia is that many learned men and women often try to prove their hypothesis, rather than trying to theorize based on the evidence they have. In the estimation of this professor, that is a grave mistake, as it prevents us from seeing other options we may not have foreseen or even imagined could exist.

Such is the case in the example of our planetary system. There's something amiss with our star charts, it is claimed. It is said we've incorrectly calculated the days of the full moons, throwing off our observations by as much as 10% of Luna's cycle each month. Moons have been depicted as slightly waxing or waning when they are shown being full, even since ancient days of the Olman lunar calendar.

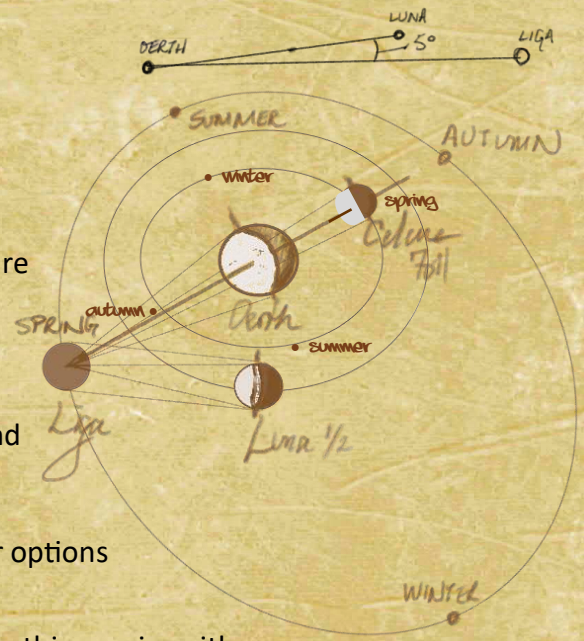
The truth of the matter, however, is that there is a single presumption which has caused those noteworthy sages to be incorrect in their assertions. ... presumption of a circle. Satellites of any celestial object are not, and cannot be, absolutely circular, by nature—barring the divine intervention of a deity. They have what are known as "eccentric orbits", being defined as slightly oblong or ovoid in shape. In extreme cases, this causes occasions like comets which only pass our planet every few years, or sometimes every few hundred years.

In the case of Luna's phases, however, it's not the moon which has the eccentric orbit which causes the discrepancy. Thus, the second presumption which compounds the problem—that it *must* be Luna's orbit. I ponder this: what if, instead of Luna travelling faster or slower in an eccentric orbit, perhaps it is rather Liga—the sun itself. Were this to be the case, the sun would travel ever so slightly slower approaching the Vernal Equinox to reach the proper point of proper alignment for a full phase. It would begin accelerating faster through perigee nearest to Oerth for the Summer Solstice in an egg-shaped orbit, and continue rapidly forward, reaching the Autumnal Equinox. It would then continue its slowing period through apogee in winter and reach the Vernal Equinox a few days behind where it would be in a presumed circular orbit.

Additionally, Luna, much like the moons of other alternate-Oerths, has a 5° angle of orbit to the ecliptic, which explains why we don't have an eclipse during every full moon. Oerth would otherwise be directly in between the moon and sun once a month. On most passes, the shadow of the planet is either too high or low to be cast across the moon.

This theory would also account for the disappearance the other known ancient star which used to exist in the same orbit as Liga in prehistory. That star, the Anti-Liga, is thought to have slid out into another planet's orbit, destroying them both and leaving only the Grinder as evidence they existed. If there once was a planet which also had an orbit a few degrees off the ecliptic and aligned with the winter apogee of the star, the two could've eventually collided, extinguishing the star and destroying the planet.

While this theory may conveniently explain why the ever-orbiting sun changes the lunar phases in unexpected, and heretofore uncalculated ways, this professor is not unaware that he is as prone to err as any other human person. The Grey College department of Astronomy expects spirited debate on the topic.



Art by Kristoph Nolen

# CARTOGRAPHY BY AARON FROKE

New artwork with the feel of vintage illustration

Aaron Froke has recently been offering his artwork on social media, giving fans a look and feel of old, hand-illustrated maps from the Age of Exploration. Froke's work has been popular for its incredibly authentic look that comes from being done in ink and watercolour washes.

This is, undoubtedly, one of the more unique visual styles in cartography, right now. We're very pleased to be working with Aaron, and the *Oerth Journal* is certain to be using his maps in articles and art in the very near future.

Froke's work can lately be seen on the [Greyhawk Resources Facebook Group](#).



Cartography by Aaron Froke

# WORLD OF GREYHAWK

## FACTIONS of Greyhawk!!

There are numerous movers and shakers in the World of Greyhawk. We're taking a New look at some of the known factions of the Flanaess and beyond. Also included are all brand new factions to use in your game!

- Political intrigue at the Royal Opera House of Greyhawk
- Who takes care of dead bodies in the Free City?
- Those who light the streets at night
- The first demon worshippers of the famed Horned Society
- Cultists of Nerull in the far western reaches of Oerik
- A noble knighthood in the Suss Forest
- The names of the heroes who defeated the Temple of Elemental Evil
- A honorable church, dedicated to righteousness and protection
- The story of one young knight, alone in the depths of Spinecastle!

**Plus a close look at how to create  
Factions for your home game!**

**Creating and Sharing for the World of Greyhawk**



**GREYHAWK**  
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