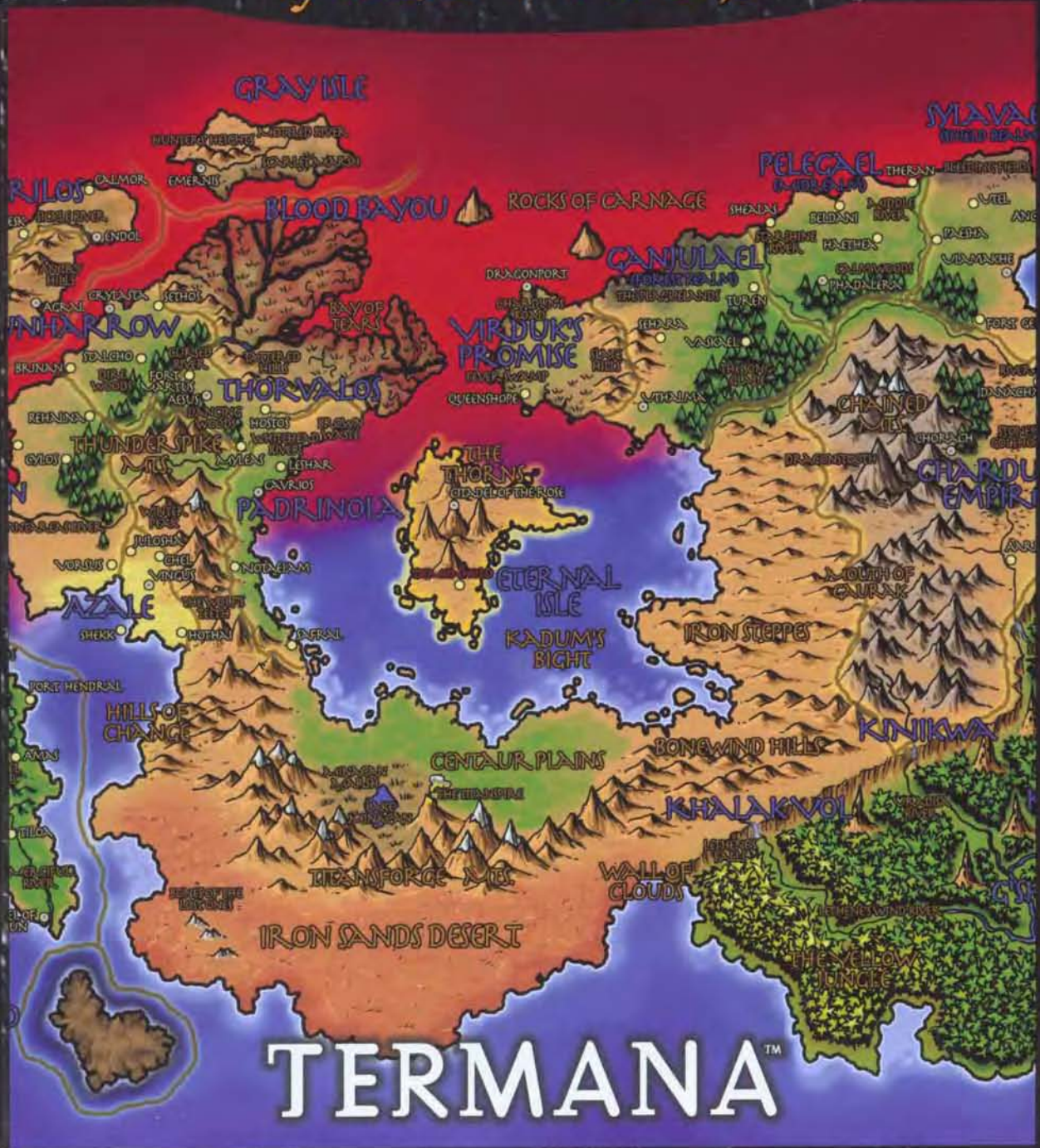


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Ehitovael
(the Southsea Realm)



Gray Isle



Blood Bayou



Eternal Isle



Karsian



Charduni Empire



Ganjulael
(the Forest Realm)



Kasiavael
(the Skysight Realm)

SCARRED LANDS

G A Z E T T E E R

TERMANA™

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SCARRED LANDS

GAZETTEER

TERMANA™

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Preface

With the creation of the Termanan continent, we have sought to broaden the horizons of the Scarred Lands' story potential.

In Ghelspad, we have many of the old familiar traits of fantasy gaming. Small nations, led by heroic warriors and wielders of arcane might, striving against the savagery that lies just beyond their borders. Cabals of mighty wizards. The massive, expansionistic empire, led by a tyrant with conquest on his mind.

With Termana, we wanted to shake some of these conventions up. Termana is dominated by non-human kingdoms, with only a few struggling human nations that are, for all intents and purposes, the continent's backwaters. An ancient civilization of elves, the once-sparkling wonders of their empire now fallen into dust and tears, glossed over with only a thin veneer of glamour and denial. A mighty imperialistic nation of dwarves, once the chosen of Chardun, but now struggling to retain what once was theirs.

We also set out to break some of the assumptions about the nature of things in the Scarred Lands. The gods aren't omnipresent in Termana - in fact, it is only among the northern folk that the gods are acknowledged. The conflict in Termana isn't between godspawn and titanspawn; two of the greatest evils on the continent owe fealty to neither.

And, ultimately, we set out to give you more of what you love about the Scarred Lands. Here is a sometimes grim, sometimes whimsical place for your heroes to make a difference in.

So welcome, fair traveller, to a place of fairy-dust and dried blood, plague-ridden swamps and life-rich jungles. There are places here that sensible folk should never visit, and personalities that wise travelers should avoid.

But then... when have adventurers been either sensible or wise?

Welcome to Termana.

Joseph D. Carriker, Jr.
Scarred Lands Adventures Developer
Sword & Sorcery Studio

Introductions

Respected Patron:

The following, a narrative originated by myself and a fellow narrator, is intended as a definitive overview of the southern continent of Termána. This realm is a great mystery to most Ghelspadans. Travelers' tales, magnified in the telling, have fueled our collective imagination, weaving an image of an exotic land, thick with jungle, crawling with foul beasts and strange peoples, where treasure lies in abundance for those who have the skill and bravery to seek it. Of course, those miserable souls toiling in the Calastian colony known as Virduk's Promise may have a slightly different view of the place, but many of the popular images of Termána are entirely true.

My name is Diago Sanhe, a gentleman of Vesh, sometime explorer and occasional adventurer. There are those who call me rake, coward, lecher and thief, and to some extent I cannot fully disagree with them. Certainly, I am a far from perfect son of Enkili, but not even the most pious paladin can claim that he has never had an unclean thought or lied to save his own skin. Or, if he has, he's a liar, I warrant.

My reasons for venturing to Termána were myriad, though the most prominent and pressing involved an unpaid gambling debt and a misunderstanding regarding the twin daughters of a Shelzari wizard. My wanderings were without direction or goal, and they took me from the teeming jungles of the Gamulganjus to the horror-filled swamps of the Blood Bayou, and to numerous places in between. Both my rapier and meager stock of spells were tested to their limits, and it is only through the grace of Enkili and Tanil that I have returned to pen this missive, and gather together the words of my fellow travelers. In this, I hope that this missive pleases you, for it is a tale of a distant realm that may one day bring great joy or sorrow to our land of Ghelspad.

Nabila

In the preparation of this manuscript, I am indebted to Nabila Silverheart, a half-elven sorceress of great power and wisdom, who journeyed to Termána as a representative of the city of Mithril, saw much of the mysterious forsaken elf realms and learned of the survival of the fearsome Charduni Empire. Nabila saw much and had numerous adventures, many of which are recounted here in her dry, matter-of-fact style. Personally, I wish she was as forthcoming about her amorous adventures as I am, but I suppose I will have to learn to live with disappointment. Here is her introduction, in her own words, far more articulate than mine.

I, Nabila Silverheart, sorceress of Mithril, daughter of Denev, scion of Madriel, huntress of Tanil and ally of Corean,

write these words. It was in the early summer of the year 148 After Victory that I journeyed to the distant continent of Termána in the name of his worship, High Priest Emili Derigesh, there to aid the diplomats of Mithril, Vesh and Hedrad in the establishment of official embassies.

In reality, my mission was somewhat less public. High Priest Derigesh and Champion Barconius had both expressed great concern over Calastian activities on Termána, and bade me gather as much information as I could about King Virduk's influence in the region, and about any potential foes that Mithril, Vesh and their allies might face. I was also to make contact with the priests and followers of Corean, Madriel, Tanil and Hedrada, and explore the possibility of an exchange and sharing of resources and information between our two continents. Finally, if possible, I was to learn more of the forsaken elf kingdoms of eastern Termána, and their conflict with the hated charduni dwarves.

This last mission was of some significance to me, for my father was a forsaken elf from the Southsea Realm. His relationship with my mother was quite unusual, in that they were genuinely in love, and he voluntarily left the forsaken elf realms at her request. He died when I was quite young,

Itineraries

Given my devotion to Lord Enkili, I tend toward somewhat disorganized work habits. All the same, I dislike sloppiness, and have organized the entries for nations and regions of Termána in alphabetical order. This means, of course, that my and Nabila's stories will be told out of sequence. The most important aspect of these entries is, of course, the cultural and physical information about the nations and peoples of Termána, but for those who retain the petty desire to read stories in their correct order, I submit the following itineraries, listing the regions visited by myself and my narrators in their proper sequence. These authors also describe the smaller features within each realm.

Diago

Gamulganjus; Tepuje Cities; Bonewind Hills; Iron Sands Desert; Silverisle; Azale; Karsian; Thorvalos; Sunharrow; Blood Bayou; Gray Isle; North Crilos; South Crib

Nabila Silverheart

Blood Sea; Eternal Isle; Virduk's Promise; Ganjulael; Pelegael; Sylavael; Ehitovael; Kasiavael

but my mother spoke well of him, and I had always wanted to return to his homeland to see his people. I ended with mixed feelings about my brethren on Termana, and returned to Mithril with a strange sense of relief.

My ship, the sloop Courageous, departed Mithril Harbor on a beautiful morning, when even the foulness of the Blood Sea could not detract from the blue of the sky and the gold of the sun. Barconius himself saw me off, grasping my hand in the awkward, self-conscious manner of a knight who does not fully accept that a human heart beats within his chest. The rigid formality of his farewell belied a deep concern and sadness that he could not hide. I watched his lone figure dwindle on the docks as Courageous caught the morning wind and left Mithril behind, and felt a slight trace of the loneliness and sorrow that is the way of the paladin. It was with a heavy heart that I turned away, looking toward the bow where the blood-tainted water foamed and parted before us. Adventure lay ahead, but I felt little save dread and apprehension at the prospect.

—Nabila Silverheart

My Departure

Leaving home is always difficult, but in my case, it was something of a relief, as the thought of leaving behind the Scaled's leg breakers and the Old Man Marjus (who, it was reliably reported, had hired a number of thugs, armed them with castrating tools and bade them find me and return with the "evidence") was comforting in the extreme. The twins cried pitifully on that last night we spent together, begging me to stay and telling me that they would both waste away from sorrow in my absence. I doubted it (if reports from my

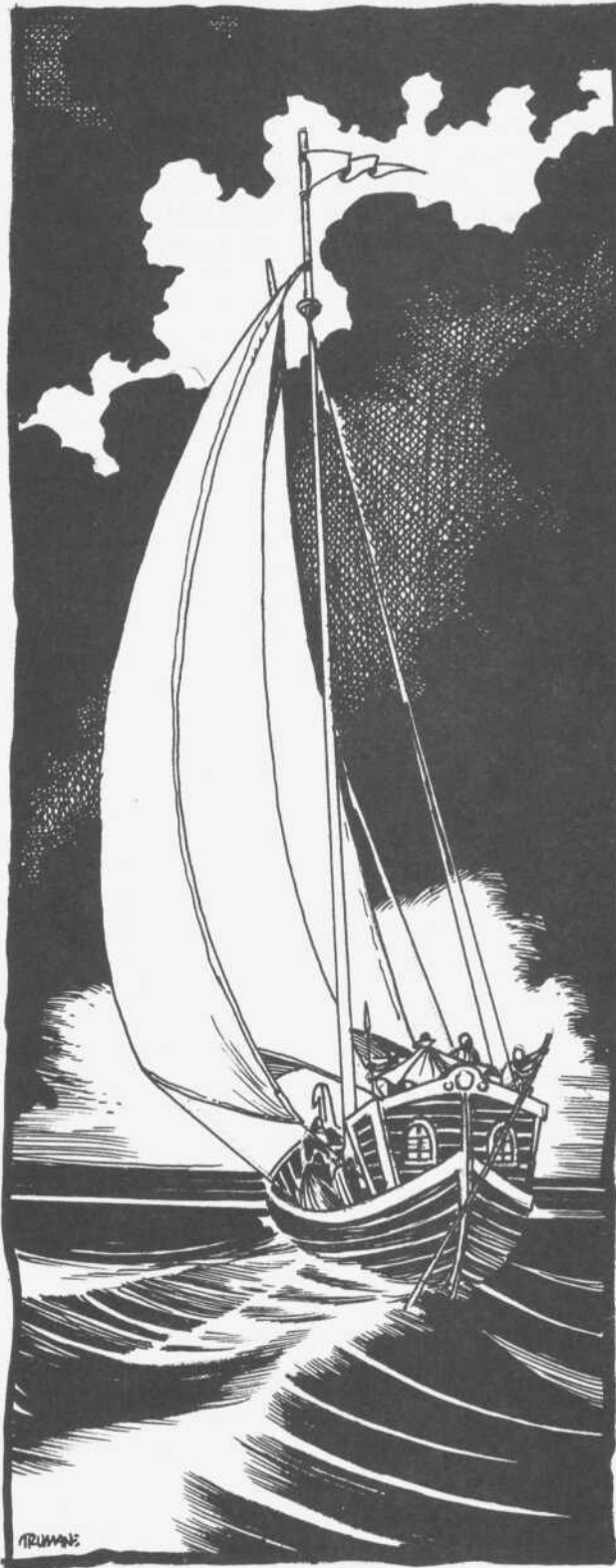
friends in the Crimson Legion were any indication, the twins had been amusing themselves quite successfully when I was not around), but I made a show of sharing in their lamentations (while always keeping an eye on the door for ugly men with serrated knives). We said our goodbyes on a gloomy morning, and within a few hours I was at sea, the threat of emasculation vanishing astern.

My voyage south was considerably smoother and more pleasant than I had expected it to be. No pisceans, no leviathans, no storms, no visions of hell... I admit to no small amount of anxiety as we sailed near the place where Kadum is supposedly chained, and I experienced nightmares in which a vast, tentacled creature wearing a cloak of diamonds and wielding numerous fearsome wands and scepters gazed at me with cold, inhuman eyes, but I put this down to nerves.

Ironically, as we left the taint of Kadum behind and the ocean became a deep, rich blue, conditions actually got worse. Three storms in as many days lashed our vessel, spoiling many of our supplies and inflicting damage on rigging and sails. We were a sorry-looking ship when at last the lush green coast of southeastern Termana appeared on the horizon, a verdant carpet with trees to the water's edge.

My companions included a gaggle of spindly scholars, constantly holding forth on a variety of obscure topics, from the evolutionary divergence of Termanan vs. Ghelspadan fungi to the history of the Empire of the Wheel and its influence on the development of the left-handed backscratcher. A unit of

grim-faced mercenaries and hired thugs helped frighten the goblins away, though I doubted they were up to fighting anything tougher and more determined. I was



part of a small group of scouts and general purpose lackeys, whose names presently escape me because so few of them survived the expedition. Most of my attention was focused on Kasavala, anyway.

A former Hollowfaustan necromancer who now worked with the scholars of Lokil (gods help me, but I've always found the female bone-twiddlers to be immensely appealing; call it a death-wish or something), she was an exquisitely-formed, dark-haired beauty of an elf with a heart-shaped face and enormous violet eyes. And she was extraordinarily intelligent, which proved a welcome change from the sensual brainlessness of the Marjus twins. I suppose the fact that Kasavala seemed so

resistant to my charms only made me more interested. Ah, well... Enkili works in mysterious ways.

Though the expedition was ostensibly to explore and describe the Gamulganjus, it was also their intention to trek across Termana and depart from the "civilized" nations of the northwest, though I (and anyone else on the expedition with any sense) was horrified at the notion. Despite my misgivings, I saw no other alternative, save desertion, and given the obvious deadlines of the surrounding lands, I was loathe to commit suicide in this fashion. Keeping my misgivings to myself, I helped the expedition prepare, and two days after making land-fall, we set off into the thick jungle.

Chapter One: A History of Termana

Termana is a wild and savage continent, and a definitive history is hard to come by. As for myself, I care little for history, and feel that the past is just that - past. On the other hand, a brief overview of the continent might provide some insight into the lands and peoples that we encounter, so I include the following document, penned by a scholar from the Library of Lokil, as a preface to our tales.

The lack of pre-war records from Termana handicaps us somewhat in our consideration of that continent's history. Tales from Asherak suggest that there were once regular trade routes between the two continents, and that the Exemplars had established several monasteries there, some of which may survive to this day.

The South

Before the Divine War, the jungles of southeastern Termana were a place of great beauty and home to several city-states who engaged in highly formalized warfare and ritualistic worship of both the titans and the gods (though at differing times in their history). These peoples were also dedicated astronomers, observing the movements of the stars and planets, crafting complex astrological tables and inscribing them on elaborate stone tablets, which they enshrined in mighty temples that towered above the jungle floor.

Originally, these temples and the druidic priests who tended them were dedicated to the worship of the titans, particularly Hrinruuk the Hunter, Mormo the Serpentmother and Chern the Scourge. After suffering mightily at the hands of their patron titans, however, the people rose up and cast down these priests, converting the temples to the worship of the gods. The peoples of the region then went into decline, and the cataclysms of the Divine War finally laid their once-great civilization low, leaving the jungles to terali mystics, the fey gnome tribes and foul titanspawn, who took their vengeance upon the humans who had shunned their masters. Only in the great Tepuje Cities of the highlands did civilization survive.

Elsewhere, great civilizations rose and fell. The best known of these was the unhappy race known today as the forsaken elves, and the dark dwarves called the charduni.

The Forsaken Elves

The small elven states of northeastern Termana are a sad remnant of a once-mighty realm that had been a shining bastion of elven glory, standing nearly alone against the might of the charduni and the evil of the titans.

Before the Divine War, the elves of Termana were among the first races to throw off the shackles of the titans and embrace the worship of the gods. Though a "mere" demigod, the deity of the elves was evidently an especially beloved and active one, often standing shoulder-to-shoulder with worshippers, actively aiding

the elven people much in the same way as the more-familiar Goran, god of the Burok Tom dwarves.

In those days, the gods were busily testing their newfound powers. Many attempted to emulate their titan forebears by creating their own servitor races. Chief among these was the evil Chardun, who created the race of charduni dwarves to serve him. No one knows whether the charduni were original creations, or ordinary dwarves twisted and reshaped at the Great General's whim. Regardless, the charduni proved a highly dangerous race, and natural foes of the elves.

The wars between the high elves and the charduni were legendary, with many battles rivaling the violence and intensity of Divine War. Slowly, however, the charduni made headway, forcing the empire of the high elves back into northern Termana. Along with a handful of human states, and with the aid of both the dragons and the ancient magi of the Citadel of the Rose, the elves held on, and developed mighty spells and weapons to turn the tide of battle against the charduni.

Then the Divine War threw all into disarray, and the gods decreed that their followers stand together against the threat of the titans. The high elves and the charduni never truly allied or fought together, though each strove separately against the titans. All the while, both races hoped for an opportunity to defeat the other while still maintaining their stand against the titans.

On distant Ghelspad, the defeat of Kadum had fearsome consequences for the people of Termana. Defeated, bound and flung into the sea, Kadum plunged into the depths and a massive tidal wave washed across northern Termana, sinking huge portions of the continent beneath blood-stained waters. This disaster, known as Kadum's Deluge, slew elves, charduni and humans alike. The charduni suffered the most, for the majority of their armies were in this region. Shattered, the dark dwarves fell back, and the surviving human states rallied, abandoning the Divine War for the moment, and driving out their hated foes.

Now would have been the time for the elves to strike the death-blow. True, much of their empire had been lost, and the Citadel of the Rose was isolated from the rest of Scarn. But many of their greatest and oldest cities and arcane citadels lay in the east, and their power now dwarfed that of the desperate charduni. And so the elves also turned from the task of defeating the titans and prepared for war against the dark dwarves.

And therein lay their doom.

Distracted from the greater task, the elves were unprepared for Chern's onslaught. The Bringer of Plagues had been busy, corrupting the dark elves of Ghelspad and mortally wounding their god Nalthalos, sowing discord and planting his own curse on the dwarves of Burok Tom. Defeated and nearly destroyed by Madriel, Corean and

Vangal, Chern fled Ghelspad, his task unfinished, and his desire for the destruction of the elven race unfulfilled. Chern's rage was fueled by his wounds and driven by unthinking fury, he descended upon the elves of Termana, determined to do to them what he had failed to do to the dark elves of Ghelspad.

Focused upon the coming war with the charduni, the high elves received word of Chern's coming and hastily recalled their armies, deploying along the sea cliffs of northern Termana, prepared to stand beside their god and face the titan. The tale of the battle is well-known, and is a story both tragic and noble, for the nameless god's herald, corrupted by the influence of Chern, revealed his treachery and struck down the elf god even as the diseased titan approached. Had the high ones been a lesser race, they might have succumbed to despair, but their rage at the fall of their god was terrible — terrible enough to slay a titan.

Weakened after his confrontation with the gods, beset on all sides by fearless warriors and mighty spellcasters, Chern learned that not even the might of a titan can stand against the wrath of the righteous. He fell, the only titan defeated by an unaided divine army. Vangal appeared soon after, to bear the Plague Lord's body away, leaving the high elves to their fate.

And it was a terrible fate indeed. Chern's dying curse blighted the high elves, transforming them into the sad race that we know today, robbing them of the ability to reproduce, for high elven children born since that day were either stillborn or horribly deformed. The cost of the battle had been great — whole armies were shattered, entire cities depopulated. The elves' most powerful spellcasters lay slain on the battlefield, and the death of their god left the forsaken elves without the divine magic needed to restore them to life.

War against the charduni was unthinkable now, for the elves were as crippled as the dark dwarves. The great kingdom could no longer function as it once was, that much was clear. In a sad and mournful council, the surviving elders decided to divide their nation into separate principalities, whose rulers would govern independently. So it was that the forsaken elf realms of today were born.

The intervening years have not been kind to the forsaken elves. Their population critically low, they have begun to engage in a practice that they would once have considered utterly repugnant - the theft or purchase of human females for breeding, and the creation of half-elven progeny. Usually, the humans are purchased as infants and raised as slaves or brood-mares, but sometimes the elves go so far as to kidnap adults or buy them from slavers. This practice, among others, has caused the forsaken elves' nature to change, from a forward-looking and respectful people into a race of self-involved, fatalistic cynics. Wars with the still-dangerous Charduni Empire to the south continue, especially along the Sylvael frontier.

The only true high elves of Termanan stock who remain are the near-immortal magi of the Citadel of the Rose, and they are completely cut off from the rest of the world. From time to time, the wizards are able to get out a message, and on occasion a lucky or powerful spellcaster is able to overcome the protective magic and enter the Eternal Isle, but both of these events are extremely rare. The forsaken elves know that their days are ending, but go on nonetheless. Other gods, most notably Tanil and Enkili, have offered to become the race's protector, but the elves cannot contemplate such a thing. They worship the memory of their vanished god, even though they know it means their eventual doom. Such is the fate of



The Languages of Termana

Charduni: A brutal, efficient language, the tongue of the dark dwarves dispenses with unnecessary frills and flourishes, and is dedicated to getting ideas across as quickly and efficiently as possible. Charduni warriors also use a silent language of hand-signals to send and receive orders in battle, where communication may be difficult or overheard; this is an entirely separate language, however.

Dark Speech: The language of the titans is spoken among the titanspawn of Termana.

Gamuljan: The common tongue of the races in the Gamulganjus Jungle, it is most commonly spoken by human and gnomish tribes. Gnolls and terali also speak this language on occasion. Gamuljan is a complex, glottal language that is difficult to learn and nearly impossible to master without being born to a culture that speaks it.

Gnoll: A bestial language consisting of grunts, howls and barks, the gnoll tongue is rarely spoken by outsiders. Gnolls who wish to make their way

in the outside world will try to learn foreign languages, but few have the skill to master any but their native tongue.

Gnomish: Most gnomes speak Gamuljan, but this quiet, musical tongue is used for secret ceremonies and when gnomes wish to communicate in secret. It is never taught to outsiders.

High Elven: Identical to the high elven tongue of Ghelspad, this language is spoken throughout the forsaken elf realms.

Termanan: The common tongue of Termana, this tongue bears some resemblance to ancient Ledeana, the most widely-spoken tongue on Ghelspad. Those fluent in Ledeana can usually make themselves understood in Termanan.

Terali: Spoken by the leopard-folk of the Gamulganjus, terali is a surprisingly gentle-sounding tongue. Terali has many words for complex spiritual concepts that outsiders cannot understand or grasp.

the forsaken elves of Termana, and my visit to their realms did little to lessen my sense of gloom and sadness at their plight.

The Charduni

When the mighty Chardun saw how the titanspawn races revered their creators — abasing themselves before the titans, marching off to war, serving without question — he set about crafting his own race of servitors, who would worship him and him alone. Accordingly, he became one of the first of the gods to create his own race, the dark-skinned charduni dwarves. Chardun's worshippers say that the charduni were an entirely original creation, crafted from the flinty hills of Termana. Others say that the Great General stole the titans' ingenuity, twisting the dwarves to serve his evil purpose.

Whatever their origin, the charduni proved a fearless race. It is said that the White City of Chorach, capitol city of the charduni, was founded by Chardun himself and the first two dark dwarves. As ages passed, the city grew in power and prominence, conquering the surrounding lands and bending them to the will of the Great General. Other races were commanded to bow down and submit to the chains of Chardun, or perish. Soon, the Land of Chains, as it was known, dominated all of eastern Termana, held in check only by the treacherous wilderness in the center of the continent, and by the still-great power of the high elves in the north.

The charduni ruled in the name and manner of their patron deity. The One in White reigned supreme, receiving his commands directly from the Great General and passing them on to his people. Instant, unquestioned obedience was the law — hesitation or

defiance was instantly and brutally punished. But such things were rare — it was not in the charduni's nature to hesitate, defy or question commands. As Chardun spoke, so the emperor commanded, and so the charduni obeyed.

As might be expected, charduni armies were models of efficiency, obeying orders strictly and to the letter. Though this robbed the race of spontaneity and freedom of individual thought, it proved devastating in battle, as the dark dwarves' conquered or exterminated the primitive eastern tribes. Gladly did the charduni march into battle and sacrifice themselves in the name of the Great General, fearlessly did they face deadly foes, and mercilessly did they slay. And the charduni were not alone, for the bodies of their warriors, and those slain in service to Chardun, were restored to shambling unlife, a deadly horde of the walking dead known as the Chardun-slain. Service to Chardun was a thing of pride and honor, the dark dwarves said, but service to Chardun even beyond death was a greater honor still. Every charduni warrior hoped that he would die bravely, slaying many enemies, and so earn the right to return as a Chardun-slain and continue fighting for the god's greater glory.

The Charduni Empire spread across Termana, held in check in only two places — the north, where the high elves, their dragon allies and the near-immortal magi of the Citadel of the Rose used powerful spells and ancient relics to resist the charduni, and the west, where human states held the passes of the Thunderspike Mountains and defeated the charduni in several critical battles. Both the humans and the charduni knew that it was only a matter of time, however, before the undead-supplemented legions of Chardun finally forced the passes, or circumvented the mountains altogether, and pressed on to the sea.

Chorach's fell hand reached out across the oceans, toward the shores of Ghelspad. Arriving in the Goblin Lands, the region today known as Dunahnae, the charduni quickly consolidated their gains and marched into central Ghelspad, quickly conquering Darakeene and Elz. Held in check by the brave dwarves of Burok Torn, the charduni were triumphant elsewhere, creating a fearful extension of the Land of Chains, ruled and administered by the One in White from his throne in Chorach.

Resistance to the dark dwarves continued unabated throughout the charduni occupation. When the charduni were defeated at the gates of Burok Tom, many free peoples rose up and drove the charduni back into western Ghelspad. Occupying a small region that was only a fraction of their old empire, the charduni remained undaunted.

Though driven from most of Ghelspad, the charduni were not about to abandon their conquests so easily. As his legions regrouped in the Goblin Lands, the One in White began to plan a new campaign. The empire's losses had been considerable, and a new war would take decades to plan and carry out, but the One in White was patient. Too patient, it seemed, for his preparations distracted him and weakened the empire, enabling the rogue human states and the elves of Termana to push the frontiers back and actually begin to reclaim some of their old territory. Using the reserves and hordes of Chardun-slain that he had prepared for the new invasion of Termana, the charduni leader was determined to blood them in battle with the alliance, destroying the upstart humans and elves once and for all.

He never got the chance. The terrible Divine War broke out before the One in White could unleash his legions. Chardun decreed that the empire's conquests were temporarily at an end, and bade his people declare common cause with the other divine races. Reluctantly, the charduni complied, withdrawing their legions from Ghelspad. For a time, the charduni fought on the same side as the humans and elves, sacrificing themselves in huge numbers to push the titanspawn from Termana.

The empire was severely weakened in the fight, and the charduni's fate was sealed when Kadum's Deluge sank large portions of northern Termana. Seeing their conquerors in disarray, the human states turned on their erstwhile allies and scattered the dark dwarves' armies. Utterly defeated, the charduni fell back across the Chained Mountains, there to lick their wounds and try to rebuild.

The human states were unable to capitalize on their gains, a continent away from the broken empire. Tragedy struck the high elves as they prepared to invade the shattered Land of Chains — their god slain, their very souls cursed, the forsaken elves split into a number of nominally-allied realms, struggling along with the rest of Scarn to recover from the Divine War. Sporadic wars raged along the northern frontier of the reduced charduni empire, the most spectacular of which was the epic Battle of the Chain River Fords, in which the charduni were driven back by the legions of the Shield Realm.

Since the Battle of the Fords, the borders have been relatively quiet, with elf and charduni armies in an uneasy cold war, occasionally raiding across each other's frontiers, testing defenses. Neither side can afford to let its guard down, and with each passing year the tension grows greater.

To the south, the Land of Chains rebuilds. Though it is but a shadow of its former self, the charduni state is still strong, and its people as dedicated as ever to the will of the Great General. The One in White maintains order with an iron hand, and charduni slavers scour the eastern half of the continent, bringing captives back in chains to labor in the mines and fields of the empire. The iron legions of the empire are as fanatical and determined as ever, though their numbers are greatly reduced, and generals rely even more on Chardun-slain to take up the slack. For the moment, the charduni lack the strength to threaten the rest of Termana, but that does not prevent them from scheming, planning and waiting.

The Human States and the Ghoul King

In the wake of the charduni retreat, human states emerged in the west, most retaining the borders of the old charduni provinces. These kingdoms were young, weak, and more often than not fought with each other and refused to cooperate. A single knightly order, the female paladins known as the Sisters of the Sun, served Madriel, and fought to bring peace to the warring states. Usually, it was a thankless task, as the humans had little or no experience in rulership or diplomacy. Only a decade after the fall of the titans, however, a terrible power rose in the region.

The destruction of the titans had created stagnant regions of negative energy, where the living could not survive. A human necromancer, the self-styled Ghoul King, found a way to withstand these terrible energies, and discovered that the island of Hurlos in the south was infested with undead. He built a fortress there, and renamed it the Isle of the Dead. By 12 AV, he was ready to set out on the road of conquest.

Seemingly endless hordes of undead waded out of the sea all along the eastern Termanan coast, conquering cities, slaying the living, and destroying everything in their path. Azale, Padrinola, Thorvalos, and large portions of several other kingdoms fell under the Ghoul King's foul sway. The living inhabitants of these lands were forced to endure a waking nightmare, as powerful autonomous undead were placed in charge of the conquered lands. In time, it was obvious to all that the Ghoul King intended to turn all of western Termana into a land of the dead, ruled by him alone.

In the north, the surviving human nations banded together and began to resist. All knew that this was a fight, not just for freedom, but for life itself.

In the struggle against the Ghoul King, the order of the Sisters of the Sun proved paramount, always at the front of every battle, always staying behind to tend the wounded, always last to retreat. When at last the Ghoul King's forces were broken and driven from southern Termana in 22 AV, they retreated to the barren Isle of the

Dead, where the land's fearsome negative energies held the living at bay and prevented pursuit.

As the armies of the living remained camped along the barren southern coast of Termana, the goddess Madriel appeared to their leader, Lady Shanae, and bade her lead her order to the unsettled Silverisle, there to build a great fortress-temple, from which they could always keep watch on the Ghoul King, and see to it that he never again troubled the realms of the living. Magical wards were created around the Isle of the Dead, so that nothing could leave it without alerting the Sisters of the Sun.

With Madriel's blessings, the new realm prospered. The few human inhabitants gratefully welcomed the order, especially when the sisters helped hunt down and destroy the titanspawn that infested the forests and central hills. Soon, construction had begun on the Citadel of the Sun, a mortal vision of Madriel's realm at the southern tip of Silverisle. Throughout the realm, farms and villages began to grow. And to the south, the Ghoul King brooded and planned his vengeance.

In 61 AV, the Ghoul King - now transformed into a lich by the negative energies of the Isle of the Dead - once more unleashed his forces, sending them north, against the Sisters of the Sun. The order was weak then, its members scattered across the continent, and the handful that held the citadel defended themselves as best they could.

The fight was brutal, and much of the land surrounding the citadel was ravaged, and many died in the defense. Weeks stretched into months, and still the citadel endured, ringed by a foul army of undead. Then, at last, the sisters on the mainland, hastily called home, formed a relief force and stormed the island, once more shattering the Ghoul King's forces and driving them into the sea.

Today, the paladins of Silverisle stand guard on the Isle of the Dead, making sure that the Ghoul King never rises again.

Blood Bayou

The lowlands of northern Termana were transformed into swamps in the wake of Kadum's Deluge. The life of the area adapted to the new bayou quickly, transformed by the taint of Kadum's ichor. It was simply assumed that the new swampland would serve as a home for fell beasts, and it was left alone in the troubled times following Kadum's Deluge.

It wasn't until the first brightly colored, filthy Carnival wagons slogged out of the Bayou that anyone in Termana had any inkling that something else had taken residence within. At first, the madcap, macabre shows of the Carnival were treated with some measure of welcome, for they brought entertainment (however twisted and unwholesome) to the peoples who dwelled near the swamps. When they departed with the coming of dawn, the strange capering beings took with them the diseased and mad of the settlements.

Eventually, however, word filtered out of the Blood Bayou of the Momus, the Jack of Tears, the King of the Carnival of Shadows. This being sent emissaries to the rulers many weeks away from the swamps of his demesnes, bearing tidings and secret messages that none truly knew the content of save their recipients. In time, the true measure of the power of the Jack of Tears became apparent. His Krewe of Waves came to dominate the crimson waters around the Blood Bayou, and none dared enter his lands, save those fools who fancied themselves seekers of adventure - and even they rarely came away with their lives or sanity.

The Momus is feared, to be sure, so much so that none turn away the wagon trains that make up the Carnival of Shadows in the rare nights when they visit those settlements that lay near the Blood Bayou. No one ever actually sees the Carnival traveling the country-



side, even when it visits settlements deep within the territory of other nations. The Carnival is only ever seen as it rolls into a town at night, accompanied by will-o'-wisps, madcap piping and the sickly sweet smell of decaying confections. By daybreak, the Carnival has gone again, taking with it the mad and sickly of the village. And, if, on occasion, those who are not among the village outcasts disappear in the revelry and debauchery of the night before, few ask any questions.

Termana Today

The continent of Termana remains chaotic and primitive. Weak human states rule the west, but most are under the influence of Blood Bayou, though the noble knights of Silverisle try to keep the peace. In central Termana, King Virduk has colonized the region now

known as Virduk's Promise. Some believe that the colony is only a cover for some greater scheme, but none can say for certain. In eastern Termana, the Land of Chains has rebuilt its power, and seeks to conquer the reduced forsaken elf principalities. In the south, the jungles harbor strange creatures and savage tribes, but are largely untouched by the outside world.

Termana continues to exercise a strange fascination for us on Ghelspad, and many scholars are interested in its history and cultures. Though it is a sentiment that I do not share (a nice villa in Darakeene and the love of two or three good women is all I desire in life), I nevertheless submit this document to you, in the hope that it will provide some insight on this distant and exotic continent.

Chapter Two: Lands and Peoples



Azale

Population: 125,000 (85% human, 10% half-elf, 5% halfling)

Government: Oligarchy

Ruler: Council of Nobles: Duke Marias (*human male* Ari10, LG),

Duchess Thelemara (*human female* Ari11/Rog3, CG), Sir Atelan (*human male*

Ari8/Ftr6, NG), Lady Evenal (*human female* Ari9/Sor5, N), Count Valtire (*human male* Ari5/Ftr8, LN), Sir Comus (*human male* Ari7/Rgr5, NG)

Capital: Vingus (20,000)

Major Cities: Chel (1,000), Hothai (5,000), Julosha (2,000), Shekk (2,000)

Language: Termanan

Religion: Madrid, Tanil, Enkili

Currency: Azale uses Karsian currency

Resources: Fishing, tin, iron

Allies: Silverisle, Karsian (see below)

Enemies: Blood Bayou

Azale is a small, poor realm, clinging to the coastal land between Karsian and the lower Thunderspikes. Normally, I'd be about as enthusiastic at visiting Azale as I would attending a charity ball for the Benevolent Society for the Resurrection of Chern, but after the long trek across the Iron Sands, the frontier city of Hothai looked like the gates of Idra's palace, complete with voluptuous courtesan-angels bearing goblets of lilac wine and pipes full of moonweed.

Hothai's pleasures were minimal, for caravan traffic was rare, but we spent days there, healing our wounds, replenishing our supplies, and taking stock of our losses. In that time, I managed to make the acquaintance of several local denizens, including a delightful dusky-skinned temptress named Docea, who educated me in the history and culture of this unfortunate little nation.

Azale was one of a handful of human states that held out against the might of the Land of Chains, and emerged from the collapse of the charduni with its independence relatively intact. In those days, its holdings stretched north to the Antareas River, but as the varied human states struggled to survive in the wake of Kadum's Deluge, Azale fell victim to the disciplined legions of Karsian, which pushed the smaller nation's forces south into the borders that it today occupies. Forced into a humiliating treaty, the Azaleans paid Karsian tribute each year to avoid being fully conquered.

All this was fine with Karsian rulers, who preferred having a weaker human state on their southern flank to take the brunt of any invasions from the Iron Sands or Thunderspikes.

As it turned out, the strategy was well warranted, for Azale was the first human nation to fall to the Ghoul King's armies in 12 AV. The region spent the next decade as an undead vassal state as the taint of the Ghoul King spread elsewhere. First to fall, last to be liberated, Azale was cleared of undead in 22 AV when the Sisters of the Sun and the Alliance of the Living drove south from Karsian and pursued their foes into the Iron Sands.

In the decades that followed, Azale slowly returned to life. Karsian insisted that the realm be ruled by a council of nobles, one of whom was appointed by the Karsian monarch. Indebted to Karsian for its aid, the Sisters assented, and so today Azale remains a virtual puppet state, authority divided among a council of six, one of whom is always in the pocket of the Karsian queen. The queen's current stooge, Count Valtire, is a loyal Karsian, constantly sabotaging any attempts by fellow nobles to increase Azale's independence and autonomy.

Despite this, Azale is a pretty decent place. The people are a pleasant mix of a half-dozen different nationalities. With the juggernaut of Karsian to the north and the devastation of the Iron Sands Desert to the south, the people have developed a rather joyfully fatalistic outlook. The past, they say, is dead, while the future isn't yet born, so why not live for today? The Azaleans sing, dance, drink and frolic with impunity, do only as much work as is absolutely necessary, and try to cram as much life as possible into the days that they have.

A fine, fine outlook, if you ask me.

Azale is an arid, infertile land with few resources. A few caravans from the south provide trade items and taxes, coastal villages catch fish, and some isolated valleys produce enough food to keep the Azaleans from starving. Mines in the eastern Thunderspikes produce a small amount of metals for export. But other than that, the place has all the economic prospects of a priest selling Coreanic artifacts in Glivid-Autel. That, perhaps, is what keeps the nation free and at least nominally independent.

The capitol city of Vingus is a reasonably bustling place, home to Azale's small army, minimal navy, and the Council Hall, where the nation's so-called "ruling body" meets once a month. Here, too, are the foreign embassies. Azale has only one true friend among the nations of Termana, but it's a powerful one - Silverisle. The Sisters of the Sun maintain not only a large and extensive mission here, but also provide a regiment of their paladins to help defend the nation. An invasion of Azale would surely provoke the ire of the Sisters, which is something that no human nation in Termana would want to risk.

Our stay in Azale was regrettably brief, for my companions were eager to continue our explorations. Accordingly, we joined a merchant caravan and made

our way north to the region's most powerful nation, the Kingdom of Karsian.

— Diago



Blood Bayou

Population: Unknown

Government: Autocracy

Ruler: Jack of Tears

Capital: The Carnival of Shadows, a mobile cavalcade of wagons, boats, beasts of burden and brightly decorated necromantic golems.

Major Cities: None

Language: Termanan

Religion: Unknown

Currency: None official

Resources: None

Allies: None

Enemies: Sunharrow, Thorvalos, Karsian, forsaken elf realms, Silverisle

It seemed that Kasavala and her fellow scholars had taken the unusual step of trying to contact the Jack of Tears directly. Without my knowledge, they had sent a message through an intermediary — one of Momus' many agents in the region — asking for an audience. To their surprise, a message arrived in the hands of a heron priest a few days later. Not only would the Jack of Tears be delighted to host us, he would provide us with transport and safe passage to the heart of his homeland.

Scholars will tell you that bayous are wonderful places, filled with myriad forms of life, virtual paradises where the blessings of Denev can be seen in every tree, every bird, every water droplet. I, on the other hand, say that a bayou is a foul, stinking cesspool, fit only for snakes and other vermin. And that goes double for Blood Bayou.

Blood Bayou was once a swampy lowland region, crisscrossed by streams and far removed from Termana's original coastline, some distance north. It was scarcely healthier than it is today, but in the main the place was avoided and uninhabited, save by the lowest rungs of human society. The region was nominally under the control of one of the many human nations that existed there before the Divine War, but no one really wanted it.

When Kadum was flung into the sea, and a flood of blood-tainted water sank large portions of the Termanan continent, the swampy lowlands and lands surrounding them became a coastal river delta virtually overnight. The loss of life along the coast and inland was staggering, and the resulting inlet was immediately named the Bay of Tears for all the sorrow that its creation had caused.

A few individuals survived the deluge, and many of those were transformed by the naked titanic energies that infused Kadum's blood. Thus were such creatures as the gator warriors, the blood krakens and the heron priests created, but it was the being known today as Momus, the Jack of Tears, the Laughing Man and the Carnival King that was the best-known abomination birthed by the disaster - or at least, it is believed that the taint of Kadum is responsible for this being.

Who was he before he became the fiend that we know today is anyone's guess. Some think he was an evil spirit or outsider, while others think that he was a human sorcerer of substantial might, made both powerful and mad by the blood of Kadum.

He was certainly influenced by the local humans, for it is known that the inhabitants of the coastal plains and river deltas were fond of elaborate fetes and carnivals, whose structure and trappings Momus emulated in building his darkly beautiful kingdom.

Certainly, he was the most powerful being in the region, for few were able to oppose him, and the human states of the region had other, more immediate concerns — the aftermath of the deluge, the destruction of the Charduni Empire, the post-war reconstruction, the threat of the Ghoul King, and their own petty internecine squabbles. By the time tales began to reach the halls of Karsian and Silverisle that a powerful being, more than a man but less than a god, was building a strange and twisted realm amid the mangroves and saltgrass, it was too late to do anything about it.

Momus' intentions remained mysterious, but few doubted his power. Within a few years, his agents were well enmeshed in the politics of the region, offering his services to local rulers, dispatching his creatures as ambassadors, corrupting the courts of lands both close by and far away. He has never sought military conquest, preferring to work behind the scenes, though to what end no one knows.

Even the mundane plants and animals of Blood Bayou seemed dark and twisted to me. From the hardy mangrove to the endless varieties of grasses, orchids, reeds, lilies, alders and others - all are adapted to life in this humid, hellish environment. Reptiles of all sorts glide through the stagnant waters. Common mammals include puma, otter, rat and raccoon. Bird species are too numerous to mention, and many are highly colorful and raucous.

The blood of Kadum has made the animals of the swamp even more frightening than the plants, however. Blood mutations of normal animals are common. The fearsome swamp tyrant is a constant hazard, as are the chuul, roper and dire monitor. Titan's blood creates even more monstrous creatures, and such things as blood moths, blood maidens, bloodflies and blood men are frequently found here.

Residual necromantic energy from Kadum creates undead constantly, and the silty river-bottom conceals countless thousands of corpses, victims of Kadum's Deluge. These horrific things regularly claw their way up and emerge from the bayou, many driven to attack the living by Kadum's blood. The Jack of Tears doesn't worry about these creatures unduly, so long as they leave his settlements in peace.

The heron priest Uhakk guided us into the swamps. Four days in this disease-infested, blood-soaked hell was more than enough for me, but our ordeal was just beginning. On the fifth day, a squad of alligator warriors surfaced silently around us, and began to tow our boats along, gliding sinuously through the stagnant water, propelling themselves with strokes of their muscular tails.



We arrived at the Carnival of Shadows just as the sun was setting. The place was indeed a dark and twisted vision, with colorful banners hanging from vine-covered wagons, covered in garlands of bright, sickly-sweet smelling flowers, torches casting weird shadows, and strange creatures dressed as festive revelers.

Though the Carnival is said to travel from place to place within the Bayou, sending out the occasional "emissary *fete*" into other lands, the wagons here looked for all the world as though they'd been here for decades. The wagons looked supremely incapable of simply remaining standing, much less traveling at all, and the festive bone-and-driftwood paddleboats - powered by mighty paddlewheels turned by undead hands - were both garish and gaily colored.

Uhakk allowed us to rest and refresh ourselves, but insisted that the Jack of Tears wished to meet us at midnight, the height of the revels. I noted with some trepidation, that both moons were new, and the night would be utterly pitch black.

Our party numbered an even dozen, including myself, Pato and Kasavala. The rest had been lost in the Gamulganjus or in the passage across the Iron Sands. Even after all the travails and dangers, our companions retained their scholarly detachment, eagerly looking forward to their meeting with this legendary creature. Only Pato and I felt uneasy as we marched toward the Grand Review, the open courtyard at the center of the carnival, escorted by several plague wretches and alligator warriors. In the darkness around the carnival's ramshackle wagons and patchwork tents, tiny shadow jesters capered and giggled, and at the entrance to the Grand Review, two dark harlequins stood guard, their faces a bizarre amalgam of joy and sorrow.

He was seated on a throne of carved hardwood, and concealed his features behind a white mask, held in a long-taloned hand. Only his eyes - dark and fascinating - were visible behind the mask. He was clad in the colors of the rainbow, from vivid indigo to bright yellow, but all with a strange sickly cast. His creatures - gator warriors, plague wretches, heron priests, dark harlequins and shadow jesters - stood all around him, regarding us with gazes that were variously curious, amused, and hostile. The air was hot and stifling. Insects swarmed around us, but no one dared move to swat at one.

"Welcome," he said at last. His voice was mirthful, like that of an overenthusiastic carnival crier, but it was the cruel mirth of a man laughing at another's pain. "Welcome to my Carnival."

Kasavala stepped forward; the other scholars, nervous now, seemed to regard her as their spokesperson.

"Thank you, Great Momus," she said, bowing. "I am Kasavala, scholar of Lokil, and we come here to learn more of you and your realm."

The Laughing Man considered this for a moment.

"I am saddened," he said at last. "I hoped that you came here to join our celebrations, to revel with us."

Kasavala did not respond, and the tension grew to almost unbearable levels.

The Jack of Tears laughed then, and it was a terrible laugh.

"Very well, then. You wish to speak me questions. Speak them, then, but be warned, for the Momus is a lover of riddles and games. And I shall have queries of my own."

Kasavala swallowed with obvious effort and spoke.

"We wish to know more of you, Lord Momus. Tell us your story. Who you are. How you came to be what you are."

Another chuckle issued wetly from Momus' throat.

"Alas, that is a story that cannot be told in full, not at this time," he said. "I am simply as you see. The Jack of Tears. Master of Revels. Lord of Laughter. I am as I was and as I will be. I rule these lands, I gather the mad and outcast to me, those who have never known joy and revelry and I gift it to them. I keep my people safe from harm. And I seek to share the truth with the unfortunates of other lands."

Kasavala frowned, and spoke again.

"The truth? What truth do you wish people to see?"

Momus held out a lacquer-taloned hand, and in it was his scepter, Foolscap, a short rod, black at one end and white at the other.

"You see the world like this scepter. That is, either black or white. You see the absence of joy as sadness. I say that there is more than that. Joy can be sadness and sadness, joy. There is more to the cosmos than the simple-minded philosophies of the gods, and the titans' mindless cycle of creation and destruction. You wish to know who I am, and how I came to be." He motioned to his minions, who began to move forward. "Stay with me, people of Lokil, and you will see. You will learn our ways, and think as we do. And then you will return to your realm as my children, to speak the truth and spread the word of the Momus."

Then the night shattered into a million pieces, as the horde of monstrosities advanced, and the now-terrified scholars turned to flee. Pato drew his razor-edged club as I pulled dagger and rapier from their sheaths, determined not to give myself up easily.

We fought then, but it was like no battle I've ever endured. The Krewefolk didn't fight so much as...caper dangerously. It was like watching a strange and insane revel that had turned suddenly deadly. They danced, somersaulted, juggled and pranced, all with weapons and magics.

I skewered a gator warrior through the throat and watched him fall with a gurgling snarl. I stabbed and slashed at a plague wretch, avoiding its loathsome touch and watching it shrug off my most ferocious blows. At last Pato smashed the thing with his club, bellowing his ululating war-cry.

Elsewhere, the scholars were seized, bound and dragged away. Kasavala stood in the middle of a ring of foes, defending herself with spells and furious blows from her staff. I fought my way to her side, using up my own small complement of magic in the process. Together, we faced the horde.

"I wish to thank you for a most interesting journey," I told her. "I would not have missed it for the world."

She grinned. "Sorry it has to end this way."

"A brief kiss would easily compensate me for my trouble," I said.

She sighed and we briefly touched lips before turning back to back and preparing to meet the foe's final onslaught.

Suddenly, Pato's war cry echoed again, and I saw his burly, powerful form hurtling through the air as he flung himself at the throne of the Jack of Tears. His club swung in a deadly arc, striking the Laughing Man's cheek, shattering the white mask that concealed the creature's face...

Then all was plunged into darkness.

The sun was rising over the bayou when I finally regained consciousness. I lay with my companions outside the gates of the seemingly abandoned Carnival of Shadows. The Laughing Man stood nearby, unaccompanied by his usual retinue of bizarre creatures. He was dressed in dark colors now - black, blue, purple and indigo, and his visage was concealed by a bright red mask with a wildly grinning face.

Beside me, Pato and Kasavala stirred, rubbing their heads and sitting up groggily.

"Let no one say that I am not merciful and just," the Laughing Man intoned. "Nor that I do not like a good joke. Last night, it seemed that the joke was on me, for your companion proved himself both wise and foolish at the same time." He shifted his gaze to Pato. "You have saved your companions. They are free to go, as are you. You have laid hands upon me, though, warrior- and those who touch the Momus are themselves touched forever after. You will come back to me, in the future, and join our revelry. Mark this."

We left his realm as quickly as we could, and counted ourselves fortunate. I think Pato is still haunted by his words, though - as, I must admit, am I.

— Diago



Charduni Empire

Population: 2,000,000 (75% charduni dwarf, 25% other)

Government: Empire

Ruler: The One in White (*dwarf male* Clr20, LE)

Capital: Chorach (75,000)

Major Cities: Borixa (50,000), Danachax (35,000), Shaskalcho (15,000), Aardunnus (12,000)

Language: Charduni

Religion: Chardun

Currency: Platinum marshal (10 gp), gold general (5 gp), gold slaver (1 gp), silver chain (5 sp), silver clasp (1 sp), copper fist (1 cp)

Resources: Iron, silver, gold, slaves

Allies: None

Enemies: Forsaken elf realms, centaur tribes

During my trek across the forsaken elf realms, I learned much of their hereditary foes, the dark dwarves known as the charduni. Located south of the forsaken elf lands, the empire continues to grow and thrive, and may one day once more threaten the freedom of these Scarred Lands.

As in the days of old, the Land of Chains is ruled by an emperor-prophet known as the One in White, who rules from the mighty fortress-city of Chorach, in the foothills of the Chained Mountains. My elven informants told me that it was a grim and terrible place, where legions of undead and pitiful slaves toil endlessly, creating weapons, armor and war machines for their cruel charduni masters.

In the style of their master, the charduni rule with an iron hand, savagely suppressing all "lesser" races, and demanding absolute servitude. The land is dotted with walled cities, fortresses and cave complexes, for the

charduni are as at home above ground as below. The eastern slopes of the Chained Mountains are rich in iron, which the charduni use to keep their warriors armed and armored. In many places, the natural iron rises from the ground in huge, spiked formations, earning the pits their nickname, the Thorn Mines. Thousands of slaves perish in the Thorn Mines each year, and the charduni constantly search for more.

The land is dry and barren - in short, perfect for the charduni, who seem to thrive on adversity. Pine and oak grow on the slopes of the Chained Mountains, harvested for construction, and the building of war machines and ships. Many predators lurk in the wilderness between the charduni fortress-cities, including dire beasts of all sorts, bulette, blade beasts, giants, and occasional tribes of gnolls and hobgoblins. Titanspawn sometimes creep down from the mountains, only to be savagely hunted down and exterminated by the charduni.

Charduni patrols and columns cross the realm constantly, marching along the cobbled roads, moving from fortress to fortress. These patrols are invariably accompanied by large numbers of Chardun-slain, and even units of slave infantry, recruited from among the toughest and most violent captives.

The charduni themselves are a grim, violent people, highly respectful of authority and regimented, ready to give their lives in service to both Chardun and his chosen representative, the One in White. All other considerations - personal health, safety, happiness, prosperity and the like - are secondary to the Great General's will. The Great General's will is apparently today focused on the forsaken elves, for the charduni continue to mass troops along the frontier with the Shield Realm.

The Land of Chains is not without its enemies. The knightly order known as the Sisters of the Sun, though their citadel is on the opposite side of the continent, occasionally raid the Charduni Empire, freeing slaves and destroying military facilities. The forsaken elves also sometimes launch limited offensives and reconnaissances in force to keep the dark dwarves on their toes, but neither foe seems to have dissuaded the One in White from continuing to plot and gather his armies.

— *Nabila*



Ehitovael (the Southsea Realm)

Population: 100,000 (85% elf, 15% half-elf)

Government: Monarchy

Ruler: Wave-King Glitheval (*elf male* Ftr5/Wiz15,NG)

Capital: Manaetae (25,000)

Major Cities: Ashiahl (3,000), Tahema (2,000), Baenash (1,000), Druochol (1,000)

Language: High elven

Religion: None

Currency: Gold wave (5 gp), gold gull (1 gp), silver shark (5 sp), silver skate (1 sp), copper eel (2 cp), copper crab (1 cp), tin urchin (.5 cp)

Resources: Fish, timber

Allies: Forsaken elf realms

Enemies: Charduni Empire

The warm southern current brushes the shores of this island nation, keeping away the encroaching taint of Kadum's blood. Thick deciduous trees grow along the coastline, giving the false impression of an uninhabited wilderness. Though Chern's Curse burdens these people as much as any other forsaken elves, the Southsea Realm retains a remnant of ancient greatness. This realm was important to me, for it was the homeland of my father.

The realm's greatest city, Manaetae is a true wonder. As our vessel approached, I saw only a few buildings surrounding the semicircular Cecea Bay. They were as beautiful as anything I had seen in the forsaken realms — blue as the sea, built in the style of graceful waves.

The Southsea Realm had always been on an island, Iskaela told me. Kadum's Deluge had caused a slight increase in sea level, but after a few months the waters receded and Manaetae returned to normal. But the changes were not as catastrophic as might be expected, for most of this wondrous city lay beneath the surface of the water.

A small delegation met us at the docks — pale forsaken elves clad in blue and green robes, moving with a quiet serenity and confidence that I had not seen since taking leave of Prince Shendael of the Forest Realm. They greeted us warmly, and escorted us into a long, low building, designed to resemble rhythmic ocean waves.

It was then that I witnessed true wonders, as the elves led us down a long spiral staircase surrounded by a tube of transparent material, whose nature I could not guess. It was not glass, nor any sort of magical substance I have yet encountered, yet it easily held back the surrounding water, and we descended into the depths in perfect safety. Golden light from above filtered down through the restless waves, illuminating the water around us, and as we descended it faded from pale green to blue, to darker blue and finally at the bottom of the stairs, the blue-black of absolute night. Beyond the range of my vision I fancied I could see vast bodies moving slowly and ponderously in the abyss, but I could not be certain.

There were few angles in this city, and fewer straight lines. The chamber where we met the Wave-King was around chamber, elliptical in cross section, its upper third transparent, sparks of light dancing on the surface far overhead. Additional light was provided by enchanted crystals, shaped into curved, naturalistic forms and set about the chamber.

The Wave-King was an elf of apparently great age. He was old, he told us, when Chern fell, but the curse visited him as well, leaving him a pale, dark-eyed wraith-like creature, frail and weak-seeming. His name, which he said he could barely remember, so long had he been the monarch, was Glitheval, and once he had been a sailor. But memories were faint, like the glitter of light from the waves above us.

I asked him about his realm, and he described it to me in great and loving detail. The Ehitovaelers had always been sailors, travelers, explorers, and sea-mages.

One very old legend said that the elves were creatures of the elements, made from equal parts earth, water, fire and air. The elements were found in different proportions among the different elven peoples. The wood elves were more earth, but the mariners of the Southsea Realm were mostly water, and that water was in their hearts and souls.

The island realm was the birthplace of sailors and naval leaders, and its vast forests provided the timber for the elven empire's mighty ships. The sailors of the Southsea Realm were instrumental in holding the charduni at bay, for despite the dark dwarves' other strengths, they were poor sailors. Pressure from the elven navy helped disrupt communications and supply lines between Termana and Ghelspad and helped hasten the collapse of the Land of Chains. When the Titanswar erupted, great battles raged on the high seas between Ehitovael's fleets and the pisceans, sea devils and krakens of the deep ocean.

Yet evil gnawed even at the heart of this near-invincible realm, and the coming of Chern spelled its doom, as it did the entire high elven race. Though they lost many vessels to Kadum's Deluge, the Southsea elves remained strong, and gathered their ships to carry elven warriors south to destroy the charduni once and for all.

But Chern came first, striding through the water, leaving filth and pestilence in his wake. Hastily recalled, the elven fleet tried to slow his progress, but was shattered, its proud ships smashed into driftwood, its sailors drowned beneath the bloody waters. Surviving sailors helped fight and defeat Chern, but when the slain titan's body was borne away and the full impact of his curse fell upon the elves, the mariners of Ehitovael seemed to have lost the most. Their once-mighty fleet was reduced to a handful of vessels, their realm was depopulated, their heritage poisoned. Quietly, they returned to their realm, to contemplate their fate.

The realm maintains the remnants of the elven fleet, and even these few vessels could challenge the might of such powerful maritime nations as Darakeene and Karria. But they sail only rarely, and the forsaken elves of the realm prefer to dwell in the safety of their lands, not risking their precious ships to battle or the threat of the elements.

Much of the realm today is thickly forested and left in its original state. A few small communities exist along the coast, with Manaetae the sole large settlement. The relative cleanliness of the water and isolation from the mainland keep the region free of titanspawn, and Glitheval told us that many sylvan creatures and other rare beasts found nowhere on Termana thrive in his forests. These creatures include satyr, unicorns and hippogriff. Truly dangerous creatures are rare.

The people are quiet and unassuming, content to dwell in peace and isolation. The Ehitovaelers rarely take human captives - occasionally humans choose to voluntarily stay here, and half-elves are uncommon.

Toward the end of my stay, I visited the village of Tahema, which was the birthplace of my father, Aethus. The inhabitants spoke well of him, but expressed some reservations that he had loved a human woman so much that he left his homeland. When told that he was dead, there was sadness but little real regret. I never identified myself as Aethus' daughter, and left the village feeling vaguely dissatisfied, and almost happy that I no longer lived among these people.

Several days later, we traveled overland to our final destination - Kasiavael, the Skysight Realm. I felt sadness at our departure, but it was sadness for a people whose time had passed, rather than sadness at leaving my father's homeland.

— *Nabila*





Eternal Isle

Population: Unknown
Government: Unknown
Ruler: Unknown
Capital: Citadel of the Rose (pop. unknown)
Major Cities: None
Language: High elven
Religion: None
Currency: None
Resources: None
Allies: None

Enemies: None

As our vessel sailed south, the fearful stain of Kadum's blood began to lessen, then at last as we entered the region that my captain called Kadum's Bight, vanished altogether.

"The maps of Termana show that this region is a vast, circular bay," I asked him as we marveled at the rich blue of the sea and the fresh, unpolluted breeze. "How is it that it is free of the Mountainshaker's taint?"

The captain made a warding sign against evil at the titan's moniker, then gestured off the port bow.

"That," he said. "The magic of the Eternal Isle."

I saw no island. Only a thick column of fog rose from the sea, concealing all that was beyond.

"The sacred isle lies within," the captain continued. "Its enchantment drives off the taint of the fallen ones, and prevents us from ever approaching."

"The Eternal Isle," I repeated, struggling to discern something besides the thick, swirling clouds. "Tell me of this place."

No one has seen the Eternal Isle since the end of the Titanswar. Thick fog enshrouds the island, and the currents magically carry south any ship south that attempts to approach. Flight is even less reliable, for flying explorers are likewise flung away from the island, some of them smashed into the waters of Kadum's Bight and killed.

Why this realm remains locked away from the rest of the world is not known for certain. Legend, however, tells a tale of evil and sacrifice, and of a mighty battle that still rages.

The island was not always an island. In days long past, millennia before the Divine War, a fantastic fortress-city, called the Citadel of the Rose (or, in the language of the high elves Shalae'Uthun). Surrounded by a range of jagged mountains known as the Thorns, the citadel was home to a circle of ancient elvish arcanists, who served their now-forgotten god, and wove powerful magics to aid their brethren.

The citadel endured for thousands of years, its inhabitants protected by awesome magic and effectively immortal. The elves were aided in their endeavors by the monarchs of the dragon nations - ancient, enormous creatures with near-divine power. Together, the two races worked closely, keeping their respective nations free, independent even of the powerful Charduni Empire.

When the Divine War erupted, the elven ancients and their dragon allies did not hesitate. They sided with the gods, and turned their powers to the aid of the divine races. For a time, elf and charduni actually fought on the same side.

The elven ancients' magic held the titans and their spawn at bay, forming an invisible protective fortress around the Thorns, sheltering many divine races and creating a secure base for attacks on the titanic armies. Enraged, the mightiest of the titans' servants combined their powers and ripped open a series of dimensional rifts surrounding the Citadel, and through these portals came horrors the likes of which Scarn had rarely seen - demons, devils, outsiders of every kind, and beasts whose power might have utterly decimated our world. Such was the anger and shortsightedness of these titanspawn that they gave little thought to what would happen if these beasts defeated the elves and were unleashed upon Scarn.

But the elves knew. With their dragon allies, they held the horde of demons at bay, but it was clear that they could not hold out forever. They cast a mighty spell that isolated the entire region from the rest of the world, locking it behind a wall of mist and magic, and fought on. Cut off from the outside world, the elves did not fight in the final battle with Chern, and were unaware of their god's death. Their magic effectively stopped the flow of elemental energy that maintained the gates, stranding the demon army on Scarn, caught within a prison of arcane force.

When Kadum was imprisoned, the waters of the Blood Sea flooded the region now known as Kadum's Bight, sinking it beneath the waves, save for a few spots of higher ground. The Citadel of the Rose and its surrounding lands were likewise spared the fury of the deluge.

Today, the legends have that the battle goes on, as it has for more than two centuries. In the center of the island, a circle of near-immortal high elven wizards and their ancient dragon allies presumably still hold the Citadel of the Rose, sustained by mighty pre-war magics and fantastic magical relics, whose very names have been lost to history. Around the island, unable to leave and stranded on Scarn, the demon army fights ferociously, flinging itself again and again at the citadel. If the elves fall, their magic will fail, the protective enchantments will be broken and, worst of all, the titans' dimensional gates, restored to full power, will begin to function once more, unleashing unbelievable horrors upon the Scarred Lands.

That is, at least, how the story goes.

— *Nabila*



Ganjulael (the Forest Realm)

Population: 60,000 (80% elf, 15% half-elf, 5% human)

Government: Monarchy

Ruler: Prince Shendael (*male elf* Rgr8/Wiz12, CG)

Capital: Uthalma (5,000)

Major Cities: Turen (1,000), Vaskael (500), Sehara (500)

Language: High elven

Religion: None

Currency: None official; most transactions are by barter

Resources: Timber, fishing

Allies: Forsaken elf realms

Enemies: Charduni Empire

Ganjulael or the Forested Realm, was the first stop on our journey through the forgotten elf nations. This principality was, Iskaela told us, the wildest and most unsettled of the realms. Kadum's Deluge sank much of the realm, and formed the northern sea cliffs where the elves made their stand against Chern.

Our port of entry was a city of pale lavender marble called Uthalma. It was a place of grace and serene beauty, with slender towers rising above low domes, elegant palaces and broad boulevards. But as we approached I saw that the city's beauty was hollow, for few people walked the streets, and many of the fine buildings were in disrepair, though the true state of decay was cloaked by cunningly woven illusions.

"Farthest from the Land of Chains, Ganjulael is in the least danger, so its people do little to defend it," Iskaela said. "Most of its surviving inhabitants dwell in the forests, seeking to return to the old ways and pretending that Chern's Curse never took place."

Her words saddened me. As we debarked and entered this empty shell of a city, my sense of malaise increased. We were housed in an ancient, dilapidated palace and tended by silent servants, who normally tended to the principality's nobility. The next day, we met with the realm's ruler, Prince Shendael. A quiet elf who had been a young warrior during the Divine War and seen Chern fall, Shendael retained a dignity and royal bearing that seemed out of place in this sad and wasted realm.

He told us much of the land's history and culture. As its name implied, much of Ganjulael is covered in ancient forests. The deepest and oldest of these have stood for millennia, and some groves were old when the elven race was young, their branches trembling with the tread of titans, and swaying in the wind from dragons' wings.

It may be that the wood elves of our continent had their origin in these dark and ancient forests. Certainly, the forsaken elves who live there today try to emulate the old ones, living in small communities, dressing in animal skins (or often nothing at all), hunting and fishing, practicing ancient rites dedicated to the forgotten god. They are a grim and insular people, who dislike outsiders.

Once, however, great cities rose here, but of these only Uthalma remains, and it is but a shadow of past greatness. The other cities fell into disrepair, were destroyed by the titans or drowned in Kadum's Deluge. Uthalma itself was once a great river port, but when Kadum fell, the ocean washed up to its very edge and threatened to sink the city entirely. Only mighty magic from the city's own spellcasters prevented catastrophe from overtaking Uthalma as well, but in the end it was for naught, for most of the city's inhabitants departed in the wake of Chern's curse. Today, only a thousand or so forsaken elves live there, tending shops, dealing with the small trickle of merchant traffic that comes through the port, and reliving past glories.

Prince Shendael, who seemed a gentle and peaceful soul, retaining much of the goodness that once lived in his race's soul, accompanied us on our journey across the realm, toward Pelegael, the Middle Realm. He proved a valuable companion, helping us pass by bands of forsaken elves who might otherwise have barred our way or even attacked us. I learned much of the history of the forsaken elves and their forebears from him, and at night, in a soft and plaintive voice, he sang the songs of his people, sharing some of the sadness that he and others like him feel.

We moved on to Pelgael with reluctance, leaving this lonely prince behind to rule his dying realm.

— *Nabila*



Gray Isle

Population: 75,000 (80% human, 20% other)

Government: None

Ruler: None

Capital: None

Major Cities: Emernis (12,000)

Language: Termanan

Religion: Various

Currency: None official; all foreign currencies are accepted

Resources: None

Allies: None

Enemies: None

One never gazes into the face of evil and emerges unscathed. Those few who survived our meeting with the Jack of Tears - myself, Pato and Kasavala among them, thank the gods - were placed on one of the Krewe of Waves' delightful vessels - crewed by twisted humans and blood krakens, octopoidal horrors the likes of which I hope to never again encounter - and sent away, with instructions to tell our story and speak well of Momus and his mercy.

The closest thing to civilization that they were willing to take us to was the Gray Isle. There's no real authority here - the place is a welter of petty bandit-states, exiled criminals, marooned mariners and mad hermits. Once, apparently, the place bore a civilization of sorts, but that was back before Kadum turned the continent topsy-turvy. Today, Gray Isle is pretty much avoided, though the rogue-city of Emernis has gained some degree of infamy throughout the continent as one of the most dangerous and lawless places imaginable.

We retained a single purse of gold, our weapons and the clothes on our backs. Even the clothes were in tatters, though I have to admit that they made Kasavala look even more fetching. Not that I was terribly interested in carnality anymore. That we were alive was about the only thing that I could concentrate on.

Life in Emernis is like life under siege. Travelers are advised to barricade their doors and sleep in shifts. We did this, and managed to keep our funds relatively intact, spending a portion of our remaining coinage on a passage to the nearby island of Crilos. The Crilosians, we were advised, were barbarians, but at least they were safer than the Grey Islanders. Kasavala and I both used the last of our

spells to drive off a gang of toughs who tried to accost us on the way to the docks, then with great relief boarded a Karsian merchant vessel en route to Crilos.

—Diago



Karsian

Population: 500,000 (85% human, 5% halfling, 10% other)

Government: Monarchy

Ruler: War Queen Metea (*human female* Ari8/Ftr10, LN)

Capital: Regama (60,000)

Major Cities: Vorsus (25,000), Cylos (20,000), Rehalna (20,000), Breskal (16,000)

Language: Termanan

Religion: Hedrada, Chardun

Currency: Gold knight (1 gp), silver captain (1 sp), copper soldier (1 cp)

Resources: Fishing, timber, iron, cattle

Allies: Azale, Silverisle

Enemies: Blood Bayou, Sunharrow, Thorvalos, North Crilos, South Crilos

From poor, powerless Azale, our expedition traveled north to the fortress-city of Verdast, and the militaristic nation of Karsian.

It's a prosperous, powerful nation, yes. But then so is Calastia, and you don't see me spending my summers there. I was far happier among the loose women and jolly men of Azale than I was with the rigid, Hedrada-worshipping clowns who run Karsian.

The merchant we traveled with told us about the land. The realm is always ruled by a woman, known as the war-queen, whose bodyguard are all neutered males (to prevent them from overthrowing her and putting one of their number on the throne). The very prospect made me squirm, and I quickly changed the subject to a discussion of Karsian history.

Always a powerful military state, Karsian led the way in the fight against the charduni, holding the passes of the Thunderspikes, occasionally driving east of the mountains, raiding into the empire, inciting slave revolts and generally wreaking havoc with the dark dwarves. She stood strong when Kadum was imprisoned, helping to smash the surviving charduni armies. Karsian took over the prosperous northern third of Azale and prevented Sunharrow from expanding beyond its pre-war borders. When the Ghoul King's shambling undead legions lurched up from the south, conquering Azale, Karsian was ready. Pushed back by the inexorable march of the walking dead, Karsian fought for every inch, and when at last the Sisters of the Sun emerged to form the Army of the Living, Karsian's knights and footsoldiers proved nearly priceless.

When the dead were driven from Azale, Queen Lathendra decided that the southern nation could retain its independence - its resistance to the Ghoul King bought Karsian time - but it could only do so with Karsian guidance. Accordingly, a weak council of nobles was created, with one seat reserved for a Karsian appointee. That done, Azale was no longer a threat and little more than a client-state of Karsian.

Lathendra resisted the influence of Blood Bayou, as well, and actually had one of Momus' dark harlequin ambassadors beaten and sent back home in chains. The Jack of Tears took this in stride, but Lathendra's death less than a year later was considered suspicious in the extreme, especially given the mad rictus grin that was upon her face when her corpse was found.

Her successor, Nytaela, ruled for two decades, leaving the throne to her granddaughter Metea, who continues to maintain the nation's independence, and keeps its legions strong. At present, however, Karsian has no real foes, and a military nation without a war is a sad one, indeed. Keeping up a large, well-trained and -equipped military is a strain, and in many Karsian cities the poor and homeless have become a significant problem. From these disaffected Karsians come small rebel groups, determined to overthrow the rule of the war-queens, or even replace the worship of Hedrada with a more merciful deity such as Madriel, Tanil or Enkili. The Jack of Tears may be behind much of this unrest, for it is known that he dislikes the nation's royalty intensely.

Our days in Karsian were unpleasant, and the capitol city of Regama resembled nothing more than a great, grim iron fortress where all the people joylessly go about their daily lives as if they expected to be struck in the face at any moment. My quest for female companionship yielded a former mercenary named Madrey, who provided some small diversion, but overall my impression of the nation was not good. I found myself actually missing the tolerant and enlightened rule of the paladins of Mithril.

Enkili help me...

—Diago



Kasiavael (the Skysight Realm)

Population: 100,000 (80% elf, 15% half-elf, 5% human)

Government: Oligarchy

Ruler: Council of the High Magi: Tamaean (*elf male* Wiz20, NE), Shasalea (*elf female* Wiz20, N), Vorus (*elf female* Wiz20, NE), Galthean (*elf female* Wiz20, CN), Launak (*elf male*

Wiz20, N), Kolderias (*elf male* Wiz20, NG),

Boraes (*elf female* Wiz19, N), Nythael (*elf male* Wiz20, CN), Valishan (*elf male* Wiz18, NG)

Capital: High Tower (5,000)

Major Cities: Dolamean (20,000), Riskahel (15,000), Thoskae (10,000)

Language: High elven

Religion: None

Currency: Platinum star (20 gp), gold star (10 gp), gold comet (1 gp), silver moon (5 sp), silver sphere (2 sp), silver crescent (1 sp), copper circlet (1 cp)

Resources: Magic items, produce, tin

Allies: Forsaken elf realms

Enemies: Charduni empire

Some of the sadness of our forsaken cousins had entered my soul, for by the time we reached Kasiavael, the Skysight Realm, and last of our destinations, I felt a deep and seemingly hopeless sense of ennui and melancholy. The frontier between Kasiavael and the Southsea Realm is lightly guarded, with half-elven warriors under the command of elven spellcasters checking the identity of all travelers. When I told them of the reason for my visit, and presented my invitation from the High Magi, we were welcomed warmly and given an escort of light cavalry for our journey to the High Tower, where the magi were waiting to meet with us.

On the way, I observed much. The Skysight Realm is a place where old elven magic is still practiced, albeit on a much smaller scale. With the exception of the high elf magi trapped on the Eternal Isle, the Skysight elves are the most powerful spellcasters in all the realms.

Since the Divine War, many have developed a somewhat idealized view of elven magic, repeating tales of mighty magic that served the gods and defended the cause of the just and the righteous. While in many cases this was true, there was and is a dark side to the magic of the elves, a side that I, even with my forsaken elf heritage, am reluctant to embrace.

Many of the old elves maintained relations with dark forces, binding evil outsiders to their bidding, and bending the forces of life and death, light and darkness until they seemed near-indistinguishable. It led to a certain amorality, and a belief by the old elves that the end justified the means, that sometimes the suffering of others could give way to the greater good.

Today, that tendency is still visible in the Skysight Realm, where wizards rule (sorcerers are not uncommon, but their form of magic is looked down upon by the ruling wizards, who believe that their form of magic carries with them the taint of the titans, or otherworldly influence). Relations with spirits, outsiders and summoned beings are quite common among the rulers, and the vile practice of kidnapping humans for breeding is practiced without qualm. Some elven spellcasters use these captives as experimental subjects, others treat them like property, and still others are relatively kind but patronizing to their "lesser" human servants.

Most half elves serve in the Skysight military - only a few are considered suitable for training as spellcasters. Some "wild" half-elf sorcerers develop their talents on their own, or learn spells as wizards, but unauthorized use of magic is a crime, and these individuals are often arrested, imprisoned or exiled. Many half-elf spellcasters who wander the Scarred Lands hail from this realm.

Like the other forsaken elf realms, Kasiavael is filled with abandoned cities, monuments, temples, towers and other wonders. The elves' magic keeps these places untouched by time, however, and a visitor can easily wander into an old wizard's manse to find it as clean and tidy as the day it was built - or so it seems. The use of glamour and illusion are at their height in this realm, and its citizenry seems pained to gaze upon any reminders of

their true destitution, so that its wizards spend much of their time cloaking it in illusion.

The High Tower is located in the foothill of Mount Syvos, the isolated peak that rises up from the center of the kingdom. It is actually a collection of towers, all connected by soaring bridges above and paved pathways below. Each of the smaller towers houses one or more of the High Magi, who live and work here. The tallest of these - known as the Tower of Lapis — is where the High Magi meet each day to govern the realm and make decisions that affect their subjects.

There are few such decisions to make anymore, Iskaela said. The realm's population is small, and most surviving communities, governed by the highest-ranking wizards in the area, generally see to their own affairs with little need of the High Magi. This has led to a certain isolation on the part of the realm's rulers. Detached and, to some extent, unnecessary, the High Magi spend much of their time devoted to arcane research, esoteric study and communion with extradimensional beings and outsiders.

Most of the realm's nine rulers reflected this distance and detachment when we spoke with them. We met in the highest chamber of Lapis Tower, a chamber whose domed roof could be changed to any image the magi wished, or made transparent to the sky above. We met as the sun descended and the stars began to appear. As night fell, the chamber roof grew slowly invisible, and we spoke for many hours in the silvery light of the moons.

Eight of the nine magi were tall and pale, reserved and seeming to live only part of their time in the mortal world. Often their comments were obtuse and philosophical, only partially applicable to our questions. Tamaean, a blue-eyed woman with frosty skin, and may well have been the oldest of the magi - clearly she remembered the world as it had been before the Divine War, and spoke often of the days when the titans walked the land. The other magi were similarly old and esoteric, couching their comments in obscure analogy, sometimes taking forever to get to the point, at other times falling silent for long periods until I wondered if they had heard me or not, then finally replying long minutes later, when the conversation had already moved on to other topics.

Of the nine, the only one who consistently made sense was a younger (which is to say that his age is a mere century or so) magus named Valishan, who seemed somewhat impatient with his fellow councilors' manner. He alone answered questions directly and he alone managed to provide real solid information on the realm and its history.

Once, Kasiavael was home to the diviners and prophets of the elven empire. Casting spells to see the future and the outcome of great events gave the realm its name, and the help of the diviners proved invaluable during the Divine War and in the conflict with the Charduni Empire. Since the fall of the elven god, however, divinatory magic seems to have grown less reliable, and the wizards of this realm have proven unable to access the powerful true rituals of divination that they once cast.

The great spells and rituals cast throughout the realm have created a place of great beauty, but in many

cases, Valishan told us, that beauty conceals great danger. The lovely sylvan terrain is home to many odd creatures, including colonies of fey that may be friendly, indifferent or hostile to travelers. The summoning of outsiders is usually carried with extensive precautions. Nevertheless, certain entities have escaped and still roam the island. Devils, demons, incorporeal undead and similar hostile entities have been known to appear and wreak havoc before being destroyed, escaping or returning to their home domain. The realm's armed forces, consisting mostly of half-elven warriors, are ill-equipped to deal with such beings, as the ruling wizards generally do not deign to aid in hunting them down.

Overall, the realm is an isolated and insular one, with little concern for the other principalities. The Land of Chains is far away, and unlikely to threaten the Skysight Realm. From time to time, the realm sends some of its spellcasters to aid the Shield Realm in its struggles with the charduni, but for the most part the wizard-rulers stand aloof, and take little role in the affairs of the mainland.

We left unsatisfied, uncertain and unhappy, and prepared to journey north to the port city of Chamalai - the realm's northernmost blue-water port - and our promised passage home to Ghelspad. As we did so, however, Valishan appeared. He spoke quickly and urgently, telling us to leave as quickly as we could, and bear a message back to the rulers of Mithril, Vesh and all the free nations of Ghelspad.

There was corruption in his land, he said. The wizards had fallen into darkness and wickedness, and sought to summon creatures of even greater power in a desperate scheme to eliminate Chem's Curse and restore the elven empire, with Kasiavael at its head. There was more to the scheme - the destruction of the Land of Chains and the subjugation of the charduni, the resurrection of the slain god, the rescue of the wizards on the Eternal Isle, the return of the dragons - Valishan said he did not have time to tell us more, but begged that we tell his tale on Ghelspad and return with aid. He was but one man, younger and less capable than the other magi, and he alone knew the significance of their plans.

We gave him our thanks then, and departed in haste. I cannot vouch for the truth of his allegations, but he seemed desperately concerned, and spoke with the fervor and intensity of a man in torment. To our intense relief, Courageous rode at anchor in the harbor of Chamalai, and no one prevented us from departing the following morning.

Iskaela chose to accompany me back to Ghelspad, for neither of us felt safe returning to the forsaken elf realms. Our tour had made her think twice about her own people, and now she hoped to work for change from distant Mithril. Whether she will succeed is up to the gods alone, but together we prayed to Madriel and asked for guidance as the blue of the Cerulean Ocean slowly darkened into the polluted crimson of the Blood Sea - the way to Mithril and home.

— *Nabila*



North Crilos

Population: 65,000 (90% human, 10% other)

Government: Monarchy

Ruler: Chief Endol (*human male* Brb18, CN)

Capital: Endol (16,000)

Major Cities: Martek (10,000), Calmer (8,000), Hardesk (5,000), Yoseva (1,000)

Language: Termanan

Religion: Tanil, Denev, Enkili

Currency: None official; most other currencies are accepted

Resources: Timber, cattle, produce, fish

Allies: Sunharrow, Karsian

Enemies: Blood Bayou, South Crilos

Leaving the chaos of Gray Isle behind, we shipped across the bloody ocean to the North Crilosian port of Endol, where the northern realm's chieftain holds court in a great longhouse decorated with the bones of dragons.

Once a single realm, Crilos was a source of brave if somewhat thick-headed barbarian warriors who helped fight the Charduni Empire. There was bad blood between the plains-dwelling tribesmen of the north and the hill-folk of the south, but difficulties had always been resolved through ritual challenges and combat. The influence of nearby nations seemed to affect the savages, persuading them to more civilized conduct, but when the Divine War, and Kadum's downfall shattered Termana, Crilos descended into civil war, finally emerging as two separate, barbaric realms.

This was, I fervently hoped, nearly the end of our long and painful expedition. I found the northern Crilosians to be a loud and boisterous race, given to brooding and depression, and bound by a rather silly and rigid code of personal honor. They revere Tanil, Denev and Enkili, but their damnable duels of honor offended me as a loyal follower of the Jester. Both men and women all consider themselves warriors, though their artisans produce remarkable woven goods, sculpture and musical instruments.

Physically, they're an impressive people, with hair ranging from dark brown to black and occasionally red, heavy bodies and broad shoulders. Men usually shave their beards, though a class of male warriors known as the "Bear Men" bafflingly avoids the intimate company of women and never cutting their hair or beards as a symbol of their dedication to their ideology.

The chieftain of North Crilos rules from Endol, advised by a council of sorcerers, witch doctors and conjurers - some are legitimate spellcasters, others frauds who have convinced everyone of their mystic powers. I found the notion both amusing and strangely reassuring, as if after all the travails of the past months my faith in the ever-present foolishness of the mortal races was reaffirmed.

We had to leave Endol in a hurry, however, though I refuse to accept any responsibility for causing it. Had I been fully informed that the male Crilosians were highly

BLOOD SEA

GRAY ISLE





KASIAVAEL
(SUNRISE REALM)

SLAVAEL
(SHIELD REALM)

PELEGAEL
(MIDLAND)

GANJULAEL
(FOREST REALM)

CHARDUNI
EMPIRE

CHITOVAEL
(SUNSET REALM)

DISTANCE IN MILES
0 500 1000

protective of their women, and disliked foreigners chatting them up in taverns, I'd have never taken that strapping warriorress upstairs and committed unnatural acts with her. When the male Crilosians battered the door down and caught us in a rather elaborate embrace, I was forced to flee in haste, then to inform my companions that we had to leave before the menfolk found us.

Kasavala cast me a dark look as we made our way out of the city gates and headed south, but I proclaimed my innocence.

"You are as innocent as a courtesan of Idra in a Shelzar tavern on the Night of Masks," she growled, and refused to speak to me for several days thereafter.

Even if I were gifted with the wisdom and insight of Enkili herself, I will never, ever understand women.

And maybe that is as it should be.

—*Diago*



Padrinola

Population: 200,000 (80% human, 10% half-elf, 5% halfling, 5% other)

Government: Monarchy

Ruler: Uthkal IV (*human/male Ari4/Ftr10, CN*)

Capital: Cavrios (38,000)

Major Cities: Leshar (18,000), Notaalam (12,000), Safral (8,000)

Language: Termanan

Religion: Enkili, Madriel, Belsameth

Currency: Gold crown (1 gp), silver regal (1 sp), copper penny (1 cp)

Resources: Fish, produce, cattle, iron, fruit

Allies: Blood Bayou

Enemies: Karsian, Sunharrow, Thorvalos

Like most of the human states on the gods-forsaken northwestern end of Termana, Padrinola is in a constant state of conflict with neighboring states, and is likewise under the less-than-benign influence of the Jack of Tears. I never did visit Padrinola, but my informants in other lands gave me a good overview of the kingdom and its "culture".

Padrinola was once a province of the Land of Chains, but with the collapse of the charduni state, the humans there threw off the dark dwarves' yoke, slaughtering their overlords and declaring that they were an independent kingdom. Padrinola's history since then has been violent and unsettled, with a long line of assassinated kings, rebellious nobles and scheming sorcerers. The land fell under the control of the Ghoulish King for a time, until the Sisters of the Sun's forces helped route the undead. Today, the land is ruled by King Uthkal IV, who has survived no less than six attempts on his life, and continues to prosecute the war against Thorvalos. He is known to be friendly with the Jack of Tears, and even has several of this strange ruler's servitor creatures serving as ambassadors in his court.

Padrinola is temperate in the south, with grassy hills and fertile valleys. In the north, the land is hotter and more humid.

The more urbane northerners hold the rustic southerners in some contempt. In the south, animals tend toward the mundane, with ordinary predators and prey dwelling in the woods and hills between valleys. The north is somewhat more bizarre, and titanspawn such as chimera, gibbering mothers, girallon and chaos beasts can be found in surprisingly large numbers. Many blame the closeness to the Blood Sea and the taint of Kadum, while others believe that these abominations are sent by the Jack of Tears to disrupt the kingdom.

The Padrinolans are a mercurial people, given to deep bouts of melancholy, explosions of temper and moments of feverish activity. They are, I am told, somewhat distrustful of outsiders, so I suppose it's all for the best that we never visited.

—*Diago*



Pelegael (the Midrealm)

Population: 250,000 (80% elf, 15% half-elf, 5% human)

Government: Rotating monarchy

Ruler: Princess Brigetta (*elf/female Rog5/Ftr3/Sor7, CN*)

Capital: Phadamera (50,000)

Major Cities: Shealas (40,000), Theran (25,000), Beldani (18,000), Haethea (9,000)

Language: High elven

Religion: None

Currency: None official; all forsaken elf currencies accepted

Resources: Timber, iron, silver, magic items

Allies: Forsaken elf realms

Enemies: Charduni Empire

After the sadness and emptiness of the Forest Realm, I almost welcomed the decadence of Pelegael.

"It is called the Middle Realm," Iskaela said, "and in many ways it shows our people at their worst."

If the folk of Ganjulael have turned inward and returned to their origins as they wait for oblivion, the Pelegaelans have embraced their curse with relish, and seem to see it as a providing them with license to behave however they choose.

Several of the old cities remain, and they are packed with mobs of forsaken elves, who treat each day as if it was the last of their existence, engaging in an endless series of revels, celebrations and debauches. No one cares much for the condition of these cities, and they are all in disrepair—building collapses, fires and other disasters are common, but the elves treat these as entertainment rather than tragedy.

Rulership of the land, Iskaela told me, was quite unusual. Every citizen has the right to be prince or princess, and the office is chosen by a sort of anarchic rotation system. A given prince serves an indefinite term of office, varying from a single day to several years, depending on how the people feel about him. A prince who stays on too long is liable to be forcibly ejected from office or even assassinated,

though the ready availability of resurrection magic makes murder a somewhat less serious matter than it is elsewhere.

Once a prince or princess decides (or is forced to decide) that it is time to go, a great revel is held, with all citizens invited. The ruler must devise a contest by which the next prince is chosen, and the contest is usually of a highly bizarre or decadent nature. They include vast drinking competitions with the last elf standing chosen as ruler; feats of skill including acrobatics, juggling and card tricks; extended orgiastic rites with the male or female who takes the most lovers in a given time awarded the throne; all these and more are devised by the jaded rulers of the Midrealm.

Our meeting with the current ruler, Princess Brigetta, proved enlightening. She was a striking woman - tall and stately, with an attractive figure and eyes of such a pale blue that they appeared nearly white. Her hair was elaborately coiffed and stuck full of jeweled sticks, and she was clad in an elaborate embroidered gown. Unlike other elves I had met, she seemed to have a fondness for body decorations. Her pointed ears sprouted a number of studs, silver spikes and carved spirals, and between her pale eyes was an elaborate triangular design of green, black and blue, set here and there with small gemstones. I could not tell if the decoration was cosmetic or a permanent tattoo. On her upper arm, the princess had what seemed to be a purposely-carved scar in the form of a round labyrinthine design.

The audience proved pleasant, for she was a talkative and friendly woman, though the circumstances were unusual and - to me at any rate - slightly disturbing. While we spoke, the princess allowed two strapping human males to

bind her in various postures with rough brown rope, and eventually bade them hoist her from the ceiling, leaving her hanging in mid-air, her arms, legs and midsection restrained. What she gained from this activity, I cannot say - certainly

it did not seem to make her any less glib and outgoing. We learned much of the nation's history, and the princess seemed remarkably honest about her realm's shortcomings.

Hers was a race who sought overcome the pain of existence by blotting it out with unrestrained indulgence, she said. Even she still felt the loss of the elven god, and even she sought greater and greater stimulation to help her dull the agony.

"Yes," she said, suspended from her ropes, her hair - now unbound - hanging down toward the floor, "I am the princess. But so lost to reality are my people, so absorbed in themselves are they that the office of princess is merely a license to indulge myself, and engage in greater excesses than my subjects."

Again, I departed with a sense of growing sadness and unease, thinking on the princess' words, and wondering what sort of woman she would be if her people were not so dark and corrupt.

As the chaos in the heart of the forsaken elves' souls continues to grow unchecked, the realm grows wilder and more dangerous. Duels and pitched battles between rival nobles or gangs grow more and more common. Though the body count from these fights is often high, resurrection by secretive priests of Enkili (see below) often restores the victims to fight again. Huge sections of

the capitol city of Phadaleria (once a center of learning and arcane research) have been destroyed in these battles, and no one cares enough to rebuild.

Many Midrealms revel in the practice of kidnapping humans, and do a brisk trade with slavers, pirates



and others. The Jack of Tears is said to be behind much of the slave trade to and from Pelegael. These kidnapped humans are treated as occasionally pleasurable possessions—violated, beaten and murdered without compunction. Half-breeds are especially common in the Midrealm, and there is no especial social stigma attached to such status. They revel and fight and engage in the land's decadent culture as enthusiastically as their purebred relatives.

The Pelegaelans have a few decent qualities, but they are more often than not hidden beneath layers of decadence and self-indulgence. Their warriors are among the finest in the elven realms—skilled, fearless and highly knowledgeable in the tactics of the charduni. Pelegaelans often serve with the Shield Realm's military, although they are often kept in units by themselves to keep from disrupting discipline. Midrealms often roam the continent, seeking adventure and exotic relief for their jaded senses. They are the nationality most likely to be encountered on our continent of Ghelspad, though given the Midrealmer's character, this is not necessarily a good thing.

The most tragic aspect of the forsaken elves' history is their isolation from their slain deity. Forsaken elfpriests can cast only the most basic divine magic, and even that appears to be fading as the last remnants of the lost god vanish. In the decadent Midrealm, however, a few elves have chosen a different path—the worship of the chaos-god Enkili.

Most forsaken elves profess nothing but contempt for those who have turned from worship of the forgotten god. Pelegael is different. While it is not openly embraced or accepted, the worship of Enkili is tolerated and secretly admired. While publicly paying homage to the lost god, some Midrealm clerics follow the Jester, gaining potent divine spells in the process. If an elven cleric happens to cast a powerful divine spell, most other Midrealms pretend not to notice. Those who need strong divine magic will surreptitiously visit these Enkili-worshippers, however, seeking aid in exchange for generous donations.

The most lucrative source of income for the chaos-priests is resurrection magic, for the Midrealms are a temperamental people, prone to violence. Duels of honor are common, and the fact that victims can often return to life after a deadly fight make them even more likely to happen. Again, the Midrealms find it politic not to notice the fact that a friend or acquaintance has died and returned to life, and the worship of Enkili continues to be the worst-kept secret in all of Pelegael.

I was eager to leave this place and move on to the Shield Realm, where Iskaela told me that the spirit of elven military greatness lived on.

— *Nabila*



Silverisle

Population: 150,000 (80% human, 10% halfling, 5% half-elf, 5% other)

Government: Republic

Ruler: First Knight Terusha (*human female* Pal20, LG)

Capital: Citadel of the Sun (12,000)

Major Cities: Tiloa (30,000), Nehala (20,000), Port Hendral (15,000), Amas (8,000), Ricea (5,000)

Language: Termanan

Religion: Madriel

Currency: Gold archon (1 gp), silverdeva (1 sp), copper angel (1 cp)

Resources: Produce, cattle, fish, timber, weapons, armor

Allies: Azale, Karsian, Sunharrow

Enemies: Blood Bayou

We never saw the wondrous Silverisle, home to the paladin Chemara and her order, the Sisters of the Sun. This didn't stop Kasavala and the other scholars from interrogating her about the order and its mission.

"We are the wardens of this region," Chemara told us. "Silverisle is located north of the Isle of the Dead, where the Ghoul King still dwells. It is our duty to keep the evil of the Isle of the Dead contained, and see to it that the Ghoul King's minions never again threaten Termana."

"Why do you not invade the isle, and destroy the dead once and for all?" Kasavala asked.

Chemara shook her head sadly. "The living cannot walk on the Isle of the Dead. Its power is inimical to us, and we cannot endure there for long. We struggle to find a way to withstand the death magics of the isle, but my order is not what it once was. We are among the last to believe that the Ghoul King is a threat. The rest of the continent... They have other things to concern them. Our priests and wizards continue to try to find a way to permanently lock away the Ghoul King, or to counteract the Isle of the Dead's foulness, but thus far we have had little success, and it is our greatest fear that one day the Ghoul King, or another like him, will rise once more and bring his terror back to our continent."

Since that time, Chemara told us, the Sisters of the Sun have been unwavering in their vigilance. Their knights travel the continent, doing good and defending the innocent, but their supreme duty, the defense of the land against the walking dead, is never far from their minds. The paradise that is Silverisle is a constant reminder to them of what is at stake—it is the land that was and, with the blessings of Madriel and the help of the gods, the land that yet will be. Of course, all this smarmy piety and goodness made me somewhat nauseous, but I kept reminding myself that Chemara *had* been instrumental in our rescue, and so held my tongue.

Blessed by the hand of Madriel herself, Silverisle is a vision of Seam's past, Chemara went on, virtually untouched by the Titanswar and swept free of titanspawn by the Sisters of the Sun. In the north, pleasant woods harbor nothing more fearsome than the occasional dire creature, while the central hills are home to farmers, woodsmen and small colonies of peaceful fey. The damage wrought by the Ghoul King's minions in the south is still evident in some places, however, where trees grow dark and twisted, or refuse to grow at all, and strange fogs gather on moonless nights. The walking dead are still an occasional problem in the south, but for the most part the sisters keep the isle free of such abominations.

If Chemara's description is to be believed, Silverisle is an unusual realm, largely free of titanspawn and unnatural creatures. In the south, a few undead still linger, but these are quickly tracked down and destroyed when they appear, and in the north a few dire creatures are known to roam, but for the most part the plants and animals of Silverisle are quite ordinary. Deer, wolves, rodents and many species of bird are to be found in the north. Wild goats, badgers and raccoons are common in the hills and the south. The Merciful River harbors numerous edible fish species, while otters and beavers are found along its banks and tributaries.

Despite her somewhat annoying selfless goodness, I found Chemara to be a charming companion (and even entertained thoughts of talking her out of that armor, but almost immediately discarded them), and when she left us at the Azalean frontier, I was sad to see her go. But I got over it quickly - civilization (or at least a reasonable facsimile) lay just north.

—Diago



South Crilos

Population: 60,000 (90% human, 10% other)

Government: Monarchy

Ruler: Chief Shelcha (*human male* Brb18, CN)

Capital: Agral (5,000)

Major Cities: Cholos (5,000), Kalthamo (4,000), Incar (2,000)

Language: Termanan

Religion: Enkili, Denev, Tanil

Currency: None official; most other currencies are accepted

Resources: Timber, cattle, produce, fish

Allies: Sunharrow, Karsian

Enemies: Blood Bayou, North Crilos

The end of our journey was near, for we learned that a Shelzari merchantman lay at anchor in the South Crilosian port of Kalthamo. The last of our funds went to lodging and passage back to Ghelspad, and we spent our last few days on Termana in the growing realization that it was all finally over.

Both halves of Crilos proved equally wild and untamed. Between cities the land is rugged, home to many species of wild animals, and occasional infestations of titanspawn such as manticora, trolls and mistwalkers.

Sometimes it seems that the more some people have in common, the more furiously they fight among themselves. I saw little difference between the barbaric, moody north Crilosians and the barbaric, moody south Crilosians. True, the southerners tend to have lighter skin and hair, and they speak Termanan with a slight brogue, but in the main their culture and outlook is almost identical to that of their northern cousins.

South Crilos, too, is ruled by a hereditary chieftain, advised by a council of tribal priests and sorcerers, and here too the worship of Tanil, Denev and Enkili is most com-

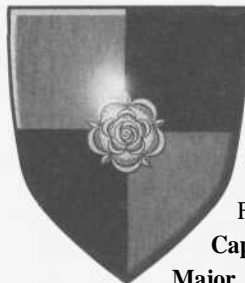
mon. The barbarians' code of honor is just as rigid and just as annoying, and as I had learned my lesson in the north, I contented myself with merely sitting in taverns and drinking, casting furtive glances at the strapping warrior women, and feeling an intense dislike for their overprotective men.

We were all far too weary to celebrate the eve of our departure, and as we boarded our ship home I was plagued by the fear that it was all a dream, that I was still a captive of the Jack of Tears. Pato seemed uncharacteristically unconcerned, however - the notion of returning to the Gamulganjus seemed unthinkable, and he was completely ready to journey to an entirely new continent. How the great brute would survive the intrigue and violence of Ghelspad is anyone's guess, but I suspect he will be well.

The waters of the Blood Sea foamed at our bow as we left Kalthamo harbor. Kadum's tomb was a place of horror, yes, but it was at least familiar horror, and the prospect of returning to Ghelspad, with its jealous husbands, corrupt guardsmen and castrating thugs was strangely comforting.

Yes, I'd return to this place. Possibly sooner than I'd like (but that depended on my judgment in choosing my bed partners), but for now I was going home, and that was enough for me.

—Diago



Sunharrow

Population: 60,000 (80% human, 10% half-elf, 10% other)

Government: Monarchy

Ruler: King Lanesh (*human male* Ftr16, LE)

Capital: Crylasta (10,000)

Major Cities: Brinan (8,000), Stalcho (6,000), Sethos (5,000)

Language: Termanan

Religion: Enkili, Belsameth, Chardun

Currency: Gold fist (5 gp), gold hand (1 gp), silver digit (1 sp), copper penny (1 cp)

Resources: Timber, fish, art work

Allies: North Crilos, South Crilos

Enemies: Blood Bayou, Karsian, Thorvalos

As we went on, the fearsome presence in the north became more and more obvious. The people refused to mention Blood Bayou or the Jack of Tears, and if they overheard us speaking of such things, they mumbled prayers and made warding gestures. Here, on the very frontier of Blood Bayou's influence, the Jack of Tears was no mere legend - he was a very real creature whose presence made the common people bolt their doors and lock their shutters at nightfall, and warn their children to be good, lest the sound of madcap piping come in the night.

And, at least according to Kasavala, that is truly a shame.

"This was once the most powerful and enlightened human nation, closely allied with the elven realm, and dedicated enemy of both the titans and the Land of Chains," she said as we passed through yet another tiny, gloom-

shrouded village. "Many elves came to live here, passing on their wisdom, even intermarrying with humans and producing half-elven prodigy. These half-elves became the region's most important councilors, and eventually, the land's ruler was chosen from among their number."

"Very pretty story," I replied. "It sounds to me as if this empire of elves simply found a new way to control the humans, by convincing them that their half-breed lackeys had access to esoteric wisdom that we short-lived apes lacked."

"After all this time together, you remain the same cynic you always were, Diago," Kasavala said, not without some trace of affection. "If I we weren't indebted to you for saving the expedition a half-dozen times, I'd probably leave you here."

I snorted. "You dissemble, my lovely elf-woman. I know that deep down you want to take me into your bed just like those elves of yore. That's the only reason you told me that story."

I admit that I got a smile for my efforts. Unfortunately, that's all I got.

Sunharrow was, indeed, once a very interesting realm, ruled by an elite class of half-elves, advised by the elven empire to the east, and served by human wizards, monks and scholars. Combined with the powerful elven magi from the Citadel of the Rose, the people of Sunharrow represented one of the only true threats faced by the Land of Chains. Even as the nightmare of the Divine War approached, the Sunharrowers schemed to force the charduni from western Termana. For a time, both human, elf, half-elf and charduni fought on the same side, but with Kadum's defeat, the continent reeled, and the chaos that followed sent the dark dwarves fleeing.

The war and its aftermath were not kind to Sunharrow. Most of the land's elven councilors perished in the war, and with the death of the elf-god, the survivors departed, never to return. In typical fashion, the humans remaining blamed their half-elf leaders for the disaster, and in a three-day bloodbath, stormed the kingdom's fine palaces, putting most of the half-breeds to death. After the war, Sunharrow was a rather wan shadow of its former self, a place of depopulated cities, shattered temples and ruined estates. A few half-elves lived on as outlaws and bandits, but in general the land was back in the hands of the humans. For all the good it did them.

Karsian briefly threatened conquest, but the prospect of governing such a chaotic and dispirited land stayed the war-queen's hand. Besides, the Ghoul King kept everyone fairly well occupied until 22 AV, when he was at last driven from western Termana. By this time, Sunharrow had fallen under the control of a warlord named Domarian, who ruled for a decade or so before having his throat slit by some jealous general.

Domarian's successors were a mixed lot, and all came to a bad end. Today, the land is in the hands of an ex-mercenary named Lanesh, and his band of rough and ready warriors, who took over the capitol eight years ago, and have ruled unchallenged since.

The realm is an Enkili-worshipper's dream, with communities and local rulers going their own way, making their own rules, and extracting their own prices for

protection of the locals. Almost anything you can think of is for sale here, as a consortium of merchant-lords (or, as I like to call them, merchant-thieves) controls trade, and deals with anyone who wants to come here.

The people are a polyglot, much like the far preferable and more joyful citizens of distant Azale. All are cynical, violent and grim, constantly keeping one hand on their purses and the other on their sword hilts. They remain in a near-constant state of conflict with surrounding human states, a situation that many blame on the Jack of Tears' machinations.

Many regions have gone over completely to anarchy and wilderness, with wild animals, titanspawn, and even Momus' minions holding sway. The Jack of Tears operates here with relative impunity, and his followers move unmolested.

Yes, it's a vision of Enkili's realm brought to Scarn, but I can't say that I liked it terribly. The threat of violence and mayhem kept me from investigating Sunharrow's feminine inhabitants, and Pato seemed almost fanatically concerned about my safety, insisting that I stay with the expedition at all times. The savage had a point, I had to admit, but it made the hot and humid nights in Crylasta even less bearable.

After about a week in this hellhole, almost anything would have been an improvement.

That, however, was when Kasavala announced that our next stop would be Blood Bayou, and we would be going as the personal guests of the Jack of Tears.

— Diago



Sylavael (the Shield Realm)

Population: 200,000 (80% elf, 15% half-elf, 5% human)

Government: Monarchy

Ruler: Queen Kathalema (*elffemale* Ftr20, CN)

Capital: Ulamakhe (50,000)

Major Cities: Paesha (25,000), Fort Ged (20,000), Anchoer (15,000), Utel (10,000)

Language: High elven

Religion: None

Currency: Gold hammer (1 gp), silver blade (1 sp), copper arrow (1 cp); gemstones are also used as currency in Sylavael

Resources: Arms and armor, iron, silver

Allies: Forsaken elf realms

Enemies: Charduni Empire

In some ways, I reflected, Chern's Curse had split the forsaken elves into nations that reflected facets of their character - the Forest Realm was that portion that sought to return to the land, and the Midrealm that of uncaring decadence. The third of the modern forsaken realms was Sylavael, known as the Shield Realm, and its character reflected the elves fierce, martial nature.

We were met at the frontier by a column of armored knights, mounted on horses of noble mein and intelligent bearing. These creatures, Iskaela told me, were as intelligent as their riders, and some claimed that they housed the souls of elves who had escaped Chem's curse. Regardless, both elf and horse regarded us with thinly-veiled hostility, and gazed at the Midrealms who accompanied us with outright contempt.

"You wish to see our realm?" demanded the leader, a frost-haired male with a stern, unwavering gaze. "If you have grown familiar with the excesses of your companions, you will find it a harsh and unforgiving place indeed."

I explained my mission, telling the officer that I was interested in establishing a basis for friendly relations between Ghelspad and the elven realms. My words were greeted without enthusiasm, but after a moment's thought, the officer indicated two riderless horses and motioned for us to follow.

The Shield Realm's ruler is known as the high marshal, and ever since the fall of Chern, that post has been held by a single woman - the warrioress Kathalema. Even in Ghelspad, I had read tales of this famous elf, and her fight with the charduni general Ixasamo along the River of Chains is the stuff of legends.

The Shieldrealms are a grim, dour and humorless people. They are dedicated primarily to one thing and one thing only - the defense of the realm (and, reluctantly, all other forsaken elfrealms) against the charduni.

Settlements are all fortified, and every elf is required to serve in the Shield Realm military. In time of war, this depopulated principality can still field a substantial army. The Sylavaelers' armor and weapons are among the finest in all of the Scarred Lands, and the rawest, least experi-

enced warrior wields arms of unbelievable beauty and quality. Even the common footsoldiers of Sylavael would prove a challenge to a paladin or vigilante of Ghelspad.

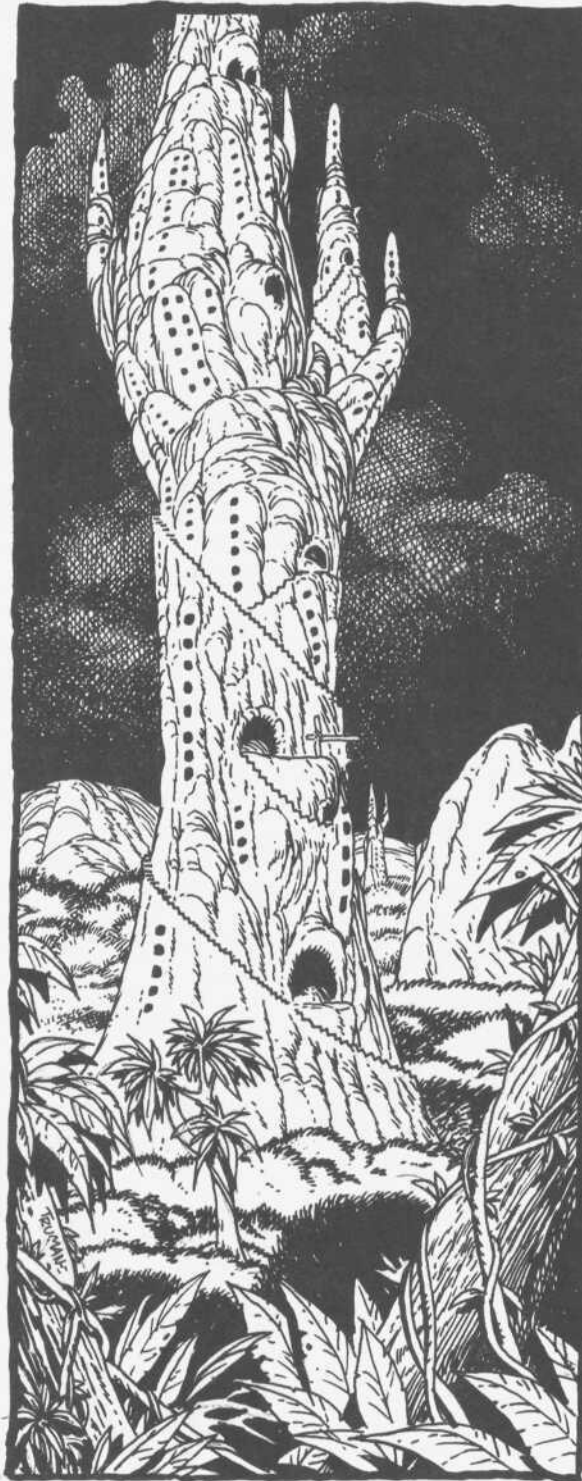
The Shield Realm's population is as low as those of the other kingdoms, however, and maintenance of such large forces requires recruits. For this reason, the Sylavaelans engage in abduction and the slave trade more than any other group of forsaken elves. Captives are not ill-treated, but are still forced to produce halfbreed offspring, who are immediately inducted into the realm's armed forces, supplementing the fading purebred forsaken elves. This realm has the highest number of half-elves in prominent positions, and Iskaela told me that some believe the pure breed strain will eventually die out, replaced by this new race.

The fortress of Ulamakhe stands on a rugged hilltop in the middle of the realm, surrounded on all sides by smaller forts, constantly patrolled and guarded. We passed by numerous checkpoints on the way to our audience, and had to confirm our identity and intentions before both soldiers and wizards armed with truth spells. When at last we reached the fortress itself, the sun was sinking low on the horizon, and we were both bone weary.

We spent much of the following day in the company of High Marshal Kathalema, who proved a surprisingly glib and outgoing woman, despite the fearful things she has seen and done during her long life. Though unlike many of her fellow monarchs, she did not actually witness Chern's fall, she was all too familiar with its aftermath, viewing her ex-

istence with the grim fatalism so common among her race.

The Shield Realm, we learned, was not always home to the finest elven warriors - that distinction went to an old principality, long since sunk beneath the blood waters of Kadum. After the disaster, however, Sylavael took the lead



in recruiting and training new soldiers, and massed much of its population on the frontier with the Land of Chains, ready to advance and smash the charduni at a moment's notice.

But Chern frustrated their plans. Much of its army was called away to defend against the titan, though Kathalema remained behind, in command of the much-reduced elven forces. And there she stayed for many years, facing the charduni and waiting for the inevitable confrontation.

It came in 46 AV, when the charduni finally moved against the elves, sending a massive army, supplemented by slave races and undead, to assail the frontier. Kathalema and her generals knew that if they fell, the entire realm, and possibly all forsaken elf lands, would fall as well, and determined to win at all costs.

The battle of the Chained River Fords lasted three long days, and in the end it was decided by a clash of generals, when Kathalema faced Ixasamo, elven steel against dwarven black iron. Though wounded and near to death, Kathalema nonetheless triumphed, cutting the dark dwarfs head from his body, then leading her people in a massive counterattack that routed the charduni and sent them fleeing back into their homeland.

Since that day, the Shield Realm has been the front line of the struggle with the charduni. Small conflicts have raged, each side raiding the other, mounting small expeditions into enemy territory, or probing defenses. Kathalema said that it was only a matter of time before the charduni came back to test her again, but this time she was not sure of the outcome. Dispirited, their ranks filled with half-elven levies, Sylavael warriors may not be able to withstand the Land of Chains.

We were not allowed to see the front, for the disposition and strength of elven troops there is a closely-guarded secret. Instead, we were granted an escort to the port city of Rhinthas, where we departed for the Southsea realm.

— *Nabila*

The Tepuje Cities

Population: Unknown

Government: Various

Ruler: Various

Capital: None

Major Cities: Buru (2,000), G'Sholi (1,800), Chukema (1,500), K!Nikwa (1,400), Kingil'shk (1,200), Khalak Vol (1,000), Mimodar (1,000), N'kiw (1,000)

Language: Gamuljan

Religion:

Currency: None; most transactions are by barter

Resources: None

Allies: None; the cities variously ally with and against one another

Enemies: None

In the northern regions of Gamulganjus Jungle, a number of odd formations rise above the forest canopy. These are called tepujes in the local tongue, and are

apparently the cores of ancient mountains or volcanoes. For all the world, they resemble sheer columns of rock, with a few hardy jungle plants clinging to their sides. The centers of these mighty formations are hollow, however, with springs or streams at the bottom, and rich jungle foliage growing in the deep, humid recesses.

When the people of the Gamulganjus discovered the true nature of these formations, it was only a matter of time before they began to tunnel into the stone, creating stairs, hallways, galleries and dwellings. The tepuje cities were born, and they stood strong, surviving even the horrors of the Titanswar. War and deprivation caused several of these cities to be abandoned, and the remainder to grow isolated and insular.

Today, eight of these cities remain, with populations varying from 1,000 to 2,000. Racially, they display characteristics of both the pale skinned northerners and the dusky, black-haired jungle humans. They grow food in the tepuje interiors, hunt in the jungles, and travel with the aid of great winged, gliding contraptions, whose original design dates back well before the Divine War.

I did not actually visit any of these cities, but saw them in the distance as we journeyed across the Gamulganjus. Pato warned me to stay away - the inhabitants were bad people, he said, who knew nothing about the jungle and preferred to live in isolation. They were doubtless evil sorcerers, he confided, and did not honor their ancestral spirits in the proper manner.

Pato admitted that the city-dwellers were more materially advanced than his people, and actually smelted metal, worked leather and crafted wood. Their weapons were greatly superior to those of the jungle-tribes, but their numbers were much smaller. Wars and skirmishes between the tepuje cities were common, often involving the local gnome and terali tribes as allies or victims. In addition to the flying vehicles, Pato claimed that some tepuje-dwellers had tamed giant birds to use as mounts, or used flying magic to travel from place to place.

The cities seemed quite fascinating to me, but I was forced to ignore them, for our companions were more interested in the jungle lowlands, where the gnomes and terali presented new and unique cultures for study.

— *Diago*



Thorvalos

Population: 100,000 (90% human, 10% other)

Government: Monarchy

Ruler: King Soelus (*human male* Ftr16, N)

Capital: Aesus (22,000)

Major Cities: Hostos (5,000), Myleas (1,000), Fort Martus (500)

Language: Termanan

Religion: Enkili, Belsameth, Chardun

Currency: Gold crown (1 gp), silver penny (1 sp), copper minim (1 cp)

Resources: Timber, produce, cattle



Allies: None

Enemies: Blood Bayou, Karsian, Sunharrow, Padrinola

Like other states in the region, Thorvalos was created in the wake of the collapse of the Charduni Empire. Also like these other realms, the land also fell under the Ghoulish King's domination for a time, and is today said to be secretly controlled by the Jack of Tears.

A warm and humid land, forested in the south, with bare hills in the north, Thorvalos has few large cities. Its population is divided among numerous small farming or fishing communities, with only the capitol of Aesus having a substantial population. This labyrinthine city is built of dark wood, surrounded by elaborate stone walls. In the center of the city, atop a high hill, rises the king's palace, said to be built on the foundations of an ancient titanspawn fortress.

The region's weather is especially tedious. When it is not raining, the realm is oppressively hot, and little work gets done in the hot months of summer. The people are generally easygoing, but are also clannish and prone to violence. They hate the Karsians and Sunharrowers with a rare passion, and anyone who does not adequately berate the nation's traditional foes is often visited with a savage beating. Needless to say, Thorvalans do not like foreigners. Skirmishes and outright battles between Thorvalos and neighboring nations are constant, but so far full-scale war has not erupted. Some writers speculate that this suits the Jack of Tears fine, keeping potential enemies at each other's throats and preventing the emergence of a truly powerful human nation. The Calastians are consummate politicians, however, and have managed to maintain relatively friendly relations with the hot-blooded Thorvalans.

Many strange plants and animals can be found in this region. Plants include bitter and carnivorous trees,

leeching willow, red colonies, assassin vine and tendriculos. Naga, slime reavers, spined lizards, mock dragons, ropers and hags of various sorts have been encountered within Thorvalos' borders, along with various minions of the Jack of Tears such as shadow jesters, dark harlequins and gator warriors. Some undead persist from the days of the Ghoulish King, or wander into the kingdom from Blood Bayou.

—Diago



Virduk's Promise

Population: 85,000 (80% human, 10% halfling, 5% half-elf, 5% other)

Government: Calastian colony

Ruler: Imperial Governor Duke Hynosu
(*human male* Ari11, LE)

Capital: Dragonport (20,000)

Major Cities: Queenshope (18,000)

Language: Calastian

Religion: All allowed, though worship of Chardun is officially encouraged

Currency: All currencies accepted

Resources: None

Allies: Calastia

Enemies: None

Our first destination on the continent of Termana was the crown jewel of Calastia's overseas colonies, the realm known as Virduk's Promise. We arrived in its capitol city, Dragonport, none the worse for our journey

across the Blood Sea and were immediately greeted by Calastian officials. In typical fashion, they were all smiles and comradeship, but I was not fooled, knowing that a friendly Calastian is usually hiding a dagger somewhere.

Dragonport certainly seemed to live up to Calastian propaganda claims that Virduk's Promise was a land of peace and prosperity for all. Its port facilities are excellent, and the city's bustling central core is a place of fine stone buildings, tree-lined streets and public parks. Beyond this, however, Dragonport grows somewhat rougher and more rustic with wooden buildings, dirt streets and few amenities. Our Calastian hosts were quick to point out that this was simply because the city was so young and had grown so fast — soon, they assured us, every citizen would live in a fine home.

We were housed in a newly-constructed ambassadorial residence, and constantly watched by Calastian agents, who barely bothered to conceal their presence. Daily tours of the city and surrounding lands were intended to convince us that Virduk's Promise was a boon to both Termana and Ghelspad, and represented no threat to the outside world. We saw happy peasants, small but pleasant villages, newly-built roads, polite soldiers and well-behaved children. All arranged for our benefit, I was certain.

Calastian administration was an enormous boon to the region, or so Governor Hynosu told us. In the wake of the Divine War, the struggle against the Ghoull King, the rise of Blood Bayou, and the constant conflict between the humans of the region, this area remained a savage, unclaimed region, home to barbaric humans, savage gnoll tribes, wandering undead and titanspawn. With the arrival of Calastian colonists, who began appearing soon after Virduk ascended the throne, all that began to change and today, if Hynosu is to be believed, Virduk's Promise is the garden spot of Termana.

Rumor has it that Hynosu was not here voluntarily, but was instead sent to Virduk's Promise after inadvertently offending Queen Geleeda. Desperate to prove himself, Hynosu has grown ruthlessly efficient, and any claims that he makes about the Promise's peace, prosperity and security should be taken with several wagonloads of salt.

After the insincerity of Hynosu and his cronies, it was with great relief when, in the company of the vigilant Tyvos and under the cover of some simple concealment spells, we slipped out of the city late one night, intent on exploring some of the territories claimed by King Virduk.

We discovered that real Calastian authority only exists within a few days' march of Dragonport and the other large city, Queenshope. Beyond these two enclaves, the region is a rough frontier province, and a place of constant conflict. Various humanoid tribes still occupy these regions, though Calastian pressure is slowly pushing them into the plains of the south and the mountains of the west. The region's wilder places are home to numerous dangerous monsters, including powerful titanspawn.

The southern portions of the Promise harbor semi-nomadic tribes of gnolls, as well as small bands of athach and bugbear. The rugged west, including the treacherous eastern fringe of the Blood Bayou, are home to bonewings, ghouls and night terrors. Late one night, as the wind howled, we fancied we could hear chanting in a titanspawn dialect that normally is spoken only by the foul race of hags, but we were never able to confirm their presence in the area. The mountainous west is known to contain hobgoblins and more gnolls and bugbears. We heard tales of creatures that could only have been blight wolves and moon daemons.

The inhabitants of Virduk's Promise are a varied lot, ranging from the cold-blooded mercenaries who patrol the frontier and hold the small forts to the deported criminals and poor Calastians taken by press gangs and shipped here to fend for themselves. Many adventurous Calastians venture here voluntarily, drawn by tales of a land of beauty and riches where hard work and determination are richly rewarded.

By the time they arrive here and discover that reality is nowhere near as rosy as that described by Calastian officials, and only the most virtuous or lucky of colonists are allowed to settle in the peaceful lands near Queenshope and Dragonport, most colonists accept this philosophically, and settle down to help clear land, expand the two cities or patrol the slowly-expanding frontier.

Some, especially those of criminal background, prove incapable of life in the colony, and are "offered" lands outside of the patrolled areas to cultivate for their own, as per the agreement that they signed in Calastia. The great nation of Virduk promised them land - but it never claimed how tenable or protected it would be.

This has led to the creation of a number of plantations, wherein a strong, charismatic or simply ruthless new land-owner gathers these outcast colonists under his banner, consolidating their lands under his "guidance and protection," forming the illusion of a community of landowners that is actually a new serfdom. Many of these plantations exist along the western fringe of Virduk's Promise, right up along the edge of the bayous there. The plantation-lords of these areas are often the boldest and most free from the influence of Calastian officials, for their demesnes are difficult to reach, plague-ridden and whispered to be under the dominion of the Laughing Lord of the Blood Bayou. Certainly, during our time here, we saw several of the parchment fliers that heralded the coming of the Carnival to various of these settlements.

After several weeks of surreptitious exploration, we met with our contact from the forsaken elf realms, a scout named Iskaela. She had presented my credentials to all of the forsaken elf rulers, and informed me that all had agreed to audiences. Leaving Tyvos to his duties, I accompanied Iskaela to Queenshope where, disguised as ordinary travelers, we boarded a human merchant ship bound for the forsaken elf principality of Ganjulael, the Forest Realm.

— *Nabila*

Chapter Three: Places of Note

Hills and Mountains

Angel Hills: Habitation in these green, pleasant hills consists of scattered farms, grazing land and small villages. Like the Northwoods, the Angel Hills are sparsely populated, but constantly patrolled for any sign of titanspawn. Several regions are known to be inhabited by fey creatures; these areas are avoided by most humans, who both respect and fear the fair folk and their powers.

Angry Hills: Forming the spine of the island of Crilos, the Angry Hills are frequented by local hunters and adventurers, proud of their barbaric heritage and eager to confront the beasts that dwell there. Sometimes greater danger comes from fellow hunters and travelers, however, as bands of northern Crilosians will battle southerners as enthusiastically as any titanspawn. A few intrepid dwarf miners have investigated the region's resources, and found that the hills are rich in silver. A few small mining colonies have been founded, but so far the Crilosians seem unwilling to do anything with the hills other than hunt there.

Bonewind Hills: A subtle foretaste of the Iron Sands Desert, the Bonewind Hills are a desolate place, haunted by the children of the titans and inhabited by hostile, near-mad human tribes. After our ascent up the Infinite Stair, the thunder of Lethene's Falls still echoing in our ears, we had hoped to find a few days respite. Alas, it was not to be, for conditions at the top of the Wall of Clouds proved so hostile that we had to move out almost immediately.

The wind always blows here, but then given the name, that's probably pretty obvious. The nickname, according to Kasavala's old text, came from the deadly winds of Lethene, that were said to strip victims to the bone in an instant.

Very few things dwell in these hills, though the children of the vanished Dame of Storms may live here, reveling in the howling gales that may be the last breath of that most mysterious and deadly titaness.

Our journey across the hills was agonizingly slow. Several tents and much equipment was lost to the howling fury of the wind, but greater challenges awaited us, in the hellish expanse to the southwest known as the Iron Sands Desert.

Chained Mountains: In many ways, these jagged peaks saved the Charduni Empire. Impassable save at a few locations, they are like a rampart guarding the flank of the dark dwarves' homelands. Almost nothing lives among these peaks — certainly nothing edible, and expeditions across the mountains always carry extra supplies in case they are snowed in or trapped by avalanches. The great charduni city of Chorach crouches on the eastern slopes of this range, the deadly peaks surrounding it granting the inhabitants an additional measure of security.

There are legends of tall, impossibly thin and leprous creatures that dwell beneath the peaks of the northern Chained Mountains, though none of the elves of the area will acknowledge these whispers, and change the subject abruptly when asked.

Dragonstooth: The mightiest peak in the terrible Chained Mountains, Dragonstooth rises up majestically, its steep slopes

usually clear of snow, forming a great black spike of granite that is used as a convenient landmark for travelers.



Hunters' Heights: These wild, forested hills are located in the middle of Gray Isle, and are aptly named, for the rugged locals often stalk dangerous animals in the region. Animals both mundane and dire abound here, as do small bands of gnolls, bugbears and ogres. More dangerous titanspawn such as trolls and hill howlers are not unknown, either, and are considered especially challenging trophy beasts.

Mount Syvos: A single peak rises from the center of the Skysight Realm. Called Mount Syvos in honor of an ancient ruler, the peak once housed a vast archive of magical and historical information, in chambers hollowed out from the living rock. The cataclysm caused by Kadum's fall and the subsequent deluge that devastated Termana caused many of these chambers to collapse, and destroyed the entrances to the mountain stronghold, trapping the elves within.

The Mouth of Gaurak: A treacherous pass through the Chained Mountains, the Mouth of Gaurak is said to be haunted, both by spirits and by titanspawn. It is one of the few ways across the mountains, however, and it is regularly traversed by charduni slave caravans, who venture into the Iron Steppes to buy or capture slaves.

Pleasant Hills: Gentle heights that grace the center of Ehitovael, the Southsea Realm, the Pleasant Hills live up to their name, and are largely free of titanspawn or truly dangerous creatures. Often visited by forsaken elves who wish to ease the burdens of daily existence, it is said that they retain some of the ancient rejuvenative magic of the pre-war universe, and that several days there can heal wounds, ease sickness and restore the soul.

Rocks of Carnage: Like the Sentinels and the Crown and Scepter, these jagged rocks are the peaks of mountains that once rose in the region before Kadum's Deluge sank the land beneath waves of blood. The Rocks of Carnage, however, have one especially disturbing feature — they move. Charts of the region simply show dashed circles where the rocks are thought to be located, for they are rarely in the same place for more than a few days, often shifting miles in a single day. Why they move, no one can say, but scholars speculate that it is due to Kadum's restless shifting and instability in the sea floor. Regardless, the Rocks of Carnage are well-named, for unwary captains have been known to plow headlong into the rocks, assuming that their positions are fixed. Blood Sea sharks, razorfin dolphins, sea devils and pisceans lurk in the waters nearby hoping to share in the bounty when an unlucky ship comes to grief.

Slate Hills: These hills form the frontier between Virduk's Promise and the forsaken elf realms to the east. They are home to gnolls, hobgoblins and hill giants, with the occasional titanspawn infestation to keep things interesting. So far, neither the Calastians nor the elves have bothered to claim the region, preferring to keep it as an effective bar to invasion.

Tattered Hills: The barren highlands that lie between Blood Bayou and the human nations to the south are largely avoided by sensible inhabitants, for they harbor numerous predators, blood sea mutants, titanspawn, and Blood Bayou patrols that have been

known to raid into neighboring regions. On occasion, dignitaries from other countries are allowed to cross the hills with an escort of dark harlequins or gator warriors, but most traffic between Blood Bayou and the outside world takes place by sea.

The Thorns: These jagged, impassible mountains surround the Citadel of the Rose, providing its immortal inhabitants with some measure of protection from the army of demons that surrounds them. Magically protected from the ravages of wind and time, they are as sharp and steep as when they first reared from the surface of Scarn, and the sorcerers of the citadel have set many fearsome beasts to patrol their vicinity. Griffons, pegasi, chimera, couatl, and even the mighty ancient dragons who share the citadel with the immortals can be seen flying above the peaks of the Thorns, seeking out foes who would creep too close. Only a few secret, well-hidden routes through the Thorns exist, and these are well guarded and patrolled constantly. So far the mountains have kept the citadel and its inhabitants safe, for the only practical way of storming the citadel is from the air, and the elves formidable allies and magical defenses have so far repelled all assaults.

Titansforge Mountains: The Titanspire is merely the most prominent and important height in the range known as the Titansforge Mountains. Legend holds that Forge of the titan Golthagga was actually located in these mountains, and if that is the case, its scholarly value alone would be considerable. Today, these mountains are not inhabited by any divine race, but the folk of Virduk's Promise tell many wild stories of storm children, thunder kites, and less familiar creatures dwelling there. Some of my informants claimed that all known goblin species inhabit the region, as well as several breeds unknown to our science. One individual, a somewhat mad old man in Queenshope, claimed that there was an especially powerful breed of goblins there known as the rock goblins, whose inherent skills with geomancy and other elemental magic make them one of the deadliest of their kind. Other tales tell of a strange race of carnivorous tentacled humanoids known as mind flayers, who devour the brains of intelligent races, and use the powers of the mind in a manner reminiscent of the ancient slarecians, who are otherwise unknown on Termana.

Thunderspike Mountains: The most prominent feature in the human lands of Termana, the Thunderspikes run squarely down the center of the continent's northwestern branch. It's a hazardous place, with few safe passes and the expected infestations of titanspawn. Weather in the mountains is foul, as well, for many believe that Gulaben and Lethene fought here once in one of countless internecine titan spats, and left some of their raging essence behind. Deadly wind storms have been known to appear out of a clear blue sky, and blizzards are not unknown even at the height of summer. Creatures such as thunderkites, storm children and a predatory species called sleet-wolves are far more common here than elsewhere on Scam.

Titanspire: South of the Centaur Plains lies this sheer spike of rock, rising from the rocky foothills of the Titansforge Mountains. While outwardly, it is as uninhabited as the rest of the area, there is a well-hidden

Calastian fortress at the foot of the spire, manned by elite Calastian soldiers. The spire itself is tall and featureless with smooth, finished sides. It is apparently not a natural feature, and the Calastians seem to believe that it is of titan manufacture. A small settlement of Calastian scholars, spellcasters and military leaders has been built at the foot of the spire itself, and they are apparently investigating ways of actually entering the spire. It is not known whether they have yet succeeded in this endeavor, but rumor has it that Royal Vizier Antreas of Calastia has personally visited the site twice, leading many to speculate that Virduk sent colonists to Termana solely to provide support for this mysterious mission.

The Wall of Clouds: The jungle lowlands of the Gamulganjus are separated from the rest of Termana by this sheer cliff, rising thousands of feet and stretching for thousands of miles. It is a truly magnificent sight, and quite a discouraging one to the weary traveler who is sick of the jungle. Soaring into the misty sky, interrupted here and there by mighty waterfalls, the Wall seems utterly impassible. Fortunately, a few ancient pathways still exist, most notably the Infinite Stair, which scales the wall behind Lethene's Falls.

The Wolf's Teeth: These two dire-looking peaks guard one of the few safe passages through the Thunderspike Mountains. A dry riverbed runs between them—rough and rocky, strewn with talus, but passable. Duties on caravan traffic between Azale and Virduk's Promise are a major source of income for both these nations, and it is in their rulers' interests to keep the pass open and safe. Mercenaries and soldiers from both countries patrol the pass, keeping it free of titanspawn and bandits, but from time to time bands of gnolls and hobgoblins make life difficult for both the guards and the caravans they protect.

Winter Peak: The tallest mountain in the Thunderspikes, Winter Peak has never been scaled, though legend holds that there is a cave at its peak containing artifacts of enormous power, as well as a dangerous guardian beast. Whether these tales are true or not is debatable, though a small but steady trickle of adventurers continues to venture there each year, hoping to be the first to climb the imposing peak and either confirm the rumors or set them permanently to rest.

Lakes and Rivers

Antareas River: The Antareas cuts through the center of the human nation of Karsian. The Karsian capitol of Regama lies along this river, and the water downstream is said to be almost unbearably foul.

Chardun's Road: Named in honor of Calastia's patron deity, this river cuts through the center of Virduk's Promise and flows past the capitol city of Dragonport. It yields some untainted freshwater fish, and also carries gold down from the Thunderspike Mountains, so a number of small fishing and prospecting settlements line its shores.

Cursed River: Flowing into the depths of Blood Bayou, the Cursed River also forms the border between Sunharrow and Thuvalos. Occasionally bloody water from the Bayou backwashes into the river, bringing

strange creatures and mutating ordinary creatures. The Cursed River is not bridged anywhere, and can be crossed only at treacherous fords.

Lake Minagan: South of the Centaur Plains lies the picturesque Lake Minagan, a clear and unpolluted body of water that is most famous for the unique reptile species known as the aquantis.

Lethene's Falls: Possibly because of the nature of the stone in this region, Lethene's Wind River has not cut a gorge into the Wall of Clouds, but instead cascades thousands of paces down into the heart of the Gamulganjus Jungle. It was a mighty sight indeed, but for our expedition, footsore and weary of the rainforest, it was also a discouraging one, for it meant that there was no way out of the lowlands here.

At least that is what we thought until Pato spoke up, telling us of a wondrous thing, a passage upward, hidden behind the cascade, known as the Infinite Stair. After a few days' searching, we found this wondrous thing, and began to make our way up the Wall of Clouds.

Lethene's Wind River: Fast, dangerous and deep, the waters of Lethene's Wind plunges down from the Bonewind Hills, then cascading magnificently over the Wall of Clouds to plunge thousands of feet into the Gamulganjus.

Merciful River: This broad and pleasant river flows from the northern highlands, past the Citadel of the Sun. It is the island's primary route for commerce and transportation, and many small fishing and farming villages nestle against its shores.

Middle River: Somewhat unimaginatively named, the Middle River is the primary route from the northern Chained Mountains to the sea. It forms the frontier between the Middle and Shield forsaken elf realms.

Mottled River: Muddy and silt-choked in places, the Mottled River is not easily navigable, but is the closest thing to a central transportation system that the Gray Isle has. Its rivermen are tough, resourceful and insular, remaining aloof from their boisterous brethren.

River of Chains: This broad, shallow river forms the frontier between the Charduni Empire and the forsaken elves' Shield Realm. In the decades since the end of the Divine War, the river has been the scene of much conflict, from minor skirmishes between scouting parties to full-scale battle. The bloodiest of these fights took place in 46 AV, when the charduni, under General Ixasamo attempted to force their way across the river as a prelude to full-scale invasion. In the battle's decisive moments, the forsaken elf queen Kathalema fought the charduni general in the middle of the river while the two armies paused to watch. When Ixasamo fell beneath Kathalema's blade, the forsaken elves surged across the river, breaking the charduni army and forcing the dark dwarves to retreat. Several smaller battles have been fought since, and the charduni are said to be massing another army for a new assault on the Shield Realm.

Semdar River: Deep and green, the Semdar joins with the Uradisa River south of the Kingil'shk tepuje. Human villages line much of the Semdar's length, for it is rich in edible fish and aquatic plants.

Sickle River: This narrow, rocky river flows down from the Angry Hills, forming the frontier between North and South Crilos.

Skysight River: This river forms the frontier between the Skysight and Southsea forsaken elf realms.

Starshine River: The broad, crystalline Starshine River flows along the border between the Forest and Middle forsaken elven realms.

Uradis River: This fast-flowing river runs from the southern Chained Mountains, cutting a deep gorge through the Sunhammer Plains and flowing down into the Gamulganjus jungle. The river grows broader and deeper in the jungle, harboring crocodiles and many species of fish.

Whiteflood River: The Whiteflood River marks the Thuvalos/Virduk's Promise frontier. Like the Cursed River, it is sometimes polluted by Kadum's blood, but is fairly quick-flowing, so such things are rare. Most of the time the Whiteflood yields a reasonable catch of fish, and is navigable for most of its length.

Forests and Jungles

Calm Woods: This thick, ancient forest occupies the southern third of the Pelegael, or Middle Realm of the forsaken elf principalities. Its name is appropriate, though the calm felt there is not an especially pleasing one. It is the calm of an old, changeless forest that is inhabited only by memories, and occasionally by the wandering spirits of the elves who perished in the Divine War. Those who venture there in search of adventure, treasure or excitement invariably return changed—darker, sadder and more melancholy for the experience.

Dire Woods: Crouched at the foot of the northern Thunderspike Mountains, the Dire Woods are aptly named, for dire creatures are common there and possessed of a highly aggressive nature. Tribes of kobolds, solitary ettercap, bands of trolls and other hostile humanoids also lurk in this shadowy region, periodically raiding into human lands for plunder, slaves and food. The woods' grim nature is usually blamed on the proximity to Blood Bayou, and the malign influence of the titans, but some rumors tell of a race of odd fey or elven beings who dwell in the depths of the forest and rescue travelers from the dire beasts and humanoids. In the opinion of many, this is simply wishful thinking. A few hardy souls have carved out communities on their outskirts, felling timber and hunting for their livelihood.

Gamulganjus Forest: The Gamulganjus (which my scholarly companions continually reminded me) means "Mighty Forest" in the ancient high elven tongue, is a jungle that makes even the thickest and most disease-infested woodland in Ghelspad look like King Virduk's summer garden. Crawling with reptiles, swarming with insects, full of raucous birds of all shapes and colors, criss-crossed by treacherous streams, and thick with undergrowth, the Gamulganjus is a hot and humid hell on Scarn. Not a moment went by when I was not soaked in sweat, swarmed by bloodsucking parasites and deafened by the screeches of birds (by day) or the whine of insects (by night). Every afternoon the rain pours down like a million hammers, and every morning the trees are shrouded in heavy, clinging fog.

The jungle lands are quite flat, interrupted here and there by massive stone formations known as tepujes (see the Tepuje Cities entry for more information on these unique locations). Here and there, one can see great tree-covered mounds rising from the jungle, but these are apparently the sites of ancient temples, raised up to honor the titans. Long since abandoned, these temples remain a tempting lure for explorers, who seek to plumb their humid, unexplored depths and find the treasures said to be hidden within.

One common legend in the region is that of the Lost Cities of the Lotus—marvelous cities that once thrived here, but were swallowed up by the jungle when their rulers became lost in lotus-dreams and neglected their kingdoms. Fortunately, my companions were more interested in academic knowledge, and made no attempts to find any lost cities.

The region is rich in wildlife, as I am sure one of the expedition's members will tell you (at length). Insects, reptiles, amphibians, predatory cats, rodents, and more are found here in abundance. Of course, there are monstrous denizens lurking in the thick green foliage. Carnivorous plants, ropers, otyugh, tendriculous, manticores, giant spiders and hostile fey creatures are all listed in the endless scholarly books cited by my companions. Pato claimed that two green dragons once terrorized his tribe, but that it was long ago, possibly before the Divine War.

Intelligent inhabitants of the area include the omnipresent humans—slightly-built, dark-skinned tribesmen with black hair and eyes—and tribes of reptile-folk—including lizard men, troglodytes and a somewhat more robust variety of our own asaathi snake-men. Two very unusual races are also found in the jungle, though we only directly encountered one—the diminutive humanoids known as gnomes. These creatures are retiring, insular beings who live harmoniously with the spirits of the forest, subsisting on nomadic hunting and fishing. It is said that the gnomes hold many secrets about the curative and magical qualities of jungle plants and animals, and that their shamans are among the most powerful in all of the Scarred Lands. They are also said to be ferocious warriors if called upon to defend their chosen territory, and few human tribes are willing to fight them.

Elves, dwarves and halflings seem to be largely absent from the Gamulganjus, leaving it to the region's other non-human race. The terali resemble upright jungle cats—leopards and panthers, in fact—and are known to be fierce, territorial, warlike and honorable. We learned much about them, but most of this was second-hand from local human tribesmen. The leopard-folk live in tribes of up to 200 members, fight with spears and clubs, practice magic that seems druidic in nature, but appears to derive from some power other than Denev or the other titans. Normally spotted, about one in 20 terali is born jet-black, and talented in the sorcerous arts. These individuals, known as marked ones, hold great influence over terali daily life, but are also schooled in a mystical philosophy that holds them aloof from ordinary mortals and demands that they wander the region, seeking wisdom and enlightenment.

Our informants were the members of the N'juk tribe, a surprisingly companionable group of humans whom we

met about a week into our journey. We spent several days with them, resting and recuperating, and enjoying the pleasure of their hospitality. Personally, I enjoyed the hospitality of several of the tribe's young women, much to the disgust of Kasavala and the other scholars' distaste. However, the tribal elders seemed to have no great objection to my bedding these delightful creatures. Once we had learned the rudiments of the N'juk language, the tribe's chieftain, a vastly fat man named Unoro, informed us that these girls were all his daughters and that now they had gained great spiritual energy by cavorting with me. I was flattered.

I was less flattered when Unoro informed me that I was now brother to his youngest son, a lad named Pato. As it turned out, Pato was unusual for his race — he was nearly a full head taller than me and could uproot a massive jungle tree single-handedly. Pato, we were told, was to accompany us back to our distant land, where he would learn of our ways and return with riches. Despite my attempts to dissuade the chief, he was insistent, and eventually Kasavala, eager to have a genuine jungle guide and friend who was fluent in the local languages, told me to shut up.

We left the N'juk, Pato in tow, and continued into the jungle. As it turned out, Pato was a valuable companion and over the subsequent months, we all became fast friends. He was to prove invaluable near the end of our journey, when we faced the evil of the Jack of Tears.

The religious habits of the local races proved quite noteworthy. While the titans once held sway in the Gamulganjus, the Divine War largely passed the place by, leaving the inhabitants to form their own beliefs. The

worship of ancestral spirits, nature gods and animistic totems became common, and the traditional eight gods of our pantheon are all but unknown here. Outsiders who know of the Gamulganjans and their scandalous ways often refer to the jungle as the Land Without Gods for this reason.

There are times — especially when I'm convinced that the gods are merely toying with us, and are little more than the titans in nicer clothes — that I begin to see the wisdom of this approach.

Northwoods: Mixed pine and oak woods cover the northern third of the island. A few small villages can be found here, home to woodsmen, hunters and miners. Human impact is minimal, however, and the woods remain largely untouched. The Sisters, along with rangers and local inhabitants, keep a close watch out for titan spawn, but Madrid's blessing continues to be strong, and most of the woods' inhabitants are of relatively mundane nature.

Yellow Jungle: The western third of the Gamulganjus presents a most unusual sight — the trees and plants there are all of a yellow hue, rather than the traditional (and I must admit, somewhat boring) green. The reason for this is not known, but of course that didn't stop the scholars of our party from speculating endlessly — residual titanic energy, extradimensional biological influences, alternate bionomic auras, someone forgot to water them, and so on. As it is we did not actually enter the Yellow Jungle, though we were able to glimpse it off in the distance. Pato told us that the place was (wait for it...) cursed, and controlled by a race of especially powerful

and hostile lizard-folk, who built stone cities and sacrificed their victims at the tops of vast pyramids. He said that there were also humans and gnomes in the region, but that they all suffered under the domination of the reptile-men. I can't



vouch for the truth of these tales, but other than the fact that everything he said was laced with primitive superstition and other nonsense, Pato always proved a reliable informant. Perhaps one day someone will explore this fascinating region. Someone else, for I have no wish to do so.

Plains, Glades and Grasslands

Bleeding Fields: In the north of the Shield Realm lies an ancient battlefield where it is said that an old elven hero once defeated the hordes of a mad demigod or demon-lord (the legends are not entirely clear on the foe's identity). As is common in traditional elven tales, the forces of good were victorious, but their joy was hollow, for many died, and the battlefield remained haunted by their memories, and by the demonic creatures spawned by the foe. Today, the fields are avoided by all but the most foolhardy, for noncorporeal undead and outsiders are known to dwell there still. The armor, weapons and treasures of the ancient combatants are there for the taking, as well, though few who go to this place return.

Centaur Plains: As their name suggests, these vast grasslands are home to savage centaur tribes who fight ceaselessly among themselves, and with the human, athach, gnoll and bugbear bands that also inhabit the region. The centaurs are highly xenophobic, and often attack members of other races on sight.

The region's humans - known collectively as the Ulante - are somewhat more tolerable. They are fierce and warlike, but are not overtly hostile to other humanoids, feeling that any foe of the centaurs is a potential friend. Dark-skinned, tall and leanly muscular and fond of piercing their bodies with rings of bronze and silver, they are nomadic cattle-herders, driving their beasts from place to place as the climate dictates. The Ulante are led by hereditary chieftains who have absolute authority over their people. Constant warfare with the centaurs and gnolls has honed the Ulante into a potent fighting force; all males and females who agree not to marry or bear children, are trained in the use of the spear and club.

The plains harbor many species of herd animals, as well as the predators that pursue them, such as lion, leopard and cheetah. Bulette, ankheg, wyvern, howler, and plaguecats have all been sighted here, and it is known that several bands of grotesques and grotesque herders wander the plains as well. Wild muskhorn once thrived here, but pressure from the wandering Ulante and their domesticated cattle has reduced their numbers considerably.

Iron Steppes: West of the Chained Mountains lies a region that the dark dwarves have never been able to fully conquer. The Iron Steppes are hot and dry in the summer months, cold and bleak in winter, and scourged by fierce winds throughout the year. The steppes hold a number of valuable resources, however — several dry river washes are rich with gold, and some of the savannah grasses provide useful components for spells, medications and narcotics. This has led to several conquest attempts by the charduni, all of which have ended in defeat. The harsh conditions of the plains tax even the hardy dark dwarves, and the lamia and human tribes who live there have invariably finished the job.

The lamia are consummate mobile troops, and the charduni have never had a reliable cavalry. Invariably, the charduni meet with initial success, smashing several groups of foes and forcing the remainder to flee. The plains tribes, both human and lamia then unite and cut the invaders to pieces with hit-and-run tactics. The last invasion, in 132 AV, ended when the charduni general Axamoxes, was captured, staked out on the plains, and devoured by jackals. This has not dissuaded the One in White from planning another campaign, this time with a new horde of slave-cavalry and Chardun-slain to protect his precious charduni infantry. Raiding parties from the empire continue to enter the steppes, taking captives for use as slaves in the Land of Chains.

The Iron Steppes are also home to tribes of wild kobolds, steppe trolls and ogres, as well as deadly creatures such as barghest, dire lions and naga. More mundane beasts include muskhorn, antelope, jackals and hyena. The human nomads tell a story of a horrific beast created by Hrinruuk the Hunter for his amusement that can only be the legendary tarrasque, but fortunately legend holds that the creature sleeps for long periods of time before emerging to wreck havoc, much like the titans themselves were wont to.

The Song-Glade: In the distant past, when it is said that the elves and dragons dwelled together in a peaceful alliance — before the scourge of the charduni brought blood and slavery to the continent — the leaders of the two great races met in this peaceful meadow. During the day, they discussed matters of state, magic, the titans, and issues relating to the health and happiness of their respective peoples. At night, however, the elves and dragons would join together in song and dance, a strange and wondrous event over field and in the sky that lasted until the following dawn. Today, with the dragons gone and the once-mighty elves reduced to a sad remnant, the Song-Glade lies largely forgotten. A dwindling handful of very old elves sometimes make pilgrimages to the glade, but the song, dance and celebration has long since vanished. The glade remains a place of pristine beauty, untouched by the evils of the Divine War, and uncontaminated by the touch of titans or gods. No living beings guard the place, but legend holds that the departed spirits of both elves and dragons will rise up to defend the glade should it ever be threatened.

Oceans, Seas and Islands

The Blood Sea: The blood of the cursed titan Kadum stains the seas to the north of Termana, just as it does the seas south of our own continent of Ghelspad. The hazards of this body are well-known, from the corsairs close to Ghelspad to the pisceans out to sea, and the minions of Queen Ran the kraken nearer to Termana, where it is said that the titan Kadum lies imprisoned. The blood of Kadum still stains the waters in the north of Termana, and blood-tainted creatures are common throughout this region.

The Cerulean Ocean: To the south of Termana, this vast blue ocean rolls onward for thousands of miles, free of the taint of Kadum. It remains largely unexplored, but is said to harbor many creatures that are unknown in the polluted regions surrounding the Blood Sea.

Isle of the Dead: In the years before the Titanswar, the people of southern Termana were terrorized by a fearful monarch known as the Ghoul King. Wielding considerable necromantic magic, the Ghoul King conquered much of the region, transforming it into a wasteland where the dead walked and the living hid in terror.

After a time, as the Ghoul King's power grew, the living banded together and drove the undead from the continent. The Ghoul King survived their assault, however, and fled to the land where his power originated, the Isle of the Dead. A barren, rocky wilderness, the Isle of the Dead exudes raw negative energy, and staying there for more than a few hours or days will transform any living thing into a shambling undead monster. Unable to pursue the Ghoul King, the armies of the living instead isolated the isle, and the Sisters of the Sun created their realm of Silverisle to keep the Ghoul King imprisoned. During the Titanswar, the Ghoul King's minions returned, flinging themselves at the Citadel of the Sun and almost destroying it before once more being flung back into the sea.

Today, the Isle of the Dead remains an enigmatic, frightening place, surrounded by a nimbus of dark energy, its very soil inimical to the living. No one knows whether the Ghoul King still lives, but most believe he does, living in a fortress in the center of the island, summoning more powerful undead and outsiders to aid him, and scheming to once more trouble the people of Termana.

Kadum's Bight: The vast bay in the center of the Termanan continent was once a place of rolling grasslands and pleasant hills. The defeat of Kadum changed that, plunging the land beneath blood-stained waves and creating the body of water now known as Kadum's Bight. Today, about half of the Bight is stained by the titan's blood; the other half remains clean, possibly due to the magical influence of the Eternal Isle.

The Sentinels: Generally considered to be the northernmost portion of the Termanan continent, the Sentinels are the peaks of ancient mountains, submerged in Kadum's Deluge. Dark red, lashed by the elements, and looking quite ominous rising from the bloody waves, the Sentinels today serve primarily as a convenient landmark, telling travelers that they have either arrived in or departed from Termana, for good or ill.

Deserts and Wastelands

Brown Waste: South of the Tattered Hills, this lifeless stretch of sand, rock and mud forms the border between Blood Bayou and Padrinola. This is something of a mixed blessing, for it prevents any large forces from making their way south and into Padrinola (as if the Jack of Tears would ever stoop to such overt actions), but also harbors numerous beasts that frequently wander out of the region in search of food. This includes abominations found nowhere else on Termana such as beholders, carrion crawlers and umber hulks, as well as skiver and various undead.

Iron Sands Desert: The land grew increasingly dry and lifeless as we made our way out of the Bonewind hills. Beneath our feet, the soil turned to reddish sand, and within a few days we ventured through a hellish realm of open desert, with the sun shining down on us with ferocious intensity.

"Are you sure we didn't wander off of the world's face altogether and into some demon's realm?" I asked Kasavala as our caravan inched across the rust-red inferno. "This is the closest thing to hell I've yet experienced. Save perhaps my first wife's boudoir." I grinned as best I could in the oppressive heat.

The necromancer favored me with a polite smile. "According to the histories, the elves called this the Iron Sands Desert. They apparently knew a technique of extracting iron ore from the sand. Perhaps there are tiny fragments of metal mixed with the sand, and they able to remove them. That would explain the reddish color — like rust."

I would like to say that I was fascinated, but unfortunately the heat kept me from thinking of anything other than my desperate desire for water and shade.

"Up there," she pointed north, to a distant and forbidding range of mountains, days and days distant, "are the Titansforge Mountains. It is said that the Iron God's forge was actually located there, and that is where Lord Corean forged his sword of justice from the scraps that Golthagga cast aside."

Yes, yes, I knew the story... Justice triumphs, Corean the good kicks the evil titan's teeth down his throat. Hurrah, hurrah, everyone loves Corean...

I held my tongue.

"They say that great fragments of metal are sometimes found in the desert," she went on. "More cast aside fragments from Golthagga's forge? Naturally-occurring phenomenon? Those massive metal things that are said to sometimes fall from the sky? We cannot say. Perhaps this expedition will help answer those questions."

I was about to respond when the sand beneath our feet shifted suddenly, as if something huge was moving beneath it. I fell, and when I looked up, a dozen great segmented metal snakes had emerged from the sand and were busy attacking our guards. With an oath I began to mumble a spell.

"Nemorga save us," Kasavala breathed, gazing in awe, wonder and without a trace of fear, at the snakes. "What a magnificent species!"

And that was just the beginning.

The Ukrudan, back home on Ghelspad, is a garden spot compared to what we saw in the Iron Sands. The reddish, rusty iron that mixes with the sand creates a variety of wild, fantastic patterns, constantly sculpted by the wind. Sometimes that wind whips up the sand into deadly blasts of grit and metal. Three of our pack animals perished in such a storm, scourged to the bone by the storm, while the rest of us huddled behind hastily-cast magical shelters, praying to whatever gods would listen that the spells outlasted the wind.

Unbelievably, there are people here. And titanspawn. We found this when a horde of Golthagga-spawned monstrosities assaulted us deep in the desert. Fierce, snouted things covered with heavy scales, wielding weapons crafted from the bones of gigantic beasts. My rapier served me well in that fight, stabbing through the joints of the monsters' armor while the broadswords of our mercenary guards simply bounced off the hardened flesh.

We'd have been in dire straits after that, had not the local humans intervened on our behalf. Why in the world they would do such a thing, I can't say - perhaps some misguided loyalty, or perhaps some odd code of honor that demanded they aid all those in need. I can't say, for I didn't speak the language.

The nomads, who called themselves the Tehlashos, were accompanied by a most impressive companion, a strapping red-haired woman in cloth-wrapped leather armor (though we later learned that she kept a fine suit of shining plate mail inscribed with the symbol of Madriel in an armor chest). She spoke perfect Ledean, and introduced herself as Chemara, knight of an order called the Sisters of the Sun. She acted as a translator, and told us much about our rescuers.

The Tehlashos are as hardy and weathered as everything else in that gods-forsaken place. Dark-skinned, lean and muscular, they're certainly a striking breed. They wore garments stained red by the wind and fought with spears, axes and iron-headed maces. Their beasts of burden were great sloth-like mammals, covered in heavy scales as an apparent defense against the fierce winds. I saw several female warriors among their ranks, and they were fine-looking specimens, though the language barrier (and the somewhat ferocious mien of their menfolk) prevented me from making closer acquaintance.

The Tehlashos seem to follow some kind of quaint worship of local spirits, or ancestor worship, or perhaps both. They were a solemn people, and led by an order of shamans who seem to become possessed by spirits that serve to guide and protect them.

The Tehlashos provided us with food and water, and when we departed, Chemara came with us as a guide. Nevertheless, the rest of the trek was the stuff of nightmares, with the heat, the wind, and deprivation all combining to make us a ragged and desperate group of refugees by the time we finally left the hellish place behind and approached the frontiers of the southernmost human nation, Azale.

Jagged Waste: Not even King Virduk can pretend that the eastern third of the region is anything but a barren wilderness. Rough, rock-strewn ravines and flatlands alternate with scraggly stands of trees, and numerous titanspawn lurk in the shadows. We saw little of this region, but enough to know that it is likely to never come under full Calastian control.

The Plaguelands: The high elves made their brave stand against Chern upon the high cliffs bordering the newly-created Blood Sea. There, the titan of plagues fell, riddled by *manaspears* and rent by powerful elven magic. But, as all know, the elves' victory was a hollow one, for the titan's dying curse shattered their race and reduced their once-proud empire to the handful of small principalities that we know today. The region where Chern fell was similarly cursed, and is today known as the Plaguelands. Uninhabited and shunned by the people of the Forest Realm, it is now the haunt of such unclean creatures as gorgons, spirits of the plague and Chern's children. Simply setting foot in the region is hazardous, for those who visit there often contract horrific diseases, many of which are resistant to magical cures.

The Skullmounds: Possibly the most horrifying place in all the vast Charduni Empire, the Skullmounds are well-named, for they are vast hills made up of the skulls and bones of charduni victims. Early charduni rulers used the place as a vast field of trophies, where the heads of slain foes were piled as a sign of the empire's greatness and cruelty. The tactic proved successful, for as word of the mounds spread, the dark dwarves' foes lost heart, often surrendering to the empire's might without a struggle. As time went by and more victims fell before the charduni onslaught, the One in White decreed that the corpses of all foes of the empire be flung onto the ever-growing mounds. This included undead that could no longer be raised, the rent remains of Chardun-slain, and body parts taken from battlefields by charduni slaves. By the time of the Divine War, the Skullmounds were truly mountainous; many were covered over by dirt and filth, supporting twisted trees and disease-ridden scavengers.

The mounds still stand today, a vast field of death and horror on the eastern coast of the Land of Chains. Dead slaves, battle casualties, torture victims and others are still left here, and the mounds continue to grow. As might be expected, the region is haunted by undead, restless spirits and outsiders. Charduni necromancers often venture here (usually under heavy guard) to summon up new undead servants, making the place a valuable resource for the empire. Non-charduni are forbidden, but human necromancers sometimes sneak into the Skullmounds, intent on tapping some of the region's death-energies. Particularly fearless adventurers have also been known to come here, for it is said that many of the dead were interred with their possessions, including gold, magic items, weapons and armor. A few hardy individuals have returned, claiming to have found vast riches, but most who venture into the Skullmounds never return.

The Stones of Golthagga: East of the Chained Mountains lie miles and miles of shattered rock, talus and treacherous canyons. It is said that these stones once were mountains rich with ore, ripped up whole by Golthagga as fodder for his forge. Today it forms another barrier between the Land of Chains and the rest of Termana, and bristles with charduni fortresses, mines and quarries. Countless thousands of slaves labor here, mining iron, tin and copper or hauling out great slabs of granite, marble and slate for charduni construction. Beasts such as chimera, manticore and hydrae prowl the wasteland, and their predations are even more effective at keeping slaves from fleeing than a legion of charduni overseers.

Swamps and Marshes

Fever Swamp: One reason Virduk's Promise lay unclaimed by elf or man were these disease-ridden coastal swamps, similar to the wilderness of Blood Bayou. The swamps swarm with mosquitoes, leeches, and unsavory blood sea mutations. Virduk's priests, warriors and engineers have begun to clear these swamps, draining and filling, hoping to drive out the taint of Kadum and its creatures, but so far they have only scratched the surface.

Minagan Marsh: Lying south of Lake Minagan, these vast marshlands are home to several different species,

including slime reavers, lizard men and a species of frog-like humanoids that have yet to be studied extensively. The lizard-folk live along the southern edge of the lake, and have been working for many years to domesticate the native aquantis to their purposes.

Scarlet Marsh: This vast and unhealthy stretch of coastal swampland is one reason that Gray Isle is so unpopular. Mirroring the larger Blood Bayou to the south, the Scarlet Marsh is considered to be a breeding ground for disease, titanspawn, and gator warriors, who live here independent of Momus' control. With no central authority, the Grey Islanders are forced to deal with the swamp's denizens on their own, mounting individual raids into the area to keep its more deadly inhabitants off balance. Otherwise, the swamp is generally left alone, though numerous wrecked ships along its southern edge are said to contain vast riches.

Unnatural Features

Bones of the Lost One: Located deep in the Iron Sands Desert, the Bones of the Lost One are vast rock formations that do, indeed, resemble the bones of unbelievably huge beings. Whether these are truly the remains of once-living giants, or simply a trick of nature is anyone's guess. The Tehlashos nomads, however, have no doubt. These, they say, are the bones of one or more titans — which one they don't know (and don't really want to know). Some tribal wizards claim that it is actually an unknown titan who perished millennia before the Divine War. Horrified that one of their number could actually *die*, the surviving titans hid the body beneath the desert sands and expunged all record of the dead being's existence. The cataclysmic Titanswar, and the eternal scouring sands of the desert eventually exposed the titan's bones, now transformed into stone. Personally, I doubt the truth of this story — it may have been some other powerful being, such as an extradimensional demon lord or outsider, rather than a titan, but I'm the last to suggest that the tale is an outright falsehood. The fact is that the

"skull" of the Lost One is presently inhabited by a tribe of hobgoblins who make travel in the region difficult. We did not visit the bones, but the view from a distance was quite astonishing enough.

Demonhold: This vast natural formation is the legendary stronghold of the demons who besiege the Citadel of the Rose. Observers have only been afforded a few brief glimpses, but these are nothing short of terrifying, for the dark, mountainous fortress appears to hold a near-infinite number of evil outsiders and other creatures. No one knows who or what rules the demonhold, or what would happen should the Citadel of the Rose ever fall, but it would not bode well for the rest of Termana.

The Infinite Stair: Behind the raging fury of Lethene's Falls lies one of the most impressive works of the old Termanans. Countless thousands of individually-cut stairs ascend Wall of Clouds, with the endlessly roaring sheet of the falls forming a shimmering barrier between the stairs and the Gamulganjus jungle below.

The stair was obviously intended for regular traffic, for at regular intervals we found chambers large enough to house our entire expedition, animals and all. With the exception of the constant roar of water that prevented anything but shouted conversation, the journey up the cliff face was surprisingly uneventful. In any event, words were not needed for the intimate conversation I desired with the delectable Kasavala.

Regrettably, she resisted my every advance, holding me back with smiles and a friendly, jocular manner. Pato, damn him, knew exactly what was going on and watched me with quiet amusement. He had never left the jungles before, and he saw the coming journey as an incredible adventure, though his superstitious nature kept him constantly praying to his barbaric jungle spirits. Slowly, I learned his language and he learned mine and despite my irritation with him for his smugness, I began to develop a liking for the brute.

It took many days to ascend the stair, and in the end we emerged in the lifeless waste of the Bonewind Hills.

Appendix:

Races of Termana

The three most populous races of Termana are the humans, the forsaken elves and the charduni dwarves. Other races, such as the jungle gnomes and the terali of the south, exist, but are less well known. The continent's major races are listed here.

Humans: The most common race, humans on Termana are bitterly divided, scattered about the western half of the continent in petty, squabbling kingdoms like Azale and Thorvalos. Most are descended from Ghelspadan slaves who threw off the shackles of the Charduni Empire, and have had to develop their skills in nation building and governance over the past century and a half. For the most part, they are provincial, insular and quarrelsome. The outgoing folk of Azale and the noble paladins of Silverisle are exceptions to this, however, and can be boon companions if given the chance. In addition, colonists in Virduk's Promise have begun to add a more sophisticated Calastian outlook to the continent.

In the southlands of Termana, however, is another breed of humanity. A tall, dark-skinned and well-favored folk, the humans of these lands populate the jungles of the Gamulganjus, the Iron Sands Desert and the Centaur Plains. Many of the civilizations of these folk are long-gone, and they have returned to a nomadic, barbaric lifestyle, save for those of the ancient tepuje cities. It is noteworthy that many folk of southern Ghelspad - especially in the areas of Zathiske and Shelzar - bear the blood of these southern Termanans,

though the precise nature of that intermingling seems to have been lost to the past.

Elves: The elves of Termana are of the stock today known as the forsaken elves. Cursed by Chern, they are pale, dark-eyed, and given to a brooding and grim nature. The forsaken elf realms of northeastern Termana are a remnant of the old elven empire that once dominated the region. The forsaken elves rarely leave their homelands, unless exiled or required to do so by their nations.

Half-Elves: The forsaken elves engage in a foul practice - kidnapping or purchasing young humans to serve as breeding stock. The product of these unions are halfbreeds, free from the taint of Chern. Despite prejudice, and the fact that most forsaken elf realms restrict halfbreeds' rights and advancement, they have been growing more and more prominent as their numbers grow. Half-elves often leave the forsaken elf realms to explore the continent and the world beyond.

Dwarves: Termana's native dwarves are all charduni, a race of dark-skinned, brutal conquerors who worship Chardun the Great General. After the collapse of their empire in the wake of the Divine War, the charduni retreated to eastern Ghelspad, where they have rebuilt their state and begun to plan new conquests. Charduni are rare outside of the Land of Chains, and those ordinary dwarves found on Termana are almost always immigrants or visitors.

Halfings: Some halfings have accompanied Calastian colonists to Virduk's Promise. Others have immigrated to the

Variant Rule: Humans By Region

As per the variant rule originally presented in the Scarred Lands DM Screen Companion (page 18), the humans of Termana may also receive certain ability bonuses, provided they give up their free feat at 1st level for being human. These bonuses are as follows:

- **Crilos & the Gray Isle:** +2 Strength, -2 Intelligence. The bandits, cut-throats and barbarians of these isles are known for their strength, as well as their simple ways. They tend toward light skin, as do the humans of the Termanan northwest who are descended from the escaped slaves of the charduni; they also have dark hair, though a few occasionally boast red or auburn hair.

- **Kingdoms of the West:** -2 Wisdom, +2 Charisma. The folk of the Termanan northwest kingdoms are known for their charm - whether

used in debauchery as in Azale or among the leaders of Karsian. They tend to have dark colored hair and olive complexions, with green eyes.

- **Tehlashos:** +2 Constitution, -2 Charisma. The Tehlashos are the dark red-mahogany hued folk of the Iron Sands Desert and Centaur Plains, nomadic folk with the ability to withstand some of the harshest environments known in Termana. They are also known for being somewhat reserved in their dealings with others.

- **Tepuje Cities and Gamulganjus:** +2 Dexterity, -2 Wisdom. The tall, lithe folk of the southern jungles and tepuje cities are quick of hand and foot; they are also known as somewhat simple and merry folk. The tone of their skin is somewhat less severe than that of the Tehlashos, being dark without the overtly red tones that the nomads are known for.



western human states to escape repression on Ghelspad. A few small communities now exist in Azale, Karsis and Pardinola, but the halflings face prejudice on Termana as well.

Half-orcs: Orcs are unknown on Termana. Their niche is filled by the hobgoblin and gnoll tribes of the central continent. Half-orcs are rarer still, but are sometimes seen as mercenaries or in the retinue of foreign merchants.

Gnomes

The race of gnomes is unknown on Ghelspad, but is found in substantial numbers in the jungles of southern Termana. These jungle gnomes are seminomadic, traveling the jungle from hunting ground to hunting ground, spending the rainy season in villages or cave complexes.

Jungle gnomes worship a complex pantheon of jungle spirits, and are capable of casting druidic magic without following Denev or any of the other titans. Though they are aware of the existence of the gods, the gnomes nevertheless refuse to acknowledge them as anything other than especially powerful spirits, and prefer to pay homage to their native deities instead. A tradition of illusion-casting wizardry seems to pervade the gnomish culture, with its practitioners recording their spells as elaborate and mandalic artwork upon hides, burnt into wood, painted upon walls, or even tattooed into their very flesh.

Gnomish tribes can contain up to 500 members, but usually number around 50-60. They are a peaceful race, subsisting on hunting and gathering the bounty of the jungle. Despite this, the gnomes are sometimes forced to fight. Occasionally, a neighboring human or terali tribe will intrude on traditional gnomish hunting grounds, or attack the gnomes for reasons of their own. When this happens, quarter is neither asked nor given, and the

gnomes fight selflessly. They favor the shortspear, club, blowgun and bow, and are adept at blending into the jungle and attacking from ambush.

Most gnomes prefer to remain safe in their jungle homeland. Tales of the horrors that lie beyond the Gamulganjus are told and retold, gaining details with each repetition, until the average gnome believes the Scarred Lands to be a place of blood, demons and death.

Regions: Gnomes are native to the Gamulganjus region of Termana. They are sometimes found outside this region as slaves, or as a result of wanderlust and the desire to see the world beyond the jungle.

Racial Abilities: Jungle gnomes have all of the following racial traits:

- +2 Constitution, -2 Strength.
- Small size.
- Gnome base speed is 20 feet.
- *Low-light Vision:* Gnomes can see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar conditions of poor illumination. They retain the ability to distinguish color and detail under these conditions.
- +2 racial bonus on saving throws against illusions.
- +4 dodge bonus against giants.
- +2 racial bonus on Listen checks.
- *Automatic Languages:* Gnomish.
- *Bonus Languages:* Terali, Termanan.
- *Animal Tongue:* Once per day a gnome can use *speak with animals* as a spell-like ability to speak with any species of jungle bird or tiny sized mammal. This ability is innate to jungle gnomes. It has a duration of 1 minute (the gnome is considered a 1st-level caster when he uses this ability, regardless of his actual level).



- *Spirit Weaving*: Gnomes with Intelligence scores of 10 or higher may cast the 0-level spells (cantrips) *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, and *prestidigitation*, each once per day. These are arcane spells. Treat the gnome as a 1st-level caster for all spell effects dependent on level (range for all three spells and duration for *ghost sound*).

- *Favored Class*: Druid or Illusionist. A multiclass gnome's druid or illusionist class does not count when determining whether she suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing (see Experience for Multiclass Characters, PHB Chapter 3). Gnomish culture teaches its children to see and listen to the spirit world, whether they are serving the spirits or weaving its essence into delightful images.

Gnolls

Though they are generally considered to be nomadic savages who ravage the lands of central and western Termana, a few gnolls have settled down, living in relative peace. Several gnoll tribes thrive in the Gamulganjus jungle, living alongside - and occasionally going to war with - the humans, gnomes and terali of that region. Gnoll adventurers are not unheard of, and are sometimes encountered in the wildernesses of Termana.

Regions: Gnolls are found throughout Termana, but are most common in mountain and plains regions, where they live in rough tribal bands and subsist on hunting and raiding neighboring tribes or settlements.

Racial Abilities:

- +2 Constitution, +4 Strength, -2 Charisma, -2 Intelligence.
- Medium size.
- Gnoll base speed is 30 feet.

- *Darkvision*: Gnolls can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only, but is otherwise like normal sight, and gnolls can function just fine with no light at all.

- *Tough Hide*: Gnolls gain a +1 natural armor class bonus.

- +3 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

- *Automatic Languages*: Gnoll.

- *Bonus Language*: Termanan.

- *Favored Class*: Barbarian or Ranger. A multiclass gnoll's barbarian or ranger class does not count when determining whether she suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing (see Experience for Multiclass Characters, PHB Chapter 3). Gnoll culture teaches its members to either embrace their natural capacity for rage, or to master the wilds and use them as a weapon against one's foes.

- *Level Equivalency*: Class level +2. Gnolls are more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most of the other common races of Termana. When creating a character of this race, add this level adjustment to class levels to determine character level; thus, a gnoll character with four levels in ranger (Rgr4) and two in druid (Drd2) is an 8th level character.

As part of this increased level, however, gnolls begin with a base 2d8 hit dice (applying Constitution modifier to the roll of each die), a +1 Base Attack Bonus, a Fortitude save of +3 and the Power Attack feat.

Terali

Deep in the jungles of southern Termana dwells a race of creatures who resemble upright, bipedal leopards.

They are known as the terali, and in recent years they have been seen more often outside their forest homeland.

Materially primitive, the terali are nevertheless a highly spiritual race, living in tribal groups of up to 200 members. Like the jungle gnomes, the terali are seminomadic, building villages for shelter during the rainy season, then wandering the jungle and living in temporary shelters during the drier hunting season. Terali are fierce warriors, fighting with spears, dart throwers, and wooden clubs lined with the teeth of predatory animals.

Tribes are led by hereditary chiefs, advised by elders and tribal sorcerers. About one in 20 terali is born with a black pelt; these individuals are, for some reason, the only terali who are capable of becoming sorcerers. These sorcerers, known as marked ones, are considered to have considerable spiritual power, and their counsel is always sought and heeded.

From time to time a marked one will decree that a terali must wander the world and seek wisdom. Terali so chosen sometimes make their way out of the Gamulganjus and into Termana proper, occasionally even finding work as mercenaries or bodyguards. These terali return to their homeland with a greater understanding of the outside world, and are usually highly influential due to the riches that they bring back. Other wandering terali shun the jungle, and choose to stay in the outside world, but this is rare.

As inhabitants of the Land with No Gods, the terali worship neither god nor titan, but instead revere the spirits of their ancestors, and follow the tenets of unique tribal spirits of the land who are said to speak only to chieftains and marked ones.

Regions: The terali are highly territorial and defend their traditional hunting grounds fiercely. Today, they are mostly found in the Gamulganjus region of Termana.

Racial Abilities: Terali have the following racial traits:

- +2 Dexterity, -2 Wisdom. Terali are faster than humans, but are prone to give in to their instincts.

- Medium-size.
- Terali base speed is 40 feet.
- *Low-light Vision:* Terali can see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar conditions of poor illumination. They retain the ability to distinguish color and detail under these conditions.
- *Natural Weapons:* Terali can make two claw attacks per round with no off-hand penalty, inflicting 1d3 points of damage each, or one bite attack that inflicts 1d4 points of damage. If a terali is armed with a weapon or carries a shield, she may not make any natural weapon attacks. Note that because terali culture has ceased to rely on these weapons, terali still provoke attacks of opportunity when using their natural weapons, unless the terali has the Improved Unarmed Strike feat. Also, use of these natural weapons follows the normal rules for fighting with two weapons.
- +2 racial bonus to all Listen, Search and Spot checks.
- +2 racial bonus to all Wilderness Lore checks when in jungle or forest terrain. Terali are great hunters, and have an almost supernatural affinity for their jungle homeland.
- *Automatic Languages:* Terali.
- *Bonus Languages:* Gnomish, Termanan.
- *Favored Class:* Druid or Ranger (marked terali have Sorcerer as their sole favored class). A multiclass terali druid or ranger class does not count when determining whether she suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing (see Experience for Multiclass Characters, PHB Chapter 3). Terali culture embraces the ways of the land around them, holding it close to themselves, rather than mastering it brutally, the way gnolls are wont to.

Appendix Two

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