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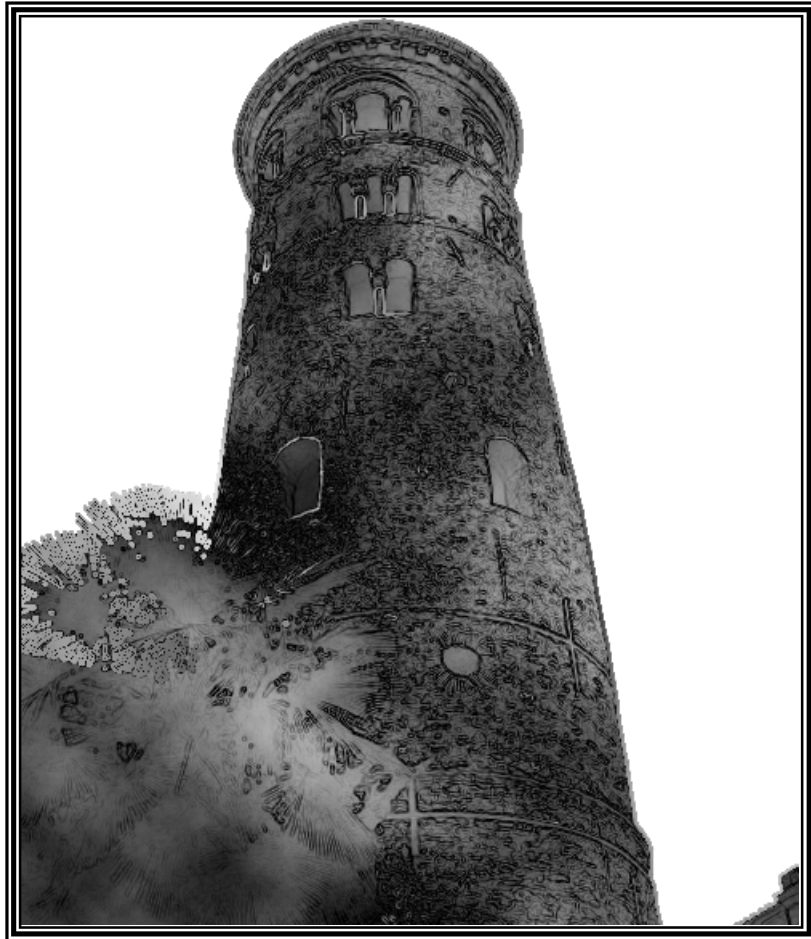
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A Chronicle of the Lands and  
People of the Flanaess

# Perth Journal

Volume II  
Issue 17



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## Editor’s Chronicle

I’d like to take the time to let everyone know the Oerth Journal is taking on some interesting changes. As the new Editor in Chief, we’re going to be pushing up the schedule for releases quite a bit. Also we have many new topic articles going into the new OJ. I’d also like to thank everyone for all their work over the past ten years. (Yeah the Oerth Journal just turned 10! Wow!) I’d also like to thank all our editors who put forth a lot of work these past few months. They are Nathan Irving, Don Kenneth Brown, Brian McRae, Randy Patton, and Mike Bridges.

The new webpage for the Oerth Journal is [www.oerthjournal.com](http://www.oerthjournal.com). The site features Back Issues, Web-Enhancements/ Errata, Submission Guidelines, forums hosted by Canonfire, and more.

I hope everyone enjoys this issue and those that follow. Everyone is encouraged to participate and submit articles that follow the submission guidelines located at our new website.

Cheerz,

Rick “Duicarthan” Miller  
Editor-in-Chief

# Cities of Aerdy: Kalstrand - City of Gold

By Paul Looby

**Kalstrand (large city):** Conventional; AL: LE; 40,000gp; Assets: 48,000,000gp; Population 24,000; Mixed (Human 79%, Halfling 9%, Elf 5%, Dwarf 2%, Gnome 2%, Half-elf 1%, Half-orc 1%, Orc 1%).

*Authority Figures:* Xavener (NE human male Rog15), Overking of Ahlissa, Grand Prince of Kalstrand, Crowned Head of the Celestial House of Darmen.

*Important Characters:* Rachern (LE human female Ari12), Queen Consort; Larissen (LN human male Clr19 – Zilchus) Grand Patriarch of Zilchus; Jareled Theldrenn (LN human male Clr10 – Zilchus), Guildmaster of the Royal Guild of Merchants of Aerdy; Paldred (LE human male Ftr12), Prince of Darmen, Commander of the Kalstrand Garrison; Patriarch-General Marquann of Kalstrand (LE, human male, Clr12 - Hextor); Galwyrden (LE, human male Wiz12), sage; Carelldra (LE female human Rog9/Clr4 - Zilchus), leader of the Redeemers criminal gang; Halgerud Arkelzur, (NG, dwarf male Rog10), Irongate's Ambassador in Kalstrand; Ilurien Arvalyris (CN male elf, Ftr8/Duelist8), duelist and bladesmith.

*Temples:* Zilchus (god of Power Prestige, Money, Business and Influence), Hextor (god of War, Discord, Massacres, Conflict, Fitness and Tyranny), Pholtus (god of Light, Resolution, Law, Order, Inflexibility, Sun and Moons) [disused], Boccob (god of Magic, Arcane Knowledge, Foresight and Balance), Sotillion (goddess of Summer, South Wind, Ease and Comfort), Delleb (god of Reason, Intellect and Study), Stern Alia (demigoddess of Oeridian Culture, Law and Motherhood), Lirr (goddess of Prose, Literature and Art), Bleredd (god of Metal, Mines and Smiths), Fharlanghn (god of Horizons, Distance, Travel and Roads).

## Overview

Kalstrand is the capital of the United Kingdom of Ahlissa, the most powerful of the successor states to rise from the ashes of the Great Kingdom of Aerdy. Untouched by the ravages of

the Greyhawk Wars, this former provincial city has stepped from obscurity to take its place among the great capitals of the Flanaess. Trade is the foundation upon which the city's glittering palaces, temples and monuments are built. Wealth, privilege and profit are worshiped here and all power flows from them. The poor are naught but another commodity to be bought and sold. No other Ahlissan city so embodies the ethos of the princes of the Celestial House of Darmen, the noble house that dominates the United Kingdom. Kalstrand is the fruit of their ambition and a mirror to the darkness of their souls. It is a city where a smile can hide a thousand betrayals. Like a true Darmen, Kalstrand conceals its evil beneath a glittering façade.

As capital of one of the most powerful realms in the Flanaess, Kalstrand attracts diplomats and spies eager to learn more about Ahlissa's intentions, strengths and secrets. The palaces of Kalstrand are rife with the endless scheming of the Ahlissan nobility, who each seek to gain wealth and power at the expense of their rivals. The city is also a favoured base to explore the Glorioles Mountains, which hide the fabled *Crypts of Iron Souls*, a mysterious dwarven necropolis said to contain unimaginable wealth. It is said that there is nothing that cannot be bought in the markets of Kalstrand, be it rare commodities or men's loyalty. The city is fast becoming one of the main mercenary-hiring centres of the eastern Flanaess. Ahlissa's wealthy nobles have vast fortunes to spend on adventurers willing to do their bidding - be it clandestine raids against the rival North Kingdom or the recovery of treasures lost in the ruined cities of Almor and the old Great Kingdom. Equally, those vast fortunes are a tempting target for rogues and thieves from across the known world. Enterprising adventurers can find a quick fortune in the City of Gold - or a quick death.

## A History of Kalstrand

**CA.- 250 CY:** Kaldared of the House of Darmen founds Kalstrand. The fortified settlement acts as a trading post between the Aerdi clans to the east and the ancient Flan Kingdom of Ehliissa to the west.

**-203 CY:** A large stone keep is built a short distance north of the main settlement. The Darmen princes launch their conquest of Ehliissa from Kalstrand. The town resists several assaults by the Hradikar, the legendary Flan warriors of Ehliissa.

**166 CY:** Prince Haldarenn of Kalstrand makes a pact with the Dwarf Kingdom of Glorvardum in the Glorioles and leads an Aerdi army south of the mountains to subdue the rebellious marcher lords of Sunndi.

**432 CY:** Xavaster of Darmen becomes Prince of Kalstrand. A highly charismatic leader, he almost single-handedly lays the foundations for the Darmen's rise to power and century and half later.

**449 CY:** At Prince Xavaster's urging, the House of Darmen betrays the House of Cranden and sides with Ivid of the House of Naelax in the bloody civil war known as the Turmoil Between the Crowns. As a reward, Ivid moves the headquarters of the Royal Guild of Merchants of Aerdy to Kalstrand. Xavaster leads a Darmen army that sacks the Cranden stronghold of Rel Deven, stripping the city of its wealth and ending resistance by the House of Cranden to the rule of Overking Ivid I.

**450 CY - 487 CY:** Xavaster reshapes Kalstrand to his own design, investing the spoils of the civil war in fortifying and beautifying the city. Extensive defences are built to protect Kalstrand from Sunndian attack.

**487 CY:** Xavaster the Magnificent dies prophesising that a Darmen will be crowned Overking within a century.

**572 CY:** Xavener of Darmen becomes Prince of Kalstrand.

**587 CY:** The United Kingdom of Ahliissa is founded in Kalstrand. Xavener is crowned as Grand Prince and Overking of Ahliissa in the Cathedral of Zilchus.

**594 CY:** Current year

## The Nightingale Throne

Overking Xavener is Kalstrand's undisputed ruler. Strikingly handsome, charming, and urbane, on the surface he appears to be a vast improvement on the fiend-seeing Naelax overkings that brought about the ruin of the Great Kingdom. Beneath the charismatic façade however, there burns a fierce craving for absolute power. Xavener dreams of the day when he will stand as undisputed ruler of not only Ahliissa, but the entire Flanaess. Nonetheless, he is well aware that virtue is the perfect guise for ambition and he never reveals his true nature to anyone, even his wife, the Queen-Consort Rachern.

The overking administers Ahliissa from Kalstrand, surrounded by a vast array of courtiers and nobles. A new Imperial Palace is under construction in the north of the city. In the meantime, Xavener holds court in the old Prince's Palace in the heart of the city, working patiently to make his realm the most powerful in the Flanaess, while simultaneously strengthening his personal influence within the kingdom. Xavener has a growing network of agents spying on potential rivals, especially Prince Dilweg of Torrich, Prince Carwend of Rel Deven and Prince Reydrich of Zelradton. The overking's minions often employ proxy agents to carry out dangerous and delicate missions, thereby preventing the involvement of the Nightingale Throne from becoming known should the dupes be discovered.

The queen-consort is widely held to be one of the most beautiful women in the Flanaess. Though she holds no official power, Rachern wields significant influence in court and in Kalstrand society. She delights in using her patronage to elevate minor courtiers and socialites, only to destroy them at the height of their fame. Recently however, Rachern herself has been the subject of scandalous comment in Kalstrand and beyond. Though she has supplied her husband with a succession of daughters, including the twins Jelalia and Lindyrra (aged 15), Marella (7) and Kathyra (3), she has thus far been unable to produce a male heir. Xavener is greatly displeased with this state of affairs, and the queen-consort is said to be desperately seeking whatever divine or magical assistance she can to remedy the matter.

Members of Xavener's immediate family or other important Darmen Princes hold all the key

## Rulership and Law

Power in the city of Kalstrand is divided between three main groups - the office of the Overking, (known as the Nightingale Throne, in honour of *Queen Ehliissa's Marvellous Nightingale*, one of the heraldic symbols of the kingdom), the Imperial Council and the Royal Guild of Merchants of Aerdy.

positions in the Imperial Court. He trusts his relatives as much as he trusts anyone and uses ties of blood and family secrets to manipulate them according to his needs. Kalstrand's garrison is under the direct command of Prince Paldred, Xavener's eldest brother. Intensely loyal to his sibling, Paldred controls the elite Imperial Guard and the Capital Army of Kalstrand. As well as these forces, the city can call on its Guilds Militia, as well as plentiful, if poor quality peasant levies and as many mercenaries as its vast wealth can buy. Kalstrand's mighty walls are augmented with a number of magical defences that render them nigh impervious to assault. These include a series of black metal rods set atop the walls' guard towers, that are capable of absorbing magical or natural lightning and projecting it at enemies again as *chain lightning* or *lighting bolts* (as a 15<sup>th</sup> level wizard).

## **The Imperial Council**

The Imperial Council poses the greatest challenge to the power of the Nightingale Throne. Founded in 587 CY, its main purpose is to enable the noble princes of the realm to limit the powers of the overking. The Council can vote on a wide range of internal policies, over which Xavener has only a limited veto. Only in external affairs does the overking have free rein. The Imperial Council has little or no direct say in the governance of Kalstrand itself.

The princes on the council have divided themselves along house lines. Nobles of the House of Darmen comprise the largest block, followed closely by the princes of the House of Cranden. However, neither of these blocks alone can form the two-thirds majority required for the passing of acts. Thus, if the Darmens and Crandens cannot agree on an issue, they are forced to seek the support of the smaller noble houses, notably (in order of voting strength): the Haxx, the Garesteth, the Torquann, and the Naelax. It is little surprise then that meetings of the Council often degenerate into interminable rounds of bargaining and horsetrading.

Xavener resents the constraints that the Imperial Council places on his power, but knows better than to challenge it openly. Instead, he fosters schisms between the princes to keep the Council divided. Moreover Prince Karralak of Strand, the overking's younger brother, is the Speaker for the

House of Darmen and works hard to neuter the influence of the Council. The prince, however, has a rather serious problem on his hands. In his youth, Karralak was sent to live in household of the Prince of Torrich, as is customary for Aerdi nobles. While there, he ravished one of the Prince's daughters. The girl's brother, Dilweg, witnessed the deed. Dilweg, now the Prince of Torrich, has recently contacted Karralak though the sage Galwyrden (see below) reminding him of this fact and that even Xavener would not be able to save his reputation if the truth of Karralak's crime were to become known. Karralak is now desperate, being caught between loyalty to (and no small measure of fear of) his brother and his own sense of self-preservation.

## **The Royal Guild of Merchants of Aerdy**

Day to day administration of Kalstrand is in the hands of the Royal Guild of Merchants of Aerdy, of which Xavener is patron. Virtually all matters of city governance are administered from the Guildhall, including the Watch and appointments to the Law Courts. In this, the city is a microcosm of the kingdom as a whole. Though the nobles of the realm have a firm grasp of the reins of power, they allow the Royal Guild to administer the fine details of governance for them, effectively acting as a civil service. The picture is complicated by the fact that many nobles, especially in the House of Darmen, are also members of the Royal Guild.

The Royal Guild is wealthier than some small nations, its riches and power derived from the monopoly granted to it over all crafts, commerce and trades in Ahlissa. To ply his trade in the United Kingdom, an artisan must first pay to be a member of the appropriate guild. All guilds must in turn pay for a license from the Royal Guild to exist. Thus the Royal Guild takes a cut of every commercial activity in Ahlissa, a portion of which it passes on in tax to the Nightingale Throne.

Jareled Theldrenn is a feudal vassal of Xavener who holds the Guildmaster's title as his fief. He is therefore very much a creature of the overking. The Royal Guild firmly backs Xavener, and, along with the Church of Zilchus and the House of Darmen, is one of the three pillars supporting the overking's vast influence and power. However, there is a pragmatic aspect to this. The

leaders of the Guild see that Xavener's interests and their own coincide. Thus they are content to support him. Equally, because he relies on their support, the overking does what he can to enrich the Royal Guild - bolstering trade within the kingdom and with Ahlissa's neighbours, in the process strengthening his own position. However, were Xavener's interests ever to diverge from those of the Royal Guild, then the pragmatic guildsmen would be forced to rethink their unconditional enthusiasm for the Nightingale Throne.

Overseen by the Royal Guild, the Watch maintains strict order in Kalstrand. Judges of the Sessions pay lip-service to the ancient and equitable Code of Laws of Schandor (see sidebar). However, in practise the degree to which the law is enforced depends on the relative wealth of the perpetrator and the victim. Wealthy princes and merchants have little to fear, unless they harm a more powerful personage. Thieves are tolerated, provided they are local, don't get caught and don't ruin anyone of importance with their activities. However, the poor can expect to suffer the full weight of the law. Foreign lawbreakers (especially thieves) endure severe punishments, ranging from crippling fines for minor offences to lifelong indentured servitude or execution for more serious crimes.

## Religion

The faith of Zilchus, the god of Power, Prestige, Money, Business and Influence, dominates the religious life of Kalstrand. The church is tightly interwoven with both the House of Darmen and the Royal Guild of Merchants of Aerdy, with many of its priests being members of both institutions. High Tradepriest Larissen, the Grand Patriarch of Zilchus in Aerdy, lent his support to Xavener's claim to the Nightingale Throne, astutely recognising that the interests of the Church of Zilchus and the overking were the same. However, Larissen has glimpsed something of the overking's true nature and is genuinely frightened by what he has seen.

The Church of Hextor is widely mistrusted by the Darmen princes because of the faith's strength in the rival North Kingdom and traditional ties to the House of Naelax, which rules there. Patriarch-General Marquann of Kalstrand was quick to proclaim his church's loyalty to Ahlissa. Xavener immediately placed the church's armies under the

command of trusted Darmen princes. The overking deliberately keeps the patriarch-general on tenterhooks, forcing him to continually prove his loyalty, thus denying him the opportunity to plot sedition.

Temples of minor Oeridian gods, including Fharlanghn, Lirr, and Stern Alia, are clustered in the shadow of the Grand Cathedral. The temple of Pholtus, purged of its clergy by Ivid V before the Greyhawk Wars, remains sealed and derelict. There are prominent temples to the Oeridian gods of the winds and sky (Velnius, Atroa, Sotillion, Wenta and Telchur), known colloquially as the Velaeri. Sotillion, Zilchus' languid wife, is especially revered in Kalstrand. A large Temple of Boccob stands adjacent to the Museum of Antiquities. Chaotic faiths are discouraged, while the worship of Tritherion (god of Individuality, Liberty, Retribution and Self-Defence), and vile cults such as those of Nerull and Incabulos (god of Plagues, Sickness, Famine, Nightmares, Drought and Disaster), are outlawed.

### **The Code of Laws of Schandor Lawgiver**

Formulated by the legendary judge, Schandor of Cranden, the Code of Laws was one of the greatest achievements of the golden age of the Great Kingdom of Aerdy. More than a mere list of crimes and punishments, the Code set out the structure of the model feudal society - describing each class, their rights, responsibilities and duties. It placed special emphasis on the duty of the upper classes to protect to lower orders and treat them justly. The Code also described the punishments to be meted out should these responsibilities be neglected, as well as an equitable justice system to arbitrate such cases. For nearly 400 years, the Code of Laws was the yardstick by which a realm's virtue and civilisation were measured. However, when the vile Naelax overkings rose to power in Aerdy, they took delight in warping the Code until it was but a corrupt mockery of the original. The original Code of Laws still forms the basis of the judicial systems of former vassals of the Great Kingdom, such as Furyondy, Nyronnd and Sunndi.

## Trade and Commerce

Sitting at the confluence of the Thelly and Greyflood rivers, trade is the foundation upon

which Kalstrand is built. The city sits astride the river barge routes that run from Nulbish to Hexpools and Rel Deven. Moreover, it lies at the intersection of two *Dirawaen* roads (see below) leading to the wealthy cities of the fertile Flamni river basin.

Under Xavener's rule, the Windmarch trade fairs have resumed in Ahlissa. In the days of the Great Kingdom, the Windmarch was a series of trade fairs that ran from Hexpools and Rel Deven in the south to the city of Eastfair in the north each year between spring and autumn. With the collapse of the Great Kingdom in 584 CY, travel became too perilous and the Windmarch lapsed for several years. The new Windmarch commences in Rel Deven and Hexpools in the month of Coldeven and travels along the Thelly and the Flamni to its conclusion in Orred after Brewfest. During Growfest, when Kalstrand holds its Windmarch fair, the city's population can increase by up to 5,000. Though troubled by banditry, the Windmarch has been successful over the past three years, greatly aiding the economic recovery of the kingdom, as well as putting coin in the pockets of the many adventurers hired to guard the travelling merchants. The restoration of the Windmarch and the vast expenditure on public building works, such as the construction of the Imperial Palace, has reinvigorated the economy of Kalstrand and Ahlissa as a whole after the lean years of the Greyhawk Wars.

## **Kalstrand' s Markets**

***The Pillared Market, Goldburgh:*** Standing behind the Guildhall, the Pillared Market is a large, stone-pillared arcade, underneath which luxury items, guild and other commercial contracts are traded and moneychangers and usurers ply their profitable professions. This is the financial heart of Kalstrand - where fortunes are made and lost. Access to the market is restricted to Ahlissan nobles and guildsmen and is strictly enforced by the Watch. Suites of private salons above the arcade are provided (at a fee) for the negotiation and settlement of sensitive deals. Priests of Zilchus are on hand to witness contracts - provided they are not making deals themselves.

**DM's Notes:** The Nightingale Throne has begun underwriting the losses of merchants who invest in rebuilding Ahlissa's war-shattered infrastructure. Given that most merchants are Darmen nobles, this system is abused far less than it might be. However, a few foolish entrepreneurs, led by Chareledd Hawtarn (NE, male human Rog8), are planning to defraud the crown - foolishly underestimating the shrewdness of the overking and the brutality of his bailiffs. His plan is to have a number of his caravans raided by "bandits". The "bandits" are in fact mercenaries in Hawtarn's pay, who will take the "stolen" goods right back to their master - once the crown has paid compensation, of course. To make the raids look convincing, Hawtarn is currently looking for some handy dupes to act as guards for the caravans. What he doesn't realise is that the leader of the mercenaries he has hired is in the pay of the overking.

***River Market, Old Strand:*** This market deals in ship supplies and trade goods straight from the docks. Bargemasters bid for cargoes in often noisy and boisterous auctions, while rivermen vie with each other for a berth and a wage on a barge. At Growfest, the port and market is thronged with barges arriving for the Windmarch Fair and departing en masse for Nulbish afterwards.

**DM's Notes:** The Jade Mask, a spy network serving the Iron League, has a small cell of agents working as dockworkers. Their primary goal is to monitor the comings and going from the port and aid the smuggling of important agents in and out of the city. They report to Malin Arkeld, Irongate's Ambassador in Kalstrand.

***Wain Market, New Strand:*** This open-air market consists of a long street over three times the width of any other thoroughfare in the city. It caters for itinerant artisans and merchant caravans. The wains simply draw up in lines along the length of the street and become mobile trading stalls. The market is one of the main centres for Growfest's Windmarch Fair. Inns and hostels are tightly clustered around the market to cater for the passing trade.

***Kinemarket, New Strand:*** Straddling the Kinagate, this market deals in both animals and menial



labourers. Every morning, hordes of peasants travel from surrounding villages to seek casual labour in the city. These unskilled workers are treated little better than the animals that are sold alongside them. A small slave market is located inside the walls, though Kalstrand's aristocracy views the use of slaves as eccentric. After all, there is an abundant supply of serfs willing to work for a fraction of a slave's upkeep. Nonetheless, slaves are cheerfully traded like any another commodity.

**DM's Notes:** Jalya Mardrenn (CN, human female, Clr6 - Olidammara) poses as a flamboyant slave trader. However, once she purchases a batch of slaves, she arranges for them to be transported in secret to Sunndi, where they are set free. Jalya has recently begun directing raids by an armed band of freed slaves against known slave owners.

**Greenmarket, Crownburgh:** Kalstrand's food market continually bustles with traders and domestics from the palaces seeking provender for their master's larders. The streets surrounding the market are packed with bakeries, breweries, pie shops and several restaurants. Unsurprisingly, most of Kalstrand's halfling community is located here, including several renowned firms of contract cooks.

**DM's Notes:** Peasant farmers are forced to pay their rent on their land in the form of agricultural produce to agents of their lords, who then sell the goods on at huge profits in the marketplace. This grossly unjust system keeps the Darmen's serfs mired in abject poverty.

## Districts and Locales

### The Goldburgh

The Goldburgh contains the administrative, religious and commercial heart of Kalstrand. One of the city's oldest districts, it was walled off by Xavaster the Magnificent, who spent years adorning it with ceremonial avenues, majestic buildings and ostentatious monuments and is now almost entirely taken up with palaces, temples, and government offices. Since the foundation of the United Kingdom, the Goldburgh has seen a massive influx of nobles, priests, and merchants, all seeking to be as close as possible to the epicentre of power in Ahlissa. Along with the genuinely powerful come a horde of ambitious young bloods, determined to

attain high office, great wealth and wide influence. Often the younger sons of lesser nobility or freemen born of wealthy artisan or merchant families, they vie with each other for the patronage of those in high office by fair means and foul, often becoming willing pawns in the machinations of the Ahlissan princes. The Goldburgh frequently echoes to the sounds of duels fought over honour, allegiance to one's noble patron, the love of a noble lady or the favours of influential courtesan - making it a vibrant, if sometimes dangerous, place to be.

**Prince's Palace:** This opulent complex of mansions, gardens, courtyards and towers dominates the heart of Kalstrand. As ornate as it is well-defended, the Prince's Palace serves as Xavener's private residence. It is a classic example of the Aerdi High Baroque style with practically every surface adorned with some manner of decoration. While the Imperial Palace is under construction, Xavener holds court in the Great Hall here. Lesser courtiers continually compete for the overking's attention, plying him with flattery and incessantly plotting the downfall of their rivals. A consummate politician, Xavener plays his court like a virtuoso, favouring those who are useful to him and abandoning those whose usefulness is ended. The palace is the focus of nearly every intrigue and political machination in Ahlissa. It is no place for the innocent, foolish or unwary.

**DM's notes:** A twenty feet high wall patrolled by the Household Guard surrounds the entire palace complex. The Household Guard comprise a body of 1,000 knights bound by oaths of fealty to Xavener. They are equipped with bastard swords, short swords, heavy crossbows, heavy steel shields and half-plate armour. Though they patrol the palace on foot, they can also fight mounted as heavy cavalry. The overking's private chambers are protected by the 100 knights of the elite Imperial Guard (also known as the Golden Nightingales for the devices on their coat of arms). These men are armed with (often magical) great swords, short swords, heavy crossbows, and magical full-plate armour on foot and with heavy lance and heavy steel shields when mounted as heavy cavalry. A wide variety of magical defences, as well as a corps of two dozen of the best warmacges and diviners that

money can buy, wards the palace from arcane or aerial assault.

### **The *Dirawaen* Roads**

At its height the Great Kingdom of Aerdy spanned nigh on three-quarters of the Flanaess. The all-conquering Aerdi armies relied on a network of magical roads, known as the *Dirawaen*, to move rapidly around the vast empire. Constructed by earth elementals tamed to the will of the famed Aerdi war-mages, these roads aided not only the passage of armies in war, but also of merchants and trade in peacetime. Neither rain nor snow gathers on the broad, black paving stones of the *Dirawaen* roads, rendering them passable even in winter when mundane roads are muddy swamps. Priests of Fharlanghn, god of Horizons, Distance, Travel and Roads, laid powerful *dweomers* on the *Dirawaens* allowing travellers to move quickly over long distances without tiring (travelling on a *Dirawaen* road doubles all land-based movement rates). It is said that no cart has ever broken a wheel, nor a horse thrown shoe or rider while travelling on a *Dirawaen* road. Today, they are the arteries carrying the trade that is the lifeblood of Ahlissa.

***The Grand Cathedral of Zilchus, The Great Guildmaster:*** Built of golden Hestmark sandstone and crowned with a gilded dome, this huge edifice towers over the centre of Kalstrand. A pair of enormous Onnwalon platinum doors lead from Xavaster Square into the long, echoing nave. A priceless gem-encrusted rood screen separates the nave from the domed sanctuary, where a towering golden statue of The Great Guildmaster sits enthroned. The vast, shadowy interior is decorated with gold mosaics, including a massive depiction of Zilchus, covering the interior of the vast dome. Pilgrims come from across the Flanaess to pray before the Great Guildmaster. Touching his right foot is said to bring good fortune in business. The local priests, of course, charge handsomely for access to the sanctuary and the statue. Behind the Cathedral itself is a warren of cloisters and buildings housing members of the cathedral chapter including Grand Patriarch Larissen.

**DM's Notes:** Characters touching the foot of Zilchus can re-roll one skill check or saving throw before the DM states whether the roll results in

failure or success, abiding by the result of the re-roll, even if it is worse than the original result. PCs can only receive this boon twice in any one year and must pay 100 gp for the privilege each time. Larissen has written extensively of his fears about Xavener's true character and motivations in his personal journals. Were these essays ever to become public, it would sorely test the close bonds between the church and the overking. Accordingly, the patriarch keeps them safe in a magically locked inside a secret saferoom adjoining his extensive private apartments, which are extensively warded against scrying and other magical surveillance and intrusion. Stealing the journals would earn the thief widespread fame and notoriety, along with a huge price on his head and the enmity of both the overking and the Church of Zilchus.

***The Guildhall of the Royal Guild of Merchants of Aerdy:*** Aptly placed between the Prince's Palace and the Cathedral of Zilchus, the many columned Guildhall easily matches its neighbours for grandeur. Except for the central Great Hall, roofed with enormous boughs of gilded roanwood, this enormous building is a maze of offices and winding corridors packed with scribes, merchants and bureaucrats. From here the activities of the vast Royal Guild are organised and directed. The north wing is entirely devoted to the governance of Kalstrand and, while the Imperial Palace is under construction, the Imperial Council meets quarterly in the Great Hall. Each guild in Kalstrand has a very strict, if bizarre code of dress. Thus the Guildhall is thronged with people wearing costumes that would offend the eyes of even the most ardent follower of Zagyg, the demigod of Humour and Eccentricity. Popular rumour has it that the Guild's entire wealth is stored in huge caverns underneath the Guildhall.

**DM's Notes:** Kalstrand's Mint lies under the Guildhall, from whence a large proportion of Ahlissa's currency is produced. Contrary to popular opinion, the Mint's storerooms only contain a minute fraction of the Royal Guild's assets - a mere 200,000 gold nightingales (as the Ahlissan gold piece is called). The Mint is extremely heavily guarded and warded with both arcane and divine protections. A squad of 50 soldiers of the Grand Army of Kalstrand is assigned to guard the Mint at any one time, though they are never allowed to

enter the works of the Mint itself (except in case of emergency), being instead confined to a heavily fortified subterranean guardhouse. Priests of the Great Guildmaster, led by Darial Turgrend (LN, human male Clr6/Templar2), a stern and eternally suspicious Templar of Zilchus, operate the Mint works themselves and stand ready to defend it with blade and spell should they be assailed.

**The Museum of Antiquities:** Standing opposite the Guildhall on Xavaster Square and adjacent to the Temple of Boccob, this odd pentagonal building houses a large collection of ancient items. Its centrepiece is the original *Histories of Epitecus the Wise*, which extols the real and imagined glories of the House of Darnen. The museum has a large number of Oeridian items, most notably the *axe of Andorann*, with which the ancient Oeridian warlord slew the red great wyrm, Carnazanthuzethal, and the *circlet of Tuerny the Merciless*, said to have been used by the mage-tyrant bend denizens of the lower planes to his will. In addition, there are also a remarkable number of ancient Bakluni and Suel relics, many predating the Great Migrations, including a ring said to have been worn by the last Padishah of the Baklunish Empire and a crumbling atlas depicting the lands of the Suel Imperium at its height. Priests of Boccob, notorious for their perverse pomposity and singular unhelpfulness, administer the museum and tend the adjoining temple to the Uncaring One.

**DM's Notes:** There was consternation among the usually sanguine Boccobans when of a number of items were stolen recently from the Suloise collection. The thieves managed to circumvent an impressive array of magical and physical wards to steal a series of magical relics reportedly related to Zellif Ad-Zol, the heir to the last emperor of the Suel Imperium. These include a rune carved sceptre, a silver ring set with rare black diamonds and a series of brass scrolls embossed with letters of an unknown language. Agents of the Scarlet Brotherhood are the prime suspects and with good reason, for if the items are used in the correct combination, they can reveal the mysterious fate of Zellif, who vanished centuries ago. The exact details of each item's properties are left for the DM to determine. The *axe of Andorann* is a +3 *dragon bane greataxe*, which has the additional ability to

grant the wielder *protection from energy* on command once per day against an energy type of the wielder's choosing (Moderate conjuration; CL 8<sup>th</sup>; Craft Magic Arms and Armour; *summon monster I*; *protection from energy*; Price 40,960 gp). The *circlet of Tuerny the Merciless* is a brass circlet worn upon the head, which on command allows the wearer to charm tanar'ri as per the *charm monster* spell once per day (Moderate enchantment; CL 7<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item; charm monster; Price 10,080 gp).

**The Sageries:** Huddling in the shadow of the Museum of Antiquities, these winding, ramshackle lanes and alleys are home to Kalstrand's small community of sages, mages and scholars. The materialistic Darmans do not place much worth on lore for lore's sake, and princes of the house have been traditionally discouraged from pursuing the magical arts in favour of more remunerative professions. As a result, many of the scholars that do dwell here tend to pursue very practical lines of study, preferring applied hands-on experimentation to abstract theorising. The dream of many a sage is to make a fortune from selling some innovation to a wealthy noble or guild. Given the potential wealth involved, competition between scholars is cut-throat - sometimes literally. This can make the Sageries an exciting place to visit as sages and their small bands of (more or less) loyal students test out one or other new invention - often with spectacular results.

**DM's Notes:** One of the most influential wizards in the Sageries is Galwyrden (LE Male human Wiz7/Loremaster2). Now in his sixties, this venerable sage served as a tutor to Prince Dilweg of Torrich (LE Male human Wiz16). It was Galwyrden who encouraged the young Dilweg to pursue the study of the magical arts against the will of the prince's father. Now the mage is Dilweg's principal ally and agent in Kalstrand - sharing the prince's vision of a kingdom ruled by mages. Galwyrden exploits the widespread feeling among the learned of the city that their knowledge and skills are unappreciated by the overking and his money-grubbing courtiers. Galwyrden is also the intermediary for Dilweg's is blackmail of Prince Karralak. The old sage is always on the lookout for skilled practitioners of the Art who might be sympathetic and/or useful to Dilweg's cause. Given

his connections, Galwyrden could be a very useful patron for an up and coming mage.

### **Noted Scholars of the Sageries**

Galwyrden (LE male human Wiz7/Loremaster2) - History and politics of the Great Kingdom of Aerdy  
Davdrann the Meek (N male human Brd8) - Legends of the dwarven kingdoms of the Glorioles.  
Lukas Onyal (N male human Wiz10) - Magical artifices of the Oeridians  
Andrew the Loud (NE male human Exp6) - Trafficking with the infernal planes.  
Maralia Lyran (LN female human Wiz11) - War magic and tactics  
Hughnyr the Artillerist (N male gnome Exp8) - Fortification and siege engineering.  
Mikas Coincounter (N male halfling Exp5) - Astrology and the prediction of the profitability of commercial enterprises.  
Stevrann of the Keys (LE male human Sor10/Asn2) - Mundane, alchemical and arcane toxicology  
Cathyra of the Mill (NG female half-elf Exp8) - Herbalism and medicinal plants of the Flanaess  
Shandyr Poras (N male human Exp6) - The anatomy, zoology and ecology of magical beasts and aberrations.

### **Old Strand**

The oldest part of Kalstrand, Old Strand is a maze of warehouses, rivermen's inns, gambling dens and ropewalks running up from the north bank of the Thelly to the Goldburgh. The Old Strand is also Kalstrand's poorest district. However, the Worshipful Guild of Architects, which oversees buildings and public works in the city, does not tolerate shanties and slums. The Guild employs the Watch to level inadequate buildings, fine the homeless and expel them from the city. Those unable to pay are either incarcerated in the Old Strand Workhouse to work off their "debt to society" or simply murdered. The emphasis of law enforcement in Old Strand is keeping the lower orders under control rather than any mission to bring justice. As wealth buys safety from the Watch, many of the poor folk of this district are tireless in their pursuit of a quick gold piece - be it through honest labour, swindling the gullible or slitting the purses (or throats) of the unwary. Given

the desperate and viciousness of the inhabitants, Old Strand can be a very dangerous place after dark.

***The Ten Princes and the Riverport:*** Kalstrand's extensive riverport lies outside the Strand Wall and extends for over 1,000 yards along the banks of the Thelly. Ten huge stone piers, known as the Ten Princes, jut into the river, interspersed with unnumbered smaller wooden wharves, all providing ample berthing space for the barges that ply the Thelly. Two large basins lie inside the Strand Wall, providing safe refuge for barges should the port ever come under attack from Sunndi raiders. All cargoes and passengers arriving on the quays are carefully searched and taxed by the dour and incorruptible guildsmen of the Reeve's Union.

**DM's Notes:** The Scarlet Brotherhood has at least two independent cells within Kalstrand. One cell is planning a major arson attack on the riverport during the next Windmarch Fair. Led by Brother Loras Shar (LE human male, Mon8), the small band of saboteurs have embroiled Prince Revedrenn (CE, male human Ari6), a drunken and dissolute minor Naelax noble with lands near the disputed frontier with the North Kingdom in their schemes. Revedrenn is a contact for a small band of Hextorite priests dispatched from the North Kingdom to spy on the Ahlissan capital. Using the prince as a patsy, Shar hopes to lay the blame at the feet of the Hextorites and hopefully start a disastrous war between the two kingdoms.

***Old Strand Workhouse:*** Kalstrand's poor rightly fear this grim mill of souls. Run by the obscenely wealthy Workhouse Guild, it is a slave factory in all but name. Those incarcerated here have little chance of ever being released. As they are usually destitute, few have any family to enquire after them and so a six-month stretch frequently becomes a life sentence. The Guild usually "hires" out the labour of its workforce to other guilds and industries, pocketing the wages paid to those supposedly under its care.

**DM's Notes:** Celwyrd Schlernn (CG, human male, Clr4 – Tritherion), a young Sunndian priest of Tritherion, has infiltrated the Workhouse. Appalled by what he has seen, he is planning a mass breakout, hoping to smuggle the escapees out through the docks and across the Thelly to freedom



in Sunndi. Schlernn meets with a small band of his countrymen in the Hogshead, a seedy tavern close to the River Market, where the continual coming and going of rivermen helps conceal their activities. Though the Sunndians are committed to their cause – they do not have the experience or skills to carry off the breakout alone. Schlernn realises this, but is torn between the suffering of the Workhouse slaves and the time it will take to procure strong allies.

***The Golden Pig Hostel:*** Situated in one of the least salubrious parts of the quarter, the Golden Pig is like a dozen other hostels in the Old Strand – except in one respect. Set close to the river gate, the facilities are basic – dormitories with mouldy straw mattresses, meals of unidentifiable gruel and stew. The owner, Helada Jerdrenn (CE female human, Rog5), an apparently frail old woman, specialises in providing cheap rooms to the most destitute labourers, travellers and rivermen. The standard rate is one copper common per night, but Helada often waives even this for the truly needy. Yet despite this generosity, those who linger in the area for any length of time will notice that the local people avoid the place, preferring to risk sleeping rough instead.

**DM's Notes:** While they may seem refreshingly charitable in a city motivated by greed, Helada's motives are not as pure as they seem. Every few nights, Helada's three sons kidnap some of their mother's guests and smuggle them across the river to Greystrand, where they are murdered, butchered and sold as exceptionally cheap cuts of pork. As Helada's victims are the poorest of the poor, few notice their disappearance. It is a telling reflection of the evil that pervades Kalstrand that few in power would care even if the truth were known.

***The Stained Tabard Inn:*** The Stained Tabard is a dingy inn not far from the River Market. It does a good trade from the rivermen pouring into the city from the quays and barges, as its ale is not as watered down as some places and the price of a straw mattress for the night is competitive. One thing a casual visitor might notice in comparison to many other rough and ready hostelries in the Old Strand is that there are almost never any brawls in the Stained Tabard. Those that do happen and usually over in an instant, as burley locals wade into

put an end to the fight. A more observant visitor would notice that the inn is frequented by more than its fair share of burley locals.

**DM's Notes:** The Stained Tabard is owned by a middle aged woman called Carelldra, who is also a priestess of Zilchus, is the leader of the Redeemers, one of the most powerful criminal gangs in Kalstrand. As a young acolyte of Zilchus, she was seduced and betrayed by a dashing young thief named Rakehell Chert. Through Carelldra, Chert was able to steal the priceless reliquary of the Cathedral of Zilchus, a crime for which he is still wanted for over two decades later. Though she was absolved of any guilt for the theft, Carelldra has made avenging herself on Chert her life's work. The Redeemers are the means to that end. Her thugs run protection rackets in the Old Strand, while Carelldra uses her contacts in the church to smuggle contraband through the docks. The Redeemers also provide discrete and efficient muscle for hire, frequently doing the dirty work of the city's upper classes. As a result, Carelldra is owed a lot of favours by many powerful people, which she fully intends to call in, when the time is right, to bring about the downfall of Rakehell Chert. She is always keen to hear news from Onnwal, where Chert has earned considerable fame as a leader in the resistance against the occupying armies of the Scarlet Brotherhood.

### **New Strand**

The New Strand is home to most of Kalstrand's middling merchants, artisans and lesser guildsmen. The district between the *Dirawaen* roads is thought to be lucky for one's business fortunes. As a result, the area is packed with emporia, shops and market stalls. Many guildhalls of Kalstrand's "Petty" Guilds are located here, along with a wide variety of hostelries, inns and alehouses. There are few things that cannot be bought somewhere in the New Strand. This is a bustling, noisy district, its streets crowded with wains, traders and brightly dressed guildsmen in their finery. Competition between the various merchants is often intense. However, the fiercest rivalries are between the guilds - be it in the Guildhall or in sporting events in the Arena. Many of the lesser guilds resent the influence that guilds such as the Merchants, the Moneychangers and Wainwrights wield over the city's governance.

Every so often a coalition of the smaller guilds will form to demand change. Usually the larger guilds make a few small concessions, buy off (or eliminate) the troublemakers and generally maintain the status quo.

***The Yolkstave Inn:*** The Yolkstave is regarded as one of the finest inns in the New Strand. Facing out on to the bustle of the Wainmarket, the huge great hall can feed a veritable army. The innkeep, Daranna Keld (NE, human female Rog5/Asn6), is renowned as an exquisite cook and tales of her sumptuous repasts can be heard along the length of the Windmarch. The inn boasts a large number of comfortable rooms, including a few in the cellar to make dwarven and gnome guests feel more at ease. The Yolkstave is one of the main meeting places for foreigners in Kalstrand and is thus a clearing house for tales and tidings from all corners of the Flanaess. Even diplomats from the Palace of Envoys (see below) have been known to frequent the great hall - no doubt eager for news from home.

**DM's Notes:** As well as being the proprietor of the Yolkstave Inn, Daranna is a Preceptor of Midnight Darkness (see sidebar). Daranna uses the bustle of the Windmarch Fair as cover for many of her killings, and delights in sadistically slaughtering foreign traders. She has turned her attention on the foreign ambassadors who have recently arrived in Kalstrand, who are far too tempting a target for her to resist. Her small band of a half dozen thieves and assassins (many of whom work by day in the inn) now spend their days studying the movements of the diplomats - especially the Nyrondeuse envoy Sir Berenn Keldernan (see below). Daranna is well aware of the diplomatic repercussions that Sir Berenn's assassination would have, but this is secondary to the pleasure of murdering a virtuous man in cold blood.

***Ilurien the Bladesmith:*** Ilurien Arvalyris is a real oddity, being a grey elf exile from the Rieuwood. The elves of that forest were bitter enemies of the Great Kingdom and greatly distrust the new kingdom of Ahlissa. This does not seem to bother the taciturn Ilurien, who makes swords to order, employing the patient and painstaking skill for which the grey elves are renowned. He is also an exceptional and deadly duelist. Duels over love,

honour or money are common among the nobles of Ahlissa - harking back to the warrior culture of the ancient Oeridian clans from which they are descended. In recent years, the practise of hiring skilled proxies to fight one's duels has become popular in Kalstrand. This practise provides a living (and frequently a death) for a small community of professional duelists. Of these Ilurien is undoubtedly the most feared.

**DM's Notes:** All swords made by Ilurien are of masterwork quality (and price), but take twice as long to make as regular masterwork blades. However, they are easier to enchant, halving the XP and time costs for enhancing the sword. For a fee, Ilurien will teach willing students the art of elven swordplay and fencing. However, students will need to be extremely patient as the process involved forging a new blade and spending weeks and months attuning one's self to it before even wielding it. Few humans have patience for Ilurien's methods, but those who have stayed the course are among the deadliest blades in Ahlissa. Ilurien is frequently employed to dispose of people who have crossed the powerful in Kalstrand. The victim is lured into accepting a duel only to discover his opponent has hired "The Elf" as his proxy. If Ilurien has any moral qualms about such deeds, no sign of it ever appears in his cold, violet eyes.

***The Arena:*** The populace of Kalstrand regularly whets its appetite for bloodsports at the Arena. Games are held at this towering edifice weekly on Freeday and every day of the four festival weeks. A variety of spectacles are provided for the paying public - from the highly ritualised ballet of the bullfight to the no-holds-barred slaughter of the slave gladiators. One of the most popular draws is the Richfest Games, which pits the brightly costumed men of the city's guilds against each other in the typically Kalstrander team sport of Golden Staves. The object of the game is for members of one team to carry a small golden ball across the goal line of the opposing team while balancing it at the end of a specially shaped ashwood club. The team that scores the most "lines" wins the game and gets to keep the ball. There are hardly any rules, and games, though fast and exciting, frequently degenerate into all out brawls, serving as a useful

outlet for tensions and rivalries between the various Guilds.

### **Midnight Darkness**

Devoted to Nerull, Midnight Darkness is a secret and murderous cult bent on the murder of those who might corrupt the "noble traditions of Aerdy". Priests of goodly faiths such as Pelor, Pholtus and St. Cuthbert present particularly attractive targets for the cultists.

The calling card of Midnight Darkness is a poisoned dagger rammed between the shoulder blades of their victims, with ragged strip of black cloth soaked in Reaper's Touch, a lethal contact poison (Contact Fort DC 25; Initial Damage 2d6 Con + 1d6 Wis; Secondary Damage 2d6 Con + 1d4 permanent Wis drain), tied around the dagger's hilt. Midnight Darkness is broken up into cells of assassins led by a Preceptor, who is usually a powerful priest or devotee of Nerull.

The cult's supreme leader, or Hidden Sickle, is Jipzinker (NE male human, Clr14 - Nerull). Formerly the Preceptor of Rauxes, in 585 CY he received a vision warning him to flee the city and fled to Rel Deven just days before all contact with Rauxes was lost. Jipzinker became Hidden Sickle after his predecessor, Karnequizda, formerly the Chief Inquisitioner of Prince Reydrich of Zelradton, vanished in mysterious circumstances after Reydrich's return from the dead in 587 CY.

Aside from Daranna Keld in Kalstrand, the other Preceptors and their locations are:

Plandarn Relshefer (NE male human, Brd11) - Eastfair

Marshevel (CE male human, Rog5/Asn7) - Rel Astra

Erkann the Antiquary (NE male human, Rog5/Asn 8) - Zelradton

**DM's Notes:** Most of the gladiatorial combats are between criminals or slaves, ranging from untrained bladedodder to highly skilled performers. The games are a major earner and many of Kalstrand's elite keep personal teams of gladiators. Though champion gladiators rarely win their freedom, some are allowed to live in luxury - with all the food, wine and women they desire. This is mainly to encourage them to fight well and not waste a considerable investment of gold by getting

killed. Open competitions are also held every festival week, where freemen can enter the arena and fight to the death for a prize of a thousand gold nightingales, presented to the winner by Overking Xavener himself (needless to say, protected by a multitude of magical wards and bodyguards).

**Palace of the Smiling Fates:** This luxurious gaming hall is extremely popular with the nobles and wealthy guildsmen of the city, not least because it also doubles as a high-class bordello, boasting some of the most beautiful, cultured and charming courtesans in the eastern Flanaess. There are few games here that are not played for serious money. Gaining entry to the palace requires either an invitation or possession of a sum of at least 1,000 gold nightingales. Fortunes are regularly won and lost at the tables here and no few duels have their origins in a dispute begun over a gaming table or the favours of a particular courtesan. While the palace caters for a wide range of tastes, there is none of the depravity here that is seen in other parts of the old Great Kingdom. The princes of the House of Darmen are as pragmatic in their pleasures as they are in their politics.

**DM's Notes:** Particularly beautiful or talented courtesans can make a very comfortable living in Kalstrand, receiving stipends from their wealthy patrons. Some gain a good measure of influence in society and even politics. Certainly having the favour of one of the more famous courtesans can open many doors that would otherwise be barred to those outside the so-called Golden Circle of Kalstrand society. The palace is also the place to hear all the scandalous gossip and rumours from the Imperial Court and the Guildhall. Taking full advantage of this is the owner of the Palace, Haldred Feldyr (LE human male Rog9) alias Cousin Nern Darev of the Scarlet Brotherhood. Darev uses the turnover in courtesans to infiltrate new agents into Kalstrand, where they can hear all manner of secrets or be within a dagger's thrust of key members of Ahlissa's ruling class.

**Crownburgh:** This area grew up in the last 50 years as merchants, artisans and commonfolk were drawn to the city by its wealth and security in increasingly troubled times. A new stone wall was built to enclose the quarter after the Greyhawk

Wars. Most of Crownburgh is residential, though a new administrative district is springing up around the Imperial Palace. The construction of the new palace and the arrival of foreign ambassadors has resulted in a wave of paranoia sweeping the city and Crownburgh in particular. Agents of the Scarlet Brotherhood are particularly feared, along with Hextorite assassins from the North Kingdom, Sunndian saboteurs, Nyronde agents-provocateurs and a host of other imagined foes. If all the tales are to be believed, the streets of Crownburgh are packed with spies and little else. The result of this scaremongering is that foreigners and non-humans are likely to be frequently stopped and questioned by the Watch in Crownburgh - far more so than elsewhere in Kalstrand. Any sort of suspicious activity is going to raise a hue and cry among the jumpy residents. This extreme paranoia is fed and encouraged by the city authorities, more for the fact that a frightened populace is easy to manipulate, than for any increase in vigilance.

#### **Ambassadors to the Nightingale Throne**

**The Kingdom of Nyronde:** Sir Berenn Keldernan (LG, male human Ftr12)

Sir Berenn is one of the younger generation of Nyronde knights who fought as junior officers in the Greyhawk Wars and were rewarded with lands and titles for their loyal support of King Lynwerd. Keldernan considers himself as a soldier rather than a diplomat, but deliberately uses himself as a distraction to allow the more subtle members of his staff to do their business unnoticed.

**The Kingdom of Keoland:** Lord Samvis Sellark (LN, male human, Clr7-Xerbo/Rog4)

A cousin of Duke Luschan VIII of Gradsul, Telves is a fierce enemy of the Scarlet Brotherhood, having fought against them when they assailed Gradsul during the Greyhawk Wars. Telves' brief is to gauge Ahlissan intentions in the Azure Sea and tentatively probe the possibilities of an alliance between the two kingdoms to break the Scarlet Brotherhood stranglehold of the southern seas.

**The Kingdom of Sunndi:** Lady Mayala Valdural (CG, female half-elf, Clr10 - Tritherion)

Mayala is an unusual choice for a diplomat, being a devoted follower of Tritherion, a god not noted for his subtlety. Certainly she has not endeared herself to the Imperial Court with her frequent appearances, which she uses to harangue the overking, the Ahlissan nobility and anything else that offends her strong sense of justice. Despite this, her requests for audiences have never been refused.

**The Free State of Onnwal:** Kerlan Arran (LN, male human Clr12 - Zilchus)

Kerlan Arran is one of the most senior priests of Zilchus in Onnwal. Since 586 CY, he has served as an aide to Duke Baeren Coriell, Onnwal's envoy in Irongate and is a consummate diplomat. With the signing of the Naerie Compact in early 584, which saw a thaw in relations between Onnwal and Ahlissa, Arran was dispatched to Kalstrand to gain Ahlissan cooperation in the war against the Scarlet Brotherhood.

**The Free City of Irongate:** Halgerud Arkelzur, (NG, dwarf male Rog10)

Halgerud is the leader of the Jade Mask cell in Kalstrand. The Jade Mask is a spy network serving the Iron League, as the alliance between Sunndi, Irongate, Onnwal and the Iron Hills is known. Halgerud has agents in the docks to smuggle agents and items in and out of the city as need demands, while the ambassador himself exchanges information with the Nyronde and Sunndian missions.

**The Free City of Greyhawk:** Orvira Telwyn (N, human female Rog9)

Orvira has been dispatched by the Directing Oligarchy of Greyhawk to divine the plans of Royal Guild of Merchants of Aerdy for trade through the Free City and the Nyr Dyv. The Directors are greatly concerned at the wealth, influence and reach of the guild, and Orvira has been using her considerable charm to wheedle information out of a number of influential guildsmen.

**The Free City of Rel Astra:** Halwyrd Veldaster (LE, human male Wiz10)

Halwyrd is a trusted servant of Drax, the Lord Protector of Rel Astra. A quiet, observant man - he is well suited to carry out the brief set for him - namely to stymie Ahlissan ambitions in Medegia (which both Rel Astra and Ahlissa claim as theirs). He also keeps an eye on communications between Kalstrand and Emmara, ruler of Ountsy, one of the cities of the Solnor Compact, who is suspected of having Ahlissan sympathies.

**Imperial Palace:** Xavener has decreed the construction of a palace worthy of "the greatest kingdom in the Flanaess". A swathe of Crownburgh was levelled to make way for the new seat of Ahlissa's overkings. Vast amounts of stone and timber are transported here daily and a horde of masons, laborers and not a few (mainly orcish) slaves swarm over the site. Several of the Eldritch Lords of the Aerdi, members of a powerful coven of mages based in Rel Deven, have been spotted here, no doubt incorporating powerful magical defenses into the foundations. A procession of priests of various faiths have also been drafted into sprinkle the blessings of the gods upon the site. The palace is due to be completed by the festival year of 600 CY.



In the meantime the Household Guard and Xavener's court war mages guard the site vigilantly.

**DM's Notes:** Given the number of arcane defenses being incorporated into the palace, there is a profitable market now in Kalstrand for exotic material components – including the blood and other body parts of magical creatures of all ilks. The Grey Seer of Nyrond is said to have reported to King Lynwerd that a strange and powerful magical aura has recently flared up in the centre of the extensive dungeons that have already been excavated beneath the Imperial Palace. There is much speculation as to what might cause such an aura. Some have proposed that it might be the effect of the activation of a powerful artefact, such as the *Machine of Lum the Mad*, which was known to be in the possession of the Overking of the Great Kingdom before the fall of Rauxes. Others have suggested that the forging of some new artefact of power or a gate to the planes might be the cause. It is clear however, that the only way to discover the truth is for a band of suitably skilled individuals to infiltrate the site.

**Palace of Envoys:** This large compound encloses a number of fine buildings within its walls. It is designed to contain foreign embassies to Ahlissa in every sense of the word. Xavener shrewdly placed the Palace in Crownburgh to keep the prying eyes of foreign diplomats and spies away from the Goldburgh, where the real power in Kalstrand lies. Ambassadors from Irongate, Greyhawk, Nyrond, Sunndi, Onnwal, Keoland and Rel Astra have already taken up residence. For their own "protection", Xavener has placed a full company of the Kalstrand garrison to guard the compound.

**DM's Notes:** In addition to the obvious guards, some of the best diviners gold can buy keep the Palace of Envoys under constant magical surveillance. The overking is careful not to make this too obvious, for fear it might tarnish the trustworthy image that he is trying to cultivate with his neighbors. He has directed his men to try to lure any spies out so that they can be caught red-handed at some nefarious act of espionage. The various ambassadors and their staffs are well aware of the dangerous game they embroiled in. They have been chosen by their realms for their subtlety and skill,

and they will need all of both to succeed in the viper's nest that is Kalstrand society.

**Hovering Gardens:** One of the wonders of Kalstrand, these spectacular and beautiful gardens sprout forth from a set of nested tiers that float over the city like verdant clouds. Magical waterfalls cascade from the upper levels, falling in sheets of rainbowed spray into lakes on the lower levels, while flocks of exotic birds take refuge in the lush foliage. Large portions of each level are laid out in formal gardens, interlaced with paved pathways, stone bowers and statues dedicated to past heroes of Kalstrand. A portion of the uppermost level is an arboretum containing both local and exotic species, including an impressive stand of roanwoods. Here the overking keeps a small menagerie of rare forest animals, including a semi-tame colony of corollaxes, some of which are trained to utter choice phrases from *the Histories of Epitecus the Wise*.

**DM's Notes:** Access to the Gardens is strictly according to status: commoners are allowed into the ground level, guildsmen into the second tier, princes and nobility into the third tier. The top tier is reserved for the pleasure of the overking, his family and guests and, as well as the arboretum, has a spacious lodge in which the overking can enjoy his private gardens in palatial comfort. The upper tiers are reached by means of a number of levitating stone discs, each one about 10 feet in diameter, and are popular with wealthy gentlemen engaging in illicit assignations with their mistresses. The gardens are cared for by a small army of gardeners led by Feran Golmyr (N human male, Drd8).

## Kalstrand's Hinterland

**Greystrand:** A satellite settlement of Kalstrand, occupying the angle between the Thelly and Greyflood rivers. It is home to the crafts and professions deemed too unpleasant to be housed in Kalstrand proper, including slaughterhouses, tanneries and cloth-dyers. It also houses the poor folk unable to afford lodging in the city, as the Kalstrand Watch only polices Greystrand if unrest threatens the craftsmen working here. Guildsmen are generally not harmed by the slum dwellers, for to do so is to invite the indiscriminate wrath of the Watch. As a result, the place is a stinking, squalid

and lawless slum. Shanties occupy most of the settlement, the hovels often awash with the foetid effluent spilling from the abattoirs and other industries. Many of the inhabitants seek menial labour in the city daily. A fleet of ferries carries goods and labourers between Greystrand and the city.

**DM's Notes:** A small cult of Incabulos has taken root among the slums of Greystrand. Its leader, Ethal Marik (CE, human male, Clr8-Incabulos) is a member of the Guild of Butchers and has begun tainting and poisoning the meat being sent to feed the people of Kalstrand. He has used the resentment that the slum dwellers have against the Kalstranders to gain followers, promising that if they do Incabulos' will, they will be spared from the diseases with which Greystrand is rife. As some of the Greystranders get menial jobs in kitchens in the city, Marik uses them to spread the sickness beyond those places stricken with his tainted meat, thereby confusing the source of the taint.

**The Weeping Isle:** This area is a large steep sided outcropping or rock that juts up out of the river at the confluence of the Thelly and Greyflood rivers. An impressive castle clings to the stony spine of the isle. The citadel is designed to ward the river port against attack from the south. The Weeping Isle is garrisoned by a force of the Grand Army of Kalstrand, led by Constable-General Dyralanndra (LE female human, Ftr12), one of Prince Paldred's small circle of mistresses. Dyralanndra often patrols the south bank of the Thelly for Sunndian raiders atop one of the squadron of six wyverns quartered at the citadel. The Weeping Isle has a grim reputation in Kalstrand. The citadel's extensive dungeons serve as the city's main prison and Xavener's oubliette. Prisoners sent here are usually never heard of again, hence the isle's name.

**DM's Notes:** The overking keeps his cadre of elite torturers in a suite of well-appointed quarters on the Isle. Led by the sadistic Kolvari (CE dwarven female, Rog4/Clr6 - Beltar), these virtuosos of pain employ physical, mental and magical coercion to ensure that Xavener's enemies do not keep their secrets long. Kolvari's latest plaything is a, a priest of Hextor from the North Kingdom captured while travelling as a "merchant"

from Roland. Though the Hextorite is showing exceptional resistance to the torture, the overking is understood very keen to hear the outcome of the "interrogation". There are those both in the North Kingdom and in the Temple of Hextor in Kalstrand who would like to see the priest either rescued or silenced before he talks.

**Wraithwatch:** This ruined border keep crowns a rocky hill some four leagues south of Kalstrand, at the very feet of the Glorioles. Built to ward the southern approaches to the city, it was assaulted by a force of Sunndian soldiers bolstered by a company of Glorioles dwarves in the last weeks of the Greyhawk Wars. The small Ahlissan garrison put up stalwart resistance, but could not hold back the fierce onslaught of their foes. The Sunndian commander sent a runner back to her superiors saying the keep was about to fall, leaving the road open to Kalstrand. It was the last communication with either the assailing or defending forces. Both Ahlissa and Sunndi have sent patrols to discover the fate of the keep, but most have not returned. Those few who have, reported being attacked by large numbers of wraiths - hence the keep's current name.

**DM's Notes:** Just before the last redoubt of the fort was being stormed, a priest of Hextor among the garrison used a strange metal rod engraved with ancient Flannae glyphs that he found in an ancient chamber under the keep in a desperate act of retribution. The magical holocaust that followed consumed the bodies of both defenders and attackers and condemned their souls to undeath. Most became sword wraiths, though other forms of non-corporeal undead, including a banshee (formerly the elven Sunndian commander), stalk the keep and its hinterland for a radius of a league. The sword wraiths still battle each other tirelessly in the name of their respective realms. Each side will also attack living soldiers of the opposing realm, or neutral parties carrying weapons that will give them an advantage in the neverending struggle.

**The Glorioles and the Crypts of Iron Souls:** Seemingly hewn from great, grey shards of granite flung from the heavens by some wrathful god, these ancient mountains are now worn and eroded with age. The Glorioles' heavily forested foothills rise in a series of gradual plateaux that undulate for many

miles out from the towering peaks of Kilvangath and Bolwhurgirn, whose perpetual snows can be seen from the walls of Kalstrand. Ogres and giants infest the lower slopes while wyverns nest in the lonely eyries that raise their rocky heads above the treeline. For millennia, the dwarves of the kingdom of Glorvardum have dwelt in their halls beneath Kilvangath and Bolwhurgirn. Their Thanes were allies of the Great Kingdom before the empire descended into evil. When the peoples of the south rebelled against imperial rule, the dwarves worsted an army from Kalstrand in battle at the Pass of Anbek. Since then, the mountains have been perilous for the men of Ahlissa.

**DM's Notes:** Since time immemorial, the dwarves of Glorvardum interred their honoured dead with their arms and armour and their slain foes in the *Crypts of Iron Souls*. In this strange, subterranean necropolis, the spirits of the dead do eternal battle with each other. Some have said that the Crypts are not of the Oerth but are instead one of the mysterious demiplanes known as Fading Lands. Whatever the truth, the prospect of uncovering a vast throve of dwarven arms and armour has attracted treasure hunters from across the Flanaess. It is a perilous quest for the dwarves of Glorvardum do not take kindly to their sacred tombs being pillaged. Nonetheless, in late 593 CY, an adventurer staggered into Kalstrand claiming he had discovered one of the *Crypts*. The only proof he could provide was a battered but plainly magical battleaxe and shield, both bearing the devices of Glorvardum. The veracity of the man's tale has not been verified as he vanished soon thereafter.

## Personalities of Kalstrand

**Xavener, Overking of Ahlissa, Grand Prince of Kalstrand, Crowned Head of the Celestial House of Darmen** CR: 15

Male human Rogue 15

**AL:** NE Medium humanoid

**Init:** +9 **Senses:** Listen +18, Spot +18 (detect undead 30ft., detect magic, detect alignment, see invisibility)

**Languages:** Common, Infernal, Old Oeridian, Orc.

**AC** 27 touch 20 flat-footed 27 Improved Uncanny Dodge, Trap Sense +5, Uncanny Dodge

**hp:** 107 (HD) 15 Defensive Roll

**Immune:** *detect thoughts, discern lies* and any attempt to magically discern alignment

Fire resistance: 30, SR 13, Evasion.

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +19, **Will** +13 (+15 vs. illusions)

**Speed:** 30ft.

**Melee:** +20/+15/+10 Melee (*Sheerinast:* +4 keen rapier 1d6+4/crit 15-20/x2); +17/+12/+7 Melee (*scepter of darmen*) 1d6+1/crit 20/x2); +16/+11/+6 Melee (unarmed strike 1d3/crit 20/x2);

**Base Atk:** +11 **Grapple:** +11

**Atk Options:** Combat Expertise (+1-5 to AC, -1 -5 to Atk), Improved Disarm, Improved Feint, Sneak attack +8d6, damage undead within 30ft. 1d6 damage/ round.

**Special Actions:** On a stand action, Xavener can many any melee weapon he wields receive the *flaming* special ability.

**Combat Gear:** *crown of ahlissa* (acts as a *helm of brilliance*)

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 19, Wis 16, Cha 23

**SQ:** Slippery Mind, Trapfinding, Trap Sense +5.

**Feats:** Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Negotiator, Weapon Finesse.

**Skills:** Appraise +5, Balance +8, Bluff +24, Climb +3, Decipher Script +5, Diplomacy +27, Disable Device +12, Disguise +17, Escape Artist +15, Forgery +5, Gather Information +21, Hide +25, Intimidate +23, Jump +7, Knowledge (Local) +5, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +5, Move Silently +15, Open Lock +13, Perform (Act) +11, Search +22, Sense Motive +20, Sleight of Hand +17, Swim +1, Tumble +22, Use Magic Device +7.

**Possessions:** Combat gear plus *Regalia of Ahlissa:* *crown of ahlissa* (acts as a *helm of brilliance*), the *sceptre of darmen* (acts as a *rod of alertness and enemy detection*) and the *orb of zilchus* (acts as a *rod of splendor*); +4 keen rapier (*Sheerinast*), +4 glamerd studded leather armor, +5 ring of protection and resistance (also confers SR 13 and a +2 insight bonus against illusions on the wearer), *amulet of mind shielding*, +6 bracers of health, +6 gloves of dexterity, ring of chameleon power, masterwork thieves' tools.

**Evasion (Ex):** If Xavener makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally

deals half damage on a successful save, he takes no damage.

**Trap Sense (Ex):** Xavener gains a +5 bonus on Reflex saves made to avoid traps and a +5 dodge bonus to AC against attacks made by traps.

**Uncanny Dodge (Ex):** Xavener retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if he is caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

**Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex):** Xavener cannot be flanked unless the attacker has at least four more rogue levels than he does.

**Slippery Mind (Ex):** If Xavener is affected by an enchantment spell or effect and fails his saving throw, he can attempt it again one round later at the same DC.

**Defensive Roll (Ex):** If Xavener is reduced to 0 hit points or less in combat by a blow he is aware of and able to react to, he can attempt a Reflex save (DC = damage dealt) to take only half damage from the blow.

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**Source:** Ivid the Undying, Living Greyhawk Gazatteer.

**Roleplaying Hooks:** A striking man of 46, with perfect olive skin, light brown curly hair and keen hazel eyes, Xavener looks every inch a king. In public, his powerful personal charisma commands the attention of all he meets. While Xavener affects a charming, modest and affable persona, at heart he is an utterly ruthless and amoral man. There are no means that he would not stoop to achieve the absolute power he craves. Xavener is far more dangerous than the Naelax overkings of the old Great Kingdom - combining as he does cold, rational genius with magnetic charm.

Within Ahlissa, Xavener has concentrated on rebuilding Ahlissa's war-ravaged economy, thereby enriching the two institutions that support his powerbase - the Royal Guild of Merchants of Aerdy and the Church of Zilchus - and securing his own position on the Nightingale Throne. He has also poured money into the construction of powerful naval flotillas at Naerie, Prymp and Pontylver, ostensibly to meet the threat posed by the vast fleets of the treacherous Scarlet Brotherhood, but, more importantly, to ensure Ahlissan dominance at sea in years to come. Abroad, Xavener has used his considerable charm to open trade and diplomatic relations with the Iron League and Nyronnd - two of Ahlissa's bitterest enemies in

the past. He has taken great pains to assure his neighbours that under his rule, Ahlissa is nothing like the tyrannical Great Kingdom. Thus, he has studiously avoided border conflicts hoping to have the support of Nyronnd and the Iron League in the inevitable war with the North Kingdom. Xavener hopes to extend Ahlissan power through trade - using his realm's vast economic might to slowly strangle, dominate and absorb his neighbours. The intelligent blade *Sheerinast*; speaks Old Oeridian and is also called Sharpswathe, and was once the blade of Xavaster the Magnificent.

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### **Rachern, Queen-Consort of the United Kingdom of Ahlissa** CR: 11

Female human, Aristocrat 12

**AL:** LE Medium humanoid

**Init:** +6 **Senses:** Listen +4, Spot +4.

**Languages:** Common, Old Oeridian.

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**AC** 13 **touch** 13 **flat-footed** 11

**hp:** 70 (HD) 12

**Immunity:** Immune to poison.

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +13

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**Speed:** 30ft.

**Melee:** +12/+7 Melee (+1 *dagger* 1d4+1/crit 19-20/x2); +11/+6 Melee (unarmed strike 1d3/crit 20/x2);

**Base Atk:** +9 **Grapple:** +9

**Combat Gear:** *eyes of charming* (*charm person*, Will save DC 15).

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**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 21

**Feats:** Improved Initiative, Investigator, Iron Will, Negotiator, Persuasive, Weapon Finesse.

**Skills:** Appraise +3, Bluff +22, Diplomacy +28, Gather Information +22, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (Local) +3, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +17, Perform (Act) +15, Ride +12, Search +4, Sense Motive +20.

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**Possessions:** Combat gear plus +1 *dagger*, *periapt of proof against poison*, +1 *ring of protection*, *potion of eagle's splendor* (CL 6).

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**Source:** Ivid the Undying.

**Roleplaying Hooks:** With her flawless olive complexion, lustrous black hair and limpid brown eyes, Rachern is rightfully counted as one of the most beautiful women in the Flanaess. Ten years



her husband's junior, she is the perfect complement to Xavener - both to the eye of the outside world and in their character. The queen consort is a scheming and heartless woman, fond of the luxury and privilege that her title has brought her. To fend off boredom, she uses her courtiers and servants as pawns in cruel political games of her own devising, setting one against another with a carefully placed comment here or an offhand remark there.

A daughter of the minor, but wealthy House of Haxx, Rachern was much sought after in her youth, especially by impoverished princes wishing to profit from her sizeable dowry. Prince Harnnad of Nulbish pursued her particularly, though out of love rather than the desire for wealth. In the end, Rachern cruelly rejected Harnnad for the dashing Prince Xavener of Kalstrand (as he was then), shrewdly recognising that his ambition would carry him far. The queen-consort's betrayal of Harnnad was well rewarded.

Despite her privileged position (or perhaps because she fears losing it), Rachern is growing desperate to produce a son for Xavener. As a result she is turning to all manner of priests, mages and charlatans in the hope of ensuring that her next child will be a boy.

**Larissen, Grand Patriarch of Zilchus** CR: 19

Male human Cleric 19 of Zilchus

**AL:** LN Medium Humanoid

**Init:** +3 **Senses:** Listen +9, Spot +9

**Languages:** Common, Old Oeridian

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**AC** 25 touch 15 flat-footed 23

**hp:** 135 (HD) 19

**Immune:** *detect thoughts, discern lies* and any attempt to magically discern alignment

**Fort** +18, **Ref** +14, **Will** +25

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**Speed:** 20 ft.

**Melee:** +20/+15/+10 Melee (+3 *holy dagger* 1d4+4/crit 19-20/x2) or +17/+12/+7 Melee (unarmed strike 1d3+1/crit 20/x2);

**Base Atk:** +14 **Grapple:** +15

**Atk Options:** Special abilities that a creature can employ to modify its normal attacks appear here. Such abilities might include feats such as Power Attack or Combat Expertise, or special abilities such as smite evil or trip.

**Special Actions:** This entry gives any special attacks that the creature can use on its turn in place of making attacks.

**Combat Gear:** *staff of healing* (CL 15, Charges: 22)

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**Cleric Spells Prepared:**

6/8+1/7+1/7+1/7+1/7+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/4+1 - (CL 19th, Save DC 19 + spell level, +15 melee touch, +17 ranged touch):

9<sup>th</sup> - *etherealness, foresight, mass heal, miracle<sup>D</sup>, true resurrection*;

8<sup>th</sup> - *antimagic field, dimensional lock, greater planar ally, shield of law<sup>D</sup>, greater spell immunity*

7<sup>th</sup> - *control weather, dictum<sup>D</sup>, greater restoration, greater scrying, regenerate, repulsion*

6<sup>th</sup> - *geas/quest, greater dispel magic, heal, hold monster<sup>D</sup>, mass owl's wisdom, word of recall*

5<sup>th</sup> - *atonement, break enchantment, commune, greater command, hallow, mark of justice, scrying, true seeing<sup>D</sup>*

4<sup>th</sup> - *death ward, discern lies, dismissal, divination \*<sup>M</sup>, divine power, neutralise poison, sending,*

*tongues*

3<sup>rd</sup> - *clairaudience/clairvoyance<sup>D</sup>, glyph of warding, invisibility purge, magic vestment, remove blindness/deafness, remove curse, remove disease, speak with dead*

2<sup>nd</sup> - *aid, calm emotions, consecrate, detect thoughts<sup>D</sup>, enthrall, silence, resist energy, zone of truth*

1<sup>st</sup> - *bless, bless water, command, comprehend languages, deathwatch, divine favor, magic weapon, protection from chaos<sup>D</sup>, sanctuary*

0 - *detect magic, detect poison, light, mending, purify food and drink, resistance*

D: Domain spell, **Domains:** Knowledge (all Knowledge skills as class skills; divination spells cast at +1 caster levels), Law (law spells cast at +1 caster level).

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**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 28, Cha 21.

**SQ:** Spontaneous casting, Turn or rebuke undead (3+Cha.Mod/day).

**Feats:** Craft Wondrous Item, Diligent, Extend Spell, Leadership, Maximize Spell, Negotiator, Silent Spell, Weapon Finesse

**Skills:** Appraise +9, Bluff +10, Concentration +24, Decipher Script +6, Diplomacy +33, Heal +14, Knowledge (Religion) +24, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +7.

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**Possessions:** Combat gear plus +3 *holy dagger*, +5 *glamered chain mail*, *ring of mind shielding*, +3 *ring of protection*, +4 *bracers of health*, +6 *gloves of dexterity*, +6 *periapt of wisdom*, +5 *cloak of resistance*, +4 *belt of giant strength*, *rod of splendor*, gold holy symbol of Zilchus.

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**Source:** Ivid the Undying

**Roleplaying Hooks:** Larissen is a tall, slender man of 75. His exquisite white and gold-embroidered robes are complemented by his wispy white hair and muttonchop side-whiskers. The weight of his responsibilities have stooped the patriarch's once-broad shoulders and etched many deep lines of care on his face. Though there are heavy purple bags beneath them, there is still wit and wisdom in Larissen's hooded grey eyes.

Xavener's agents rescued Larissen from Rauxes during the Greyhawk Wars, after the old patriarch angered the insane Overking Ivid V. The patriarch backed Xavener for Overking because he shrewdly saw that the prince would be the best person to restore peace and prosperity to the war ravaged lands of Ahlissa. As a result, the Church of Zilchus now enjoys more power than it ever has, as the state-religion of one of the most powerful realms in the Flanaess. However, the patriarch faces a schism in the church led by Matriarch Schleretha of Zelradton, who has denounced him as Xavener's lapdog. The old man knows that this is the truth, however, despite his fears about the Overking's true nature, Larissen cannot see any better alternative and has neither the energy nor the years to find one. The patriarch's thoughts have begun to turn to nominating a successor. His deputy in Kalstrand, **Cherench; LN; Male human Clr15 of Zilchus**, is too dazzled by the church's new prestige and power to see Xavener for what he is. On the other hand, Larissen knows that appointing Schleretha as his successor would fragment the church and allow Xavener to purge those Zilchans who oppose his rule. The old patriarch can see only a choice between greater and lesser evils - and that is a hard burden for his age-stooped shoulders to bear.

**Ilurien Arvalyris, duelist and bladesmith CR: 16**

Male grey elf, Fighter8/Duelist8

**AL:** LN Medium Humanoid (Elf)

**Init:** +18 **Senses:** Listen +7, Spot +7, Low-Light vision

**Languages:** Common, Elven, Gnomish, Old Oerdian.

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**AC** 33 touch 27 flat-footed 23 **Canny Defense**, Dodge (+1 AC vs one opponent), Elaborate Parry, Enhanced Mobility, Mobility (+4 AC while moving through threatened squares)

**hp:** 162 (HD) 16.

**Immune:** Sleep

+2 Saves vs. Enchantment Spells and Effects, grace

**Fort** +14, **Ref** +21, **Will** +7

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**Speed:** 30ft.

**Melee:** +31/+26/+21/+16 Melee (+4 *wounding rapier* 1d6+9/crit 15-20/x2) or +26/+21/+16/+11 Melee (unarmed strike 1d3+3/crit 20/x2)

**Ranged:** +27/+22/+17/+12 Ranged (+1 *composite longbow* 1d8+1/crit 20/x3)

**Base Atk:** +16 **Grapple:** +19

**Atk Options:** Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Precise Strike<sup>C</sup>, Whirlwind Attack., add +1 to attack and damage when using +1 arrows, +1 to attack only for masterwork arrows.

**Combat Gear:** *boots of speed*

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**Abilities:** Str 16, Dex 30, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 8

**Feats:** Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Critical: Rapier, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus: Rapier, Weapon Specialization: Rapier, Whirlwind Attack.

**Skills:** Balance +17, Bluff +17, Climb +7, Craft (Weaponsmithing) +13, Escape Artist +20, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +6, Jump +15, Listen +7, Perform (Weapon Drill) +2, Ride +14, Search +6, Sense Motive +5, Spot +7, Swim +5, Tumble +22.

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**Possessions:** Combat gear plus (*Hiranilvar*) +4 *wounding rapier*, +4 *ring of protection*, +6 *gloves of dexterity*, +6 *amulet of health*, +3 *cloak of resistance*, +4 *belt of giant strength*, +6 *bracers of armor*, +1 *composite longbow*, +1 *arrows (50)*, masterwork arrows (50), masterwork weaponsmith's tools.

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**Canny Defense (Ex):** When not wearing armor or using a shield, Ilurien adds 1 point of Intelligence bonus (if any) per duelist class level to her Dexterity bonus to modify Armor Class while wielding a melee weapon. If Ilurien caught flat-

footed or otherwise denied his Dexterity bonus, he also loses this bonus.

**Improved Reaction (Ex):** Ilurien gains a +4 bonus on initiative checks. This bonus stacks with the benefit provided by the Improved Initiative feat.

**Enhanced Mobility (Ex):** When wearing no armor and not using a shield, Ilurien gains an additional +4 bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity caused when he moves out of a threatened square.

**Grace (Ex):** Ilurien gains an additional +2 competence bonus on all Reflex saving throws. This ability functions only when he is wearing no armor and not using a shield.

**Precise Strike (Ex):** Ilurien gains the ability to strike precisely with a light or one-handed piercing weapon, gaining an extra 2d6 damage added to his normal damage roll. When making a precise strike, Ilurien cannot attack with a weapon in his other hand or use a shield. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is not vulnerable to a precise strike, and any item or ability that protects a creature from critical hits also protects a creature from a precise strike.

**Acrobatic Charge (Ex):** Ilurien may charge over difficult terrain that normally slows movement. Depending on the circumstance, he may still need to make appropriate checks to successfully move over the terrain.

**Elaborate Parry (Ex):** If Ilurien chooses to fight defensively or use total defense in melee combat, he gains an additional +8 dodge bonus to AC.

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**Roleplaying Hooks:** Ilurien Arvalyris was born 149 years ago in the Rieuwood. He is tall for an elf, standing just over 6 feet tall, with a long braid of silver hair falling to his waist and cold, emotionless violet eyes. Ilurien generally dresses in finely made human garb - generally silk or fine-spun cotton - favouring grey and green colours. He is never without his blade Hiranilvar (Elven: Heartpiercer), one of the masterworks of his forge and a sword which has ended countless duels and lives on the streets of Kalstrand and elsewhere.

Ilurien is an elf of few words. He rarely speaks, except to a few people he respects (generally fellow duelists or mastercraftsmen), and never on the subject of his past. Generally, he tries to avoid coming into contact with other elves, especially those of the Rieuwood. Ilurien is born of a reclusive grey elf clan called the Etaini. One of

the central tenets of Etaini culture is that they are the Chosen of Corellon Larethian - as denoted by a red crescent birthmark on the right hand of each of the Etain. In his youth, as well as learning the art of bladeforging and sword play, Ilurien trained to become a lorekeeper - a position of high prestige within the clan. In the course of his studies, he opened scrolls of secret lore, known only to the eldest loremaster. What he read shattered his worldview completely. Slaying his teacher, he fled the Rieuwood and turned his back on his people forever. Since then he has lived without hope or belief among humans, finding joy only in the crafting of fine blades and his skill in battle.

## Kalstrand in the Campaign

Kalstrand can provide a variety of interesting challenges to player characters. On the surface, it is a safe, orderly and cultured city with some of the best markets in the Flanaess - the perfect base to rest and re-equip after an arduous dungeon-delve in the Glorioles perhaps. Underneath the civilised veneer however, ambition and greed consume the souls of the city's populace. Unlike other evil cities, orcs, fiends or other foul creatures do not stalk the streets. In Kalstrand, the real monsters travel in gilded carriages. This might serve as an interesting change of pace for PCs used to more overtly evil foes. Consider revealing the true face of the city to the PCs slowly. Kalstrand is the kind of place where friends can often prove faithless, selling trusting PCs out for a few gold pieces or to get a little further up the greasy pole of power.

Good-aligned characters might find themselves thrust into uncomfortable situations. When they help out the beleaguered merchant whose caravans are being plagued by bandits, they might discover that the merchant deals in slaves who the "bandits" are trying to free. However, in Kalstrand - the merchant is the law-abiding citizen and the "bandits" are the criminals. As an Imperial capital, Kalstrand attracts powerful people like a flame draws moths. Perhaps the campaign's archvillain makes his home here, protected by his wealth and privilege. The PCs may find it difficult to kick in his door and confront him, especially if he has powerful friends. However, he may also have powerful enemies, willing to help the PCs bring



about his downfall, even if they are no less evil than their foe. What do the PCs do if eliminating their nemesis helps another villain to become more powerful? There are no easy answers in Kalstrand and nothing comes without a cost.

Kalstrand is an excellent backdrop to plots, intrigues and machinations of all sorts, but there is also room for a more direct approach, be it aiding Sunndian raiders to strike a blow against the despotic Ahlissans, or fighting for gold and glory in the bloody sands of the Coliseum. Given the highly political nature of the city however, PCs who favour strength over subtlety had better have either a fast horse or a powerful patron to protect them.



# The Gray Orcs of Greyhawk

By Everett Brunson, with contributions from Tal Meta

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## How the Nalshaval Came Into Being

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Just as there is a great number euroz, so too is there a legion of euroz deities. Nearly all of these are the offspring of Gruumsh, He-Who-Never-Sleeps, and Luthic, Orc-Mother. Some of these children are known across the planes and worlds, but others are small and minor powers familiar only to a single tribe or a small group on Oerth. One of these lesser offspring was a smallish deity named Torva, the euroz god of magic. Unfortunately, Torva's magical abilities were poor, and he was only able to teach the euroz the rudimentary magics of a witch-doctor. His own lack of power and skill infuriated Torva. He was determined to increase his magical abilities and his standing within the hierarchy of the euroz pantheon.

In CY 453, in desperation, Torva sought out the greatest of the gods of magic, the human deity Boccob. Torva asked Boccob to instruct him in the ways of magic. Boccob laughed and refused, dismissing Torva as a fool, a liar, and a puppet of Gruumsh. Torva then sought out Wee Jas, the vain and aloof power of the Suel humans, but without a suitable gift, Torva could not even gain admittance to speak with her. In desperation, Torva sought out another human deity named Zagyg the Mad, and asked him to teach him the ways of magic. Zagyg agreed, but told Torva that he must first steal the *Golden Scepter of the Sun*, the symbol of the sun god Pholtus. Torva thought over his options and saw that he had little choice. He stole into Pholtus' Palace of the Sun using stealth and aided by his skills with magic. Torva soon found that Pholtus rarely left the scepter alone. Torva stayed well hidden in the ever-bright palace, but waiting had its cost -- constant pain.

After several decades, Pholtus finally placed the *Scepter* aside as he seduced a young and beautiful mortal woman from the Kingdom of Aerdi. Torva crept forward, seized the *Scepter*, and ran. Pholtus instantly knew that his hand-crafted artifact was in

the hands of another, and sent his burning sunrays to slay the would-be thief. The sunrays hit Torva as he ran from the Palace of the Sun, scorching and scarring his skin. Exhausted from the long wait in the palace and the searing pain of the sunrays, Torva stopped in a vast forest and rested. He hoped the thick trees would hide him from the enraged sun god. Unfortunately, Pholtus never lost track of the would-be thief. He followed the magical trail of the *Scepter* and found the euroz god sleeping beside a river. Pholtus snatched the *Scepter* away from the sleeping god. Torva awoke as the artifact was snatched from his grasp, and leapt at the sun god. Pholtus' mere touch was pure pain for Torva, but he was determined never to give up the fight and allow his hard won prize to be lost. With his bare hands, now burned black, Torva fought on. Pholtus fought the Euroz god, but was unable to strike a mortal blow. For a day and a half the two gods fought and struggled over the *Scepter*. Finally, as the two warring gods fought over the artifact, the head of the *Scepter* snapped off from the strain placed on it, and fell to the ground. The rod in Pholtus's hand came to be known as the *Rod of Righteousness*, while that fell to the ground came to be known as the *Golden Orb of the Sun*. Pholtus stood in stunned disbelief. His artifact had been broken in two. Torva saw an opportunity and quickly seized it, snatching the golden orb that was the head of the *Scepter* and fled. Pholtus raged and burned down the entire forest searching for Torva and the *Orb*.

Torva fled straight to Zagyg and presented him with the *Golden Orb*. Zagyg laughed and waved off the artifact. Torva decided to keep the globe as a symbol of his power. Over the next several decades Zagyg taught Torva many of the secrets of magic.

Torva found that soon after his grand adventure he had been permanently changed by his close contact with Pholtus, and especially by the *Orb*. His once emerald-green skin was now ashen; his hands, though fully healed, were still black as midnight; and most importantly, his close contact

with Pholtus and the *Orb* had granted him powers over the sun and light.

In CY 571, armed with his greater magical prowess and new abilities Torva returned to the ever-dark domain of his father, Gruumsh. Such was his power that Torva glowed with the power of the sun in the dark realm. His sibling gods and goddesses avoided looking at him, finding the light painful to them. Torva approached his father and spoke of his adventures and ordeals. Gruumsh was angered Torva had gone to the human gods for knowledge. Still, Torva asked his father if he could bring his newly acquired knowledge to his followers, and instill in them the ability to learn magic as the other races did. Torva explained his philosophy that only races that were invested in magic were destined to rule, because strength would only go so far. Gruumsh bellowed with laughter and called Torva a fool.

"The euroz race was made by strength of arms, not the cowardly magic which the elves use!" Gruumsh exclaimed. Gruumsh told Torva to take his "foolish notions" and be gone. The other euroz gods and goddesses, seeing Torva as momentarily weak, also laughed and began pelting him with stones. Torva was livid with the sheer stupidity of his father and siblings. Enraged, Torva shone forth with a light as brilliant as any that Pholtus could bring about and caused the stones that were pelting him to disintegrate.

Torva watched as his brothers and sister fled his display of power, and still in a blinding rage, walked up to Gruumsh and in a voice filled with a lifetime of anger and frustration called his father a 'blind fool'. Gruumsh, enraged at Torva's actions and especially his words, took up his mighty spear and with murder in his heart cast it at Torva's chest. Torva narrowly evaded the flung spear, and fled his father's wrath.

Torva quickly found and bade his mother goodbye, for it was no longer safe for him to stay. As he was leaving the Shadowed Halls, a small gathering of euroz powers, outcasts like Torva, met him and asked to accompany him into exile. This group of deities included Movos Ashyrr (his younger brother); Hod (son of Bahgtru); Ezri (the winged goddess of freedom), and her mysterious brother Khavylus; Tunki (a young goddess filled

with fiery passion); Guxrai (a learned god who rarely spoke) and Savidge Tryn (a god of nature).

As these gods and goddesses stood before him Torva suddenly remembered a conversation he had had with an ancient deity named Huntum just before he embarked upon his quest. "*You shall face a multitude of tests. Some shall wound you, others scar you, and your flesh shall burn. You will leave these Shadowed Halls and scale the sky. Upon your return, damnation and enlightenment shall follow.*" Torva asked the others to wait as he sought out Huntum and his vampiric wife Aisula. He invited them to accompany himself and the others into exile. Huntum agreed. Aisula smiled.

When Torva returned with Huntum and Aisula he saw that Ollyvux (goddess of law and justice) had also joined the outcasts. Torva gathered them around himself and started speaking. He spoke of founding a new and enlightened pantheon of euroz deities. He gave unto them a new name, the Zavik (which means 'the Enlightened'). It was finally agreed that the deities should separate their followers from the other euroz by altering them.

As he spoke to the euroz, the Zavik underwent a miraculous change. Their green skins turned ashen gray and the light of day no longer hurt their eyes. What the gathered euroz didn't realize immediately was that they too had undergone the change as well, which they now refer to as the Transformation Miracle. The euroz were shocked, but Torva told them that the zavik gods had brought about these changes for their own good. Never again would their kind be mistaken for ordinary 'savage' euroz. Torva declared them to be the Nalshaval, 'the Gray People'.

Later that evening Torva and the other Zavik appeared to their followers as dreams and told them to flee their individual tribes and clans and gather for protection. Torva explained that Gruumsh's anger would light a fire of genocide against those who worshipped any of the Zavik, and their families as well. Many of his followers listened, sneaking from their homelands and gathering in the places told to them by the Zavik. Those who remained were slain, as Gruumsh incited his priests against them.



## **Lands of the Nalshaval**

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### **Vren Tog (Ve-rin T-og)**

Leader: Lady Cylvia Winthrop of Hardby (M5) & Lord D'foe Scalin-Winthrop (Su-Khan) (F9)

Capital: Vren Tog (pop. 5300 total)

Population: 9,900 total

Demihumans: Halflings (650)

Humanoids: Gray orcs (8,300)

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Resources: Food, lumber

### **The Tale of Vren Tog**

Of the euroz in the area of the Pomarj, the Abbor-Alz, and the Gnarley Forest, hundreds were worshipers of Torva and the other Zavik. In CY 571, they fled their homes at the Zavik's command and traveled to the north or west as quickly as they could. The euroz under the command of Gruumsh's clergy tracked and slaughtered any and all followers of Zavik that they could find. Out of the many euroz who started this holy journey, more than 60% fell into the cruel and unforgiving hands of Gruumsh's clergy. Guided by visions sent by Torva, many of the Zavik's followers in the region of Greyhawk entered the Gnarley Forest. These small groups kept meeting and merging until a wandering tribe of twelve-hundred euroz searched the Gnarley for a home. In summer of CY 573, a scout reported that he had found a hidden vale twelve miles long, with a deep lake at the end.

The loosely organized euroz, leaderless and confused, slowly made their way to the vale. When they arrived in the vale, the wanderers gathered under a great stone needle that projected two hundred feet into the sky. Torva and the other Zavik appeared before the weary travelers and told them that their quest for a homeland was ended, declaring this small vale their new homeland. The gathered euroz were joyous and cheered. Torva preached of a new dogma, one of tolerance, strength, magic, persistence, and pride. The clergy and witch-doctors fell to their knees overwhelmed by the power of their patrons. Torva continued to preach that they would have to change their ways. Over the next few weeks the Nalshaval set to work building a makeshift village along the banks of the lake, which they named Star Lake. Of the surviving Nalshaval, sixty were priests of the various Zavik deities and over a hundred and fifty were mages;

formerly witch-doctors. The remainder was made up of the family members of the priests and mages and their lackeys. Of the true warriors who began the trek, the Nalshaval had lost the most. Less than fifty warriors survived to see the vale.

The priests immediately gathered together at a theocratic conclave and signs of the future were already present. Thirty-two of the priests decided to found a religion based upon worship of all the Zavik, not just Torva. They started construction of a temple, called the Church of the Zavik, to the various gods and goddesses of the Zavik. It was built under the Cliffs of Fire, so called because during any full moon the cliffs radiate with a purple phantom fire. Five of Torva's mage followers disagreed and decided to found a religion based upon Torva. They set aside their spellbooks and took up the holy symbol of their patron. They were the first Disciples of Torva. Three of the clerics quietly walked away from the conclave to form a small cult based upon worship of Huntum and called themselves the Covenant. The primary tenets of their cult were wisdom, common sense, self-sacrifice, and prophecy. Huntum's wife Aisula became the goddess of death and rebirth amongst the Nalshaval. Five of her priestesses survived to build a small temple and founded the Maidens of Twilight's Dawn. They perform the very important rolls of overseeing the rites of death and birth. The Maidens were the first to plant grapes within the vale and make wine, an important ceremonial instrument. Eight young priests were inspired by the courage and persistence of Torva, the suffering he had undergone, and his willingness to fight for a just cause. They swore to follow in his footsteps and continue the fight as monks. Thus was born the Order of the Black Fist. The remaining twelve clergy were all female priestesses of Ezri, Ollyvux and Tunki. They banded together for protection and formed an organization that was named the Sisterhood.

As the priests fragmented, so too did the mages. At first they tried to form a large single union. Those plans crumbled when three separate leaders with separate agendas arose. The mages splintered into four separate groups. The three leaders set up arcane unions for the protection and preservation of magical knowledge and the fulfillment of their agendas. The largest union,

boasting forty-two members, called themselves the Sorcerers of the True Source and was led by a small nalshaval named Na'Skah. The Ones with the Hand of Power were another union composed of twenty-eight mages who fanatically followed a very strong mage named Tu'Rokk. The last union is the mysterious Ruby Ravens, of which there is only sixteen members and very little is known, including the leader's name. The remaining seventy-eight mages decided to forego joining a union and instead set up their own individual towers and laboratories.

As the priests and mages cemented their orders, this left the remaining warriors in charge. Quickly a leader stepped forward with the vision and ability to hold the Nalshaval together. D'foe Scalin was named Su-Khan (battle lord). From the remaining warriors D'foe organized a warrior society called the Smoke Breath, loosely based upon his former warrior society, when he was a sergeant in the Slave Lord Turrosh Mak's personal bodyguard. The Smoke Breath received its name from the sacred pipe of the First Warrior.

D'foe also organized the people into work squads that would perform the tasks required for the community to survive. Of paramount importance was a stable food source. D'foe chose a dozen of his finest warriors and another dozen young boys as their apprentices, to start hunting the forest surrounding the vale. Fifty women in five separate groups were sent out, protected by another squad of warriors, to gather as much food as possible. It only took a few weeks for the remaining people to build a simple wooden motte-and-bailey keep and a wooden wall around the village.

D'foe claimed to have been visited by Torva in a vision and told to build a magnificent city-state, a castle, and a temple as a sign of the Nalshaval's faith in himself and the Zavik. Who was D'foe to refuse his god? He told the people and construction was started on a stone city. The stone for the buildings was quarried out of the Cliffs of Fire, a rich source of granite.

As the work on the city progressed D'foe sent out agents to spy on the surrounding forest communities to ensure that their community had yet to be detected. The next part of D'foe's plan was dangerous. He sent three Nalshaval in disguises to purchase seed, a few horses, cows, and chickens. He knew the most dangerous part of his plan was

their return to the vale. Within a few weeks the three merchants returned from the Wild Coast with the goods, and they weren't followed. Twenty families were selected and scattered throughout the vale to plant the various seeds and farm the land. Here the women proved their weight in gold, as many of them already knew the rudiments of agriculture.

Over the next few years, food was scarce, but they never went without. More Nalshaval found the hidden community and within a years time the population was pushing thirty-three hundred. As for the town, which was named Vren Tog, meaning Holy Home in the Keoish dialect of Orcish, D'foe forced his insurmountable will upon his fellows and construction was going well. The town even looked pleasant to the eye. D'foe would not allow the workers to make sloppy or misshapen buildings. The streets were narrow and made of cobblestone. Most of the buildings were over three stories, and small square parks were constructed for the people to gather and feast at. Over twenty mage towers were also built within the city, and a total of thirty other buildings, both towers and large houses, were built outside of the city. Crops such as maize, turnips, onions, tomatoes, and sweet potatoes were now feeding the populous, for animals were scarce. Each year D'foe sent out more merchants to find goods the community needed. In CY 578, the construction of the city of Vren Tog was completed.

Soon thereafter, the vale and its inhabitants were discovered by a Gnarley ranger employed by Greyhawk. At first Greyhawk was alarmed by the appearance of a town full of strange looking euroz. The rangers of the Gnarley were contacted and asked to keep an eye on the community and collect information, while an army was put together to destroy the invading euroz. What the rangers reported was amazing. They claimed the euroz were planting and tending crops and had built a small city above ground. Additionally, new euroz were appearing every day from the wilderness and were welcomed into the community. They appeared to be well groomed and no fights were reported seen.

Within a week of this first report, a small group of cloaked riders rode into Corustaith and asked to meet the mayor and the leader of the Gnarley rangers. The delegation was made up of

D'foe and his most trusted lieutenants. Many of the rangers wanted to kill the euroz on the spot, but Prisimmon Turmercan and a visiting Druid of Obad-hai told them to stop. D'foe met with Turmercan and several druids and told them the story of the Zavik and the journey of the Nalshaval to the holy vale. Everyone was surprised at D'foe's candor and honor, but they were shocked to learn of the Nalshaval spell-casters and especially their numbers. When the meeting broke up a druid carried a message to Greyhawk with the news and a request by D'foe for Vren Tog to join the growing Domain of Greyhawk as an autonomous city-state. The Lord Mayor of Greyhawk sent a negotiator named Lady Cylvia Winthrop of Hardby, a respected mage and major landholder, to meet D'foe and discover his intentions. Her meetings with D'foe were wild shouting matches in which neither moved nor gave an inch. For days the two would meet alone in a small room at the Gilded Acorn, the local inn. Many of the rangers and druids feared the Lady would report unfavorably for the Nalshaval, whom they had gotten close to over the last two months as they waited for the Lady Winthrop to arrive and the negotiations to begin.

All were completely surprised when the Lady Winthrop left without warning and everyone feared the worst. Many expected D'foe and his aids to flee, but they stayed in Corustaith. D'foe feared he had failed in the negotiations and his people would be wiped out by his pride. Just because he felt so uncomfortable alone with the lovely Lady Winthrop, which in turn made him angry. D'foe sent a message to Vren Tog to prepare the vales' defenses. A month passed with no word from Greyhawk. D'foe got more nervous by the day. Finally, a ranger ran into the village with news. He had spotted a force of two hundred militiamen moving toward Corustaith. D'foe and his four remaining aids prepared to ride out and meet the coming foe. They didn't want the soldiers to rein havoc in the village. An hour after noon, the five riders left the village with the rangers, druids and villagers watching them go. Many openly wept, fearing these brave humanoids were going to meet death.

D'foe elected to meet the coming force in a large clearing in the forest. They prayed to the Zavik for deliverance and then shared a small pot of

tea prepared by D'foe. D'foe and his men then sat atop their horses and waited for the oncoming army stoically. An hour later, the scouts of the column of foot soldiers spotted the five warriors. Ten minutes later, a small company of twenty mounted soldiers and Lady Winthrop approached. Lady Winthrop smiled brightly at D'foe, and offered him a scroll case stamped with the seal of the Lord Mayor of Greyhawk. D'foe quickly read over the document within the leather tube. It was a treaty of peace and goodwill between the Nalshaval and the people of Greyhawk. It also contained articles of governance. Lady Winthrop was to be the governor of Vren Tog, with himself as her leading aid and leader of the local militia. The two hundred militiamen would add to the city's garrison and be under D'foe's command. D'foe was also commanded to appear before the Lord Mayor four times a year with an accounting of the happenings within the city. D'foe was overwhelmed by the news and wept openly for joy. That night there was a great celebration in Corustaith. It took another two weeks of cutting a path through the forest to reach the vale of Vren Tog. Here D'foe and the militia were met by a force of three hundred armed Nalshaval and all of mages and priests. D'foe gave them the news of the treaty with Greyhawk and declared a week of celebration.

Sometime during the week long celebration, Su-Khan D'foe and Lady Winthrop became lovers. The population of Vren Tog has grown steadily. Now there are eighty-three hundred nalshaval, six hundred and fifty halflings, and four hundred humans living permanently in the vale. Many were surprised by the massive influx of halflings into the vale, many coming from Elmshire, the Kron Hills and Furyondy. The first halflings to settle in the vale were refugees from the plague ridden town of Elmshire in CY 583. Many others halflings recently settled in the vale after hearing of the fertile land and 'civilized' euroz. Most of the humans once lived on the Wild Coast or in Tricaster, which was burned to the ground by a surprise attack from the euroz of Blackthorn. A year after the treaty's signing Lady Winthrop and D'foe were married, although she remains the governor. A year later she bore him a set of fraternal twins, whom they named D'ali and D'aila Winthrop.

The elves within the Gnarley are not happy to have a city of euroz so near to their domain. In CY 583 a renegade band of sylvan and grugach elves started raiding the outlying farms in the vale. Six farms were burned and the residents murdered. According to the laws of Vren Tog brigandage is punishable by death, and so D'foe gathered an elite group of warriors, mages, and priests to deal with the raiders. Eventually the renegades were found and a battle ensued. All of the twenty-seven raiders were either killed on the spot or captured and executed in the city's square.

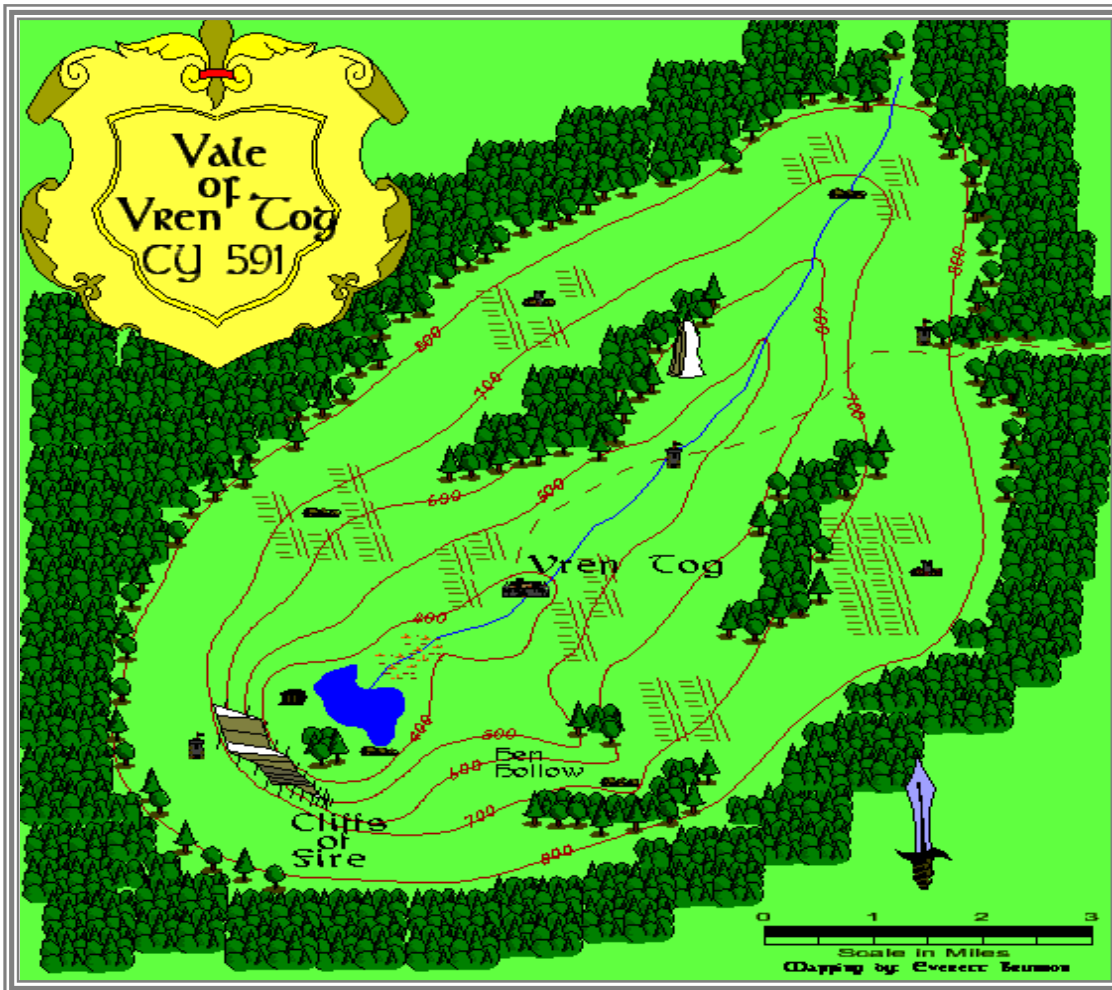
The elven clans along the border of Greyhawk's Domain sent pleas to the Queen in Celene. They asked her to declare war on the 'filthy beasts'. They felt the nalshaval had gone too far in hunting done and wiping out the renegades. A clan chief, and father of one of the executed renegades, is quoted as saying "Those filthy beasts have no right to take the life of an elf, any elf, for any reason. How can they compare their short lives to our immortal spirits? They should be hunted

down and know who their superiors truly are!"

For several weeks, groups of elves and nalshaval fought, until a messenger from the Celene arrived and told the clans to stand down. Queen Yolande had ruled that the raids upon Vren Tog were unlawful and that the renegades were thus subject to the penalties imposed by the nalshaval. The clan leaders were outraged and threatened to continue the raids and kill all of the 'filthy beasts'. The queen placed a detachment of Gryphon Knights along the border to enforce the peace. A year later, Turrosh Mak's armies marched forth and challenged Celene, Ulek, and the Wild Coast. The hostility towards the humanoids from Pomarj was directed towards Vren Tog. Many of the clans along the border sent detachments of their warriors to deal with the euroz right next door. Now the queen must surely support them in their efforts.

D'foe had heard of the armies being raised by his former boss. He knew the news out of the Pomarj would set off the fury of the border clans, so D'foe informed the Lord Mayor and asked if he

could raise a purely defensive force to repulse any aggression toward Vren Tog. The Lord Mayor reluctantly agreed. D'foe immediately started recruiting young nalshaval, humans, and even halflings into his militia units. When the attacks started, D'foe always retreated. This tactic gave the elven warriors heart and they started raiding closer to the city. After three weeks the elves merged into a single force of 470 warriors, under the command of a former Gryphon Knight, Zhyllin Rhaphordi. D'foe had kept the



true strength of his army a secret. The day after the elves gathered into a single host, D'foe and 500 warriors met them in combat. The carnage was great on both sides. At noon the elves seemed to be driving the militia back against the walls of Vren Tog. At D'foe's signal fifty wizards stepped to the battlements. Each mage released a spell or two into the elven army. Within moments, half the elven army lay dead. The remaining elves started running for the safety of the forest. Horses were brought forth and D'foe and a squadron of cavalry chased the blasted rabble down and captured most of them. These captives were ransomed back to the Queen of Celene, who needed every warrior for the Suss Campaign. Relations between Celene and Vren Tog are still strained and sometimes openly hostile.

Over the years, D'foe has led several campaigns against the euroz of Blackthorn and other evil humanoid groups in the Gnarley Forest. He is often seen visiting Corustaith or entertaining visitors from there.

## **Vren Tog Description**

Vren Tog is the name commonly given to the city and vale. The city is built from stone quarried from the Cliffs of Fire. Vren Tog's streets are narrow, usually less than twenty feet, and have recently been paved with cobblestones. Nearly every building in Vren Tog is built with stairs leading down to the main entrance in what humans consider the basement. The Nalshaval still feel very comfortable underground. These below ground floors are usually shops, taverns, merchant offices, and inns. The housing in Vren Tog is on the floors above these enterprises. The entrances to these apartments are on what humans consider the second floor. A wide (6'-10') stone staircase leads up to the apartment entrance. Inside each building are stairways up and down that allow access to other levels. Most buildings are four story structures. Each floor is divided into one to four apartments. Recently, several building owners have constructed bridges to connect neighboring apartments. This has started a new building craze. Thus, Vren Tog is developing a second tier of streets three stories up, which they have started calling The Causeways. The quality of these structures is very sound. Scattered throughout the city are common wells in large airy plazas, which have become central

gathering points for the women of the community to discuss recent news and gossip. Vren Tog also sports over a dozen small parks with trees and fountains, each having a tiny shrine dedicated to Savidge Tryn. These parks have come to mean a great deal to the nalshaval, and the citizens of Vren Tog spend many hours among them each day.

Children are required to attend lectures given by a mage, priest, or warrior in the parks once a week. No merchants are allowed to peddle their wares within the parks, thus all of the streets leading into the parks are crowded with stalls selling food, charms, jewelry, and many other exotic items. The children must also attend five hours of classes three days a week. The schools resemble huge stone domes with four entrances in the four cardinal directions. Inside, each is a circular amphitheater lit by globes of magical light. Mages and those who pursue the academic arts are highly thought of and respected, far more so than warriors. Vren Tog currently supports three minor arcane schools and a host of independent mages. The independents usually leave the city and build a tower or comfortable country house to live and work in. Some have built towers, some reaching eight stories in height, within the city itself.

## **Montesser (mon-Tes'-er')**

Founded: CY 577

Leader: Vudash of Montesser, Na'Ter (M8)

Capital: Montesser (pop. 5,100 total)

Population: 22,900 total

Demihumans: Halflings (350)

Humanoids: Nalshaval (9,200)

Alignment: LN

Resources: food, fish, horses

## **Founding of Montesser**

When the call came, in CY 571, for the worshipers of the Zavik to gather, many thousands of euroz within the Great Kingdom and the Bone March heeded the call. These euroz were drawn south and east to the Grandwood. The journey was long and harsh. As many euroz that gathered together for the journey, ten times their number hunted them at the command of Gruumsh. In the Grandwood, the nalshaval were instructed to hide and wait. The nalshaval took refuge in tiny hamlets and single households. Both elves and other euroz

hunted the nalshaval. In CY 577, another call brought the nalshaval out of the Grandwood. The battered refugees were drawn to the ruins of a coastal city. Of the thousands that started the original journey only 600 survived to reach the cove and the ruins of the human town of Montesser.

As in Vren Tog, the Zavik appeared to their followers. Torva spoke of the new dogma and the transformation miracle. Like the nalshaval in Vren Tog, a good number of the survivors were mages (73) or priests (49). Only a dozen hardened warriors survived the "Gathering", as they termed the hell of the Grandwood and the journey to Montesser. In Montesser, the reigns of leadership were taken up by a crafty mage named Na'Ter. He was proclaimed to be the Vudash, Aerdil Orcish for King. Under the inspired leadership of Vudash Na'Ter, the nalshaval quietly set to work building a fortified town. For the most part the nalshaval succeeded in staying undiscovered. The turmoil within the Great Kingdom aided the nalshaval. Stone was taken from the ruins of the human settlement and used to build homes and a 25' tall wall surrounding the new town and an impressive keep that was to be Na'Ter's seat of power. It took the nalshaval nearly five years of hard and dedicated labor to build a town that would make any army think twice before attacking.

In CY 582, soldiers discovered the nalshaval community. The See of Medegia sent a small army to crush the upstart euroz. To call the force that came against them an army would be an insult. One hundred green recruits under the watchful eye of a grizzled old campaigner, marched into Montesser and demanded the nalshaval pronounce their loyalty to the Holy Censor or he would unleash the troops. Na'Ter took the sergeant aside, gave him a sack full of gold and asked him to say the sight had been abandoned. The sergeant eyed the sack and agreed. The next year saw the valiant march of Osion and his occupation of Medegia. Ivid sentenced the Holy Censor to the Endless Death and ordered his army to destroy every structure and kill every soul in Medegia. The army was more than happy to comply. Tens of thousands were slaughtered. Because of the sergeant's report, Montesser remained untouched by the army. By CY 584, the See of Medegia was no more. The countryside of

Medegia was overrun by bandits, mercenaries, euroz warbands, and many other foul creatures.

Na'Ter organized the mages into a single society named Keljaval (Servants of the People). The Keljaval was organized around eight closely allied septs, each based upon ideology. The priests splintered into three different organizations with far different goals. The first calling itself the Church of the Zavik was pantheistic, worship of all the deities that made up the pantheon. The second was a stoic monastic society called the Nagatal (True Heart) warriors, based upon the worship of Torva and his brother Movos Ashyrr. The last, and largest group, were a society of women, called the Circle, who revered only the individual female deities of the Zavik. Over the past decade, the Circle has established itself as the leading cult in the community. Every woman, singled or married, belongs to the Circle. The men hold the Nagatal in high respect and occasionally visit the Church of the Zavik, but allow the women most of the control of the community.

Vudash Na'Ter also reorganized the military of the community into a general militia, encompassing every man (including all of the mages and priests) and a good number of women, and a standing force of hardened professionals called the Thasan (Hundred). The Thasan are highly trained heavy cavalry, akin the knights, and are a true force to be reckoned with.

In CY 584, a ship from the Sea Barons anchored in the cove and sent in nearly two hundred seasoned sailors to sack the town. The battle lasted only a few minutes, mainly because of the mages' spells and priests' prayers, and the sailors were driven back to their ship. Later that day, the captain of the ship approached Na'Ter under a flag of truce. A trade agreement was made and signed a week later. Since that encounter, the Sea Barons have had a safe harbor along the Medegia coast, to sale its goods in return for foodstuffs.

The population of nalshaval in Montesser has also steadily increased. By ones and twos, small family groups are still trickling out of the Grandwood and the number of nalshaval births has increased to nearly four thousand in the town, and another five thousand in the countryside. There are now four Thasan companies who patrol the surrounding forty to fifty miles. Farming is by and



far the major occupation of the nalshaval. Na'Ter, feeling the power of the Circle, was forced to marry, a priestess of Tunki. At first he resisted, but love found his heart and he gave in. Whereas he was named Vudash (King), she was given the name Lethog (Footholder).

The gravest threat to Montesser came only two years ago when a high priest of Gruumsh named Hinakk discovered the nalshaval community. He gathered around himself twelve of the greatest euroz war leaders in the region and amassed an army of twenty thousand euroz. They marched on the sea-side town intending to execute every last soul. For six months the siege of Montesser lasted, and only failed due to the magic of the Keljaval and because fresh food was supplied by the Sea Barons. Eventually, Hinak ordered an all out assault of the town. The walls were breached, and the fighting in the cobblestone streets was furious. Not quarter was asked nor given by either side. At the height of the battle, a group of fifty Nagatal warriors appeared and seemed to dance through the ranks of the invading army leaving behind broken bodies and the dead. In a matter of minutes, the tide of battle was turned. Na'Ter ordered a counterattack into Hinak's army. The mages and priests gathered upon the town's walls and directed lightning and balls of fire into the heart of the invaders. Hinak was killed when a fireball engulfed his pavilion. Without their leader the invading euroz were soon routed.

After their display of martial prowess, the Nagatal have seen the number of recruits quadruple. The town soon recovered from the extended siege and showed itself a force to be reckoned with in Medegia. Already, agents from Rel Astra, Ahlissa, and the Lordship of the Isles have visited the growing city-state. Trade with each is being negotiated. The power of Montesser now extends fifty miles from her walls and numerous farming villages have been established to feed the ever growing population. In addition to the nine thousand nalshaval in Montesser, growing numbers of humans and halflings have settled in Montesser or its territory seeking the lawful rule of the nalshaval and a stable environment where they can farm and herd in peace.

## Montesser Description

Montesser is a sea-port city with close economic ties to the Sea Baron and recently a trade route with the Rel Astra has been established. Montesser was built with stone scavenged from the ruins of a long destroyed city. It is still a rough looking city, and efforts are underway to rebuild the city with stone from a quarry nearly sixty miles inland. Montesser sports twenty-six small and medium fishing boats, four merchantmen, and a newly purchased galleon (from the shipyards of Rel Astra). Although, Montesser is serving as the epicenter of a return of civilization to Medegia, it is unimpressive. Over the past two years, those parts of the city destroyed during Hinak's War, have been replaced with better made buildings of sturdier design. Only the palace of Vudash Na'Ter is something to behold. It was built, like the rest of the city, from scavenged materials. A year ago the citizen of Montesser awoke to find to hulking brute of a fortress that they had built was gone. In its place was a sleek palace constructed from a strange black stone. The palace now towers over the city.

## The Nalshaval "Grey People"

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**Climate/ Terrain:** Any land

**Frequency:** Rare

**Activity Cycle:** Any

**Diet:** Omnivore

**Intelligence:** Average (8-10)

**Treasure:** Nil (0 x 10)

**No. Appearing:** 1-10

**Armor Class:** 10(dependent upon armor type)

**Movement:** 12

**Hit Dice:** 1 (dependent upon level)

**THAC0:** 19

**No. of Attacks:** 1

**Damage/Attack:** By weapon

**Special Attacks:** Nil

**Special Defense:** Nil

**Magic Resistance:** Nil

**Size:** M (5'6" - 6'6")

**Morale:** Steady (11-12)

**XP Value:** 35

The nalshaval are an offshoot of the orcs (euroz). Whereas normal orcs are virtually dead to magic, the nalshaval are more like humans in this regard. With enough study and effort, any

nalshaval can employ magic. The nalshaval, unlike their cousins, are an intelligent, very-well organized, and studious race. Schooling is very important to the nalshaval. That is why 99% of the nalshaval, both male and female, can read and write the local common tongue and the local dialect of orcish. Reading is a favorite past-time of the nalshaval. Although the nalshaval are a studious people, they believe in a strong military to protect their rights as individuals.

The typical nalshaval looks much like your typical orc. Hair color tends to be red, auburn, black, and blond. Nalshaval eyes are very much like humans, with the same colors dominant. Skin color is ashen gray (a very light gray). Teeth color is normally ivory or golden brown, depending upon oral hygiene. Nalshaval tend to be lean and well muscled, from tending the farms or working at other laborious tasks. Their garments are sturdy, well made, and utilitarian. The nalshaval mostly wear solid colors and those are usually bright.

**Character Classes Allowed (Maximum Level):** Fighter (11), Fighter/Thief, Fighter/Mage, Fighter/Priest, Thief (10), Thief/Mage, Priest (12), Priest/Thief, and Mage (12)

**Ability Score Adjustments:** +1 Strength (max 18 or 18 00% for fighters), +1 Constitution (max 19), -1 Charisma

No special night vision, nor infravision.

No penalty for being out in the sunlight.

## The Zavik (Enlightened Ones)

**Torva** (Orb-Holder, Sunchaser, Gray Mage)  
Intermediate Power of Mechanus, LN

Portfolio: Magic, Light, The Sun, Persistence

Domain Name: The Bright Hall

Allies: Zagyg, The Zavik Pantheon

Foes: Gruumsh, Pholtus, Euroz Pantheon

Holy Symbol: A Black Fist Upon A Golden Orb

Worshippers Alignment: LN, NG, N, NE, CN

**Torva's Avatar** (mage 27, monk 15)

Torva's avatar assumes the form of the god himself, an 8' gray skinned Euroz with blackened forearms and hands. He is most often seen wearing white robes with black trim, or its direct opposite.

(Str. 18, Dex. 23, Con. 18, Int. 22, Wis. 19, Cha. 15)  
AC: -4, HD 16, hp 159, #AT 2, THAC0 5, DMG 1d8+6 (fist); MV: 12, SZ 8ft., MR 70%

**Special Att/Def:** Torva's only means of attack are his hands/feet or his magic. He finds it distasteful to use weapons. Once a round Torva can clap his hands together, thus creating a thunderbolt which stuns everyone within 60' radius for d20 rounds and sends out a concussive force that knocks those stunned back d20 feet.

## **Torva's Specialty Priesthood**

Priests of Torva, called the Disciples, are devoted to him as the master of Magic and Light. All of their ceremonies are held outside under the sun's bright rays. The priests actively seek to bridge the gap between mages and priests, by collecting mystical items, tomes, spellbooks, and anything dealing with the arcane. These materials (each temple is considered a fully stocked research laboratory) are freely shared with mages who worship Torva. When a priest reaches tenth level he is visited by Torva and informed of the other communities of Nalshaval shattered across the Flanaess and given the gift of Dream in order to communicate with their counterparts.

*Requirements:* AB Int 13; AL LN, NG, N (T); WP quarterstaff, dagger, fists; AR leather only; RA white robes with the ends of the sleeves burned black and a gold starburst on the chest;

Spell Spheres: All, Creation, Divination, Guardian, Protection, Sun, Elemental: Fire\*, Healing\*, Necromantic\*, Wards\*;

PW 1) Comprehend Languages at will, 3) Tongues 3/day, 5) magic resistance 3%/Level starting at 5th, 7) may use mage items and equipment only usable by mages, 10) Dream 1/day

## Lesser Deities

**Hod** (m); LN; Building, Craftsmanship, and Steadfastness

Hod is the son of Bahgtru and is nearly his equal in strength. Also like his father, Hod is a god of loyalty and expects it to be returned in equal measure. He is often called 'The Steady', because when he places his loyalty and trust into another individual or an ideal, he will fight to the death to

protect it. Unlike his father, Hod chose not to become a warrior. Hod is a builder by his very nature. This puts him in direct conflict with most of traditional euroz culture. He prefers to build with stone, but he is a master of all crafts from ceramics, to clothing, to wooden tools, and even food preparation. The reason he joined Torva is because the euroz refused to take pride in these crafts, and he felt his talents were going to waste. He thought to correct that by joining the Zavik.

**Holy Day(s):** 27<sup>th</sup> of Patchwall

**Worshippers:** smiths, carpenters, masons, thatchers, leatherworkers, dyers, etc...

**Symbol:** a black hammer on a blue field

### **Khavylus** (m); N; Travel, Trade, and Gathering Knowledge

Khavylus, called "The Wonderer", is a regal looking nalshaval standing ten feet tall. When he moves, many compare it to a cat striding around. His manner is of one who is distracted by petty things, but that is a ruse. He embodies the quest for new horizons, new opportunities, and new knowledge. In the sunless halls of Gruumsh's domain, information and secrets were invaluable to survival. Now in the sunlit world, his cult retains this dogma. Although Khavylus is a shrewd and cunning spy master, he has added new aspects to better fit into life in the surface world. Khavylus is not only in the business of buying and selling information, he has expanded to include anything that can be bought or sold. Therefore, if you desire a something, Khavylus will be happy to acquire it for you in exchange for something he deems just as important. Although Khavylus was doing well in the ever dark realm of the euroz, he felt they did not respect him, which was true. They believed him weak hearted and a coward. He joined Torva to prove them wrong.

**Holy Day(s):** 11<sup>th</sup> of Harvester

**Worshippers:** merchants, traders, thieves, and information brokers

**Symbol:** a golden perfectly balanced scale on a dark red field

### **Movos Ashyrr** (m); LN; Honor, Skill, Stoicism [for ALL people; not just fighters]

Movos Ashyrr is a younger brother of Torva's and the first to join him in founding a new

pantheon. Movos lives as a stoic whose greatest weapon and armor is his honor. Honor is Movos' reality. He will do nearly anything to protect his honor, the honor of the Zavik, and the honor of all nalshaval. Movos is far more than just a warrior's deity. He symbolizes the perseverance, dedication, and humility in all nalshaval. If he does something, he does it with the skill of someone who has done the task millions of times before. If it is new to him, Movos learns it quickly and becomes a skilled master of the task. Although many respect and honor him, Movos is sworn to his brother. Therefore, would never take up arms against him.

**Holy Day(s):** 4<sup>th</sup> of Fireseek

**Worshippers:** all nalshaval

**Symbol:** a complex design of interwoven bands that form a circle

### **Huntum** (m); LN; Pain, Self Sacrifice, Wisdom, Prophecy, Oration

Huntum is old, nearly the equal of Gruumsh in age. He is very wise and is often sought out as a councilor. His advice is often cryptic and prophetic. His long thinning hair is platinum white, a sign of his extreme age. From early in his life, Huntum found that although he gave good advice with a civil tongue, his words were rarely heeded by those who sought him out in the first place. The other euroz deities would then exact their revenge upon Huntum for speaking cryptically. Huntum, being to old and weak, could only stand and take the punishment, yet he never once bowed a knee to those that would hurt him. Even the vaunted Gruumsh would come to hear the words and advice of Huntum, which he never refused to give to anyone. It is only because of his commonly benevolent advice and common sense, that Gruumsh forbid his death, but still allowed the young gods to beat the elder statesman of the euroz deities. A few centuries ago Huntum met a young euroz deity named Aisula. He was instantly enchanted by her beauty and fell in love, even though he knew she was a vampire. He also found that she was strong enough to protect him from those who would take advantage of his weakness. Ever since their fateful meeting, they have been inseparable. Huntum willingly gives of himself, so that her hunger never harms any of the other Zavik.

Torva came to Huntum and asked him to join the Zavik as an honored advisor and aid.

**Holy Day(s):** 1<sup>st</sup> of Needfest and the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the festivals

**Worshippers:** anyone who seeks wisdom and knowledge of the future

**Symbol:** a wooden hourglass set on its side with all of the sand in one side

**Ezri** (f); CN; Birds, Freedom, Roaming, Mirth

Ezri is a free spirited, winged euroz goddess with multicolored feathers in place of hair. She rarely allows her feet to touch the earth. Of all the Zavik, Ezri is the staunchest ally of Torva, because without his outburst at Gruumsh and his formation of the Zavik, she would still be trapped in the dark and eerie underground domain of the euroz gods, dreaming of endless horizons. Ezri rarely stays in any one place for long. She leads a nomadic life, constantly skirting the edge of euroz and nalshaval lands. She listens to her avian followers who bring her tails from near and far. Whenever something of great interest happens Ezri is usually the first on the scene, thus she often serves as the ambassador for the Zavik. Ezri is also known for her wicked (though never cruel) sense of humor, which has gotten her in trouble more than once with gods and goddesses more powerful than her. Her swift flight has saved her life on more than one occasion. Ezri loves birds, and is constantly surrounded by their beautiful forms and listening to their songs.

**Holy Day(s):** 1<sup>st</sup> of Planting

**Worshippers:** females, hunters, comedians

**Symbol:** a pair of black and gray wings with the tips being a brilliant blue

**Aisula** (f); CN; Blood, Death, Twilight, Beauty [Note: she is a Vampire Goddess]

Aisula was born of a union between Gruumsh and a little know euroz goddesses named Oishen. Oishen died in child-birth. It is rumored that Luthic was jealous of her and killed her as the baby was born. Aisula was raised by Luthic as her own daughter. Early on, the adventurous and beautiful young goddess, who had an affinity for shadows and twilight, showed herself to be a handful. She seduced many of the young gods, even some non-euroz gods found her too beautiful

to resist. Yet, she would never allow any of these gods to capture her heart.

While traveling the planes in search of adventure and another lover, Aisula met and seduced a young god, who unknown to her was a vampire deity. He eventually turned upon her and they fought. Who this god was she will not say, but it is rumored to be Kas the Destroyer. Needless to say, Aisula suffered grievous wounds. She barely made it home to Luthic's doorstep before she succumbed to her wounds and died, only to rise again as a vampire euroz. She and Luthic kept this secret, fearing what Gruumsh would do. Through the limitations of vampirism were limited in the sunless halls of Gruumsh's domain, the call of the blood was something that Aisula could not ignore. Under the control of her hunger she surprised another young euroz god and drained him dry. Fearing he would also rise, she destroyed the remains. For many years, that one kill sustained her.

Eventually the hunger came upon her again. She tried to resist, but it proved to be her master. Aisula hunted and found an ancient euroz deity, Huntum, who would sustain her for decades. Just before she attacked, a group of young gods set upon Huntum beating him for no reason. Aisula jumped out and sank her fangs into one of the young ones, who she quickly drained. The others ran in fright, not even bothering to look to see who was attacking them. Sated, Aisula helped Huntum up. He was grateful to her for helping him, and offered to help her. Together they destroyed the remains of the young euroz god. Although, Huntum was weak for a god, Aisula felt he had a certain nobility about him. Aisula found in him a kindred spirit. She started spending more and more time with Huntum, growing to respect and love the elder deity. That is, until the day arrived that she was dreading. The hunger had returned. Huntum, offered her a little of his blood to help her through the hunger. His ancient blood tasted sweeter than any wine. The next day after awakening, Aisula found she could control the hunger.

Over the next few decades, Aisula and Huntum spent much time together and were secretly married. Every few weeks he would offer her a little nibble on his neck or wrist, to sate her hunger. Aisula has grown to truly love the ancient Huntum, and would protect him from Gruumsh himself. Aisula serves

the nalshaval as their undying “Mistress of Death”. She is often referred to as “The Seductress”.

**Holy Day(s):** 28<sup>th</sup> of Sunsebb

**Worshippers:** prostitutes, mid-wives, tenders of the dead, and thieves

**Symbol:** a bunch of dark red grapes on a black field

## **Demi-Gods**

### **Savidge Tryn (m); N; Hunting, The Four Seasons, Nature**

This enigmatic young god has been hunted by the other euroz deities at the command of Gruumsh for nearly his entire existence. Savidge is the spirit of nature, a concept that most euroz spit and trample upon. When he heard of the new sun-god of the euroz, Savidge sought him out. Savidge is tired of the constant warfare and brutality of the euroz race. When he learned of the Zavik, Savidge saw an opportunity to renew his own faith and at last take up residence in the forested hills, to feel the wind and rain upon his face, and to be one with Nature.

**Holy Day(s):** 1<sup>st</sup> of Needfest

**Worshippers:** all nalshaval, hunters, scouts, rangers

**Symbol:** a large oak tree with outstretched branches surrounded by four balls that represent the four seasons

### **Ollyvux (f); LN; Ceremonies, Law, Punishment/Vengeance**

Ollyvux is a young goddess who had the misfortune of being born a female in a male dominated society. Although she stood for law and punishment, which is highly respected in euroz society, she was heavy into ceremonies. Euroz are not big on ceremonies. Down through the centuries Ollyvux tried to start numerous cults on Oerth, but the male gods hated her and quickly crushed her cults in the vilest method imaginable whenever they were found. Ollyvux has grown to distrust men, bordering on hatred. Originally, Ollyvux’s cult specialized in ceremonial punishment, usually torture, of lawbreakers. Later, they started concentrating on males.

When she heard of Torva and his band of separatists, she was curious. When she saw Ezri

and Tunki join the new pantheon, Ollyvux quickly joined. She gained Torva’s promise that her followers would be the keepers, interpreters, and administrators of the Law.

Secure in her position of defining the laws and customs of the nalshaval, Ollyvux and her followers have taken it upon themselves to eradicate the old ways. While the Transformation Miracle changed the outward appearance of the nalshaval, some still occasionally fall back into the old habits of normal euroz. Therefore, the laws among the nalshaval are harsh and the punishments for breaking them are even harsher.

**Holy Day(s):** 5<sup>th</sup> of Brewfest

**Worshippers:** judges, barristers, executioners, jailers, bounty hunters

**Symbol:** a judge’s gavel with crossing scrolls behind

### **Tunki (f); CN; Fire, Passion, Females**

Tunki is a flame-red haired euroz who is ruled by her emotions, especially her passions. Tunki can be called the first euroz feminist. Even as a young euroz, Tunki felt the system was corrupt and needed drastic, even revolutionary action to fix it. She especially hated the extremely strict laws that governed the euroz and kept the female euroz in perpetual bondage. She often used the fire of her passion to burn overly domineering males. She was on the verge of being forced to marry Yurtrus in order to break her will when she saw Torva stand up to Gruumsh. Tunki immediately decided to throw off the marriage and join Torva. Although, she is highly attracted to the powerful leader of the Zavik, she refuses to become his bride until he acknowledges females as equal to males.

**Holy Day(s):** 16<sup>th</sup> of Fireseek

**Worshippers:** all female nalshaval

**Symbol:** a tower of flame on a field of green

### **Guxrai (m); LN; Silence (formerly Singing), Scholarship, Hiding, Loss**

Guxrai is another god that would normally fit into the euroz society, if only he wasn’t a scholar and teacher. Long ago Guxrai, who was a euroz skald, did something that is forbidden to the Euroz deities. He learned to read and write. When Gruumsh found him asleep in a secluded cavern

clutching a thick volume on flowers and laying next to a large pile of books, he kicked the sleeping god awake and grasped him by the throat. Guxrai would have died, but Gruumsh was interrupted by the touch of a hand upon his back. Luthic begged her master and husband to spare Guxrai (who had been her lover for decades). Gruumsh gave Guxrai one last crushing squeeze to the throat, smiled wickedly and then threw him into the main cavern. The gathered gods and goddesses condemned Guxrai and outlawed him. Guxrai's once perfect voice is ruined. He can only speak with difficulty and then only in soft whispers, when he speaks at all. Guxrai fled the euroz and has lived upon the edge of euroz society ever since. Lacking a voice, Guxrai read more and more. At night, Guxrai steals into libraries around Oerth seeking books he hasn't yet read. Reading is the only true joy that Guxrai allows himself. He feels isolated and still weeps nightly remembering the essence of the songs and he once sung and dreams of one day standing tall and once again singing. It is without a doubt, that Guxrai is the most learned of the euroz deities. Guxrai has also perfected the art of hiding. He is so well versed at it that he does it without thinking about it now. Guxrai used his hiding ability to help him move amongst the other deities. On one of these journeys, he saw the proud Torva standing up for himself before the mighty Gruumsh. Guxrai decided then and there to attach himself to the fledgling Torva, in the hopes of someday raising his voice in song.

**Holy Day(s):** 15<sup>th</sup> of Patchwall

**Worshippers:** story-tellers, teachers, skalds, sages, musicians

**Symbol:** a lute and a book leaning against one another

**Notes:** In addition, the following relationships exist within the Zavik.

- 1) Aisula and Huntum are married. She receives the blood she needs to survive from him, while he sacrifices and gets the pain (both his and hers).
- 2) Torva is courting Tunki, but her fiery passion and low opinion of males has kept him off balance. Her demands are great, but so is his love for her.
- 3) Movos Ashyrr is widely worshipped by all nalshaval (next to Torva), and many warriors have founded societies based upon him.
- 4) All judges and executioners are females, and are usually priestesses of Ollyvux.

## The Location of the Vren-Tog Vale

(Compiled by Stylianos Scarlatos)

Given the various calculations listed, it seems logical that the Vren-Tog vale is located inside the Gnarley forest. Based on the movement rates of the 1e DMG, which is more detailed with respect to movement than the WoG '83 boxed set.

There are two possible places in the Gnarley wood to locate the springs of the stream of the article map, based on the northeastward flow of the stream.

The first location is at the springs near the werebears of Beltander. Since there is no mention of them in the article, and for reasons you will read below, this is not a suggested location. Another problem of this location is that it is closer to the Dyvers than the Greyhawk control of the Gnarley, while there is no mention of Dyvers in the article.

According to the Gray Orc article, in 578 CY, Greyhawk acknowledges Vren-Tog vale as autonomous city-state and sends a governor, articles of governance, and 200 militiamen. It takes for the force of the 5 leaders of the gray orcs, the governor, and the 200 militiamen, to cut through the forest, from Corustaith to the vale, 2 weeks time. Since there is no mention of horses (but the 5 leaders, and possibly the governor), the heavily burdened force (the militiamen carry possessions to live in the vale), in the rugged to sometimes very rugged terrain of the Gnarley, would travel 3 –4 miles per day (mean rate).

Assuming that the force did not travel always straight, the vale is placed approximately 40 miles northwest from Corustaith, at the spring of a stream that joins the Selintan river tributary that passes near Lockswell Manor. It is convenient to be placed likely, since this pushes further westward the dominion of Greyhawk into Gnarley, and provokes the elves of Celene being closer to Shelleton (Celene's eastern Gnarley outpost) than Corustaith, according to the demands of the writers of the article. The calculated location seems to be in a distance from Blackthorn that makes possible to campaign against the euroz of Blackthorn, according to the demands of the writers.

There exist two springs of streams conjoining the tributary of Selintan mentioned above. Between these two options, only the one close to Zendrelda's Tower satisfies the estimated distance from Corustaith.



## Addendum

The population of the Vren-Tog vale is outrageously large. At the beginning of their migrations into the Gnarley (571 CY) there were hundreds, and more than 60% of these hundreds were slaughtered by the Euroz of Gruumsh, surviving to the vale only 260 of them.

In 591 CY the population grows to almost 10,000 (together with few halflings). Comparing with the '83 boxed set, the whole population of the Gnarley is almost as large as the population of Vren-Tog vale. Note that the Vren-Tog vale is only 12 miles long, while Gnarley spans more than 150 miles in each direction.

Given that the vale is oval shape a rough estimate is that the Gnarley is 200-300 larger than the vale. I believe that their numbers should decrease dramatically, otherwise the article is not believable. Another comparison with LGG shows that their capital is almost as large as the capital of the Pomarj, Stoneheim! This creates a major anomaly!

Furthermore, the article states that their leader has led several campaigns against the Euroz of Blackthorn. But, with their power as stated in the article they can crush Blackthorn within a day. It is suggested that if this is used in game, the population totals be reduced by ten-fold to balance out the game mechanics. While army sizes be only reduced by 1/3 their size to keep their threat level.

## 3.5 Conversion Notes

(By Brian McRae)

All references to “mages”, “priests”, and “thieves” in the above article should be changed to “wizards”, “clerics”, and “rogues”. Letters representing character classes should be changed accordingly as well. For example, “M5” would become “Wizard5”, “P7” would become “Cleric7”, “T5” would become “Rogue5”, etc.

### Gray Orc (The Nalshaval “Grey People”)

**Gray Orc, 1<sup>st</sup> level Fighter**

**Medium Humanoid (Gray orc)**

**Hit Dice:** 1d10+1(6 hp)

**Initiative:** +0

**Speed:** 30

**Armor Class:** 14 (+3 studded leather armor, +1 shield), touch 10, flat-footed 14

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/ +3

**Attack:** Battle axe\*\* + 4 (1d8+2) or light crossbow + 2 (1d8/19-20)

**Full Attack:** Battle axe\*\* + 4 (1d8+2) or light crossbow + 2 (1d8/19-20)

**Space/Reach:** 5ft. / 5ft.

**Special Attacks:** None

**Special Qualities:** None

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1

**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 8

**Skills:** Listen +4\*, Spot +4\*, Ride +4, Climb +4

**Feats:** Alertness\*, Weapon Focus (battle axe) \*\*

**Environment:** Any

**Organization:** Gang (2-4), squad (11-20 plus 2 3<sup>rd</sup> level sergeants and 1 leader of 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> level), or band (30-100 plus 150% non-combatants plus 1 3<sup>rd</sup> level sergeant per 10 adults, 5 5<sup>th</sup> level lieutenants, and 3 7<sup>th</sup> level captains)

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Usually Neutral

**Advancement:** By character class

**Level Adjustment:** +0

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The nalshaval or “Grey People” are an offshoot of the orcish (euroz) race, and are commonly referred to as “gray orcs” by other races. The nalshaval are much more civilized than the average orc however; their society being more similar to that of humans than to their euroz cousins. Due to the tradition of learning among the nalshaval, barbarians are very rare.

Nalshaval tend to be underestimated by those not familiar with them, particularly in regard to their knowledge, craft skills, and understanding of magic.

### Gray Orcs as Characters

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Gray orc leaders tend to be fighters or wizards. Most gray orc spellcasters are wizards.

**Gray Orc Traits (EX):** Gray orcs possess the following traits.

---- +2 Str, -2 Cha.

---- A gray orc’s land speed is 30 feet.

---- **Automatic Languages:** Common, Orc. Bonus

**Languages:** Dwarven, Giant, Gnoll, Goblin, Undercommon.

---- **Favored Class:** Fighter.

### Recommended Domains For Nalshaval Clerics

- 
- **Torva:** Knowledge, Law, Magic, Sun.
  - **Hod:** Creation\*, Protection, Strength.
  - **Khavylus:** Knowledge, Travel, Trickery.
  - **Movos Ashyrr:** Law, Strength, War.
  - **Huntum:** Healing, Knowledge, Oracle\*
  - **Ezri:** Air, Animal, Travel.
  - **Aisula:** Death, Hunger\*\*, Trickery.
  - **Savidge Tryn:** Animal, Plant, Weather\*.
  - **Ollyvux:** Law, Protection, Strength.
  - **Tunki:** Chaos, Fire, Liberation\*.
  - **Guxrai:** Protection, Knowledge, Trickery.

\* Complete Divine

\*\* Libris Mortis

## With Boccobs Blessing

# The Shadow Tome

By Rick “Duicarthan” Miller

This book was once the property of the so-called Demiurge of the Vale, a mysterious being who ruled the Vale of the Mage until his disappearance in CY 530. The book was left in the care of the loyal Valley Elves of the area and remained hidden with them until an enterprising wizard, named Jaran Krimeah heard of the tome and journeyed to the Vale to claim it. To his surprise, Krimeah not only successfully claimed the book, but he was quickly accepted by the denizen Valley Elves, who believed that he was the Demiurge of the Vale returned to take his place as laird of the land.

**Appearance:** *The Shadow Tome* is a black-bound book crafted from shadow dragon hide. The tome measures roughly 21 inches long, 17 inches wide and 7 inches thick. The cover is adorned with cold iron corner protectors and a similar key-lock clasp that holds the book closed when not in use, but otherwise bears no writing. A piece of violet silk, marks a page roughly in the middle of the book. When closed, the book emits an aura of shadowstuff and feels cool to the touch.

”The Shadow Tome”, written inside the cover in Draconic script, is embossed in silver into the page. “The Black One” is inscribed in Draconic script at the bottom of this page, which also bears an *arcane mark*: The Black Ones’ crest, a blackened shield engulfed in the flames of a *fireball*. The pages within the tome are made from a cimmerean cloth and are penned with glowing silver ink.

The first page of the book is a *secret page*, trapped with a *sepia snake sigil*. The last page of the book is also a *secret page*, trapped with *explosive runes*.

At the center of the book is a page that is written in reverse order. The script on this page is written with strange glyphs that may only be read with a successful Decipher Script check DC 25, or a *comprehend languages* spell. The center page details the arcane defenses of the tome and a brief index of its contents.

**Contents:** *The Shadow Tome* contains 400 pages with spells and notations intermixed throughout. The *shadow tome* contains the following arcane spells:



**0 level:** *acid splash, arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, message, open/close,*

*prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue.*

**1<sup>st</sup> level:** *alarm, burning hands, charm person, chill touch, comprehend languages, disguise self, grease, identify, mage armor, magic missile, protection from evil, ray of enfeeblement, shield, silent image, sleep, true strike, unseen servant.*

**2<sup>nd</sup> level:** *alter self, arcane lock, darkness, darkvision, detect thoughts, invisibility, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, misdirection, protection from arrows, see invisibility, spectral hand, veil of shadow* <sup>(MHB)</sup>, *wall of gloom* <sup>(CA)</sup>, *web.*

**3<sup>rd</sup> level:** *displacement, dispel magic, fireball, fly, haste, hold person, lightning bolt, major image, protection from energy, shadow binding* <sup>(CA)</sup>, *shadow cache* <sup>(MOTP)</sup>, *suggestion, vampiric touch.*

**4<sup>th</sup> level:** *detect scrying, dimension door, enervation, Evard's black tentacles, greater invisibility, hallucinatory terrain, ice storm, phantasmal killer, scrying, shadow conjuration, stonewall, Tysiln's wondrous carriage* <sup>\*</sup>.

**5<sup>th</sup> level:** *break enchantment, cone of cold, cloudkill, false vision, mirage arcana, passwall, shadow evocation, shadowfade* <sup>(MOTP)</sup>, *teleport, wall of force.*

**6<sup>th</sup> level:** *anti-magic field, chain lightning, flesh to stone, greater dispel magic, mislead, planar binding, shadow walk, true seeing.*

**7<sup>th</sup> level:** *delayed blast fireball, greater shadow conjuration, greater arcane sight, plane shift, reverse gravity, spell turning, symbol of stunning.*

**8<sup>th</sup> level:** *demand, dimensional lock, greater planar binding, greater shadow evocation, moment of prescience, incendiary cloud.*

**9<sup>th</sup> level:** *gate, Jaran's prismatic blade* <sup>\*</sup>, *shades, shapechange, time stop.*

### Spell Notations

Throughout this article, the following notations apply.

CA: Indicates a spell detailed in **Complete Arcane**.

MHB: Indicates a spell detailed in the **Miniatures**

### Handbook.

MOTP: Indicates a spell detailed in **Manual of the Planes**.

\*: Indicates an older spell converted to the 3.5e rules.

### Jaran's Prismatic Blade

Evocation

Level: 9

Range: Personal

Components: V

Duration: 1 round/level

Effect: Personal

Saving Throw: Special

This spell condenses the colors and powers of a prismatic sphere spell into a multi-hued, sword-shaped blade, which appears in the caster's hand. The blade acts as the same as a *prismatic sphere* (q.v.) and may only be removed in the same fashion. The spell grants full proficiency with the weapon, which is treated as a +5 enhancement bonus weapon for purposes of hitting. Those hit by the blade suffer all seven layers of the prismatic sphere at once.

### Tysiln's Wondrous Carriage

Evocation

Level: 4

Range: Close (25ft. +5 ft./ 2 levels.)

Components: V, S, M.

Duration: 2 hours/level

Effect: One vehicle with four corresponding horses.

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell creates a translucent, ghostly-green vehicle composed of force energies. The caster determines what the vehicle will look like, but it must be some type of fancy carriage, wagon, buggy, or the like. A team of four shadowy horses accompany the vehicle; each horse must be of the same type (e.g., prancing horses, draft horses, etc., as the caster desires). All four shed the same eerie radiance as the carriage.



The caster does not need to concentrate to maintain the spell, although one round of attention is required to will the vehicle to begin to move, to change speed or direction, or to stop. Otherwise, the caster may perform other actions, including spellcasting, reading, or the like.

Due to the carriage's force-energy composition, passengers are partially shielded from outside attacks: they , receive a +4 concealment bonus to AC and are *shielded from* magic missiles.

The glow produced by the carriage extends to a distance of 30 feet in all directions (but not through solid barriers), and can be seen up to 100 yards away in dim light, 500 yards in complete darkness. It is a soft, non-blinding glow that allows reading, inspection of small items, and the like. It also negates any magical *darkness* with which it make contact, without harming the vehicle itself. Spells and magical devices that can absorb or destroy force energy will affect the carriage.

The carriage cannot pass through magical barriers of any sort, but is not harmed by such magic if contact is made. Other magical attacks and effects will not harm the vehicle or horses, but can affect its passengers, as noted above. If the vehicle is destroyed or the spell's duration expires while it is moving, passengers suffer 1d6 damage for every 5-feet of movement, due to inertia. Thus, if the vehicle is moving at Spd 50, when the spell ends, its passengers suffer 10d6 hp inertial damage. (Consider making this parallel falling damage, at 1d6 per 10' of movement.)

The material components for this spell are a miniature model of the vehicle to be created (carved from a green gemstone worth at least 500 gp), and a lock of green-dyed horse hair from the type of horse the spell is to create. The caster may also use kelpies, nightmares and other magical horses' hairs to conjure such creatures with this spell.

**Resources:** 3.5e Players Handbook, 3.5e Dungeon Master's Guide, Dragon Magazine Issue 241: Arcane Lore – Greyhawk Grimoires II by Robert S. Mullin., World of Greyhawk Campaign Setting, and the History of Jaran Krimeah: By Rick “Duicarthan” Miller.

# The Hands of Aargrosh

## Part 1 of “The Trail of Evil”

By Stephen S. Greer (aka Handofluz)

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How deep does the evil of a fiend go? As the wizard Artemus Hamm learned, it is found in every particle of their being. To his chagrin, he found out that the apple truly does not fall far from the tree. A decapitated hand of a bone devil would make for an extremely unique animated servant, he thought. But it turned out to be far more than what he bargained for. Sealing his evil little creation in a locked iron chest with hopes of some day “fixing” it, he hid it beneath his basement flagstones. But now the old wizard is dead and his curious nephew has opened the chest.

“The Hands of Aargrosh” is a short adventure intended for a group of four 3<sup>rd</sup>-level characters. By completing the adventure, the PCs should amass enough experience points to advance to 4<sup>th</sup>-level. This adventure is the first in a 3-part series of adventures called “The Trail of Evil.” It may also be run as a one shot adventure at the DM’s option.

### **Adventure Background**

The small community Cobb’s Stairs has been decimated by an utterly evil construct called the Hand of Aargrosh. It now lurks in the shadows in and around the thorp waiting for new victims with an army of animated constructs known as crawling claws at its command. How did this happen? For the answer, you must go back 45 years...

The wizard Artemus Hamm and his companions had traveled the length and breadth of the known world in search of adventure. Near the end of their adventuring days when they

began to prepare for a life less dangerous in which to enjoy their riches, they embarked on one last mission in which they descended into the bowels of Hell to save a young woman from fiendish kidnappers. Suffice it to say, they returned as heroes and shortly thereafter began their retirement. They had each collected treasures and keepsakes in their travels. One of Artemus Hamm’s was the hand of a bone devil they had defeated. It was kind of a morbid trophy, but he thought it would make an interesting animated servant using an exotic spell he had learned in his travels. Artemus animated the claw and kept it around as a novelty, though secretly something about it disturbed him. Perhaps the memories it evoked or brief flashes of intellect it showed from time to time.

Not long thereafter, the town of Northanchor was plagued by mysterious murders. They continued for weeks until one night Artemus awoke to find his animated claw crawling out a window and scuttling out into the town. He followed it unseen and witnessed his creation killing a young street urchin. Horrified, he returned home to spend a sleepless night wracked by guilt and wondering what to do. Indirectly he knew he was responsible for the recent murders.

In the morning, he locked the construct in a metal box, packed up his things, and left town. He relocated about 40 miles to the east in a tiny flea-speck community of miners and goat herders called Cobb’s Stairs on the fringes of the Iron Hills. In time, he rationalized that he could never have known what would happen when he

animated the claw. He knew the best thing was to destroy it, but could not bring himself to do it. He felt that he could “fix it” given time. However, as is often the case with such good intentions, he never got around to it. Instead, the hand of Aargrosh the bone devil remained hidden away in his basement for nearly 5 decades.

Artemus grew old and infirm and death’s cold embrace drew near. In his final days, he penned a letter to his nephew Alex, in which he willed his belongings to him including an old sailing ship that he had paid men at Northanchor to maintain for him should he have need of it one day. The old wizard had grown quite senile, but in a moment of clarity he remembered the box in the basement and scribbled an addendum to the letter which he had forgotten to send. It was a simple warning not to open the box. He then promptly forgot about the letter.

When his nephew came to deal with his uncle’s estate, the letter was still on the old wizard’s desk in a sealed envelope, which Alex found and read.

After everything in the cottage had been liquidated Alex’s curiosity got the best of him. Locating the hidden box, he dragged it from its niche and after long deliberation over the wisdom of not heeding his uncle’s warning, he opened it. The young man hardly knew what hit him as the claw sprang out and attacked him. Alex soon lay dead in a pool of blood and gore. The Hand of Aargrosh then darted up the steps and went on a bloody killing spree. For the next three days it slaughtered everyone in Cobb’s Stairs. Such was the build up of pent up evil energy in the bony claw that it now had the ability to spawn more of its kind. With each man, woman, and child it slew, the left hand of their corpses animated and tore themselves free from their former host to follow the Hand of Aargrosh. The evil little construct and its minions now hide throughout Cobb’s Stairs awaiting more creatures to kill and add more hands to their growing numbers.

## **Adventure Summary**

The PCs enter Cobb’s Stairs and find it empty. After a bit of investigating, they find a letter written by the wizard Artemus Hamm that provides a clue as to what happened to the missing people. In his basement, the characters find an open iron chest next to an empty niche in the ground from which it was taken. Blood and gore stains the flagstones of the basement as well as numerous other cottages they explore. A growing sense of paranoia develops as the adventurers continue deeper into Cobb’s Stairs possibly following the tracks left by the bodies that have been dragged over the dirt road.

Their investigation leads them to a general store and a large storm shelter behind the building. In the store they find clues foreshadowing Part 3 of this adventure series: “In the Halls of the Reaper.” Down in the storm shelter the bodies of the folk of Cobb’s Stairs lay in a gruesome pile. Each is missing its left hand. Investigation here draws attacks from a shadow lurking among the decaying flesh.

Upon leaving the storm shelter, the PCs learn what happened to the missing hands as they are attacked by a wave of crawling claws animated from the people of Cobb’s Stairs. A second wave attacks from concealment as they continue through the thorp.

Further up the road the PCs find a small chapel of Jascar. Entering to investigate, the Hand of Aargrosh crawls atop the lectern and commands the remaining crawling claws to attack the characters. Three dozen crawling claws swarm out of their hiding spots to attack the PCs in this final confrontation. The huge bony claw of Aargrosh joins combat when attacked. When it is destroyed the adventure is effectively over.

## **Cobb’s Stairs**

Cobb’s Stairs was populated by 75 souls before recent events. Its citizens were mainly miners making a meager living in the mines



deeper in the Iron Hills or working independently in smaller, lesser known mines. Those that weren't miners were simple farmers, laborers, craft folk, and hunters.

There are approximately 2 dozen homes here in total. Each home is a simple one or 2-story stone cottage with a high-peaked thatched roof with a chimney jutting from it. Each cottage has its own small stone cistern holding water out back. The thorp is built along a switchback dirt road wending its way deeper up into the Iron Hills. Some of the homes have little gardens around back and even livestock such as chickens, goats, pigs, and even a couple of milk cows.

Hidden throughout the thorp are the crawling claw minions of the Hand of Aargrosh. They would be extremely difficult to Spot (DC 32) even should one know what to look for (each one has had plenty of time to take 20 on their Hide checks). They watch for potential prey and communicate this information empathically to their master lurking in the church of Jascar higher at the eastern end of the thorp.

Should the PCs desire to scavenge for treasure among the empty homes and bodies (see area F), there are many useful tools and items here as listed in the equipment section of the *Player's Handbook* such as rope, building materials, picks, shovels, other assorted tools, oil, torches, lanterns, simple serviceable weapons, a few suits of light armor, and the equivalent of 4d10 gp worth of mixed coins. The assorted goods should total no more than 160 gp in value.

### A. First Signs of Trouble

A quaint little community of stone cottages appears up ahead built along the dusty road that ascends into the Iron Hills via a series of switchbacks. Each home boasts a colorful flower garden and brightly painted low wooden fence and gate. A few of the gates stand open, swinging open and closed in the breeze. There is an air of emptiness about the community. In fact, not a

soul seems to be stirring. Instead, unattended livestock – goats, mainly – wander the hard packed dirt road, nibbling at weeds among the rocks flanking it and staring at you apathetically.

Suspicious characters may wonder where the herdsman responsible for the animals is at. There appears to be no living soul anywhere in sight from this vantage point. If any of the players request a Listen or Spot check, allow them to make a roll (see the Spot DC above for spotting one of the crawling claws). There is nothing for them to see or hear yet other than what has been described in the text above. However, let them know that there is an unsettling feeling of being watched.

### B. A Flicker of Movement

Trekking up the dirt road, there appears to be no one about. However, you detect movement at the corner of your eye and turn in time to see a curtain twitch in a nearby window as if someone had just peaked out.

The movement of the curtain is simply from a breeze that caused it to stir. Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs enter this or any of the other cottages to investigate.

There are obvious signs of a struggle here. Broken crockery, overturned furniture, and most damning of all, blood splattered on the flagstones. But nothing appears to have been looted. In fact, the only thing missing is bodies.

A DC 10 Survival skill check allows characters to follow blood smeared on the ground out to the dusty road. From there, PCs must succeed on a DC 20 Survival skill check using the Track feat to follow the trails of bodies dragged up the road to area F.

### C. The Hell-Wolf Guard Dog (EL 2)

This cottage appears like the others. However, when any of the PCs enter, read or paraphrase the following.

Entering this simple cottage, there appears to have been a scuffle – knocked over furniture and broken glass. Before you have time to search the premises, a deep rumbling growl from the shadows precedes the slow, menacing approach of a large black mastiff with hackles raised and teeth bared in a snarl.

**Creature:** This ferocious guard dog is near feral and ready to attack any trespassers.

### Hell-Wolf Guard Dog CR 2

N Medium animal

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +7, Spot +7

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AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15

**Hp** 25 (4HD)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

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**Spd** 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +5 (1d8+1)

**Base Atk** +4; **Grp** +5

**Atk Options** trip

**Resist** fire 10

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**Abilities** Str 13, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6

**Feats** Improved Initiative, Run, Track<sup>B</sup>

**Skills** Hide +13, Jump +12, Listen +7, Move Silently +13, Spot +7, Survival +7 (or +15 if tracking by scent)

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**Trip (Ex):** When the hell-wolf guard dog hits with a bite attack it can attempt to trip its opponent (+5 modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip it.

The miner that lived here found this dog as a cub out in the hills. What he wasn't aware of was that the cub was the offspring of a hellhound and a wolf. Though it never breathed fire or acted any differently than what it appears to be, it is extremely tough and far more intelligent than its master ever knew.

**Tactics:** The hell-wolf guard dog attacks anybody entering the cottage or attacking it. It is agitated and extremely hostile since the attacks of the crawling claws. It won't pursue the PCs outside of the cottage, but fights to the death inside of it.

**Development:** A character with the Wild Empathy class feature may attempt a DC 25 Diplomacy skill check to calm the animal if the PCs do not attack it. If the result of the check improves its initial attitude to friendly (DC 35), the animal may be coaxed out of the cottage and perhaps join the PCs if they wish. It has a wheeze as it breathes as if something is caught in its throat. Assuming the guard dog is friendly toward the PCs one of them may examine the dog and find that a human finger is caught in its throat.

The finger came from one of the crawling claws when it attacked and killed its master. Without its master there to feed it since he was killed, the dog ate the crawling claws it killed during the attack.

**Ad Hoc XP Award:** If the PCs are successful in calming or befriending the hell-wolf guard dog, award them experience points as if they had defeated it in combat.

## D. The Home of Artemus Hamm the Wizard

A sign in front of this large quant cottage reads, *Artemus Hamm – sage, wizard (retired)*. The cottage is a bit larger than the rest. Inside, it appears to have been vacated. Only a few pieces of furniture and other nondescript items remain, most of which are covered with white sheets. A conspicuous letter sits atop the dining room table and stairs at the back of the cottage descend to what is most likely a basement.

Aside from the description, this cottage is very similar to the others. A trail of blood as if something had been dragged starts at the the stairs down to the basement and lead out of the cottage and onto the dirt road. The Hand of Aargrosh dragged the corpse of the wizard's nephew Alex up from the basement and out of

the cottage to be stashed in the storm shelter under the general store up the street (area F). The letter on the table reads as follows:

*Dear Nephew,  
Be not saddened by my departure from this world for I have passed on to a happier existence. Remember, this life is only the beginning!  
I apologize for the debts I am sure to have burdened you with. However, I think you will find the magical odds & ends and bric-a-brac here worth enough to settle my debts and set yourself up in a most satisfactory way. I know your love of sailing. I hope you enjoy *Swordfish* as much as I did when I was a youth. She's yours now.  
With my warmest affection,  
Uncle Artemus*

At the bottom, in a somewhat shakier hand and obviously written at a later date, the writer added the following:

*P.S. Hidden under a loose stone in the basement is a locked iron chest. Please DO NOT OPEN IT under any circumstance. Instead, send it to my associate Ippolito in Northanchor. He will know what to do with it."*

The magic items and bric-a-brac mentioned in the letter are no longer here. They were liquidated after the wizard's demise. *Swordfish* is Artemus Hamm's caravel docked in the nearby town of Northanchor and is the focus of Part 2 of this adventure series: "The Hunt for the Cofre Del Mar."

In the basement, there is an open chest next to a niche under the flagstones. A large pool of blood and gore stains the flagstones close by. A rolled up parchment lies on the floor in a corner of the room. The iron chest smells of chemicals used to preserve necrotic flesh and a faint whiff of brimstone, a common smell of the Hells. A character with ranks in Craft (alchemy) may make a DC 15 skill check to recognize the odor of embalming fluid. The other odor may be

identified with a DC 15 Knowledge (the planes) skill check. Otherwise, these are simply odd and strangely repellent odors.

**Treasure:** The rolled up parchment is the deed to the sailing ship *Swordfish*.

### E. A Hand in the Bush (EL Variable)

As the PCs approach this area, have them make DC 13 Spot checks to notice a slight rustling in the bush's nearby. If successful and they search the area, read or paraphrase the following.

Lying in the dirt behind a bush is a dismembered human hand. By the looks of it, the hand seems to have been ripped from the arm of its owner. However, you see no signs of a body nearby.

**Creature:** This is a very rare animated construct called a crawling claw under the mental command of a more advanced version of it, the Hand of Aargrosh. The PCs will have already ignorantly passed the hiding places of many others that were spying on them and mentally reporting to their master. This one was clumsy.

The hand appears to have belonged to a laborer; it is covered in thick calluses and caked with dried blood. With a DC 20 Search, the PCs notice blood under the fingernails.

#### Crawling Claw (1)

CR 1/3

N Diminutive construct

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

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**AC** 15, touch 14, flat-footed 11

**hp** 5 (1 HD)

**Immune** construct traits, gaze attacks

**SR** 10

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

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**Spd** 20 ft.

**Melee** claw +3 (1)

**Space** 1 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

**Base Atk** +0; **Grp** -12

**Attack Options** smite fallen

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**Abilities** Str 10, Dex 10, Con –, Int –, Wis 5, Cha 5

**Skills** Hide +12

**SQ** create spawn

**Smite Fallen (Ex):** A crawling claw inflicts double damage against prone combatants.

**Create Spawn (Su):** When a humanoid or monstrous humanoid is slain by a crawling claw spawned by the Hand of Aargrosh, the hand of the creature animates 1d4 minutes later and rips itself free of its host body. The newly spawned crawling claw is under the mental domination of the Hand of Aargrosh thereafter. If its master is destroyed the crawling claw is rendered inanimate again 1d4 rounds later. This ability is unique to crawling claws created by the Hand of Aargrosh.

*Monsters of Faerûn 29* (variant)

**Development:** This crawling claw will not attack the PCs. It lays there motionless under the direction of its master “playing dead.” The characters may make a DC 10 Sense Motive check to realize that the hand is more than what it seems. However, the PCs have a –5 penalty to their Sense Motive checks because the Bluff is very believable.

If the PCs take any kind of aggressive actions toward it, the crawling claw has a readied action to scramble down a nearby rodent hole and flee back to area I. Otherwise it remains motionless until the PCs move on. If they return here later they find that the hand has mysteriously vanished.

## F. The Cache of Corpses (EL 3)

This empty building appears to have served as a small general store or trading post. Within, you see similar signs of a struggle as in the other cottages. A small open stable connects to the north side of the building and around back you can see a storm shelter with its doors flung open exposing wooden steps descending into darkness.

The store is filled with many of the items described in the **Cobb’s Stairs** section. In addition,

a badly written note is laying on a countertop at the back of the store where the clerk would normally be found.

The note is written on a wrinkled sheet of parchment in charcoal. It reads as follows:

*“Mister Hawkings,  
Me and Jarret followed some trakz we seen at the spot the missing minerz wuz last at. We wuz not abel to follow far, but we think sum men took em. Therez an old gnome mine a bit east of the place we lost the trakz. Don’t know of much else round here. Maybe me and Jarret will hed over there and poke around inside tomorrow. Sending this note with my boy Kyle so you know. –  
Plunkett Darnen”*

Before the decimation of the thorp, the people of Cobb’s Stairs had noticed some strange things happening out in the hills – people disappearing, undead sightings, and strange men hauling covered carts through the hills by night. The store owner, Mr. Hawkings was in charge of an investigation to see what was going on. The two trackers he sent out – Jarret and Plunkett – never returned. They were about 2 days overdue when Artemus Hamm’s nephew Alex arrived to deal with his uncle’s estate and inadvertently freed the Hand of Aargrosh.

Closer inspection of the storm shelter reveals smeared blood on the steps, flies buzzing around, and a charnel stench wafting up from the darkness. Descending the stairs, the characters discover the bodies of the missing folk of Cobb’s Stairs piled haphazardly atop one another with hundreds of flies crawling over them. PCs attempting to search through the bodies, must succeed on a DC 12 Fort save or become nauseated for as long as they remain down here plus an additional 1d4 minutes after leaving. Searching the bodies quickly reveals that each one is missing its left hand as if it had been torn from its owner’s arm.

**Creature:** Any exploration of this room also draws attacks from a shadow lurking here among the decaying bodies. It was drawn to the powerful aura of death here.

**Shadow (1):** hp 19; *Monster Manual* 221

**Treasure:** Within a locked wooden chest inside the store (Open Lock DC 20) are 2 tanglefoot bags, a flask of alchemist's fire, a bottle of yellowish-green whisky called Goblin Piss, a small diamond worth 50 gp, and 28 gp in mixed coins. The chest has a false bottom (Search DC 20). The secret compartment contains a human arm wrapped tightly in oil cloth with scented herbs to mask the odor of rotting flesh. On the back of the hand is branded a stylized G inside a triangle.

The arm in the chest belonged to a ghoul that attacked some of the miners of the thorp. The ghoul's arm may be identified as such with a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check or by any person with ranks in Profession (mortician). The symbol is too obscure to be recognized, but it is a strong clue that will lead the PCs further into the adventure arc. It is the personal mark of a cleric of Nerull named Gravewind.

### G. A Show of Hands (EL 3)

This encounter takes place as the characters emerge from the storm shelter (area F) or as they continue up the road should they decide not to investigate it. Read or paraphrase the following as this encounter begins.

A strange scuttling sound precedes the arrival of a mass of dismembered hands rapidly crawling and hopping toward you with jerky, spider-like movements.

**Creatures:** By this time, the Hand of Aargrosh has begun to feel threatened by the presence of the adventurers and sends a wave of 9 crawling claws to attack them, hoping to add their left hands to its ranks.

**Crawling Claw (9):** hp 5; See encounter area E for full statistics

**Tactics:** The crawling claws attack mindlessly, swarming onto the nearest targets. They can all fit easily into one square and attack a single opponent. Since they have to enter their enemy's square this draws Attacks of Opportunity. Once they are on a foe, they crawl all over the victim's body clawing, scratching, and tearing at it as they do.

**Note:** As constructs, crawling claws are immune to nonlethal damage. PCs attempting to grab individual claws off of them are subject to Attacks of Opportunity per the rules for grappling (*Player's Handbook* pgs. 155-157). In addition, if the PCs try to destroy the crawling claws by grappling them (crushing, squeezing, etc.) they suffer -4 penalties on their grapple checks to do so without having the Unarmed Strike feat. "Stop-drop-and-roll" tactics will not harm them as this deals nonlethal damage and is, in fact, very dangerous due to a crawling claw's *Smite Fallen* ability. A fall from a significant height deals the same amount of damage to a crawling claw as it does to a PC. Attacking a crawling claw that is on an ally deals the same damage to the ally as it does to the crawling claw.

### H. The Second Wave (EL 4)

The bushes and weeds to either side of the road erupt as a swarm of dismembered hands crawl out onto the road and scuttle forward to attack.

**Creatures:** The Hand of Aargrosh has sent an additional 12 crawling claws to ambush the adventurers here. Any PCs that fail on a DC 22 Spot check to see them hiding are flat-footed and the crawling claws make a single standard or move action.

**Crawling Claw (12):** hp 5; See encounter area E for full statistics

**Tactics:** The crawling claws charge the PCs as their first actions if any of them are within 20 ft. Otherwise they simply move up to surround a

single PC. Thereafter, they attack in the same manner as those at area F, though they work on one character at a time until destroyed as instructed by their master.

### I. Hiding in the Chapel (EL 7)

A snowcapped mountain peak is painted over the entrance to this large stone building. One of its double doors gapes open crookedly while the other swings open and closed in the wind, thudding heavily against the wall each time it does. A double row of simple wooden benches face a stone lectern in the deep shadows of the far end of its interior. Spots of blood on the flagstones inside the double doors suggest that the violence that swept through this thorp was felt here as well.

PCs may surmise that this is a church. Its purpose is fairly obvious. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check or DC 15 Bardic Knowledge check allows the PCs to correctly identify the symbol over the door as the holy symbol of Jascar, the Suel god of hills and mountains. He had a strong following among the miners of Cobb's Stairs.

The chapel consists of a single large chamber filled with two rows of 5 benches facing the stone lectern. The walls, floor, and even the lectern are rough like the inside of a cave and seem to be of one piece as if carved out of the rocky hillside. They are flecked with tiny chips of gemstones that sparkle and reflect any light brought inside. They are of very little value, but aesthetically pleasing to any worshipper of Jascar to enter this holy site.

**Creatures:** Hiding under and behind the benches as well as within the thatching above (Spot DC 22) is a total of 36 crawling claws. These are the rest of the crawling claws under the control of the Hand of Aargrosh, which is hiding behind the lectern.

As the PCs enter the chapel, the Hand of Aargrosh scuttles up onto the lectern and points a

finger adorned with a large golden ring at the PCs. With this gesture, the 36 crawling claws swarm out to attack the PCs.

**Crawling Claw (36):** hp 5; See encounter area E for full statistics

### Hand of Aargrosh, Unique Crawling Claw CR 2

NE Small construct

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

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**AC** 25, touch 14, flat-footed 22 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +11 natural)

**hp** 23 (1 HD)

**Immune** construct traits, fire, gaze attacks

**Resist** acid 10 and cold 10

**SR** 10

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

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**Spd** 50 ft.

**Melee** claw +4 (1d3+3)

**Base Atk** +0; **Grp** -1

**Atk Options** smite fallen

**Combat Gear** *ring of counterspells* (magic missile)

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**Abilities** Str 16, Dex 17, Con -, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

**SQ** create spawn

**Feats** Toughness

**Skills** Climb +4, Hide +5, Jump +4

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**Smite Fallen (Ex):** The Hand of Aargrosh inflicts double damage against prone combatants.

**Create Spawn (Su):** Any humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by the Hand of Aargrosh loses its left hand as it animates and rips itself free from its host after 1d4 minutes. It is thereafter a crawling claw under the mental control of the Hand of Aargrosh. These spawn also have the ability to create more, but they are under the control of their master. This is a unique ability. If ever the Hand of Aargrosh is destroyed, the crawling claws it has spawned revert to inanimate flesh 1d4 rounds later.

*Monsters of Faerûn* 29 (variant)



**Tactics:** Of the 36 crawling claws here, 25 of them leave their concealment at various parts of the chapel floor to attack the nearest PCs. They can all occupy a single square and attack a single opponent if so directed by their master (see the **Note** in area F for other details). While this first group attacks, the 11 that were hiding in the thatched roof clamber down to attack. It takes them 3 full rounds to do so. Meanwhile the Hand of Aargrosh sits atop the lectern observing the battle and directing its minions. It has a readied action to command its minions to swarm onto any PC that falls prone. The angled stone lectern provides it with cover (AC 28, +4 to Reflex saves) making it extremely difficult to hit.

The first time the Hand of Aargrosh takes damage, it relentlessly attacks the creature that injured it until it is reduced to 10 hit points or less, at which point it flees combat using its crawling claw minions to cover its retreat if necessary.

**Treasure:** The Hand of Aargrosh wears a *ring of counterspells* on its bony second finger. It was taken from Alex when he opened the chest in his uncle's basement. The last spell cast into the ring was *magic missile*. Behind the stone lectern sits a *+1 warhammer* with a head made of magically treated granite. It bears a holy symbol of Jascar in relief on each side of its head. Dwarven runes carved into its wooden haft name it "Bone Crusher." Several crawling claws appear to have been smashed flat to the ground in this area attesting to the fact that it was used to defend its owner's life. It belonged to Stotie Bloodstone the dwarven cleric in charge of the church. Unfortunately, there were too many crawling claws attacking the dwarf and he perished.

carry out their last command to attack the PCs. If their master is destroyed, they continue attacking for 1d4 rounds and then collapse. Thereafter they are ordinary lifeless hands.

## Concluding the Adventure

This adventure is essentially over once the player characters have destroyed the Hand of Aargrosh and the remaining crawling claws are rendered inanimate. If the Hand of Aargrosh escaped during the final battle, it will likely resurface somewhere else, perhaps with even more crawling claw minions at its command. This can make for an interesting development in your campaign as the PCs begin finding small isolated thorps and hamlets like Cobb's Stairs and increasingly larger swarms of crawling claws.

With all of the residents of Cobb's Stairs dead, their land reverts to Irongate, which the tiny community owed allegiance to. The city officials of Irongate may decide to reward the PCs with their own little cottages and/or the title of protectorates (honorary or real) of Cobb's Stairs as it is slowly repopulated. With such a responsibility, though, they will need to ensure that the new residents of the community are kept safe. You never know what kind monsters may be skulking near the thorp waiting to prey on its residents.

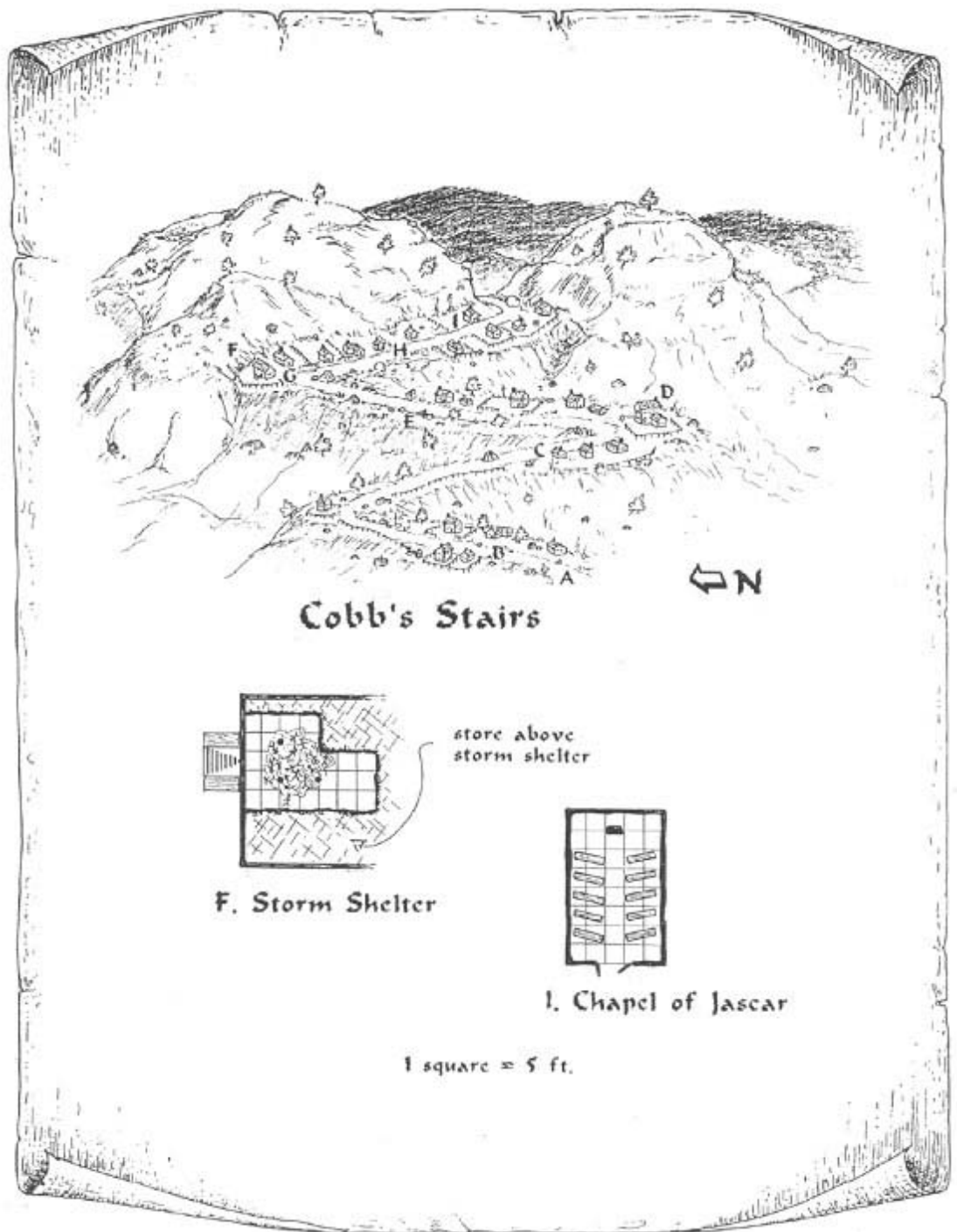
With the deed to *Swordfish* in hand, the PCs will most likely want to head to Northanchor soon to cash in on their prize. However, when they begin inquiring about *Swordfish*, they learn that the ship was stolen several months ago. If you plan to run Part 2 of this adventure, "Hunt for the Cofre Del Mar," attempting to recover the stolen ship leads the characters out onto the open sea and a meeting with the death god cleric, Gravewind.

## Scaling the Adventure

"The Hands of Aargrosh" is a short adventure designed for a group of four 3rd-level characters, but is easily adaptable for use by 1st-2nd-level characters or 4th-5th-level characters. Suggested changes to the adventure are as follows:

**1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>-level characters-** Remove the shadow in area F and replace it with a rat swarm. Split the first wave of crawling claws (area G) into two or three groups and have them attack in separate waves, each one occurring after the PCs have finished off the previous one. Reduce the second wave (area H) to 6 crawling claws. In area I, reduce the amount of crawling claws there to 12, but insinuate that there are more lurking in the area. Only attack the PCs with 3 or 4 crawling claws at a time unless it is proving too easy of an encounter. In that case, remember that there are about 70 crawling in the thorp. You can easily send wave after wave of them at the PCs until the crawling claws have all been destroyed.

**4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>-level characters:** In area F, add a second rat swarm for 4<sup>th</sup>-level PCs or another shadow for 5<sup>th</sup>-level PCs. Add 3 crawling claws to area G. Run area I as written, but decrease the amount of time it takes the claws climbing down



from the thatched roof to reach the PCs to a single round as they leap onto the characters from above and send larger waves at the PCs.

## Denizens of the Flanaess

# The Skulltwister

By Rick "Duicarthan" Miller

The skulltwisters origins date back to many millennia ago when the clerics of the dread god, Tharizdun first came into opposition with the other gods of Oerth. The skulltwister was formed from the dark entropy of the Abyss, the larcenous vileness of the Nine Hells, and the vast emptiness of the Gray Wastes. All these energies were focused by 13 clerics of Tharizdun in a day long ritual. The clerics formed these volatile energies into a solid form on the Plane of Shadow, then gave it sentience by infusing the spirit of a nightshade. The skulltwister quickly became the champion of the powers of darkness, overwhelming many of the forces of good and delivering a bitter nail into their neutral allies. In a final gambit, the gods of Oerth allied with the Heirophants of the Cabal and created the legendary tarrasque to defeat the abyssal menace.

## SKULLTWISTER

Huge Undead (Evil, Extraplanar)

**Hit Dice:** 25d12+28 (227 hp)

**Initiative:** +8 (+4 Dex., +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 50 ft. (average) (10 squares)

**AC:** +37 (-2 Size, +4 Dex, +25 Natural), touch 12, flatfooted 33

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +12/+40

**Attack:** 2 Claw +30 melee (2d6+20, crit 17-20/ x2) or Tail Sweep +30 melee (2d4+30, crit x2) or Tusk +30 melee (2d6, crit x2) or Horns +30 melee (2d8+30, crit x3)

**Full Attack:** 2 Claw +30 melee (2d6+20, crit 17-20/ x2) or Tail Sweep +30 melee (2d4+30, crit x2) or Tusk +30 melee (2d6, crit x2) or Horns +30 melee (2d8+30, crit x3), or 2 Claw +30 melee and Tusk +25 melee and Tail Sweep +20 melee.



**Space/Reach:** 15ft. / 15ft.

**Special Attacks:** Frightful presence DC: 29, (60 ft. radius), rend (ex) 4d6+30, At will— death knell (DC 18), deeper darkness (DC 19), desecrate (DC 18), detect magic, greater dispel magic (DC 22), haste (DC 19), tharizdun`s touch (DC 18), unholy blight (DC 18); 2/day— finger of death (DC 23), greater shadow conjuration (DC 23), greater shadow evocation (DC 24), plane shift (DC 21), tharizdun`s maddening scream (DC 24), unholy aura (DC 24) ; Caster level 25th, summon nightshade, summon undead, wisdom damage 1d4 per claw attack

**Special Qualities:** Aversion to Daylight, Damage Reduction (Su): 20/epic, Darkvision: 120 ft., Spell Resistance (Ex): 13 + CR (33), Turn Resistance +4 (Ex), Immunity to Cold, Electricity, and Sonic (Ex), Unholy Regeneration (Ex): 20, See in Darkness (Su), Undead Traits

**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +10, Will +18

**Abilities:** Str 50, Dex 18, Con --, Int 20, Wis 22, Cha 18

**Skills:** Climb +30, Concentration +28, Diplomacy +16, Hide +24, Jump +34, Knowledge (Arcana) +25, Knowledge (History) +15, Knowledge (The Planes) +25, Listen +25, Move Silently +28, Search +20, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +35, Spot +16, Survival +16

**Feats:** Improved Critical: Claw, Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Improved Toughness, Power Attack, Quickened Spell-Like Ability (greater dispel magic and unholy blight), Toughness

**Languages:** Abyssal, Infernal

**Climate/Terrain:** Any Unnatural

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 20

**Treasure:** Coins: Standard , Goods: Standard , Items: Double (x2)

**Alignment:** Always Neutral Evil

**Advancement:** 26-32 HD (Huge); 33-42 HD (Gargantuan); 43-60 HD (Colossal)

Skulltwisters are humanoid-looking horrors with great ragged wings, viscous tusks, a bladed prehensile tail, and ragged leathery flesh that ebbs with a shadowy-essence. Glowing purple eyes illuminate the horned skull of the skulltwister. A skulltwister is about 20 feet tall and weighs about 10,000 pounds.

### Combat

Skulltwisters lurk in the darkest possible areas of the world. They are fond of surprise but also relish melee combat. A nightwalker's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

**Aversion to Daylight (Ex):** If exposed to natural daylight (not merely a daylight spell), nightshades take a –4 penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks.

**Frightful Presence (Su):** The skulltwister can inspire terror by charging or attacking. Affected creatures must succeed on a DC 29 Will save or

become shaken, remaining in that condition as long as they remain with 60 feet of the skulltwister. The save DC is Wisdom-based.

**Rend (Ex):** If a skulltwister hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 4d6+30 points of damage.

**See in Darkness (Su):** A skulltwister can see perfectly in any type of darkness, whether that be natural, magical, or supernatural.

**Spell-Like Abilities:** At will— *death knell* (DC 18), *deeper darkness* (DC 19), *desecrate* (DC 18), *detect magic*, *greater dispel magic* (DC 22), *haste* (DC 19), *tharizdun's touch* (DC 18), *unholy blight* (DC 18); 2/day— *finger of death* (DC 23), *greater shadow conjuration* (DC 23), *greater shadow evocation* (DC 24), *plane shift* (DC 21), *tharizdun's maddening scream* (DC 24), *unholy aura* (DC 24);

Caster level 25th. The save DC's are Wisdom-based.

**Summon Nightshade (Su):** A skulltwister can summon any one type of nightshade once per night. The nightshade arrives in 1d10 rounds and serves for 1 hour or until dismissed.

**Summon Undead (Su):** A skulltwister can summon undead creatures once per night: 9–16 shadows, 3–6 greater shadows, or 2–4 dread wraiths. The undead arrive in 1d10 rounds and serve for 1 hour or until released.

**Unholy Regeneration (Su):** A skulltwister regenerates any lost hp 20/ round any time it stands in shadows or is not exposed to direct sunlight or a *daylight* spell.

**Wisdom Damage (Su):** Each time the skulltwister makes a successful claw attack the target must make a successful Willpower save or suffer 1d4 wisdom damage. Once the target reaches 0 Wisdom, they are slain.



Grey-comix

# Vecna Begins!

By Mike "Mortellan" Bridges



IF YOU PLAY ONE ADVENTURE THIS SEASON, THIS IS THE ONE!  
-**HALMADAR THE CRUEL**

A TRIUMPH...TWO TENTACLES UP!  
-**DEMOGORGON, PRINCE OF DEMONS**

FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!  
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AN INSTANT CLASSIC  
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