

AETALTIS

WORLD

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ADVENTURER'S GUIDE







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OF  
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WORLD OF AETALTIS: PLAYER'S GUIDE

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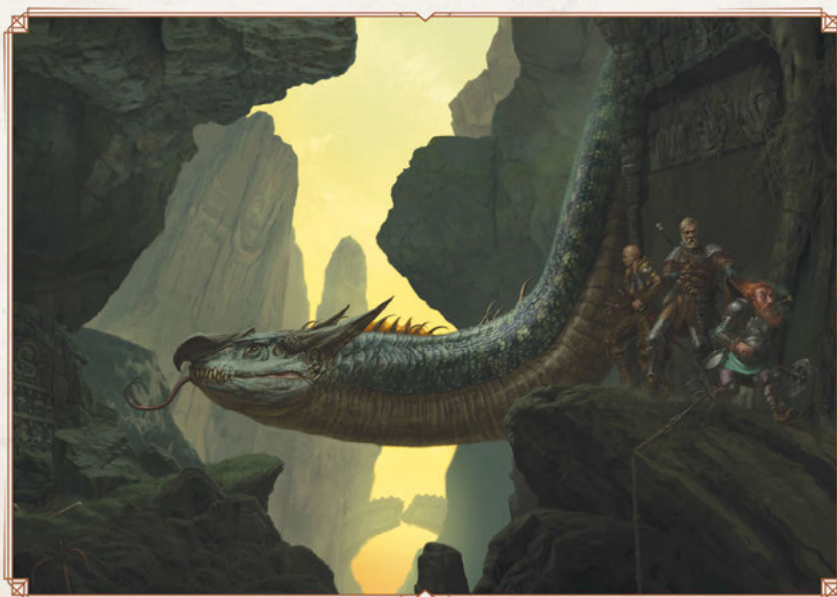
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## ABOUT OUR COVER

*A group of heroes, high in the Stonegate Mountains, are exploring a long forgotten Deepland entrance when they encounter the tunnel's current inhabitant.*

*by Russell Marks*



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### ON THE ORIGINS OF THIS BOOK

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Greetings, friend. I am High Provost Yanar Stanis. You hold in your hands the result of two years of toil by a veritable army of scholars, scribes, and experts. Before you begin reading, I wish to share a bit about this remarkable tome.

This book, *The Adventurer's Guide to Aetaltis*, was commissioned by High Lord Valinar Drakewyn II, Master of New Erinor and Regent of Agthor on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Alantra in the year 421 AC. It is High Lord Drakewyn's desire that any soul willing to risk their life for the betterment of all should be properly informed of what lies before them. He cannot stand beside you at every battle with blade in hand, but he hopes this shield of knowledge will help you to achieve victory and return home safely.

### ON THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

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This book is designed as the ultimate reference guide for adventurers. It contains a wealth of information that will aid you in your work and quite possibly save your life. We have not, however, sought to include everything we know about the world. A tome of that scope would be so large as to be impractical for a traveling adventurer. Rather we've provided you with building blocks of knowledge collected in a concise and compact tome that will fit in your pack.

And how should you use these building blocks? Use them to assemble reasonable assumptions about the people you meet, the things you discover, and the dangers you face. Reference this book when you find yourself at an impasse, and leverage its wisdom to help you plot the safest possible course into the unknown. Employ it as a codebook of worldly formulae you can use to puzzle out the truth of any mystery you find.

### ON THE AUTHORS

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This text is a product of the Department of Discovery and Exploration at the College of New Erinor. It represents the combined efforts of the Department Provosts and Scholars, along with the assistance of their staff and students. Uncounted hours of research, compilation, and writing went into the production of this work, and all those involved deserve equal praise for their tireless efforts. It would, however, be remiss if we did not place a coin in the hat of Provost Vestyn Wineman, the leader of this endeavor, without whom we surely would not have achieved our goal.

### ON OUR SOURCES

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The information found in this book comes from a wide variety of sources, from scholarly writings to religious texts, to direct interviews with experts and even first-hand investigations. Whenever possible we have used contemporary primary sources to avoid any muddling of the information via transference. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to the traveling historian Eathen Winswood. His journals, which tell of his recent travels with the Crimson Thorn Adventuring Company, provided a wealth of information that we were able to use in the assemblage of this work.

### ON THE ANECDOTAL SIDEBARS

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At Lord Drakewyn's wise suggestion, and in keeping with his now famously unorthodox approach to such things, we invited a number of successful adventurers to read the completed text and offer their personal thoughts. Although these individuals are not scholars and have never undertaken rigorous years of study into the topics contained herein, all of them had opinions on and additions to the subjects we covered. As any scholar who has had their work reviewed, we listened carefully and made changes based on the feedback.

But in his wisdom, Lord Drakewyn went one step further and insisted that we include all of the feedback we received exactly as submitted (or dictated in the case of illiterate contributors). We pray the contributions they provided, presented here in the colloquial and uncensored format in which they were received, are both helpful and accurate.

Information about each of these respected individuals is provided at the end of this book.

### ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

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The majority of the illustrations found within are from the hand of Ambrose Previtt, an artist who traveled with Eathen Winswood. Ambrose's drawings bring to life the sites and wonders the two witnessed on their expedition.

### ON CONTRIBUTING TO THE WORK

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We intend to continually update this book with new information as it becomes available to ensure that future editions contain the best and most current information possible. To that end, we encourage you, adventurer, to keep your own journals and to bring or send them to us here at the College. Your experiences may provide a new building block of knowledge that saves a fellow adventurer's life.



## *A Dire Warning to All Adventurers*

*Turn back now. The adventurer's life is nothing like the  
romantic tales told by alehouse bards.*

*Light does not always prevail over Darkness, there is little glory,  
less wealth, and sometimes no one makes it home.*

*It is a dangerous, dark, and bloody business.*

*This is the first and most important piece of advice you will find  
in this book. Hang up your sword, put away your spellbook, and  
return to your farm or your workshop. There you will find a long  
and happy life, perhaps with children if the Enaros so bless you,  
and surrounded by the people you love.*

*If you are still reading, so be it. Your choice is made, and the die  
is cast. The path you've chosen is a noble one. Despite the  
warnings and the admonitions given above, we salute you.  
Our land, our entire world, is in dire peril. It is only through  
the selfless heroism of adventurers like you that we may emerge  
victorious from the dark times to come.*

*Journey Onward, Adventurer.*

*Provost Vestyn Wineman*





## CHAPTER ONE

# HISTORY OF THE KNOWN WORLD

**I**N THIS CHAPTER, WE PROVIDE A CONCISE HISTORY OF OUR WORLD IN GENERAL AND THE Amethyst Sea basin in particular. History is the great educator, for it chronicles the actions and outcomes of those who have come before. Here is your chance to learn from the successes and mistakes of others so you might achieve glory in your own endeavors.

For adventurers, history provides yet another weapon for their arsenal. It is the light that washes away the shadows of ignorance. When you delve into long forgotten ruins, examine ancient relics, and struggle to unlock the path to victory against strange foes, you will undoubtedly encounter much that is unknown or forgotten. This chapter may not answer all your questions, but it provides context to allow you to deduce the truth from a handful of faded clues.



## THE AGES OF HISTORY

To organize our recounting of both the world's and the region's history, we've taken our lead from the scholars of Winterkeep. When they put pen to paper to create the now famous Codex Historica, they organized the past into a succession of ages. Each age is named according to the primary power or event of the period.

The seven great ages of Aetaltis are:

- ♦ **Age of the Enaros** The time before the creation of the world.
- ♦ **Age of Dawn** The early days of life on Aetaltis, before the gift of magic.
- ♦ **Age of Magic** The period following Endroren's gift of magic to the enari. A time of fey dominance.
- ♦ **Dwarven Age** The period following the Ritual of Limitation and the loss of true magic. A time of dwarven dominance.
- ♦ **Age of Darkness** The period following Endroren's return to the world with his Dark Hordes.
- ♦ **Age of Shadow** The period of uncertainty immediately following Endroren's defeat and the imprisonment of the Dark Hordes in the Deeplands, during which all peoples struggled to survive.
- ♦ **Age of Atlan** The period following the arrival of the Atlan Alliance. A time of dominance for the Alliance peoples, especially the atlan.
- ♦ **Current Age** The unnamed period following the Cataclysm that persists through the present day. Although not technically one of the great ages of history, we include it here for clarity.

## HISTORICAL SOURCES

One challenge we face when compiling a complete history of Aetaltis is that there is no definitive record of our past. Rather, there are a host of different historical records, many of which are incomplete, some of which are of deeply questionable veracity, and none of which are stored in a single geographic location. Assembling a complete history and separating legends from truth is a monumental academic puzzle.

Never fear, good adventurer! We, the dedicated scholars of the College of New Erinor, have pored over hundreds of ancient texts to assemble this condensed history of the world and the Amethyst Sea basin. Special care has been taken to remove any apocryphal information, and the result is a completely accurate and faithful representation of our history. Furthermore, this history is written with adventurers in mind, and it focuses on the people and events that will be of greatest interest to you in your heroic endeavors.

We would, however, be remiss in our scholarly duties if we did not properly cite our sources. The following are the primary historical records that exist in the lands surrounding the Amethyst Sea and that we drew upon when writing our condensed history.

## ENAROSIAN SCROLLS

Nearly everything we know about the Age of Enaros and the Age of Dawn comes from a collection of ancient texts known as the Enarosian Scrolls. It is said that the scrolls were written by the holy avatars of Toletren, Enaros of Knowledge. Except for a small fragment of an original scroll locked deep within

This is how you begin? A history lesson? I'd rather wrestle a troll.

—GRAIMAK

What's wrong, Graimak? I thought the drothmal saw suffering as Droth's blessing?

—DYSART

He's in for a lot of blessings. The damned chapter goes on for more than forty pages.

—VRENN

Forty pages? When do we get to the stuff adventurers actually care about?

—TORRICA

All of you, please. If an adventurer does not find the history section to their liking, they can skip ahead. We, however, must review the entire book.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

It would be foolish to skip this chapter. Adventurers who ignore history—

—ISIN

Are doomed to repeat it?

—PORTAND

No. They get killed.

—CALABRIA

Precisely.

—ISIN



Question the authenticity of the scrolls, get “firmly silenced.”  
Message received.

—CALABRIA

That is not the intended message. The Lyceum Toletren is academically aggressive in their defense of the Scrolls, but that is all. There is no implied threat.

—ARIA

The Hearhtales? Are you mad? You can’t believe a word of those things. They’re more fairy-tale than history.

—VRENN

Don’t be dismissive. They’re an excellent historical record.

—PORTAND

So the story about the hare who was crowned King of Gelendor. That’s history?

—DYSART

It could be. There are very few records from that period. And his reign was quite short. Assassinated by the Royal Chef accidentally at dinner the same day as his coronation. A tragic tale, really.

—PORTAND

the vaults of Winterkeep, only copies of these scrolls exist today. The largest and oldest surviving collection of copies is stored in the Silver Tower in Selentheia.

Although the original scrolls are lost, the people of the Amethyst Sea generally accept the information contained in the copies as the true word of the Enaros. There is no question in the minds of believers—or we researchers—that what the scrolls describe is the absolute truth.

There are a few heretical scholars who dare suggest that the scrolls are fantasies written by priests during the Age of Magic. If this were to prove true, it would throw much of what is known about the world into doubt. Naturally, all such allegations have been stoutly rebuffed and, in some cases, firmly silenced.

## LORESONGS OF THE FEY

The fey record their history in the form of songs. Each song tells a different part of the historical record from a particular point of view, and only when certain songs are performed together does one achieve a full understanding of the events they describe. Even then, a listener must be specially trained to understand these ancient melodies. No written form of the Loresongs exists, and attempts to write them down with any semblance of accuracy have failed.

## DWARVEN HISTORIES

The dwarves maintained a detailed, albeit dry, record of dwarven history that extended back to their settlement of the Deeplands. Unfortunately, most of these texts were lost during the Age of Darkness, left behind as the dwarves fled their homes. Only a few meager volumes have been recovered.

## HALFLING HEARTHTALES

Another aural tradition, the halfling hearhtales are a collection of stories told around halfling hearth fires for as long as any halfling can remember. While they often contain rare accounts of people and events lost to other historical records, the halfling tendency to embellish makes the accuracy of these stories suspect.

## CHEEBATAN MERCHANT ROLLS

Since the first cheebat merchant houses were established after the Alliance’s arrival, the cheebats maintained detailed records of every transfer of property and financial transaction in which they’ve participated. While the rolls are more of a ledger than a historical text, the detailed nature of these records, combined with the notes, comments, and annotations the cheebatan bookkeepers add to them, allow one to glean a fair amount of historical information from their pages.

## ATLAN CHRONICLES

The Atlan Alliance Library at Atlanor maintained a complete and detailed record of the history of the Alliance’s time on Aetaltis. Unfortunately, the destruction of Atlanor during the Cataclysm and the difficulty of reaching the remnants of the island capital has prevented the recovery of all but a handful of these valuable texts. The only surviving volumes are those that were in personal libraries on the mainland at the time of Atlanor’s destruction. The Silver Circle in Selentheia owns the largest known collection of these tomes.



## CODEx HISTORICA

The wizards of Winterkeep are writing a new history of the world dubbed the Codex Historica. They started work on the Codex more than three decades ago, and it will likely take many more years, if not lifetimes, to complete. The scholars entrusted with this task are using material from all of the sources listed above, as well as first-hand accounts, reports from adventurers, and more. Although it is far from finished, a great debt is owed to these scholars as a significant amount of what you are reading here comes to us by way of a copy of the current edition of the Codex, located in the College of New Erinor's library.

## THE AGE OF THE ENAROS

Since the beginning of time, a battle raged between the protectors of light and the followers of darkness. Prophecies foretell that this conflict will culminate in an apocalyptic final battle that ends the universe as we know it. Whichever side stands victorious when the final blow falls shall rule a new universe that rises from the ashes of the old.

Chief among the protectors of light are Endros and Aros, ancient beings more powerful than mortals can imagine, dedicated to the destruction of darkness. After uncounted eons of direct conflict with the armies of the dark, these two protectors of light sought to bolster their spiritual forces. If they were to win this battle, they required warriors.

Although Endros and Aros wield the power of creation, newly born spirits are too weak to stand against true darkness. A spirit must sharpen its ethereal blade through the experiences of a mortal life. Only after passing through the crucible of life will a spirit have the strength it needs to join the battle.

But simply living is not enough. The spirits of mortals require care and guidance. If left to their own devices, spirits can fall prey to temptations and never reach their full potential. Even worse, wayward spirits may fall fully into darkness, bolstering the forces of the enemy.

But how were Endros and Aros to find the time to nurture young spirits in the midst of the eternal war?

## THE CREATION OF THE ENAROS

Endros and Aros fashioned a mighty horn from the bones of a dead star. They sounded twelve long notes upon the horn, six notes each, summoning twelve spirits who had already passed through the crucible of life. They named these twelve spirits the Enaros, and they set out to teach them all that they knew.

Having worked on the Codex myself, I can speak to the care given to ensuring its accuracy. It is as close to Toletren's truth as one will find in the world today.

—ISIN

It is worth reinforcing for the reader that the dark spoken of here is not mere evil as experienced by many mortals during their lives, but rather a force of pure malevolence that corrupts the underlying fabric of the universe. The fight adventurers are being asked to take on is not simply one against cruelty and hurtful behavior, but it is a battle against the minions and monsters who serve evil in its purest, most fundamental form.

—ARIA

Bah. I'm just in it for the gold. But if I can stomp on the forces of darkness along the way, fine with me.

—TORRICA





That section where it says “passed through the crucible” seems to suggest that the Enaros were once mortal. Any thoughts, Aria?

—CALABRIA

The Enarosian Scrolls suggest that divinity is within the grasp of every person, and we should always be working to make ourselves worthy of that final ascension.

—ARIA

That seems unlikely. There is no evidence that mortality is a path to godhood. This sounds more like an effort to influence behavior in ways beneficial to the Lyceums.

—ISIN

There is a wizard in Tricos who claims to have a grain of celestial dust. He keeps it locked in a vault and refuses to show it to anyone, but a good friend of mine saw it.

She said the wizard showed it to her after he got drunk one night.

She doesn’t know if it’s really celestial dust, but said it was unlike anything she’d ever seen and it literally glowed with power.

—BELLYNDA

From the secrets of time to the mysteries of creation, they helped the Enaros develop the skills and abilities necessary to manipulate the warp and weft of the universe.

As the Enaros’s powers matured, each showed talent in different areas of their studies. Endros and Aros nurtured these natural inclinations, and in time, the Enaros became masters of distinct domains. In this way, the Enaros took command of those aspects of our reality that they control today.

Eager to use their new powers, the Enaros declared their desire to take the next step in their destinies. Endros and Aros agreed the Enaros were ready. They proceeded to explain how the forces of light needed new spirits to join the fight against the darkness. The task entrusted to the Enaros was to create a world, one that would give birth to these spirits of light. The Enaros would then nurture and guide these spirits through their lives. In this way, the Enaros would ensure these immature spirits did not stray from the path of light and fall under the sway of darkness.

As a gift to the Enaros, Endros and Aros created a golden hall which they called Lensae. Lensae would serve as home to the Enaros in the ages to come. Within its shining walls, the Enaros could perform their divine work of creation. When they completed their work, it would provide a vantage point from which they could watch over the world and its inhabitants. Finally, Lensae’s divine light would warm and illuminate the Enaros’s new world, serving as a beacon of hope and a source of life for the world’s future inhabitants.

## THE NAME OF THE WORLD

Aetaltis is not the name given to the world by the Enaros, but rather it is the Atlan name for the world. Each of the lineages and cultures of Aetaltis have different names for the planet, but since Aetaltis is the name used in the Codex Historica, we’ve chosen to use it there as well.

## THE CREATION OF AETALTIS

The Enaros began their work at once. Combining their powers, they drew celestial dust from the depths of the cosmos. With loving care, they shaped this clay of the universe into a sphere and infused it with a portion of their own essence. When the work was complete, the Enaros looked down upon their creation, and they were pleased. They called the new world Aetaltis.

## THE AGE OF DAWN

The time had come for the Enaros to create life to populate their newborn world. They began with plants. From the tiniest flower to the mightiest oak, they shaped each plant and set it in place on the surface of the world.





## THE ELDERS

When the Enaros created the first plants and animals they summoned ancient spirits directly from the Essential Plane and placed them in mortal bodies. The sages of Winterkeep refer to these first creatures and plants as the Elders. It is possible to kill an Elder by violence, but unlike their mundane offspring, the plagues of old age and disease can never touch an Elder.

Sadly, most of the Elders are lost to us. A great number of them met their end during the Age of Darkness, for Endroren had them hunted down and killed. It is believed, however, that not all the Elders died. Now and again, a rumor surfaces in which some person claims to have encountered a living Elder. While the veracity of these stories is unknown, the very possibility that some of the Elders still live poses a tantalizing possibility for scholars and historians.

Of all the Enaros, Grethken proved the most talented in the ways of plants. When the work of creating the plants was complete, the Enaros declared him the keeper of all green and growing things.

Next, the Enaros created insects and animals. They filled the world with these, setting them free onto the land and into the sea and air. They even made creatures to live in the deep, hollow places of Aetaltis, the vast subterranean world we today call the Deeplands. The enaros called Vale showed a natural affinity for these beasts, and the other enaros declared her the mistress of all the wild creatures.

With the lesser living things complete, it came time for the most important task of all: the creation of the beings that would serve as vessels to carry the newly born spirits of light.

## THE CREATION OF THE LENSARI

The first entities the Enaros created to host mortal souls were of lineages known collectively as the lensari. The lensari were creatures of such incredible power and beauty they nearly matched the Enaros in their potential. The lensari had many forms, but the Enarosian Scrolls that describe them were lost. Today we know little of their true appearance. Only two types of lensari are known to the people of the Amethyst Sea today: the First Born Giants and the Great Dragons.

Endros and Aros, who were watching the Enaros as they worked, inspected the lensari. They were pleased with the Enaros's skill but would not allow the lensari to inherit the world. The lensari, they explained, were far too powerful. It is important that a spirit finds its own strength, earning it through struggle. Endros and Aros allowed the lensari to live, but these glorious creatures were forbidden from procreation, and they would not inherit the world.

Many of the Elders still live. They just have no use for our "civilization." The wars and wanton destruction common among all our people disgust them, so they've retreated to the hidden corners of the world.

—SSYNES

My mentor encountered a creature of stone and fire in the Deeplands. Big as a house, it was, and unlike anything he'd encountered before or since. He claims to this day it was one of the lensari. Not a dragon or giant, but something else entirely.

—VRENN





## THE CREATION OF THE ENARI

Disappointed but determined, the Enaros set to work once more. This time they tempered their enthusiasm and ensured that the demands of Endros and Aros were better met. At last they finished, and when they presented their creations to Endros and Aros, their creators were pleased. These new beings, known collectively as the enari, included the elori, drothmals, tsvergaals, and scythaas.

The Enaros bequeathed each of the enari with a portion of Aetaltis to call home. The enari thrived, living simple lives and taking what they needed from the land. To the civilized, modern-day inhabitant of the Amethyst Sea basin, their lives would seem primitive, but it was an uncomplicated, happy existence.

### BIRTH OF THE FEY

In those days the enari could not easily manipulate essence. They had little skill or ability for casting spells or creating enchantments. Despite this, the ambient essence of our world altered the enari over time, as we've since learned it does with some regularity. The most notable example is the change it wrought upon the elori (or "the fey" as they are commonly referred to in the Common tongue).

The fey are tightly bound to essence, and over time this connection altered their physical forms. The results are the myriad shapes and appearances that the fey have today, including the three types of fey most familiar to modern Aetaltans: the elves (elliya), fairies (faelariya), and sprites (loriya).

### BIRTH OF THE DWARVES AND HALFLINGS

The tsvergaals were changed as well, but not only by essence. Rather, their inclinations altered their forms. Some tsvergaals chose to reside in the caverns of the Deeplands, while others preferred to make their homes on the surface (or at least nearer to it). Those who chose the Deeplands called themselves dwarves (tsvergs), while those who stayed on the surface called themselves halflings

## THE CHILDREN OF THE LENSARI

Although it is impossible for the lensari to reproduce with others of their own kind, they can procreate with lesser creatures. From these unions a variety of powerful beings have emerged, including the lesser dragons and dracoforms, including wyverns and hydras, and the lesser giants and giant-kin, such as the cyclops and the ettins.

While these lesser creatures are sometimes intelligent, their unnatural origins often leave them maddened. Most are dangerous and some even joined with Endroren during the Age of Darkness. Fortunately, while the children of the lensari are immensely powerful, they are not as strong as their lensari parents. Skilled, well-armed, and determined mortals can best them in combat.

Interesting. It sounds like essence might continue to alter the enari, or even the Alliance people for that matter. Is that likely?

—DYSART

It is inevitable, actually. This is the nature of essence. As far as we can tell, however, the process is slow. It takes many thousands of years for such changes to occur.

—ISIN





## THE NAMES OF THE ENARI AND ENDRORI

The college at Winterkeep was founded by survivors of the Atlan Alliance. As a result, they use the Common language names (dwarf, halfling, elf, sprite, fairy, drothmal, and scythaa) for the enari. To avoid confusion, and due to the regular use of these names among those who speak the Common tongue, moving forward we'll observe the same naming conventions in this book. It is important for adventurers to note, however, that not everyone approves of the use of the Common language names. There are those, especially among the dwarves, who demand the use of their "true name." In the most extreme cases, use of the atlan names is considered an insult.

(tsaals). As the years passed, physical differences emerged as each adapted to their chosen environment, and in time the dwarves and halflings diverged into two distinct lineages.

The Enaros watched with pleasure as the enari multiplied. Their only disappointment was that they dearly wanted to teach their children all they knew, just as Endros and Aros had done for them, but Endros and Aros forbade it. Endros and Aros reminded the Enaros yet again that the souls of the enari must find their own strength. But Endros and Aros were

not without sympathy, and they agreed to a single concession: each of the Enaros may give the enari one gift to aid them in their mortal lives.

## ENDROS AND AROS DEPART

Before the Enaros set to work on their gifts, Endros and Aros made an unexpected announcement. They declared the Enaros's training to be complete. From that day forward, the Enaros must forge their own paths. They reminded the Enaros to tend to the world with care and to remain ever vigilant against interference by the forces of darkness. Endros and Aros then bade their twelve beloved children farewell, and, as they had planned from the beginning, returned to the armies of light to continue their role in the eternal war.

## THE GIFTS OF THE ENAROS

Putting the sadness of farewells behind them, the Enaros returned to work. Soon they'd completed their gifts. One by one, they descended from Lensae and presented their gifts to the enari.

- ♦ **Alantra** gave the gift of family. She created an unbreakable bond between parent and child that would give the enari strength even in their darkest hours.
- ♦ **Modren** gave the gift of construction. Now the enari could build houses, tools, and all the things they desired to improve their lives.
- ♦ **Phensral** gave the gift of boats and ships. Water would no longer be a barrier to the enari.

Utter drivel. The tsverg form is pure and true. We're no more related to halflings than we are to the scythaa.

—VRENN

The Enarosian Scrolls are quite clear on this subject. The origins of halflings and dwarves are clearly stated.

—ARIA

It's tsverg! Although I guess it's too much to expect a follower of the Betrayers to use our proper name.

—VRENN

I think it would be best if we moved on to the next section now.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS





There is a tavern keeper in Almaras  
who can balance fourteen flagons  
of ale on his head.

—TORRICA

I don't understand the relevance.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

I just figured if other adventurers  
are as bored with this as I am,  
there should be *something* of value  
on this page.

—TORRICA

Bwa ha ha ha ha! The big woman  
is funny!

—GRAIMAK

- ♦ **Grethken** gave the gift of farming. While the enari would never have complete control of the wild lands, now they could grow food near their homes instead of always searching for their next meal.
- ♦ **Vale** gave the gift of dominion over some of Aetaltis's beasts. These chosen animals would serve the enari by providing food, clothing, companionship, and transport.
- ♦ **Toletren** gave the gift of writing. Truth could now be written down, and each new generation would not have to start the search for knowledge anew.
- ♦ **Elendra** gave the gift of artistic inspiration. Music, painting, sculpture, poetry, and more were opened to the enari, allowing them to add to the beauty of their world.
- ♦ **Zevas** gave the gift of trade. A person who could not farm but who still had useful abilities would not starve, for they could exchange the fruits of their labors for those things which they needed to survive.
- ♦ **Aelos** saw that when the first of the enari died, their souls had difficulty crossing the vast gulf between Aetaltis and Lensae. Her gift was a great hall of starlight she called Numos, the moon. It is a place where the dead can rest until Aelos and her avatars can help guide their souls to Lensae.
- ♦ **Larayil** taught the enari to harness the wind. Now their ships raced across the waves, and their mills were turned by the power of the wind alone.
- ♦ **Droth** disapproved of gifts. How were the souls of the enari to grow strong with so much handed to them? For this reason he gave the enari the gift of trial. Disaster, heartache, sorrow, and pain were his blessings. At first these seemed a terrible thing, but when the Enaros saw how much stronger their children grew after passing through trial, they realized the wisdom of Droth's gift.

When all the other enaros had presented their gifts, **Endroren**, the most powerful of the Enaros, came forward.

## THE GIFT OF MAGIC

Endroren, the Master of Magic, planned to teach the enari to manipulate essence so they might create magic of their own. As he stepped forward to present his gift, Zevas stood and blocked his way. Zevas declared that Endros and Aros specifically forbade the Enaros from granting a gift of such power. He insisted magic would make life too easy for the enari, and that with it they would never gain the strength of spirit required for the coming war.

Endroren seethed at this denial. He turned to the other enaros for support, but it was not to be. Zevas, the most clever of all the Enaros, had discovered





## THE LANDS BEYOND THE AMETHYST SEA

The events described up until now relate to the history of the world of Aetaltis as a whole. From this point onward, we turn our focus to the Amethyst Sea basin and the lands immediately surrounding it. Sadly, we know very little about what lies beyond these borders. Even if we did, it is unlikely that a history of distant lands would serve much purpose for adventurers like yourselves.

beforehand the gift Endroren intended to give the enari. He'd approached all the other enaros in advance of this moment and won them over to his side. So it was that they sided with Zervas and rejected Endroren's gift. A dark and terrible fury consumed Endroren then, and he stormed from the Golden Hall.

The Enaros were not pleased with this outcome, but even Toletren, always a skeptic and seeker of deep truths, reasoned that Zervas's arguments were sound and they had no choice. With nothing to be done for it and exhausted from their efforts, the Enaros rested.

Endroren, however, did not meekly accept their denial. While his siblings slept, he went down to Aetaltis and secretly gave the enari his gift of magic in defiance of his siblings' wishes. Once finished, he crept back into the Golden Hall, and lay down quietly beside his brothers and sisters.

## THE AGE OF MAGIC

With the power of magic at their disposal, enari civilization advanced at a rapid pace. Enchanted crops grew at unnatural speed, putting an end to hunger. Magic elixirs cured all but the most virulent of diseases. Mystic portals transported people instantly from one point on the globe to another. Life on Aetaltis went from primitive hunting and gathering to one of cultural sophistication almost overnight.

While the Enaros continued to sleep, the enari further perfected their spell-casting skills. Soon they built mighty cities with crystalline towers that touched the clouds, fortresses that flew through the air, and Deepland highways that connected all of the dwarven kingdoms.

## THE FALL OF ELLOR NYALL

The power of magic seemed without limit to the enari, but the fate of Ellor Nyall proved them wrong. After overcoming an invasion from the southern courts, the queen of Ellor Nyall felt such pride that she declared herself High Queen over all the fey. None before her dared such an audacious act, but it was soon discovered that this was not the limit of her hubris.

The Queen revealed that she believed it her destiny to become one of the Enaros. She commanded her sorcerers to create powerful spells to help her accomplish this lofty goal but gave them just one year to complete the task. The sorcerers

In regard to your statement that you're only covering the lands adventurers care about, I fear your Agthorian ego is showing. There is a grand world outside of the Amethyst Sea basin, and one well worth exploring.

—BELLYNDA

Indeed! There are the mighty stoneholds of the Blade Sea, the otherworldly wonders of the Newardine Empires, and the austere beauty of the Scythaan Wastes. You touch on these places in your book, but you don't spend nearly enough time on them.

—PORTAND

I will make a note of it. Unfortunately, due to the constraints of both time and page count, we may need to wait for future volumes of the Guide to address these gaps.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS





The Library of Selentheia has three pages said to have been copied from the *Book of Eternity* by an adventurer.

—ISIN

So you're saying some adventurer out there already has the Book?

—CALABRIA

No. According to the adventurer's journal, he found the book, but for some reason could not remove it. The best he could do was to copy that handful of pages. Sadly, the pages were recovered from his body, and the journal does not say where he found the book, so the mystery persists.

—ISIN

worked feverishly, for they knew too well the cruelty of the Queen's punishments for those who failed her. The sorcerers explored many theories and even had some minor successes, but in the end, every effort ended in failure.

At the end of the year, the Queen returned. The sorcerers, too afraid to tell her they'd failed, lied and claimed success. They told her to return in three days to allow Numos to reach its height. At that time, they would begin her transformation.

Over the next three days, the sorcerers took everything they'd learned and constructed a powerful spell. It was imperfect, and none of them expected it to work, but it was all they could do. On the third day the Queen returned, and the sorcerers cast their spell.

The premise behind the spell was to draw as much essence into the Queen as possible, giving her magic power beyond that of any mortal. They began casting, and as the spell took effect, they watched in awe as the Queen's spirit shone like a newborn star. For a brief moment they thought they'd succeeded, but when they attempted to end the spell they discovered how wrong they were.

Try as they might, the sorcerers could not stop the magic. The sorcerers used every power at their disposal, but essence continued to pour into the Queen. It was far too much essence for any mortal soul to contain, and eventually it would burn her spirit away to nothing. The Queen would be killed, body and soul.

But a greater danger loomed if they could not end the spell. Fey queens are bound by essence to their land. As the wild spell swelled the Queen's spirit, the arcane power also flowed into the forests, plains, and swamps of Ellor Nyall. Trees went from seedlings to hundred-foot tall monsters in a matter of hours, and newly grown forests swept across the countryside. Spreading vines whisked through cities and tore buildings from their foundations. Roots burst through the ground, toppling the graceful elven towers and shattering fortresses.

The people of Ellor Nyall fled. They left everything behind and raced for the nearest harbors and roads, hoping to at least escape with their lives. Within a week, the entire eastern coast of the Amethyst Sea lay covered in a magically twisted, nearly impenetrable forest. It remains so to this day, and it is now known as the Elliyeen Wilds.

## THE BOOK OF ETERNITY

The Queen's sorcerers never discovered how to turn her into a goddess, but some scholars believe that they accidentally unlocked the secret of immortality. Time and again adventurers have plunged into the Elliyeen Wilds to seek the sorcerers' lost spells and enchantments with the hope of obtaining eternal life.

The objective of many adventurers' quests is to retrieve a tome called the *Book of Eternity*. Legends claim the book contains extensive notes made by one of the Queen's sorcerers, and it lies somewhere among the ruins of Ellor Nyall's capital. Many have tried to retrieve the book, but all have failed and most never return.





## THE GREENFOLK OF THE ELLIYEN WILDS

The fey who did not escape Ellor Nyall were consumed by the rapidly expanding forests, but what was their final fate? One tantalizing clue are the tales with which explorers traveling the ELLIYEN WILDS often return. They tell stories of semi-intelligent creatures that are half-fey, half-plant. They claim that these strange creatures are sensitive to fire, but impervious to nearly all other forms of harm.

## THE TRIAL OF ENDROREN

The wild magic of the Queen's failed spell reverberated through the Essential Plane. So powerful was the spell that it awakened the Enaros from their slumber. Grethken put a stop to the unnatural growth of the plants while Toletren and Aelos ended the disastrous spell. When they investi-

Ssynes has seen the Greenfolk. They're real, they're every bit as intelligent as us, and they do not like our kind.

—SSYNES

gated the cause, they discovered to their dismay that against their wishes, the enari now had the power to use magic.

The Enaros, furious, summoned Endroren to Lensae. They pointed to the disaster that had befallen Ellor Nyall and demanded an explanation for his action. Endroren stated in a calm, clear voice that he need not justify an act he had every right to take. He further explained that while the disaster was tragic, it was no more terrible than the many deaths caused by the other gifts the Enaros had bestowed upon the enari. What of those who were burned by fire, drowned sailing ships across the sea, or killed when thrown from horseback?

The Enaros were unmoved and declared that Endroren must pay for his crime. He had expected this, of course, but he had underestimated the anger of the Enaros. They declared that he should be stripped of his seat among the Enaros and banished forever from the Golden Halls of Lensae.

Endroren could not believe his ears, thinking perhaps he misunderstood their proclamation. But there was no mistake, and when Endroren realized this, his surprise gave way to a deep and terrible fury. In a murderous rage he threw himself at his siblings. It took all their strength to restrain him. "Betrayal and treachery," he cried, but it fell on deaf ears. Summoning their full combined power, the Enaros turned it on Endroren and cast him out.

## THE RITUAL OF LIMITATION

The Enaros now set out to repair the damage caused by Endroren's gift. They left Ellor Nyall as it was. It would serve as a reminder of the danger of magic and the folly of hubris. As for the gift of magic itself, Endroren had changed the fundamental nature of the enari's spirits. Try as they might, the Enaros could find no way to remove the ability without destroying their children.

Toletren, the enaros most skilled in magic after Endroren, offered an alternative. He proposed a spell that might mitigate the worst of the problems caused

There's a lesson for adventurers right there. If ya don't solve yer problems permanently, they're gonna come back and bite ya later.

—TORRICA

Brutality and violence are not the only way to solve problems permanently.

—ARIA





It's interesting to note that true magic is now unreliable and potentially deadly, but not completely impossible.

—ISIN

Its use is also forbidden by the Enaros, and those who ignore the prohibition risk the divine anger of our gods.

—ARIA

There are truly wondrous things to be found in the ruins of the old fey cities—if you can find them.

—BELLYNDA

I've seen the remains of fey cities in the Stonegate Mountains near the Elderwood. The Ritual broke many spells, but some persisted. I spotted a breathtaking crystalline tower among the ruins that was unquestionably a product of magic.

—PORTAND

Well, Dysart? Aren't you going to share your flying city story?

—CALABRIA

Laugh all you like. I know what I saw.

—DYSART

by the gift. The other enaros examined his proposal and soon agreed. Aetaltan scholars have named this spell the Ritual of Limitation.

When the Enaros cast it, the spell permanently altered the way magic functions on Aetaltis. It fundamentally changed the patterns of magic, making the old techniques of spell-casting and enchantment unreliable at best and at worst, so difficult to control as to be deadly. The practical result is that most methods of using true magic became impossible.

Exhausted by the power required to cast this world altering spell, the Enaros performed one final act before returning to Lensae. They commanded their avatars to locate enari with deep religious devotion and grant them the ability to channel divine essence straight from the Enaros. This ensured that the enari, who had come to depend on magic, would not be left completely without magical aid. Unlike Endoren's gift, the Enaros and their avatars could carefully monitor and control the use of this divine magic. It was by this act that the first clerics of the Enaros were born.

The clerics were a generous blessing upon the enari, but the Ritual of Limitation had grave implications for the people of Aetaltis. In the great cities, the magic that held the cloud touching spires aloft failed, and these monumental edifices crashed to the ground. In the sky overhead, the great flying fortresses faltered and fell. Everywhere in Aetaltis, the enchanted objects that had become a staple of everyday life ceased to function, or in some cases, began to operate in strange or unexpected ways.

The fey felt the greatest pain from the change. They'd entwined magic into every facet of their lives. They tried to compensate for the loss with clever inventions and clerical magic, but their society relied too heavily on the old spells.

The once mighty fey courts began their slow decline.

## THE AVATARS

The avatars are immortal beings of incredible divine power that act as the hands, will, eyes, voice, and swords of their masters, the Enaros. There are more than 300 named avatars, and some avatars are even worshiped as lesser gods.

Theologians disagree on the origin of the avatars, but there are two prevailing theories:

- ♦ **Enlightenists** believe avatars are ascended mortals. According to this theory, a person who lives a pious life in service to the Enaros has the potential to become an avatar when they die.
- ♦ **Eternalists** believe avatars are ancient servant spirits that have existed from the beginning of time. They reason that the Enaros summoned these spirits to aid them in their work in the same fashion that Endros and Aros summoned the Enaros.

Eternalists view the enlightenists' beliefs as blasphemous, and at times the debate has descended into violence.





## THE DWARVEN AGE

The Ritual of Limitation did little harm to the dwarves and their kingdoms. They'd always maintained a strong tradition of working without magic, since the insubstantial nature of spells made them uneasy. Dwarven minds prefer tangible concepts. From the solid stone walls of their Deepland halls to a firm love of tradition, the dwarves look for that which is immovable and unchangeable.

The dwarven kingdoms were perfectly positioned to fill the cultural and political void left when the fey courts receded from power. Dwarves prospered in this new world and quickly expanded their Deepland holdings farther and deeper than ever before.

## THE DISCOVERY OF RUNE MAGIC

Despite all of the destruction and chaos caused by the Ritual of Limitation, the enari did not give up on their efforts to wield magic. Perhaps, some speculated, the Ritual was simply a new challenge to help the enari to grow stronger. Seeking answers, King Mordkett IV of the Donaren Mountains, the old name for the range we know today as the Donarzhais Mountains, ordered his sages to discern the specific ways in which the magic of the world had changed.

Learned dwarven scholars studied ancient artifacts, performed arcane experiments, and pored over ancient scrolls and texts in search of an answer. Although they were unable to determine the exact nature of what had happened, by a quirk of fate, they stumbled upon something far more important.

While conducting one of their experiments, the scholars created an arcane symbol designed to channel raw ambient essence. When they activated this symbol, the effect was remarkably similar to that of a simple spell prior to the Ritual. The early results were relatively minor, little more than a soft blue glow, but it was the first controlled manifestation of arcane magic since the Ritual.

At the King's command, the sages turned their attention to understanding how the phenomenon they had discovered worked. They found they could vary the effect by altering the symbol's physical form. In addition, by combining a series of symbols and then channeling essence through them in succession, they could create more complex and longer lasting magical effects.

Over the next few decades, the scholars of the Donaren Mountains developed a lexicon of these designs. Each one was devised to make a specific change to the essence channeled through it and to function in set ways when combined with other symbols. They named this new method of manipulating essence rune magic.

I find it strange that the fey made no similar effort to adapt to the new laws of magic.

—ISIN

I find it strange you think they did not.

—BELLYNDA

If they had, I'm certain we would know. One cannot hide an entire school of magic.

—ISIN

I don't know. I once hid a hundred horses for two weeks from the Warden of Crendec. Seems to me you can hide just about anything with enough will and the right motivation.

—DYSART





Items enchanted using runes tend to create simple effects, but they're solid as Deepland stone. They're easy to use, work every time, and are nearly impossible to break.

—CALABRIA

I've only ever encountered an abomonae once, and I'm lucky to have escaped with my life.

—BELLYNDA

That's the stone truth. Abomonae are like nothing else on Aetaltis. Evil doesn't begin to describe them.

—VRENN

With the discovery of rune magic, the dwarves further solidified their position of power in the land surrounding (and under) the Amethyst Sea. In addition, the later development of rune inscribed objects allowed the dwarves to create not only spells but enchanted devices. This further secured their control of the region and their place as masters of the age.

## THE RISE OF DARKNESS

The Enaros believed they'd seen the last of Endroren. They felt sure that after his banishment he'd leave the world, never to return. Instead, Endroren went to Aetaltis and descended into the Deeplands. Down and down he climbed, past the deepest dwarven halls, until he reached the core of the world.

Alone in shadow, Endroren's anger consumed him like a cancer. Bit by bit, it corrupted his spirit, until all that remained of his divine soul was a bleak darkness. Endroren had been transformed, and with his transformation he gained awareness of ancient secrets known only to those who have fallen. Endroren, once the Lord of Magic, had now become the Lord of Darkness.

Using his new powers, Endroren contrived to build an army to serve him. He sculpted these beings from pure darkness and called them the abomonae. He ordered the abomonae to visit the surface and bring back samples of all the living things the Enaros had created.

The abomonae returned soon after bearing gifts for their master. They brought animals, plants, insects, enari, and more. Endroren set to work experimenting on the captives. Calling upon dark powers never seen before on Aetaltis, Endroren twisted the prisoners' minds, bodies, and spirits. He slowly transformed them into dark shadows of their former selves.

His first efforts were less than successful. The monstrous results were more than even Endroren could bear to look on. Some of these abominations he cast out, others he destroyed, and still others he locked away in hidden Deepland prisons. Despite these failures, Endroren's skill at manipulating darkness grew.

## THE CREATION OF THE ENDRORI

When Endroren received enari prisoners, he suffused their spirits with darkness, twisting them into terrible corruptions of their natural forms. In whatever way the enari was beautiful, Endroren made his creation terrible. Where the enari was kind, he made his monster cruel. If the enari was thoughtful, he made his fiend brutish. He twisted the body and souls of each enari until he had perfected their dark opposite. He called these monsters the endrori, which means "Children of Endroren."





## THE FORGOTTEN ONES

Some of the hideous monsters Endroren created in those first, ill-fated attempts at manipulating the darkness survive to the present day. A few remain locked in their Deepland prisons, waiting for some unsuspecting fool to free them. Others made their way to the surface after he cast them out, and they stalk the dark places of the world still.

These Forgotten Ones have no direct tie to their creator. No matter how powerful they are, they aren't drawn into the Deeplands like most dark creatures. This allows them to roam the surface unchecked, posing a danger that rivals that of almost any other dark beings.

Next Endroren bred his creations. When the first offspring were born, he raised them using violence, pain, and cruelty. The weak were culled, and only the most terrible of the endrori survived. He continued to breed these fiends until he had birthed an army of monsters.

Endroren called the armies his Dark Hordes, and he armed them with fell weapons and taught them evil spells. When all his preparations were complete, Endroren threw open the gates of his lair, and loosed the

endrori upon the Deeplands. The Dark Hordes surged forth like a vile plague, their orders brutally simple: destroy everything.

## THE SIEGE OF THE DEEPLANDS

Only the oldest dwarven kingdoms had descended to the far depths of the Deeplands. For centuries, these venerable kingdoms had tunneled into the deepest caverns seeking new mines and new territory. What they could not know is that their delvings placed them perilously close to Endroren's sanctuary. Secure from their enemies beneath miles of stone, these deep colonies had few defenses, and what defenses they did have were designed to protect against an enemy attacking from above.

When the Dark Hordes roared out of the core of the world, the dwarves of the deep kingdoms were caught unprepared. Their defeat was swift and bloody, and very few of the deep dwarves managed to escape. Within a matter of days, the deep kingdoms had all fallen.

Alarm spread through the Deepland halls of every dwarven kingdom. Warriors were called to arms, armies were raised, and hasty defenses were erected against the evil surging up from below.

On the surface the events transpiring below were initially dismissed as tall tales, and the other enari remained unconcerned. The dwarves, however, fought for their lives. For every endrori that fell, Endroren sent three more to take its place. No matter how bravely the dwarves fought or how long their defenses held, they could not hope to win.

I've heard that the wealth and majesty of the deep kingdoms exceeded anything ever seen on Aetaltis.

—PORTAND

It's all true. The output of a single deep mine was greater than every mine in operation today, and each kingdom controlled dozens.

—VRENN

I've also heard that the dwarves of the deep kingdoms perfected rune magic to a level unknown in the upper kingdoms. The most intriguing rumors are that they were able to use runes to build rudimentary transport gates that bypassed the Ritual's limits.

—ISIN





The gate is sealed today, but the ruins of the dwarven city that stood at its entrance remain. A fair amount of these ruins remain unexplored.

—CALABRIA

Be wary. The Dark Hordes occupied the city for centuries. The corruption lingers.

—SSYNES

There was a lesser known gate of a similar size to the Stonegate west of Callios on the Phensrelan Ocean. One must assume it was overrun as well, although we have no records of its exact location or its fate.

—ARIA

All the while, the enari on the surface ignored the rumors coming out of the Deepland kingdoms. The rulers of the surface nations were content to let the dwarves deal with the danger, not wishing to become involved in the Deepland war, certain that the enemy would never reach them. And if it weakened the Deepland dwarves' hold on the Amethyst Sea basin, that wasn't such a bad thing.

But when the Stonegate fell and the Dark Hordes erupted onto the surface, the other enari could no longer ignore the threat.

## RISE OF THE DARK HORDES

The Stone Gate was an enormous Deepland entrance carved into the side of the Stonegate Mountains. Over a hundred feet high and three hundred feet wide, the great gate led straight into some of the wealthiest and most densely populated Deepland halls.

## THE AGE OF DARKNESS

When word of the Stonegate's fall reached the other dwarven kingdoms, a conclave of the dwarven kings was called. Most of the deep kingdoms were already overrun and those near the surface were nearing collapse. At the meeting's close it was decided the dwarves had no choice but to fall back from the rising flood of the Dark Hordes. They must abandon the Deeplands.

Only the dwarves of the Donaren Mountains refused to partake in the planned exodus. They swore they would die in the deep rather than give their homeland to the vile endrori. As dwarves around the Amethyst Sea basin prepared to evacuate their halls, the dwarves of the Donaren Mountains reinforced their defenses.

## THE STONEGATE

The gargantuan Deepland entrance known as the Stonegate was an essential component of the dwarven trade system. A majority of dwarven trade, even that originating in distant Deepland nations, passed through the Stonegate. Over the centuries the Stonegate became the primary point of connection between the surface and the Deeplands.

The name isn't dwarven in origin. Among the dwarves the gate was known as Barator Bayithdor, which translates to "The Settlement at the Mouth of Bayith," but merchants who traded with the dwarves at the entrance christened it the Stonegate. The name stuck, and over the years the gate became so important that the name was lent to both the dwarves of that region and the mountains they lived in.

When the last of the Stonegate's defenses failed, the Dark Hordes had a clear path to the surface. Like a torrent of pure evil, they burst through the great gateway and into the unsuspecting surface lands beyond. First hundreds, then thousands, then hundreds of thousands of Endroren's monsters issued forth from the open door of the Stonegate.

The Age of Darkness had begun.





On the surface, the state of things was no better. The Dark Hordes were moving west from the Stonegate, destroying everything in their path. One by one the eastern kingdoms fell, unable to hold back the advancing endrori armies.

Accompanying the Hordes were a multitude of Endroren's other creations. Abomonaes, bound undead, and all the twisted monstrosities he had forged in the deep.

Faced with a seemingly unstoppable foe, the enari attempted to rally a combined defense. Surface armies joined with dwarven refugees, and they rallied their forces to confront the oncoming Hordes. The enari fought valiantly and slew many of their enemies, but they could not hold against the massed minions of Endroren.

When the last defense broke, the enari fled for their lives. Those that could went into hiding; the rest were either killed or enslaved by the advancing Hordes. So much land was burning in those bleak days that smoke and ash blackened the sky and blotted out Lensae's light. In this unnatural darkness, the endrori reveled in their victory.

Even with the defeat of the armies of the Amethyst Sea basin, the endrori were not finished. Led by the abomonaes, they began hunting the lensari and the Elders. Even these powerful beings were hard pressed to stand against Endroren's servants.

The Amethyst Sea was not alone in its suffering. In the east beyond the Stonegate Mountains were fertile green plains where the drothmals dwelt. Endroren's minions used powerful magic corrupted by darkness to transform these plains. The once tall and graceful grasses twisted into blade edged stalks that sliced into the flesh of anyone who brushed against them. In a final bloody march for their lives, the drothmals fled their homes through this gauntlet of pain, retreating to the frozen reaches of the Icebound Plains.

In the south, beyond the Scythaan Wall, lay a country of lush tropical forests where the scythaaes lived. When the endrori reached this land, they set it ablaze with arcane fire. The fires burned for seven years, and when the flames finally subsided, all that remained was ash.

The Dark Hordes continued their assault on the scythaan homeland. Next, the abomonaes came and turned the soil into sand, dried up the rivers, and shattered the hills and mountains. When they were finished, a desolate wasteland was all that remained of the once verdant country.

In time, the Dark Hordes ruled all of Aetaltis. Their victory was complete, and the Hordes raised their voices in a vile cheer heard across the land. They

There is a tavern near Selentheas built in the skull of a Great Dragon. The proprietor claims it died fighting the Dark Hordes.

—GRAIMAK

I wouldn't wish to be caught drinking there on the day another Great Dragon comes along and sees their sibling's head turned into an alehouse.

—BELLYNDA

I don't know. I've been there, and they brew a damn fine porter. I'd say it's worth the risk.

—TORRICA





praised Endroren in his unholy might and called to their dark master to join them.

Endroren heard their cries.

Summoning forth the full power of his corrupt dark magic, Endroren cracked the world open to its heart.

Out of the gaping wound he climbed, emerging onto the surface for the first time since his banishment from Lensae. At the edge of the chasm, he constructed a black fortress from the burned bones of his victims, and there, from his obsidian throne, he ruled all of Aetaltis.

## THE GREAT WAR

The breaking of the world sent a shiver through the Essential Plane. The disruption was felt all the way to the Halls of Lensae, and the Enaros were alerted that something terrible had happened. Looking down on Aetaltis, they saw with horror what had befallen their world and their people.

The Enaros called their avatars and armed them with war gear forged by Modren. When all the preparations were complete, trumpets sounded and the gates of Lensae were thrown open. Wreathed in divine power, the army of the Enaros charged out to make war on Endroren and his Hordes.

When the battle began, the Enaros found themselves hard pressed to make headway against the Dark Lord. During his rule, Endroren's minions had multiplied, and each time one of them died, their tainted soul was drawn into Endroren, making him stronger.

There were many battles in the war, but the final confrontation took place in the land of Goloth. It was there Endroren had broken open the world and constructed his fortress and throne. On the scarred plains below the walls of Endroren's castle, the Enaros gathered their armies.

The avatars formed ranks, along with the Elders and lensari who had escaped Endroren's hunters. Even the enari gathered to join the fight. Hopelessly out-matched in this war of gods, they refused to give up hope and demanded their right to fight in what might be their world's final battle.

The conflict that followed was awful beyond imagining. Avatars fell, ageless Elders and all-powerful lensari lost their lives, and the brave armies of the enari who took the field that day were all but obliterated. The immortal Enaros were the only ones free from the threat of true death, but even they suffered grievous injury during the ferocious fight.

## THE KEEPERS OF HOPE

Despite the horrors the enari endured, somehow hope remained alive. While many of the enari were killed or enslaved, a few managed to remain free. These brave souls fought from the shadows, striking at the Dark Hordes swiftly then retreating to their hidden bases.

There is a wealthy ship owner in Mooricos who says she knows the route to Goloth. She believes some of the weapons Modren forged for the battle still lay on the battlefield where they fell. She's mounting an expedition in the spring.

—BELLYNDA

I'll pass. I already know how this story ends. "And they were never seen again. The End."

—CALABRIA





At last, Zevas, Vale, and Alantra broke through the enemy defenses and fought their way to Endroren's great hall. There they found the Dark Lord sitting haughtily on his throne. He seemed not to care that his defenses had fallen or that his armies were collapsing in the plains below. He was simply smiling, a look of strange satisfaction on his face.

The three enaros demanded that Endroren surrender to them, but the Dark Lord spoke these words, the meaning of which remains a mystery to this day.

"Take me back into your arms this night, and I will aid you against your true enemy," he said. "For you are so immersed in the light, that you are blind to the true darkness within."

Vale, Alantra, and Zevas ignored Endroren's strange proclamation. They grasped him by the arms and legs and bore him out to the walls. When the remnants of the Dark Hordes saw their master held by the three enaros, they broke and fled the battlefield. The Great War had come to its end.

## THE JUDGMENT OF ENDROREN

The Enaros assembled amid the wreckage of Endroren's fortress and formed a circle around their wayward brother. All were wracked with sorrow, for they were tormented both by what Endroren had done to the world and by the fact that they must, yet again, mete out punishment against him. But the crime he had committed could not be ignored.

After much debate, they agreed on a punishment. Since he had cowered for so long in the depths of the world, they would return him there. With chains forged by Modren in the fires of Lensae, they bound him to the world's core so he might never turn his evil against the world again. Once his chains were linked, they closed the chasm he had created and sealed him below for all eternity.

When the dwarves who had survived the war heard what the Enaros had done, they cried out in anguish. Any of Endroren's surviving minions, from the most powerful abomonae to the weakest endrori, would clamber for the Deep-lands to be near their master, as was their nature.

The Enaros knew this to be true, for already the creatures of darkness were scurrying into the Deeplands after their Dark Lord. Sadly, it was too late to change the course of things. Alantra attempted to comfort the dwarves. She told them they would be given the richest land of the surface world, and that the Enaros would bless them and all their children.

The dwarves spat on the ground. They wanted no blessings. They wanted no surface lands. They wanted their ancestral homes, the grand kingdoms they had carved with their own hands from the very heart of the world. Their halls

Speaking of Goloth, nothing in the history books say they tore the castle down. I imagine it's still standing there if you could find it.

—DYSART

I urge you to call this what it is—the Betrayal. Don't pretend the Betrayers cared a whit for what they'd done. They knew full well the cost.

—VRENN

I caution you against such speech. You invite darkness into your soul saying such things.

—ARIA

The Deeplands *are* my soul, and the Betrayers already filled them with darkness. What's a bit more?

—VRENN





A lesson every adventurer should learn! The deeper you go, the greater the challenges that await you.

—GRAIMAK

Truth! Like it says, the really awful stuff is more drawn to Endroren than the less awful stuff. To put it simply, every step you get closer to Endroren increases the likelihood you'll run into something really terrible.

—CALABRIA

And to be clear, when you get into the Deeplands, everything you run into is terrible. Things are just *more* terrible the deeper you go.

—DYSART

had been stolen from them forever and would now become a realm of nightmares.

Tearing the holy signs of the Enaros from their breasts, the dwarves flung them to the ground. They swore they would never follow the Enaros again. For eons they had worshiped the Enaros with faith and devotion, and the payment they received was betrayal. As the dwarves left the field of battle, the hearts of the Enaros broke, for the greatest casualty of the war had been the love of their dwarven children.

## SEALING OF THE DEEPLANDS

Although Endroren's creatures desired to stay by their master's side, nothing prevented them from returning to the surface if they chose. This was especially true for less powerful beings like the endrori. These lesser creatures are not so tightly bound to the Dark Lord, and can easily surface if they desire. To prevent them from escaping, the Deeplands had to be sealed.

Alantra called her surviving clerics to her, and she taught them powerful spells of warding. With these spells the clerics could seal the Deepland halls and prevent any of the minions of Endroren from endangering the surface world. These clerics became the first Warders of Alantra.

There was one ward that Alantra raised personally: the seal for the Stonegate, the massive Deepland entrance from which the first Dark Horde had risen. Alantra sealed it with a sheer wall of night black stone hewn from the very material of the firmament. Black, smooth, and harder than any substance found in Aetaltis, the enormous seal would stop even the most powerful dark creature from escaping. Because of this seal the Stonegate earned its new name, the Black Gate.

## THE DWARVES OF THE DONAREN MOUNTAINS

For the dwarves, who had already lost so much, the final tragedy was yet to come. In the Deeplands of the Donaren Mountains, the last dwarves there still fought against the endrori. Throughout the Age of Darkness these dwarves had survived, and they weren't going to abandon their homes now.

When the Warders came to seal the Donaren entrances, the dwarves of that

## THE WARDERS OF ALANTRA

The tales of the Warders' selfless courage in those dark times remain an inspiration for paladins and clerics to this day. Warders roamed the monster infested mountain slopes for months at a time, beating back the evil things they found there and sealing the passages behind the beasts.

The Warders of today, while a stalwart and noble order, are but a shadow of those legendary heroes from the Age of Shadow. It is the dream of every modern Warder to live up to the example of their predecessors. To be compared to one of the Warders of old is the greatest compliment any modern Warder can receive.





## THE DONARZHEIS MOUNTAINS

No one knows what happened to the Donaren dwarves, but reason suggests that they were slain by the endrori. Legend has it that even in death the dwarves of the Donaren continue to fight, and their spirits haunt the mountains to this day both above and below. This is how the Donaren Mountains earned their new name. Today, they are called the Donarzheis, which means "Spirit Home" in the old dwarven tongue.

land insisted they leave them open. To do so, however posed a terrible danger, for if the dwarves of the Donaren ever fell, the endrori would have an open passage out of the Deeplands. The Warders prayed to Alantra for guidance, but in the end could find no other answer. The Deepland entrances of the Donaren had to be sealed.

The people of the Amethyst Sea basin sent word to the dwarves and begged them to come out. If they did not, they would surely be trapped with the endrori for all time. The Donaren dwarves refused and shouted that the mountains were their home now and forever.

The Enaros sent Modren himself to talk with the king of the Donaren dwarves. Modren had loved the dwarves more than any other enari, and he begged the Donaren dwarves to come out of their Deepland halls. The dwarves of the Donaren spit on the ground. They called Modren "betrayer" and ordered him to leave their realm.

Alantra relayed this to her followers. With heavy hearts and no other choice, the Warders sealed the Donaren Mountain gates with the dwarves still inside.

## THE PLEDGE

The Enaros looked over their ravaged world and contemplated all that had occurred. They only now recognized the wisdom of Endros and Aros, that darkness creeps into even the best lit place, and there it spreads like a disease. The Enaros underestimated the power of darkness, and Aetaltis had paid the price.

The Enaros pledged that from that day forward, they would keep constant watch over Aetaltis. They swore that they would walk among their people, listen to their prayers, and personally aid them whenever they could. They would not do everything for the enari, for as Droth reminded them, trial builds strength, but they would never turn their attention completely away from Aetaltis again.

## THE AGE OF SHADOW

Dark times lay ahead for the enari. Their world lay in ruins: kingdoms shattered, temples fallen, and people scattered, dead, or worse. Most of Endroren's endrori were locked in the Deeplands, but many still roamed the surface, along with darker, more dangerous things.

No other choice my ass. Every one of them Warders had a choice.

—VRENN

There weren't just endrori wandering the surface. There were entire endrori cities. Those ruins are still out there as well if you know where to look for them.

—BELLYNDA





Bellynda made a good point earlier.

People forget that the endrori ruled our world for centuries. They built towns, cities, roads, mines. They had slave markets and ships and everything else necessary to maintain their dark parody of civilization. The enari, and later the Alliance, wiped out as much of this as they could, but the shadows of that time remain in the form of ruins, artifacts, and everything else a large civilization leaves behind when it falls.

—CALABRIA

Part of the reason the stoneholds were so effective is that the dwarves kept many of their locations a secret. We don't know how many stoneholds were built or where they were located. I know adventurers who have made an entire career out of hunting for lost stoneholds.

—PORTAND

And because they're lost, when you find one there's a good chance nobody else has been there since the last dwarf locked the gate on the way out. Fresh pickings!

—TORRICA

Even the renewed pledge of the Enaros to remain among the enari was of little aid. Endroren's long rule had tainted the very essence of the world, and only the Enaros could cleanse it. It would be centuries before they could fully turn their attention to the needs of individual mortals.

As for sealing the Deeplands, the Warders of Alantra were stretched to their limits. During the Dwarven Age, dwarves excavated countless Deepland entrances. It would take generations to seal them all.

## THE STONEHOLDS

With so much danger around them, the surviving dwarves constructed immense surface fortresses called stoneholds. Some of these they carved from natural stone outcroppings while others they built from cyclopean blocks of cut stone. Part castle and part enclosed town, the stoneholds applied the communal living concepts the dwarves perfected in the Deepland halls to a surface settlement.

Designed as a self-sustaining community, stoneholds could be sealed off from the outside world for months or years at a time with little added hardship for the inhabitants. Any enari who found their way to a stonehold and wished to enter was welcome, so long as they were willing to share in the community's work. Thanks to the stoneholds, many enari were saved who might never have survived the Age of Shadow.

Prior to Endroren's imprisonment, a stonehold would never have held against the Dark Hordes. Powerful dark creatures like the abomonae could bypass such defenses with impunity, tearing it open for invading forces. After Endroren's imprisonment, however, the majority of the most powerful beings were destroyed or had retreated to the deepest Deepland caverns. The endrori still on the surface were limited to conventional siege engines. Against a mundane siege, the stoneholds were virtually impregnable.

The security of a stonehold came at a price. The fungus farms that served as the stonehold's primary food source required constant grooming, and the unchanging diet of dried, ground mushrooms was painfully monotonous. The dour gray walls of the fortress could trigger claustrophobia in the hardiest souls, and the tight quarters put strains on even the closest relationships. Combined with the constant vigilance required to guard against endrori attacks, the challenges of life in a stonehold made them a short-term solution at best.

## GODS AMONG MORTALS

The Enaros and their avatars are sometimes seen walking among the people of Aetaltis. They usually travel in disguise, only revealing themselves if absolutely necessary. Their influence is felt more now than it ever was in the past, suggesting that the Enaros have indeed remained true to the pledge they made at the end of the Great War.





## BEFORE THE DROTHMAL

The original name of the drothmals is lost to the ages. Many scholars are searching for this name, and for some this singular quest is their lifework. The origin of the name "drothmal," however, has its seeds in the Age of Shadow.

When the Age of Darkness ended, and the Age of Shadow began, the drothmals received no sign that their trial was complete. So it was that in the early days of the Age of Shadow, the drothmals chose their new name. Until such time as droth sees fit to free them from their punishment, they will always be called the drothmal, meaning "servants of Droth."

## THE STONESHIPS

There were some dwarves who wanted more than survival. One group of these dwarves headed south to search for a new homeland. They'd heard tales of a rich land beyond the Stonegate Mountains, uninhabited and untouched by the Dark Hordes. What they discovered were the corrupted blade grass plains that were once the homeland of the drothmals. The dwarves named this strange, warped landscape the Blade Sea.

Those were desperate times, and where a person today might have turned back if faced with such an imposing obstacle, the dwarves of the Age of Shadow did not. Surely, they thought, the land they sought must lie somewhere beyond this deadly plain. But they needed a means of crossing the Blade Sea, for no person or mount survived a long journey through the deadly, blade-sharp grass.

Observing the strength with which the wind raced across the open grasslands, the dwarves came up with an ingenious solution. They constructed a fleet of small wooden ships and outfitted them with wheels. They rolled them out onto the open flatland, unfurled the sails, and caught the whipping wind. The ships took off across the plain, sailing on the stone of the ground as easily as water vessels did the sea, and carrying their occupants safely above the deadly grass.

Some of these dwarves eventually settled in a distant country across the Blade Sea, while others built homes on the wide plateaus that dot the plains. To this day the descendants of those dwarves sail their stonships across the open plains. The routes they established remain vital to trade in the modern world.

## THE DROTHMAL

The drothmals retreated to the frozen north during the Age of Darkness. Their shamans told them that the Age of Darkness was punishment from the Enaros for the decadent lifestyle the drothmals enjoyed before the coming of the Dark Hordes. Now the drothmals lived under the rule of Droth, Lord of Trial, and their trial would only be lifted if he saw fit. Their suffering was his blessing, and only through suffering might they someday be forgiven.

The entire Blade Sea is dotted with those plateaus. Almost every one of them is hollow on the inside, filled with rooms and passages and tunnels. They were like that when the dwarves found them.

—CALABRIA

And the dwarves only settled a handful of the plateaus. The rest are largely unexplored.

—DYSART

Never ask a drothmal about the time before the snow. It is a shameful time in our history.

—GRAIMAK





There's a single page of an Alliance text held in Winterkeep that seems to suggest the Amethyst Sea basin isn't the only place on Aetaltis the Alliance set up colonies. If this is true, I am curious to know what became of those settlements after the Cataclysm.

—ISIN

A ship wrecked near the mouth of the Dragon's Maw a few years back. When the bodies washed ashore they were human, but not dressed like people from anywhere in the known world. It does make you wonder.

—PORTAND

## THE YEARS PASS

The successes of this Age of Shadow were few, and most enari experienced nothing but hardship. The new and surviving settlements on the Amethyst Sea were little more than scattered pockets of survivors, fighting to hold off the remnants of the Hordes while scraping a life from the ravaged land.

But time heals all things.

As the years went by, more and more Deepland entrances were sealed and attacks by the endrori decreased. Trees and grass sprouted from the fire-blackened soil, rivers ran clear once more, and the taint of Endroren's power faded from all but the most damaged places. Life was still hard, but a certain level of normalcy returned.

Eventually the enari reached a balance in the battle against the remaining dark creatures. They carved out enough of a hold that they weren't easily dislodged by the remnants of the Dark Hordes. The endrori, however, still had great enough numbers that the enari could not achieve a complete victory. For many, many years, the enari lived with this fragile stalemate.

## ARRIVAL OF THE ALLIANCE

But change was coming. On a bright day just over 400 years ago, a young halfling shepherd tended his flocks in the foothills of the Dragon Tail Mountains. His family had moved to the highlands from the city of Gelendor in search of a simpler life. Fate, however, had different plans for them.

As the shepherd sat beside a river, playing on his reed flute, a strange energy filled the air. It was more of a feeling than a physical sensation, but it was as palpable as the spring breeze. The boy was about to investigate when a deafening roar shook the trees. All around him was a sea of light and strange forms moved in the blinding brightness.

As suddenly as it had started, the strange display ended, and standing in the glade beside the shepherd were three figures. The first looked something like a halfling, but he was tall and gangling, like a thick-limbed elf. The second was of a similar height as the first, but he was much thinner with skin the color of stone and a cold, featureless face. The last, was a monster of gigantic proportions. It was over nine feet tall, as wide as a cart, and had the appearance of a hideously-deformed giant halfling. These were an atlan (or humans, as many prefer to call us), a newardin, and an orog respectively.

Gathering his wits about him and realizing that just staring at the strangers was terribly discourteous, he welcomed the newcomers and invited them back to his home for supper.





The story above is, loosely, the halfling account of the Atlan Alliance's first arrival on Aetaltis. The full halfling story involves numerous polite welcomes, humble shepherds preparing sumptuous feasts, and all the other elements of a good halfling hearthtale. As with all hearthtales, there is likely some basis of truth to the story, although the majority of it remains suspect.

The important point is that just over 400 years before the present day, a small group of explorers arrived on Aetaltis. These beings were all members of a great civilization known as the Atlan Alliance. The Alliance was a powerful empire that used arcane gates to travel between worlds. Some worlds they simply explored, others they colonized. Aetaltis was chosen as an Alliance colony world.

## THE AGE OF ATLAN

After this initial contact, the Atlan Alliance swept into Aetaltis like a rising tide. Within two years, a veritable army of scouts, explorers, scholars, and workers descended on the Halfling Dalelands. Under any other circumstances, such an influx of strangers into a settled land could only be called an invasion. There is one simple reason that this wasn't the case with the Alliance; the Alliance had the ability to wield magic and they shared it.

For the first time since the Ritual of Limitation, true spellcasting had returned to Aetaltis. No runes were required for these spells. All one needed was the innate talent to sense essence and the proper training.

## THE RETURN OF SPELLCASTING

The spellcasting techniques used by the Alliance wizards were completely different from the true magic used by the enari during the Age of Magic. Where the true magic was an innate, almost emotional form of spellcasting, Alliance spells involved detailed formulae, complicated mental exercises, and well-practiced rituals. Most importantly to the people of Aetaltis, however, was that the majority of Alliance spells were unaffected by the Ritual of Limitation.

Scholars and theologians have long debated why the Enaros allowed Alliance magic to work. Some have suggested that the Enaros believed the enari had learned their lesson and were ready to use magic again. Others claim that the ability had been within the enari all along, and they simply hadn't discovered how to create spells under the new rules imposed by the Ritual. Whatever the reason, the Alliance's methods triggered a renaissance in spellcasting on Aetaltis.

There were still spells that didn't function properly. These were limited in scope and mostly dealt with the movement of people and things instantaneously from one point to another. Even these limitations were sometimes bypassed us-

This contains yet another lesson adventurers should learn. Those descended from the Alliance people are not welcome everywhere in the Amethyst Sea basin. There are some who still resent the Alliance for taking without asking. They were not, after all, invited to make their homes here.

—SSYNES

The sentiment isn't limited to outlanders and people living on the fringe. There's a secret society of enari based in Port Vale with the goal of driving anyone of an Alliance lineage out of the Amethyst Sea basin. I've heard membership is growing.

—CALABRIA





Norentor was not the first. They built another city in the Dragon Tail Mountains before Norentor, but the endrori overran it. The survivors founded Norentor. Ssynes has seen a map to the ruins and was told its unfinished world gate still stands.

—SSYNES

Ha ha ha! They killed them because they thought they were endrori. I love that story! Ha!

—GRAIMAK

ing specialized rituals and tools, such as the Alliance world gates.

The Alliance taught the enari their spellcasting techniques in exchange for assistance establishing their colonies. The enari were quick students, since by their very nature they were tied to the magical power of essence. Despite the benefits of magic's return, some enari shunned this new art, fearing the wrath of the Enaros. Most embraced it, and soon Alliance magic spread across the Amethyst Sea.

## THE FOUNDING OF NORENTOR

Even with their magic, the Alliance still had a great deal of work ahead of them. Their first course of action was to establish a permanent camp. They selected a site at the mouth of the Gray River, and they called it Norentor. The leaders of the Alliance marked the founding by declaring the year as Aetaltan Cycle 0, or 0 AC. Later, when the Alliance rose to dominance in the region, this marking of the years became the standard. It is still used to this day.

Next, Alliance explorers began the construction of Aetaltis's first world gate. These strange devices were at the heart of the Alliance's power. In an instant, people and goods traveled back and forth between Aetaltis and the Atlan home world. Messengers were dispatched, military reinforcements were sent to support local troops, and supplies could be instantly ferried to the colony.

The construction of that first world gate, executed by the Alliance people known as the newardin, took two years to complete. Throughout this time, word of these otherworldly travelers spread, and envoys from settlements throughout the Amethyst Sea were sent to meet with the Alliance representatives.

## TREATIES AND CONFLICTS

Although the dwarves and halflings got along well with the Alliance, initial encounters between the Alliance and the other enari were not all positive. When the Alliance first ventured into the Icebound Plains, the drothmals assumed that

## THE DARK THREAT OF ARCANES MAGIC

Despite its utility and power, there is an underlying and often unspoken distrust of magic among the people of Aetaltis. The simple fact that Endroren was the master of magic before his fall from grace leaves a seed of doubt in many people's minds about whether any arcane magic is truly safe. This is reinforced by such things as the occasional spectacular arcane spellcasting failure, the magic-soaked ruins of the old Alliance cities, and the strange demeanor of many who are drawn to the arcane arts.

The more cosmopolitan a settlement, the more likely they are to downplay or ignore these worries. This is thanks in part to improved education in these communities and a greater breadth of worldly experiences. In many remote communities, however, arcane spellcasters may receive a cold welcome—or worse.





they were some new form of endrori. Inevitably, this led to violent encounters that left many dead on both sides.

The elves, the dominant lineage among the fey, actually went to war with the Alliance on a number of occasions. The Alliance's expansionist tendencies didn't sit well with the elves, particularly when it came to the protection of the forests that the elves had nursed back to health after the Age of Darkness. When Alliance settlements encroached, the elven response was swift and merciless. This prompted the Alliance to retaliate. It was decades before a lasting peace was finally reached between the elves and the Alliance.

## THE DARK HORDES RETURN

In the years immediately prior to the Alliance's arrival, the remnants of the Dark Hordes were relatively quiet. There were still many endrori living in the mountainous areas of the Amethyst Sea basin, and no enari dared dig a well or try to build a deep mine for fear of striking an endrori infested Deepland hall. Most of the endrori, however, were now far from the fertile lowlands where the enari settled. Some areas, such as the halfling Dalelands, were so free of endrori that they had become almost peaceful.

It was a false peace. The Hordes were merely biding their time, growing their numbers, and waiting for the right moment to attack. That moment came two years after the founding of Norentor. Although the enari warned the Alliance about the Dark Hordes, their absence from the Dalelands and the regions around Norentor led Alliance leaders to write off the threat as little more than legend and superstition.

When a Dark Horde swept out of a previously unknown and unsealed Deepland entrance in the Dragon Tail Mountains, it caught the Alliance unprepared. The Horde swept through the countryside, burning halfling villages and fields and either killing the residents or taking them as slaves to send back to the Deepland mines. Within a week, the Hordes were racing toward the Alliance colony.

The colonists scrambled to prepare a defense, but it was clear that they wouldn't be able to stop the surging mass of endrori. An advance Alliance force went out to test the strength of the onrushing Horde. The Horde crushed it in a single skirmish. Even with their magic, the Alliance could not stand against the sheer numbers of the Horde.

The Alliance, however, was not without resources. As soon as news of the advancing Horde reached Norentor, they sent word to the homeworlds. They responded that aid was coming, so the Alliance waited. Each day that passed, the Horde advanced, until finally they were camped within sight of Norentor's walls.

There is a large elven settlement on the northern coast of the Windsinger Sea. They've kept to themselves for the most part, but recent ships flying the court's flag were spotted off the coast of Selentheia. They ignored hails and sailed away without making contact. Quite strange, if you ask me.

—BELLYNDA

The place where the Horde emerged is one of the only large Deepland entrances in the northern Dragon Tail Mountains. It was blocked and warded, but there is something happening on the other side of the barrier. A team of Warders and engineers were dispatched last fall to assess the situation.

—ARIA

And!?

—PORTAND

A fair question. So far, the archons have chosen not to release their report.

—ARIA





The farmers around Hawk's Crest still plow up old weapons, bits of armor, and broken bone in the fields where the battle took place.

I met an amiable fellow growing beans who showed me an absolutely stunning collection of antique Alliance equipment he'd found over the years.

—PORTAND

You left the Icewalkers out of your story! The Alliance would have never beaten the Hordes if it were not for my people. You dishonor us!

—GRAIMAK

The colonists begged their leaders to use the world gate to evacuate them, but they refused. The home world had commanded them not to activate their gate. The pleading colonists became an angry mob, and just when it seemed a battle would break out inside the walls of the city, a low hum rose from the center of the colony. The noise was the sound of the great world gate being activated.

The crowd rushed to the gate thinking they were being evacuated at last. The massive stone pillars that encircled the gate platform glowed with a white-hot light. With each low thrum of the gate, the pillars pulsed, brightening with every resonant beat. Meanwhile, a bellowing horn sounded from somewhere deep within the ranks of the Dark Horde massed in the plains beyond the walls.

As the Dark Hordes advanced on the colony, a fresh legion of Alliance warriors marched out from between the glowing pillars of the world gate. Swordsmen, archers, cavalry, battlemages, and whole units of monstrous orog mercenaries. Without stopping, they marched straight through the city, out the front gates, and onto the field of battle.

With calm precision, the Alliance warriors formed up into ranks. Once they were in place, the Alliance commander, the now famous general Corvin Drakewyn, gave the command to charge. With a triumphal shout, the Alliance legion surged forward. When the two armies met, it is said that the crash could be heard as far away as Gelendor.

The battle that followed was costly for the Alliance legions. They'd never faced such a truly evil foe, and they were unready for the innate cruelty of the enemy. Despite this, the Alliance prevailed. The Horde broke, and its wraethdari leader fell at Drakewyn's hand.

Unfortunately, this was only the beginning. Something was happening in the Deeplands, and the Hordes were rising again. Having made a commitment to their Aetaltan colony and their enari allies, the Alliance did not retreat. Instead, they established more settlements, constructed more gates, and set out to defeat the menace of the Dark Hordes once and for all.

## THE HORDE WARS

The Alliance spent the next few years fighting the minions of Endroren. Dark Hordes were rising all across the Amethyst Sea basin, and the enari knew too well the horrors of a Horde attack. Walls were constructed, weapons forged, and throughout the region the people prepared for war.

Whenever word of a risen Horde reached the Alliance, their military commanders dispatched armies to confront them. Bolstered by thousands of Alli-





ance troops from the Atlan homeworld, the combined forces of the Alliance and the enari were turning the tables on their attackers.

Rather than waiting behind stone walls for the attack, they met the endrori in the field. The wraethdari that commanded the Hordes were not ready for such strong resistance, and the endrori battle lines faltered in the face of the combined Alliance and enari armies. For the first five years, this trend continued, and it seemed this recent rise of the Hordes would be short lived.

## THE FALL OF THE OROGS

The Alliance strategy contained a fatal flaw. With all the worlds they had traveled to, the Alliance had never encountered a true force of darkness. They'd fought creatures that were evil, and they'd certainly seen all manner of cruelty and treachery. What they were not prepared to contend with was pure, unadulterated darkness, the source of Endroren's power.

Imprisoned at the core of the world, Endroren could exert little direct control over the surface world. He tried to escape from his prison again and again, but all his attempts failed. Endroren discovered, however, that he could sense the seeds of darkness that lay within the spirits of some mortals. Normally a person could keep their personal darkness at bay, but this seed, if encouraged, had the potential to grow. If allowed to grow unchecked, in time it spread throughout the person's spirit, and eventually corrupted it completely.

Endroren realized that while he could not have a direct impact on the world while imprisoned, he could nourish these dark seeds wherever he found them. With each failure of the victim's will, the darkness spread, and when at last the darkness overwhelmed them, they fell forever into Endroren's grasp. The unfortunate individuals that survive this process are called the Fallen. They are forever changed, both spiritually and physically, and they become eternal servants of the Dark Lord.

The Enaros created the enari in such a way that the dark seed was rare among them. The people of the Alliance, however, were much more likely to have a dark seed. This proved especially true for the warrior-born mercenary people known as the orogs. The seed was strong in the orog spirit, and it took little effort for Endroren to encourage its growth.

One by one, orogs fell into Endroren's grasp. Often the fall occurred in the midst of battle. An orog warrior fighting alongside an enari or other members of the Alliance, might suddenly turn on his allies. The dark influence seemed to spread as well, for when one orog fell to the darkness, the other orogs around him soon followed.

I wish to point out that this is all speculation. No one is entirely sure what happened with the orogs, and this paints a rather dark, excuse my choice of words, picture of their people.

—DYSART

One may always have doubts, but the evidence in this case is convincing and more than mere speculation.

—ISIN

She is correct, Dysart. The presence of a dark seed in orogs is a proven fact. Sadly, this means every orog is susceptible to Endroren's influence and should be treated as potentially dangerous.

—ARIA

You say things like this and then you wonder why orogs are so unpleasant! Me? I judge my companions on their deeds alone. That is the only true measure of good and evil.

—GRAIMAK





Still nothing about my people! I  
have a mind to make a few *edits* to  
your book with my axe.

—GRAIMAK

There is a breathtaking monument  
to those who died in the battle of  
Valen Creek. Lord Drakewyn had  
it restored recently, and it's quite  
moving. Well worth a visit.

—PORTAND

Calling the bloody wars fought  
between fey and the Alliance  
“occasional conflicts” is an insult to  
the many lives lost.

—SSYNES

It was some time before the Alliance realized these were not isolated incidents. All across the Amethyst Sea basin, orogs turned on their masters and allies and took the name of ogre. Many crossed sides and joined with the Dark Hordes, bolstering the enemy's forces and weakening the allies at critical moments.

When the Alliance finally understood what was happening, they ceased bringing orogs to Aetaltis. This was a blow to the allied armies of the Alliance and enari, for the orog mercenaries were a key component of the military hammer used to strike at the endrori. Not all orogs fell to Darkness, and those that resisted are the ancestors of the orogs that live among the civilized people of the Amethyst Sea basin today. Most did fall, however, and the descendants of these creatures, still known as ogres, are often found dwelling alongside the endrori.

## THE LAST HORDE

In time, the Alliance and enari recovered from the loss of the orogs. Slowly, and at great cost, they fought the endrori back into the Deeplands. As the Hordes retreated underground, Warders swept in to seal the passages. In the year 22 AC, just north of the newly founded Alliance settlement of Erinor, the Alliance and enari conquered the last Horde at the battle of Valen Creek.

That is not to say the land was immediately safe. Scattered tribes of endrori still plagued settlements on the outskirts of civilization, strange creatures twisted by magic regularly clawed their way out of the Elliyen Wilds, and the rest of Aetaltis's magical and mundane threats still existed. The day of the organized Dark Horde, however, had passed.

## RISE OF THE ALLIANCE

Over the course of the war against the last Dark Hordes, the Atlan Alliance became more and more entwined in the lives of the enari. By the time the last Horde was defeated, the Alliance had become the most powerful force in the region.

Alliance settlements flourished and grew, and more colonists came through the world gates every year. Soon Alliance cities were springing up from one end of the Amethyst Sea basin to the other.

In the year 25 AC, the Alliance discovered a large island at the center of the Amethyst Sea. There they founded a city called Atlanor. The Alliance spared no expense in the city's construction. This new settlement was to serve as the Alliance capital on Aetaltis. By the time of its completion, it was a splendid example of the best the Alliance had to offer.





## THE GOD OF THE OROGS

The orogs worshipped a deity called Othorr when they came to Aetaltis, and many still worship Othorr today. Most theological scholars claim that Othorr is actually a representation of Droth, and not a unique god at all. The orogs deny this.

With the exception of the initial battles with the drothmals and the occasional conflicts with the fey, the rising Alliance power was not resisted by the enari. This is largely credited to the Alliance's policy of living alongside

people they encountered rather than attempting to lord over them. Wherever possible, the Alliance incorporated enari traditions and cultural artifacts into their own society on Aetaltis. The most notable example of this is the Alliance colonists embracing Aetaltan religious beliefs and practices.

## THE ALLIANCE AND THE ENAROS

According to the surviving records from the Alliance's arrival, the members of the Alliance, with the sole exception of the orogs, worshiped no gods when they arrived on Aetaltis. They did have a complex system of philosophical beliefs known as Centering, but gods played no role in Alliance beliefs.

The Alliance colonists were amazed by the power of Enarosian clerics. Initially, Alliance sages assumed that the powers were an indigenous form of arcane spellcasting. These scholars believed the divine spellcasting of the clerics was simply another form of wizardry involving the drawing and shaping of naturally occurring essence.

Further study disproved this, and soon the scholars were forced to admit that Aetaltis's clerics were wielding a power unlike anything they'd seen before. While the scholars debated the source of this strange power, the common colonists decided that they were witnessing true miracles. Many began to worship alongside the enari, and the number of colonists worshipping the Enaros and their avatars grew.

The dwarves warned against this. They proclaimed the colonists would be let down in the end, and they encouraged the colonists to rely on their own wits rather than the fickle whims of the Enaros. The dwarves' warnings were largely ignored. Even with all the wonders the Alliance brought with them to Aetaltis, colony life remained difficult and faith in the Enaros made this life easier.

## THE APPARITION AT ORINTOR

While Alliance rulers generally accepted the growing faith among the colonists, one story tells of a different reaction. The events are said to have taken place around 45 AC in a city called Orintor (the location of which has been lost).

Belief was not the issue when it came to the Alliance and gods. Except perhaps for the orogs, there were no gods on our homeworlds. The Enaros were the first gods we'd encountered.

—ISIN

Forgive my skepticism, but isn't it more likely that we were somehow unaware of the gods. After all, who created our homeworlds? Who created us for that matter?

—ARIA

Worlds without gods? Sounds like paradise to me.

—VRENN

Correction. The *exact* location of Orintor is lost. There is a wealth of evidence that places it west of the southern Dragon Tail Mountains on the coast of the Phensrelian Ocean.

—BELLYNDA





I question the wisdom of including this story. There are countless historical flaws that bring its truth into question. A colleague of mine wrote a well-reasoned analysis on the subject.

—ISIN

I am the first to admit there are questions about the veracity of this tale. One cannot understate, however, the impact the story had on the people of the Alliance. Its spread was the turning point for our people in terms of acceptance of the gods.

—ARIA

In the Hearhtale version of the story, Toletren stays for dinner afterward.

—PORTAND

“True civilization?” Really? How very Agthorian of you.

—CALABRIA

The governor of this city took a dim view of the emerging religious beliefs among the colonists. He felt that the Enaros and their avatars were legendary beings with no real power. This governor believed that worship of the Enaros took the people away from the tenants of Centering that had made the Alliance strong, and Enaros worship would undermine the colony’s chances of success.

To put a stop to the growing “Enaros Cults,” as he called them, he outlawed worship of the Enaros. Following this declaration, he systematically dismantled the religious orders in his colony, even going so far as to arrest dissenters and demolish the temples. The worshipers fought back against this persecution, and soon the entire city was plunged into violent unrest.

At the height of the fighting, an old man appeared at the gates of the governor’s palace. The guards refused him entry, but he told them secrets about themselves that no other person could know. The guards fled in terror from this stranger who knew things no one should, and the old man walked unhindered into the palace.

Arriving at the doors to the great hall, where the governor was planning his next assault against the cults, the old man single-handedly pushed open the massive iron doors. The governor, surprised but furious at this intrusion, ordered his men to arrest the stranger. Before any action could be taken against him, the old man raised his arms and slowly pulled back his hood. A blinding white light and a chorus of a thousand voices filled the chamber and everyone in the room fell to their knees in terror.

Walking to the governor, the old man spoke, saying “I am Toletren. It is clear you do not realize the truth of what you are doing. I shall show you.”

Toletren touched the governor on the forehead and revealed all the pain the governor’s cruel edicts had caused. Suddenly, the governor knew the full truth of what his war against the worshipers of the Enaros had done. He saw with agonizing clarity the error of his ways. Toletren pulled back his hand, and the governor fell to the floor weeping.

By the time the light had faded and the voices subsided, Toletren was gone. At once the governor ordered all laws against the followers of the Enaros rescinded and the temples rebuilt using gold from the city’s own coffers. Some say that Toletren’s appearance in Orintor not only put an end to the persecutions there, but as word spread, it convinced more Alliance colonists to worship the Enaros than ever before.





## WORLD GATES AND CITY GATES

The Alliance built two types of gates during the Age of Atlan. The first and best known are the world gates. These massive arcane constructs bridged the gap between worlds and transported people and goods between them.

Equally important, and more common, were city gates. These smaller gates looked like scaled down versions of world gates. Rather than creating connections between worlds, these gates transported people and goods between city gates on the same world. This allowed the Alliance to quickly deploy troops where needed, send leaders to inspect distant colonies, and facilitate the movement of vital supplies in an emergency.

strike them down. With their newly adopted worship of the Enaros, the Alliance raised temples that were more glorious than any seen since the Dwarven Age. As a consequence, the clerical orders of the Enaros flourished, bringing their gifts to all the people of the Amethyst Sea basin.

More colonists came as well, and this time they were accompanied by a new people known as the cheebat. A handful of cheebats had actually arrived on Aetaltis with some of the first Alliance explorers, hiding in the supplies the colonists brought with them. For the first time, however, they came to Aetaltis as legitimate colonists.

The cheebats' easy-going natures earned them swift acceptance among the enari. Cheebats served as intermediaries between the native Aetaltans and the often overly serious atlan and newardin explorers. Soon, the cheebatan colonists began constructing their maze-like warrens of shops and homes near the outskirts of the Alliance settlements. With startling efficiency, they established trade relations with most of the region's great powers. Before long, they were blazing new trade routes across land and sea.

The cheebats established the great merchant houses during those years. Amazingly, the merchant houses are some of the few institutions established during the Age of Atlan that survived to the modern day. While clerical orders, schools of wizardry, and organizations of every kind fell apart in the years following the Cataclysm, somehow the merchant houses survived. In many cases, these merchant houses were instrumental to the reconstruction of society during the chaotic times after the Cataclysm.

## THE GLORY OF THE ALLIANCE

For the next eighty years the Alliance worked tirelessly to bring true civilization back to the region. They constructed highways that stretched from the edge of the Dragon's Maw to the foothills of the Stonegate Mountains. They built great cities in the Alliance style with sweeping circular canals. They dredged ports, bridged rivers, and even started digging new mines for the first time since the Age of Darkness.

If creatures of darkness surfaced, the Alliance sent powerful armies to

I don't wish to be rude, but I do think you've understated the importance of the enari in the rebuilding. I believe a correction is in order. The entire process of rebuilding was a partnership between our peoples.

—PORTAND

I'm not a historian, but I've seen enough of the world to know Portand is right. The Alliance didn't swoop in and "fix" everything. Our two peoples joined together, sharing our strengths, merging our ideas. Frankly, it's a much more hopeful story than the way you've told it here.

—CALABRIA

Portand and Calabria speak the truth. And we enari weren't waiting around for somebody to save us. We'd already started rebuilding long before the Alliance arrived. Now I ain't so arrogant as to say the Alliance didn't help; they did. But like's been said, we did it together. That's the message you should be deliverin'.

—VRENN

Oh, dear. This would require major revisions. I mean, I agree with your points, I just—I mean, I would need to discuss this with the High Provost. Your points are well taken. Thank you.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS





We don't actually know the number of gates the Alliance had on Aetaltis. Explorers are still discovering the wreckage of old Alliance settlements and outposts we didn't know about.

—CALABRIA

Only veteran adventurers should consider exploring previously undiscovered Alliance ruins. The changes wrought by the Cataclysm were infinitely varied and completely unpredictable. There is no way to know what you will encounter.

—ISIN

## THE CATACLYSM

On a hot morning in the early autumn of the year 105 AC, disaster struck. It began as nothing more than a strange hum coming from the world gates and city gates that stood at the center of almost every Alliance settlement. Although the noise was unusual, the general populace was not particularly alarmed. They'd grown used to odd sounds and lights coming from the gates, and the Alliance had explained it was just the gates' strained interaction with the Ritual of Limitation.

Within the gate complexes, however, the newardin gatekeepers were far more concerned. No one is entirely sure what went on, but a few stories have come down over the years, saying that there was a flurry of activity within the walled gate compounds. There are even stories of some sort of fighting breaking out within the compound walls, but again, these are just stories with little to base them on other than the hazy recollections of traumatized survivors.

The hum continued for close to an hour, but then it rose to a deafening roar. People rushed from their homes and looked toward the city centers. Those close enough to see are said to have witnessed an undulating blue light shining from where the gates stood. A flash of light followed, so bright that people a day's ride from the settlements could see it. After the flash came an earthshaking boom that shattered windows in distant villages and sent livestock in far hills scrambling in terror.

A torrent of pure essence poured out of the gates. People tried to run, others hid, but no one within sight of it could escape. Like a tidal wave, it ripped through the cities, smashed across the countryside, and continued on for miles beyond the walls of some settlements.

The results were devastating. Entire cities were wiped from the face of the world, leaving nothing but a smoking crater where they used to stand. Others were horribly twisted, altered in horrifying ways by the wild magic that had consumed them. Still others were replaced by strange, otherworldly landscapes.

Before Lensae even had the chance to finish its rise above horizon, the power of the Alliance was broken.

## THE LOST AGE

In the aftermath of the Cataclysm, chaos reigned. The people of the Amethyst Sea had come to depend on the great Alliance cities. But there would be no more shipments of plows, or vases, or cloth, or any of the other supplies the outer towns and villages had come to expect from the great urban centers. Vital ports, major highways, and nearly all the other structures of civilization were shattered.





In the fertile lowlands, petty warlords who had long been held in check by the superior power of the Alliance military rose up and seized control of the lands around them. The surviving remnants of the Alliance armies tried to hold them back, but it was a losing battle. In a few cases they succeeded, but in most they failed, and whatever the outcome, the battles only did more harm to the already fractured and struggling survivors of the disaster.

In the hinterlands, the endrori, also held at bay by the Alliance armies, took advantage of the Alliance's sudden fall. Within a few weeks of the Cataclysm, any endrori or other dark creature that could escape the Deeplands surged out into the countryside.

At times, the people were their own worst enemy. Fearing food shortages, the collapse of order, and the growing dangers of the wilds, many settlements fell into chaos. Rioters filled the streets, Alliance store houses were broken into and looted, and the wealthy tried futilely to defend their estates against the desperate masses.

Some of the people's fears did come to pass. Every major Alliance settlement had been home to a gate of some kind, whether it had been one of the massive world gates or one of the smaller city gates. These settlements were nearly always located in the richest farmlands where an ample supply of food could support the population. When the waves of essence flowed out from the gates, they didn't stop at the city walls.

The wild essence rolled miles into the countryside before it finally dissipated. Rich farmland, along with crops just weeks away from harvest, were as ravaged by the disaster as the settlements they surrounded. Even if a field survived, many were pillaged by soldiers during the ensuing wars between petty warlords and remnants of the Alliance army, or were burned by endrori that surged out of the hills.

By harvest, the few remaining fields yielded far less than was needed for the survivors to make it through the coming winter. By the height of winter's fury, starvation was the greatest threat the people faced, and by spring, nearly a third of those who had survived the Cataclysm succumbed to hunger.

Then there was the threat of disease. The largest holy orders, whose task it was to heal those plagued by illness, had been headquartered in the Alliance settlements. When the settlements were destroyed, so were the orders and the majority of their clerics. The few clerics that survived could not hope to provide healing to everyone who needed it. Soon, deadly plagues, many of which had been unknown for decades thanks to the clerics, ravaged the towns and villages of the region.

You still find caches of equipment, food, and occasionally treasure squirreled away in the hills outside of the old Alliance cities. Most of it was hidden by people hoping to protect it from the mobs and looters. Unfortunately, a fair number of those folks never made it back to collect their goods.

—DYSART

There are still places of strange magic in the world thanks to those waves of essence. My companions and I once discovered a field of potatoes that screamed like a dying child when you picked them.

—GRAIMAK

I imagine everyone stuck to rations that night.

—DYSART

What? No! They stopped screaming after a moment or two. And they were the most delicious potatoes we'd ever eaten.

—GRAIMAK





I've heard some of the oldest doors in Winterkeep don't always open into the same rooms. One day you open the door and find a broom closet, the next you open it up and discover an ancient, dust-covered library.

—DYSART

Naturally, these are just foolish stories told by the ignorant.

—ISIN

"Naturally," Isin and her friends would never lie about something like this. Hey, Millonas. Make a note that I'm rolling my eyes.

—CALLABRIA

## A BASTION OF KNOWLEDGE

In those grim times, learning was of little interest to most people, but a small group of sages and scholars set out on a mission. It was the year 110 AC, and in the high woodlands of the northern Dragon Tail Mountains, they founded a hidden library in the crumbling ruins of a tower left over from the Age of Magic.

When other scholars heard of this place, they made pilgrimages to the tower. They brought with them whatever books, scrolls, and artifacts they could carry. Among these intelligentsia were many wizards, and with the addition of these spellcasters, the sages of the tower soon found themselves well-guarded against outside threats. Eventually, the tower was given a name; Winterkeep.

They chose the name not for the season but rather the winter of chaos that had fallen over the Amethyst Sea basin after the Cataclysm. The scholars designed Winterkeep to stand as a stronghold of knowledge amidst a time of cold ignorance. Within its walls they stored all the knowledge of the land, so that someday, when civilization returned, generations of learning would not have been lost.

In its early years, Winterkeep's location remained a secret. The name was spoken of only in whispers, and even then, only to those who proved their faithfulness. Secrecy was paramount, since many power hungry warlords believed that Winterkeep held secret knowledge that could aid them in their campaigns for power.

Had one of the warlords launched an assault against the keep in those early days, it's unlikely it could have withstood the attack. Fortunately, this did not happen, and Winterkeep survived. Much of the ancient knowledge that scholars benefit from today survived only because it was hidden away in Winterkeep during the chaotic times after the Cataclysm.

It wasn't until many years later that the location of Winterkeep became public knowledge. The sages, sorcerers, and spellcasters of Winterkeep were powerful enough by then that no warlord would have dared to attack them. In the year 123 AC, Winterkeep expanded its initial aim of collecting knowledge by founding a college of wizardry. The school was the only one of its kind in those days, for all the other arcane schools on the Amethyst Sea basin had been destroyed during the Cataclysm.

## THE LAND OF CALLIOS

In the southwest corner of the Amethyst Sea is the land called Callios. Nestled along the eastern edge of the southern Dragon Tail Mountains and sitting just west of the Zhamayen Jungle, it is a land of rich soil and fine grazing. Prior to





the Cataclysm it had been densely populated, and many large Alliance colonies were located there.

The large number of colonies in the area, and thus the large number of gates, meant that the Cataclysm ravaged Callios worse than many other lands. More than a century passed before the last essence storms dissipated, and even now the arcane residue of the destruction is felt lingering in the Essential Plane. In those early years, however, Callios was a strange land filled with arcane anomalies and mysterious, essence-touched creatures.

The fading of the residual essence did not signal the end of chaos for Callios. Even before the Cataclysm, the Calliosan court had been a fractious entity. Scores of wealthy, land-owning nobles fought constantly for power, and it was all the royal family could do to hold the kingdom together.

When the Cataclysm struck, most of the nobility were at their country estates where they stayed during the late summer and early autumn. While the cities and urban centers were all destroyed, the nobility survived—with the exception of the royal family. Within a decade, long-standing rivalries between noble houses erupted into open warfare.

The nobles engaged in minor wars on and off for many years, and by the year 124 AC, only eight of the original noble houses remained. In the summer of that year, all eight houses embarked on a massive campaign of warfare in an attempt to topple their rivals once and for all. Despite the nobles' grand plans, the wars did not end with the coming of autumn, and it was two decades before a peace was finally achieved—although not in the way they expected.

To the dismay of all the nobles involved, peace came at the hands of an outsider. Out of the north sailed a gallant sea captain named Alloren Farsky. He commanded a fleet of thirty ships, all manned by well-trained sailors and carrying an army of skilled soldiers and horsemen. The force landed just south of the Dragon's Maw in the year 144 AC. No one today knows what land these people came from, but they swept through Callios like an icy northern wind.

Within two years, Farsky and his troops defeated all eight of the noble lords. When the city of Tricos, once the capital of Callios, fell to Farsky's forces, he declared himself King of Callios. He immediately set out on an ambitious mission of reconstruction, married the daughter of one of the fallen noble lords, and earned the love of the people with his kindness to the common folk.

The founding of Farsky's kingdom might have been the first step toward healing for the Amethyst Sea basin had it not been for one thing. Farsky was not only a powerful warrior, but he was a merciful victor. Rather than having the defeated noble lords killed, he sent them into exile. From their exile, they plotted

A fair number of these arcane anomalies still exist, especially in the wild places. Adventurers should demonstrate caution when traveling the hinterlands of Callios.

—BELLYNDA

What sort of caution?

—DYSART

For one thing, always travel with a wizard or someone with the ability to sense essence. They'll often pick up on the fact that something is amiss before you go stumbling into it like a drunkard on wet cobbles.

—BELLYNDA

Where were the great merchant houses during all of this?

—DYSART

Shoring up our investments and focusing on more conservative ventures while we waited for the violence to end.

—BELLYNDA

She means they were hiding. Just wanted to clear that up.

—VRENN





No assassin made it past the defenses. It was one of his boys that did the deed. I'd put silver on it.

—TORRICA

I had the distinct honor of holding one of the scrolls mentioned here.

They are astonishing. You can feel the power infused into the parchment. I couldn't begin to guess how they were made.

—ARIA

Interesting note: they never did find the ruins again. The ship carrying the elven scholars went down along the coast of the Northern Wilds. They were all killed and took the secret of the ruins' location with them to their watery grave.

—PORTAND

revenge. With no hope of retaking their lands by force, they hired assassins to kill the new king.

Despite the king's faithful retinue of guards, an assassin made it through. In the year 167 AC, twenty years after he took the throne, King Alloren Farsky was killed by a poisoned dagger as he left his council chambers. Farsky had three sons, none of whom had been well raised, for their father spent more time on his kingdom than on his family. With their father's passing, the three young men set their eyes on the throne.

Once more Callios stood on the brink of war. At the urging of their mother, however, the sons made an agreement. They split the kingdom into three parts of equal value, and each took command of one of these parts. None of their kingdoms ever held the promise of Farsky's Callios, but Callios managed to avoid another costly war. An uneasy peace fell over the land.

## THE TOWER OF SELENTHEA

In the year 202 AC, a small group of exhausted elven scholars arrived at the gates of Winterkeep. They carried a collection of scrolls and books and asked to exchange these for membership and shelter. The leaders of Winterkeep approved the request without hesitation, for the texts the elven scholars brought were unlike anything the sages had ever seen.

More ancient than anything in the keep's great library, the strange texts were inscribed in the flowing script of the ancient fey courts. Brightly illuminated with intricate flourishes and patterns, their beauty filled the readers with awe. There was more, however, to these strange scrolls than beauty. Close examination revealed the incredible truth: the scrolls were written during the Age of Magic.

When questioned about the scrolls' origins, the scholars explained that they were members of an isolated elven village on the edge of the Elliyen Wilds. Herb gatherers from their village happened across ancient ruins at the wilds' edge and discovered these scrolls within.

When a band of endrori raiders attacked the village, the scholars fled with the scrolls. They returned to their village later only to discover it burned to the ground and the inhabitants carried off or slaughtered. With nowhere to go, and hoping to save these ancient texts, they began the arduous journey to Winterkeep.

The librarians of Winterkeep asked these travelers if they could find their way back to the place where the scrolls were found. The scholars said they could, and immediate plans were made for an expedition to the Elliyen Wilds.





This was an unprecedented move for Winterkeep since until then they focused their efforts on protection and preservation. Scholars who found their way to the keep were almost always welcomed, along with the knowledge they carried, but the keep's leadership made no attempts to actively seek out lost knowledge. When planning for the expedition started, many within the keep disagreed with this change in strategy.

The resulting disagreement carried on for all of that winter until, by the summer of 203 AC, the two sides were so firmly divided neither could see any hope of reconciliation. After a monumental debate on the floor of the grand council chamber, the side in favor of exploration declared that if their wishes were not met, they would leave Winterkeep. The isolationists refused to budge and by nightfall, a document called the Schism Scroll rested on the Magister's desk. It declared that those who favored exploration would depart Winterkeep and set out for the wilds.

Those favoring exploration knew the isolationists would not give in to their demands, and they were not proven wrong. As such, they had already prepared for their journey, having gathered the mounts, funds, and other supplies required. They also made arrangements for protection. They hired a respected group of mercenaries, the Knights of Steelpeak, to accompany the scholars on their trek to the wilds.

With over 100 scholars, 200 functionaries, and 100 mercenary soldiers, they formed the largest non-martial expedition seen in the Amethyst Sea basin in decades. As they passed through struggling towns and villages on their journey east, their mission of learning and enlightenment inspired the people they met. Desperate for a better life, many picked up and followed the company. Soon their number swelled to 500, then 800, then 1000. By the time they reached the port of Hawk's Crest, the party consisted of more than 1500 souls.

In Hawk's Crest, the leaders of the expedition set to work assembling a fleet. They purchased every ship they found, hired sailors, and spent the next year building additional ships. Endrori attacked the city twice during that time, but on both occasions the Knights of Steelpeak and the expedition's wizards defeated the attackers.

In the spring of 205 AC, the preparations were complete. They set sail on a cool morning, and catching the stonewise winds that race east along the northern coast of the Amethyst Sea, they set out on their grand adventure.

The journey was not without its troubles. Of the 20 ships in the fleet, 7 were lost and 2 had to be abandoned due to hull worms. It was nearly two months before the fleet reached its destination, a large bay on the Windsinger Sea at

According to the old manifests, some of the lost ships carried more than just food and camp supplies. A few were carrying powerful enchanted items taken from Winterkeep. Pinpoint where those ships went down and figure out a way to get to them, and you might make a coin or two.

—DYSART

Of greater value are the books, papers, and scrolls. These were stored in waterproof chests. Some were salvaged, but the remainder are assumed to have gone down with the ships.

—ISIN





In the early days of the spice trade, one of the merchant houses tried to establish a city deep inside the Zhamayen Jungle. They hoped to reduce the time it took to harvest the spices and bring them to market. A year after they built it, everyone in the city disappeared. Everything in the city looked like the people were there one moment and gone the next.

—CALABRIA

You've been there?

—DYSART

I don't think anyone has—not in the past two centuries anyhow. The city was a secret project, intended to give the merchant house an advantage over their competitors. I tried to find records of it recently, but the relevant documents were all burned during the wars between the merchants and the nobility.

—CALABRIA

the mouth of the Gyllen River that they christened Toletrenor Bay in honor of Toletren, the Enaros of Knowledge.

At the easternmost end of the bay, scouts discovered the ruins of an Alliance town. It stood on an island at the headwaters of the Gyllen River. Their investigation suggested that the town failed prior to the Cataclysm and never housed a gate. The scholars chose the spot as the place to settle their colony. As they set up camp, they discovered a marker with the ruined town's name on it. The scholars named their new settlement after the old Alliance town: Selentheia.

## THE CALLIOSAN LEAGUE

As the little colony of Selentheia carved a patch of civilization out of the wilderness, important events transpired in other parts of the world. Back in Callios, a consortium of merchant companies mounted an expedition to the Zhamayen Jungle. It set out in 207 AC in search of exotic spices and magical plants.

The expedition was gone for three years, but when they returned, they carried an incredible cargo of plant extracts, dried herbs, and essence-touched flora. Within another two years the merchants established trading colonies all along the edge of the jungle, and within five years they were shipping valuable loads of these goods, known collectively as spices, to lands in the north.

The merchants grew wealthy as their ships circled the Amethyst Sea. They followed the stonewise currents to bring spices to the north, and returned with valuable northern trade goods when the current took them south. In 221 AC, the merchants created a formal organization to manage the distribution of spices and other jungle products and resolve internal disputes. Called the Calliosan Merchant's League, it consisted of the wealthiest and most powerful merchant companies in Callios.

The leaders of the three kingdoms of Callios paid little attention to the growing power of the merchants. The kings were greedy men and cared only about the gold that taxes on the merchants' wealth brought into their treasuries. This proved a fatal mistake.

The nobility of Callios, growing fat off the endeavors of the merchants, grew greedier with each passing year. In 231 AC, the five greatest merchant houses in the League made a pact, agreeing to use their combined clout to oppose the nobles. They secretly colluded to manipulate prices, schemed to alter the availability of important goods, and otherwise tampered with the financial power of the kings.

Their efforts did not stay secret for long, and when the nobility discovered these machinations they were not amused. In the year 235 AC, the conflict





came to a head in the city of Tricos. The king at that time, Humdort Farsky III, ordered his troops to march on the docks and seize all of the warehouses and their stock. The merchants were prepared. Their warehouses were well-guarded, and when the king's forces arrived fighting broke out. By nightfall, the entire city was engulfed in battle.

The battle at Tricos lasted a week, but eventually the Tricosan merchants overwhelmed the nobles' forces. They were now an island of freedom in a hostile land. Royal warships were dispatched to block the port, and a great army was sent to lay siege to the city.

The other merchants of the League realized if things went badly in Tricos, they were next. To this end, the Calliosan Merchant's League made the momentous decision to go to war. All across the three kingdoms, merchant lords mustered their vassals, revealed hidden stocks of weapons (hoarded for just such an occasion), and contested the power of the nobility.

By midsummer 236 AC, the entire region was plunged into war. The effects of this conflict were felt throughout the Amethyst Sea basin, since it brought the majority of trade in the region to a halt. The fighting lasted for six years, until in the year 242 AC, the last of the three kingdoms fell to League forces.

The League portioned out the land to the eight most powerful merchant houses in a fully business-like manner. The divisions were made based on the city where each of the houses was headquartered and the calculated value of the surrounding countryside. The resulting city-states are the same eight political bodies that still rule the region to this day.

## LAND OF A THOUSAND KINGS

To the south of the Donarzheis Mountains, stretching from the Three Sisters River to the Dragonsky River, is an open country known as the Plains of Agthor. When the Alliance controlled the region, it had been the most fertile and productive land on the Amethyst Sea. After the Cataclysm, it fractured into a thousand tiny kingdoms, each ruled by whoever was strong enough to hold onto the land.

With increasing waves of endrori raiders coming down out of the Donarzheis Mountains, the common folk had little choice but to serve these warlords to gain their protection. Most of these warrior kings were unscrupulous criminals who ruled by force and fear.

When the warlords weren't fighting endrori, they fought each other. The struggle to claim more and better land was constant, and the people of the region lived in a continuous state of war. Crops were regularly pillaged or burned, most

About half way between Tricos and Mallicos is a stretch of coast called Deadman's Quay. A huge naval battle took place right off shore, and dozens of ships sunk in the shallow water or drifted onto the beach after taking damage. Most of the wrecks are long gone, but every now and then a storm will uncover one of these old ships. Some of these were flagships of the merchant and noble fleets—massive things with gilded rails and all the fancy fittings.

—PORTAND

During this period, the warlords built countless castles, forts, and fortresses. Seemed like anywhere they found a hilltop, they dropped a castle onto it. Many are little more than half-walls and tumbled down piles of stone today, but a fair number still stand. Not all of these are occupied by Agthorian nobles, especially those that don't occupy particularly valuable territory. Adventurers should be cautious about entering these. Bandits, monsters, and even endrori like to hide out in these old fortresses.

—DYSART





able-bodied folk were conscripted to fight, and all the resources of the land were focused on supporting the local warlord and his personal whims or desires.

## THE HIGH LORD OF AGTHOR

For more than two centuries the region remained in this state, and there seemed little hope of change. Then, in the year 318 AC, a boy was born in a village near the ruins of Old Erinor. His name was Malinar Drakewyn, and he was the eldest son of a peasant farmer. He grew up strong, and his mother, an amateur scholar, taught the boy the value of wisdom and knowledge.

On the day of his sixteenth birthday, Malinar was conscripted to fight in the infantry of the local warlord. The warlord sent him north to join a battle already raging along shores of the Whitestone River. Malinar survived those early fights, and as time passed he proved himself a cunning warrior. In time he learned to love the martial life. He rose quickly through the ranks, and soon he commanded the majority of the warlord's forces.

During one of his campaigns, Malinar's army passed through his old village. To Malinar's horror, he discovered that it had been ravaged by a recent battle. Racing to his parents' home, he found it burned to the ground and his parents' charred corpses lying among the wreckage.

The joy Malinar had found in his position of power evaporated. He now wished for nothing more than an end to the constant war that gripped his land and declared that he would personally put a stop to the fighting.

That night, Malinar and his five closest lieutenants left camp and headed west. They set off to find warriors to join them in their quest to bring order back to Agthor. They quickly discovered that idealism and determination were not enough. Without gold or goods to pay troops, they stood little chance of forming even a small army.

While sitting in a tavern debating their next move, they overheard an elderly traveler talking about the ruins of Old Erinor. According to the man, he had been inside the ruins and had seen treasure beyond his wildest imaginings. He would have brought it out, he insisted, if not for the spirits of the dead who rose up and chased him from his prize.

Malinar knew what to do. He and his companions would venture into the ruins of Old Erinor and find the lost treasure of that once great city. With the wealth they obtained, they could hire mercenaries, form an army, and march toward Malinar's dream.

The stories of Malinar's adventure are the stuff of legend now. There are plenty of claims about what transpired, but no one is entirely sure what really happened

I am deeply curious about Malinar's adventure in Old Erinor. In one account, Malinar and his companions were inside Old Erinor for three weeks, but when they emerged they thought they'd been away for years. Curious.

—ISIN

I heard the Drakewyn that went in isn't the same Drakewyn that came out. There are claims he went in right-handed and came out left-handed and his eyes changed color from blue to gold.

—PORTAND

That's the thing about Old Erinor; any of those could be true. Every person that goes in comes out with a completely different story about what they found.

—CALABRIA





in the essence-soaked ruins of Old Erinor. What matters is that somehow, Malinar survived. Only two of his companions made it out with him, but they did indeed return with treasure—gold, jewels, enchanted artifacts, and more.

As planned, they hired soldiers with their newfound wealth, and soon Malinar had his army. It was not, however, the strength of his army that garnered Malinar the most attention. Rather, it was one particular treasure: the crown and scepter he wrested from the great palace near the center of the ruins.

According to a prophecy made by a cleric of Zervas just days before Cataclysm, the son of the dragon would rise from the ashes of destruction. He would carry the sigils of power from the heart of madness and bring light back to the land, and they would call him the High Lord. Malinar wasn't aware of this prophecy, but in the first village he came to, he met a priestess who was.

When she saw the crown and scepter, she threw herself at Malinar's feet and pledged her allegiance to the young warrior. Malinar tried to turn the priestess away, but he could not dissuade the woman. Soon the priestess spread word throughout the town, and the townspeople, who respected her deeply and were hungry for hope in their troubled lives, pledged themselves to Malinar as well.

When Malinar departed the next morning, more than half the village took to the road with him. At each town he came to, more people joined him, and by the time he reached the Pendroth Peninsula his party numbered over 3000 strong.

In some ways this was a boon. Among the followers were able-bodied warriors, skilled craftsfolk, blacksmiths, leatherworkers, and even clerics skilled in the art of healing. In other ways, the attention he received proved a problem. Too quickly his actions became known to the warlords of the region, and they mobilized their forces to squash this upstart. It wasn't long before the first attack.

Fate was on Malinar's side—or by some accounts the Enaros. Everything in the battle seemed to go his way, and victory against the attacking army was secured quickly with few losses. What is more, most of the enemy survivors defected to Malinar's side and joined his army. Although Malinar had the power of prophecy on his side and was a brilliant military commander, the primary factor in his growing power was his compassion and wisdom as a leader.

Malinar believed in treating all who followed him equally and fairly. From the simplest servant to the most skilled warrior, all were valuable in the eyes of the High Lord. He even treated his enemies with respect and mercy. This reinforced the growing belief that Malinar Drakewyn was indeed the High Lord of the prophecy.

Over the next few years, Malinar continued to gather followers to him. By the time he reached Stormkeep, the castle of the warlord who had conscripted Malinar

Awfully convenient how that all worked out for Malinar, don't ya think?

—TORRICA

What are you saying? Do you doubt the story?

—ARIA

I'm just sayin', for enough gold, even a priest or priestess might suddenly remember a useful prophecy or two.

—TORRICA





The roots of Eldrith Keep run deep.  
I don't think Drakewyn's people  
have any idea what lies beneath  
them.

—VRENN

Although the dream of Agthor  
began at Stormkeep, the once  
important fortress has lost  
relevance over the years. It sits on  
the hill overlooking the town today  
like a tattered banner left too long  
in the wind.

—PORTAND

as a boy, his army was over 10,000 strong and he had five times that in non-warrior followers. The siege lasted less than a month, and by the third day of Alantra, in the year 342 AC, Malinar Drakewyn marched into the keep as the victor.

Malinar declared himself High Lord of Stormkeep, and his followers settled in the farmlands around it. Unfortunately for Malinar and his army, there was no time to rest. They spent the rest of the summer confronting one warlord after another. Slowly, his lands grew until his was the largest kingdom in the region.

In 343 AC, Malinar's army laid siege to Eldrith Keep on the Pendroth Bay. This formidable fortress was built on the ruins of an ancient dwarven stonehold. Attempting to breach the fortress would be the greatest challenge Malinar had faced, and many believed that it would be his ruin.

The siege lasted over a year, but finally the castle fell to Drakewyn's forces. Malinar was so impressed by the ability of the fortress to withstand his attack, that in the summer of 344 AC he moved his capital to Eldrith. With this victory, Drakewyn finally accepted the role he seemed destined to play. He renamed the town at the keep New Erinor, and he declared himself High Lord over all the lands once held by the pre-Cataclysm kingdom of Agthor.

## THE FREE KINGDOMS

Not everyone was ready to pledge allegiance to the new High Lord, and Malinar Drakewyn's reach had its limits. His example, however, inspired some to seek a better future for their people, if by different paths.

In the lands between Agthor and the Halfling Dalelands, a visionary group of nobles and military leaders set out to create a new nation of their own. They envisioned a land where independent provinces were ruled with autonomy, turning to a centralized High Court for guidance in times of desperate crisis or to settle disputes. They believed that only local leaders could know what was best for their people, not some cold, uncaring central government far from the people they governed. They called their land the Free Kingdoms.

In the early days, the Free Kingdoms lived up to the lofty dreams of its founders. Unfortunately, as the years passed and younger, less idealistic children took over thrones from their aging parents, the dream of the Free Kingdoms began to fade. Within two generations, the region settled into its now familiar pattern of social maneuvering, shadowy intrigue, and war. The only things that hold the kingdoms together are the mutual security the alliance provides against large endrori invasions, the desire to maintain autonomy from Agthor, and tradition.





## THE SILVER TOWER

In Selentheia, the tiny community of wizards and scholars blossomed into a mighty city. People from across the Amethyst Sea traveled to this island of civilization on the edge of the wilds. Some came to offer their services to the wizards there. Others sought to profit from the needs of a swiftly growing city. Still others hoped to take advantage of the city's civilizing presence to make land claims and become the new nobility of this uninhabited wilderness.

In the year 341 AC, around the same time that Malinar Drakewyn and his army were marching across Agthor, the wizards of the Silver Circle decided the time had come to establish a proper wizarding college in Selentheia. Plans were drawn up for a mighty tower where they could house their libraries, perform their research, and train new wizards. At first thaw in the year 342 AC, they broke ground on the largest island in the mouth of the river and construction of the tower began.

For more than thirty years, laborers worked day and night on the monumental structure. Taller than anything constructed in Aetaltis since the Age of Magic, it was a wonder of both engineering and magic. Clever design was key in the tower's construction, but the overall structure was reinforced many times over with powerful arcane spells and runes.

Upon its completion, Selentheia held a great festival, and people from all corners of Aetaltis came to partake in the celebrations. Most notably, Winter-keep sent a contingent to congratulate the Silver Circle on their accomplishment. With that simple gesture, decades of animosity between the two orders was put behind them. While there is still a strong sense of professional competition between them, they've enjoyed excellent relations since that day.

## THE SEALS BEGIN TO FAIL

Years went by, and slowly life in the region improved. The city of Selentheia continued to grow and many small duchies took root in its shadow, the Calliosan League prospered, and Drakewyn's Agthor brought a much-needed civilizing influence to that region.

But all the while, a terrible danger grew. When the Alliance collapsed, many vital institutions ceased to exist. Among these were the Warders of Alantra. For centuries before the Cataclysm they maintained the all-important seals that kept the endrori from surging out of the Deeplands. With the Warders gone, there was no one left to keep the seals strong. After years of neglect, the seals started to fail.

There are rumors that the tower extends downward as far as it extends upward. Seems unlikely what with the Deeplands and all, but that's the story, anyhow.

—DYSART





To be clear, Port Vale wasn't invited to the summit, but they had representatives present all the same.

—DYSART

"And they all died." Not going to include that part? Every Warder in that first group was killed while restoring the wards. You need to remind adventurers it's not all cheers and heroic quests. Among the Liberators we never hide the truth. Better to tell them what they're truly signing up for.

—VRENN

The first sign of the dark creatures was in the lands surrounding Selentheia. There had been a great proliferation of Deepland entrances around the Black Gate, and when the seals began to break the endrori swarmed forth like a plague. At first, the Selentheans assumed that this was just another chance incursion. They felt certain that with enough force they could drive the endrori back and life would return to normal.

This was not the case. More and more endrori appeared until all of the newly settled duchies of Selentheia were under siege. Not long after this, the same happened in Agthor, then Port Vale, then the Free Kingdoms, and then Callios. Alarmed, the leaders of the nations and city-states of the Amethyst Sea basin held an unprecedented summit in the city of Hawk's Crest in the Free Kingdoms. There, they discussed the growing threat and made a plan to combat it.

To begin with, the leaders wanted to know why this was happening. Parties of warriors were outfitted with the latest in military equipment and sent into the mountains to find the source of the trouble. In the end, only one party returned, but they brought with them the information the summit needed: the seals were failing.

This same party, however, brought back more than knowledge. While exploring a ruined city high in the Donarzheis Mountains, they discovered a codex of ancient wisdom compiled by the last Warder of Alantra. It contained all the secrets of the old order. Using this, the nations worked together to rebuild the ancient order of the Warders. In the year 390 AC, the first group of Warders set out from city of New Erinor. Hope had returned.

## THE DECLARATION OF TALIMANE

While the rebirth of the Warders of Alantra meant that the seals could be repaired, there were many seals and few Warders. The great nations helped as they could, but with endrori attacks becoming a regular occurrence, they had no choice but to keep their troops close to home to protect their people.

So it was that High Lord Valinar Drakewyn, grandson of Malinar Drakewyn, made a declaration at the shrine of Talimane in 411 AC that changed the world. There had always been brave souls who ventured into the very maw of evil to fight the forces of darkness, and Drakewyn's family history showed first-hand what a small group of daring adventurers could accomplish. Unfortunately, adventurers were regarded with suspicion. Many people felt that anyone who spent that much time in close proximity to the forces of darkness couldn't help but be tainted by it.





At the declaration of Talimane, Drakewyn pronounced that the occupation of adventurer was an honorable and necessary one. Those who took up the sword to fight and risk their lives, when and where the great kingdoms could not, should be treated with honor and respect. These adventurers stood at the front of the battle against the darkness. It was they who risked their lives every day for the good of the land.

With this declaration, the place of adventurers in society shifted almost overnight, and brave young people from across Agthor flocked to this newly honorable profession.

## THE CURRENT AGE

The year is 423 AC. The great kingdom of Agthor is ruled by the wise Lord Drakewyn from his capital of New Erinor. Agthor is the most powerful force of hope on the Amethyst Sea, but the looming threat of the endrori overshadows everything they accomplish. The Free Kingdoms remain free but are mired in their petty bickering. Selentheia is regarded as one of the greatest centers of learning and wizardry in the land, but the wilds on their every border leaves them constantly on guard. The city-states of Callios continue to thrive, but it's a cutthroat culture where a person greets you with one hand while stabbing you in the back with the other.

Now, more than ever, the people of Aetaltis need heroes. Will you stand by and watch the world struggle to survive? Or will you take up the mantle of adventurer and put spell and blade to the test in defiance of the Dark Hordes?

If so, if you have the courage to take on this burden for the good of all, perhaps there is still hope, and perhaps someday your own adventures will be immortalized in these pages.



Do you actually believe this clap? "Shifted overnight?" Hardly. I've been chased outta town more than once by pissy locals who must not have gotten the message that we're all supposed to be treated with honor and respect.

—TORRICA

I've never had that happen. People have always been quite pleasant.

—PORTAND

I agree. People are generally very nice. Especially if you've come to solve their problems.

—DYSART

When traveling in Agthor, even those who find my appearance strange have shown Ssynes kindness.

—SSYNES

Even I have never been "chased out of town," and many find my appearance intimidating.

—GRAIMAK

I'm seeing a pattern here. Maybe we should talk after, Torrica. I can probably give you a few pointers.

—CALABRIA







## CHAPTER TWO

# MAGIC, SPELLS, AND ESSENCE

**W**E'VE ALL EXPERIENCED MAGIC, AND MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE THEY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS AND HOW it works. Some have heard of essence, the source of magic, and have a rough sense of how spellcasters shape it to create wondrous effects. At the very least, they've witnessed the miracles of clerics and the power of the Enaros.

For most, this is enough. Not so for you.

You are an adventurer. You will experience aspects of magic undreamt of by common folk. You must have a full understanding of what magic is, where it comes from, and how it shapes your world. Ignorance will make the challenges you face more difficult, and may even cost you your life.

This chapter teaches you everything you need to know about essence, spells, and magic. You will learn of the many types of spellcasting, what differentiates them, and where the line is between spellcasting that only seems dangerous and that which is truly based in darkness. We will educate you on magical phenomena such



as ley lines, essence wells, and essence voids. We will explore topics such as alchemy, enchantment, and spell scrolls. We will even talk briefly about the source of essence, the Essential Plane.

Before we begin, however, I offer a word of warning. Toward the end of this document, we will also discuss the forbidden arts. Naturally we do not explain how to wield these powers, but it's vital you recognize dark magic and know how to combat it.

## WHAT IS ESSENCE?

Essence is the energy that allows all life to exist. It is bound into our emotions and is woven through the fabric of the physical world. Wherever there is life, there is essence.

On some worlds, such as our own, the inhabitants, the plants, the animals—even the planet itself—are infused with essence. On other worlds, its power is barely noticeable. We know this thanks to the surviving records of the Atlan Alliance. They explored countless worlds, and they discovered that on some, essence was almost non-existent and magic was myth.

On those worlds, all things are limited by what scholars call the laws of physical philosophy. These laws are simple truths about the Physical Plane that hold true even in the absence of essence. Allow me to offer an example. In our study of essence voids, we find that dropped objects still fall to the ground. We cannot say with certainty why the object falls, but we know the presence or absence of essence does not change this.

When essence is present, however, these physical laws remain in effect, but we are not limited by them. Essence regularly, and in some case easily, breaks these laws. In fact, prior to the Ritual of Limitation, the only limits on what we could accomplish with magic were rumored to be our imaginations and our will.

## THE ESSENTIAL PLANE

So where does essence come from? The common person will tell you essence comes from a separate plane of existence called the Essential Plane. This is true in a sense, but in reality, the Physical Plane and Essential Plane are one and the same. They are, in effect, different facets of a single plane of existence.

## WHAT IS THE ESSENTIAL PLANE LIKE?

The Essential Plane is often described as a shadow realm. Its appearance mirrors the Physical Plane, except all non-living objects have colorless, wispy forms lacking definition and substance. These objects obscure sight on the Essential Plane as they would in the physical, but people and objects existing primarily on the Essential Plane can, if they choose, pass through them as if they were shadows.

Living and magical things, however, are colorful and complex on the Essential Plane. Their shapes are roughly equivalent to their Physical Plane counterparts, but they are made of complex patterns of interlinked threads of essence. We call these wondrous constructs essence forms. Essence forms glow, and the brightness, color, and intensity of the light they emit shifts and changes.

As a person's or object's physical form moves through the Physical Plane, its essence form moves through the Essential Plane. The essence form is no more independent of the physical form than your reflection in a mirror.

If the Alliance traveled to a world without essence, how did they get back? The world gates are magic, so wouldn't they be trapped?

—DYSART

The gateweavers established binding conduits between the essence rich origin world and the essence poor destination world. They could feed the necessary essence through the conduit, leveraging a folian self-replicating glyph to maintain the alignment.

—ISIN

Oh, sure. I mean, naturally. That's what I figured.

—DYSART

I once had the pleasure of using a set of lenses that granted essential sight. I will never forget the sheer beauty of the living essence forms. They are a miracle to behold, and even the luminous, complex essence forms of our spells are dull, simple things by comparison.

—BELLYNDA



Must we review all of this dusty  
drivel? If so, I'm going to need  
more ale.

—GRAIMAK

We've been over this. You knew  
what you were signing up for,  
Grainmak. Don't tell me it's too  
difficult of a trial for you.

—CALABRIA

Bah, I said no such thing. It is just  
more than adventurers need to  
know. Do as I do: if it glows, smash  
it, if it waves its arms and chants,  
hit it. We have no need of a whole  
chapter to explain that.

—GRAIMAK

Sounds, smells, and other sensations echo across the Essential Plane, although these physical sensations are muted. Emotions, on the other hand, are powerful things on the Essential Plane. They radiate out from their source in waves of light and color, and according to our sources, a traveler on the Essential Plane can feel the energy created by emotions like wind in the air.

Light is not generated in the usual way on the Essential Plane. The entire plane has a dim, twilight glow at all hours of the day and night, and non-magical light sources do not increase the illumination. It is posited by arcane scholars that the glow comes from the unformed ambient essence that exists everywhere on the Essential Plane.

Lensae, Numos, the planets, and the stars are all visible on the Essential Plane. Some astral bodies, such as Numos and Lensae, glow. This tells us they have essence forms, suggesting they are either magical or alive. Unfortunately, their physical distance makes detailed analysis impossible. They do not, however, serve as sources of light as they do in the physical world. Their glow merely makes them visible.

## HOW DOES ONE SEE IT?

There are three primary means of perceiving the Essential Plane. In each case, natural talent or powerful magic is required to allow perception.

### ESSENCE SENSE

Some individuals are born with the innate ability to sense essence forms. Their instinctual ability allows them to sense the presence, power, and quality of essence forms around them. They cannot see essence, essence forms, or the Essential Plane, but with training they can learn to identify what they sense. Some individuals even learn to manipulate essence, guided by their sensations. It is the equivalent of an artistically talented blind person who learns to sculpt in clay purely by means of touch. The individuals that master this skill are called spellcasters.

### ESSENCE SIGHT

It is possible to shift one's perception so it aligns with the Essential Plane rather than our own. This is achieved either through natural ability or by magic. When using essential sight, one's physical form remains on the Physical Plane, but one's perception is shifted to the essential. While using essential sight, one continues to interact with the world on a physical level but sees the Essential Plane.



## ESSENTIAL TRAVEL

All essence forms have a primary state: physical or essential. When we are alive, our primary state is physical and the essence form of our spirit is mirrored on the Essential Plane. After we die, our primary state is essential. We leave our body behind and our spirit exists primarily on the Essential Plane. We will only have a ghostly presence in the physical world if we have any presence at all.

When an essence form's primary state is essential, it is bound by the rules of the Essential Plane just as you and I are bound by the rules of the physical. This means its senses are limited to the Essential Plane, it can pass through non-living and non-magical objects, it can see the essence forms of the things around them, and it can interact directly with other essence forms just as we do with physical objects.

One could, in theory, use magic to shift one's primary state from primarily physical to primarily essential. This theory is fueled, in part, by stories of spellcasters having this power prior to the Ritual of Limitation. To date, the means of shifting one's primary state has eluded arcane researchers, but there is promising work being done in Selentheia.

## ESSENTIAL PROJECTION

Another more dangerous means of shifting one's primary state to the essential is to temporarily separate your spirit from your body. To achieve this, the spellcaster enters a death-like state that shifts their consciousness entirely to their spirit form. While in spirit form, their primary state becomes essential. Unlike true death, where the spirit is severed from the body, the person retains a tenuous connection to their physical form. As long as that connection remains, their body remains alive.

Unfortunately, many who have attempted this never make it back to their body. They appear to remain in perpetual sleep until at last their body dies from lack of food and water. Did they lose their way, was the connection to their physical form broken, or did some other calamity befall them? It is a mystery for future generations to solve.

## TYPES OF ESSENCE

All essence is theoretically the same, but in practice we recognize a number of different types. Types allow us to categorize different sources, conditions, and states of essence. The following are the types of essence adventurers should be aware of.

### AMBIENT ESSENCE

Ambient essence is the raw, unshaped essence that is everywhere around us. The only place in our world where one is not surrounded by ambient essence is in an essence void, a phenomenon we'll discuss later in this chapter.

Ambient essence is not evenly distributed. It might be thick and strong in one place while thin and weak in another. It can flow like a river, gather like fog, or drift like clouds. Its power is steady in most places, but it can ebb or intensify, shift positions, and generally change over time.

### CORE ESSENCE

Living things, spells, and magical effects all have essence forms that exist on the Essential Plane. The essence these forms are composed of is called core essence. If an essence form's core essence is siphoned off in some way, the loss is reflected on the Physical Plane. This might appear as spontaneous physical injuries, warping or weakening of a magical ability, or the disruption of a spell.

Essential projection is not possible. In every recorded case, the "techniques" lead to death. Please remove this section from your text as it is misleading and dangerous.

—ISIN

No offense, friend, but your information is wrong. It's absolutely possible. I knew a monk from a kinjatsi monastery—who could project his spirit into the Essential Plane. He'd go into his trance and when he'd come out of it, he'd describe all sorts of things there was no way he could have seen or heard. Absolutely incredible. Now, he did tell me that finding your way back to your body could get tricky. Maybe that's why it doesn't work for everyone?

—BELLYNDA

It's not just finding your way back. Ssynes's people have legends that tell us the Essential Plane is home to dangerous spirit creatures. Wise adventurers will remain in the physical realm.

—SSYNES



Most adventurers suffer from corruption at some point. There's no way to do the work we do and not have it happen. The key is to avoid corruption whenever you can and to seek purification as quickly as possible.

—CALABRIA

And remember that merely being around someone who has suffered corruption is not in itself corrupting. No need to abandon a friend just because they've had some bad luck.

—BELLYNDA

But know that clerics can sense the source of corruption. Do not think you can engage in dark acts and then just stop by the temple for purification. We can purify using magic, but for some we may suggest a more aggressive path to purity.

—ARIA

## PERSONAL ESSENCE

The essence forms of living things, be they plant, animal, or otherwise, also function as natural essence vessels. Each living essence form holds a reserve of essence. We call this reserve personal essence.

Once a living essence form is filled, it remains that way until something drains it. Normally, nothing drains a living thing's personal essence, but in modern forms of spellcasting, spellcasters tap their personal essence to power spell effects. Personal essence is recovered naturally over time as the essence form absorbs ambient essence.

## CORRUPTED ESSENCE

Any type of essence—personal, ambient, or core—can become corrupted. Corruption occurs when essence comes into contact with dark magic, dark beings, dark essence, or even other corrupted essence. The evil taints the essence like water in a well fouled by filth, and it poses a danger to any that try to make use of it.

Corruption of ambient essence most often occurs after prolonged contact with especially evil dark creatures such as abomonaes. The ambient essence in and around the lairs of these creatures may remain corrupted long after the fiend departs.

Ambient essence may become corrupted by deeply evil acts such as violent murders, wars, and other emotional torments. The corruption of ambient essence may also occur due to the use of dark magic, casting spells using corrupted essence, or catastrophic spell failures.

Corrupted personal essence may occur when one recovers personal essence in an area of corrupted ambient essence. As with ambient essence, it is also possible to corrupt one's personal essence by using dark magic, casting spells powered by corrupted essence, or from catastrophic spell failures.

The most dangerous type of essence corruption is the corruption of core essence. This is possible through prolonged contact with dark creatures, residing in an area of corrupted ambient essence for an extended period of time, the use of dark magic, or casting spells using corrupted personal essence.

A person may also corrupt their core essence by committing truly evil acts. In addition, the core essence of a magical object can become corrupt if used to perform evil acts. Not surprisingly, entreating Endroren for aid will almost certainly corrupt one's core essence. Perhaps most frighteningly of all, one's core essence can be corrupted if they suffer damage from dark magic or the attacks of some dark creatures.

In most cases, corruption fades over time, but depending on the power and source of the corruption, it could take months, years, or even centuries. There is divine magic that can remove corruption, but it can only cleanse small amounts of corruption. Cleansing deeply corrupted people, places, or things lies beyond the power of mortals.

## DARK ESSENCE

Dark essence remains a point of contention among arcane scholars. Some claim it is a myth. Others believe it is just deeply corrupted common essence. We can tell you with certainty that neither of these is true. Dark essence is very real and exceptionally dangerous. If you plan to fight the forces of darkness, you must know this fact. More importantly, if you ever experience the power of dark essence at work, we urge you to flee or you will risk permanent corruption.



Dark essence is the literal embodiment of evil. When dark personal or ambient essence is used to cast spells or create magic in any way, the outcome is always evil no matter the caster's intentions. Essence forms composed of dark core essence are irredeemable and destined to bring sorrow and suffering from every action and to all who come into contact with them.

The core essence of endrori, the Fallen, abomona, and all other creatures of darkness are composed of dark essence. When one entreats the power of Endroren, the magical effect is created by dark essence. Outside of these two examples, dark essence is blessedly rare.

We do not know where dark essence originates, but it is not found naturally on the Essential Plane. We know of only three sources of dark essence. First, as mentioned above, essence channeled directly from Endroren is always dark essence. Second, the offspring of dark creatures are always born with spirits composed of dark core essence. Finally, when the weight of corruption in normal essence becomes great enough, corrupted essence—especially corrupted core essence—may switch states to become dark essence.

There is no way to cleanse dark essence. If the weight of corruption converts essence to dark essence, the transition is permanent. The only means of removing it from our plane is to destroy the person, creature, or thing where the dark essence resides.

## MAGIC AND SPELLCASTING

When essence has an effect on the Physical Plane, we call this magic. Magic is either natural or directed.

Natural magic is any physical manifestation caused by essence not consciously created by a sentient being. Animals that fly without wings, spirits that walk among the living, and beasts that breathe fire are all examples of natural magic. There are also more subtle manifestations of natural magic, such as plants with medicinal properties that break the laws of physical philosophy.

Directed magic occurs when sentient beings purposefully shape essence to obtain a desired effect on the Physical Plane. It is accomplished by creating specially designed essence forms and then empowering those forms with additional essence. Since the Physical Plane and Essential Plane are bound together, this results in a change to the physical world. This process is called spellcasting.

Flee? What sort of ridiculous advice is this? Face your fears and Droth will protect you.

—GRAIMAK

Dark essence is blessedly rare?  
This fool clearly ain't been to the  
Deeplands.

—VRENN

Agreed.  
—CALABRIA

This is the truth.  
—SSYNES





What about druid magic?  
According to the druids I've met,  
they've been around and casting  
spells since the Age of Dawn.  
Seems like something you should  
mention.

—DYSART

We decided not to include druid  
magic since all indicators point  
toward it simply being divine  
magic originating from Alantra,  
Grethken, and Vale. Basically,  
clerics by another name.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

You'd better never say that to an  
actual druid. Unless you want them  
to turn you into something slimy.

—CALABRIA

It is also inaccurate. Recent  
research suggests their magic, while  
similar to the divine spellcasting of  
clerics, is in fact drawing its power  
from a unique source. I suggest  
you consult Elbinay Whitehome's  
recent publication on the subject.  
He makes a compelling case for the  
druidic argument that the planet  
itself is a living being and the  
source of their power.

—ISIN

## TYPES OF SPELLCASTING

The methods used by Aetaltans to cast spells have changed and evolved over the Ages. The following is a brief history of the spellcaster's art.

### DAWN MAGIC

During the Age of Dawn, Aetaltans practiced a primitive, quasi-religious form of spellcasting called dawn magic. In those days, their connection with essence was tenuous, the effects of their spells unsubtle, and their spellcasting techniques unreliable. Few Aetaltans had the natural ability to cast spells, and those that did had little understanding of how or why their magic worked.

### TRUE MAGIC

At the end of the Age of Dawn, Endroren gave Aetaltans a new way to cast spells called true magic. True magic made casting spells as natural to the people of Aetaltis as walking, and every man, woman, and child could cast spells to some extent. From farmers plowing their fields to kings directing their armies, magic was woven into every aspect of their world. No formulas or rituals were necessary to cast spells with true magic. The caster simply sensed the presence of essence around them, reached out to touch it, and then focused on what they wished to accomplish. Spellcasting still required practice and training if one wished to excel at it, but the possibilities of what a properly cast spell could do were nearly limitless. Appropriately, this time is known as the Age of Magic.

### THE RITUAL OF LIMITATION

As every Aetaltan knows, the Age of Magic was not to last. The Enaros rightly decided mortals were not ready for the power of true magic. Using a spell we know as the Ritual of Limitation, the Enaros severed the direct bond between the people of Aetaltis and essence. Some enari could still sense essence, some could even touch it and manipulate it, but they could no longer instinctively interact with it. What had once been an inherent part of their being became an external force just out of reach.

### DIVINE MAGIC

The Enaros are both merciful and kind, and after the Ritual of Limitation they sent their avatars to teach the enari a new type of spellcasting. We call this technique divine magic. With divine magic, the spellcaster channels essence directly from the Enaros and shapes it via divine inspiration to create magical effects. Divine magic requires an intimate synergy between the caster and at least one of the Enaros. Not only is this a rare gift, but if the caster strays too far from the teachings and values of their chosen enaros, they may lose their abilities.

Divine magic was a tremendous boon to the people of Aetaltis. It allowed them to overcome the hardships caused by the loss of true magic. At the same time, it ensured that magic would only be used in ways the Enaros saw fit, avoiding future catastrophes like that which befell Ellor Nyall.

### RUNE MAGIC

The Ritual of Limitation prevented the enari from shaping ambient essence into spells, but the dwarves discovered some of the enari could still invoke and direct essence. Using a complex carving ritual, they designed a set of essence-laced symbols called spell runes. The spell runes act as essence molds, and when a person directs essence through the rune's mystic pattern, it shapes the essence to



## PRACTICAL LIMITATIONS OF THE RITUAL

After the arrival of the Alliance, we discovered that not only did the Ritual sever the enari's direct tie to essence, but it also altered the fundamental nature of magic on our world. Certain types of magical effects once possible are not so today.

Teleportation is one such effect. Spells and magic that cause the instantaneous movement of people and things from one place to another without passing through the space in between no longer work. This includes summoning spells, spells that open gates between planes, and banishment magic designed to send beings from other planes back to where they came from.

The only known exceptions were the Alliance world gates and city gates. These allowed instantaneous transport, but required complex and powerful magical devices operated by a team of specially trained wizards. Furthermore, there is suspicion that whatever magic the Alliance used to bypass the Ritual's restrictions may have been the direct cause of the Cataclysm and the reason these gates no longer function today.

A related class of magic, long distance sensing and communication, is also greatly restricted. Magic that provides otherworldly senses, divines the locations of people or objects, or transmits information over long distances, only function within the range of the caster's natural senses.

create raw magical effects. By directing essence through a series of runes, one can even create simple spells. The dwarves called this rune magic.

Rune magic is still in use, although it has fallen out of favor since the introduction of glyph magic. Part of the difficulty is that after each use of a spell rune, it needs time to recover before it can be used again. Spell runes are also difficult to make properly. Even the slightest flaw in a rune renders it useless, or even worse, might lead to a catastrophic failure of the spell.

### GLYPH MAGIC

Glyph magic is the style of spellcasting introduced by the Atlan Alliance. With glyph magic, spellcasters use trace amounts of core essence to form a spell template called a spell glyph. The glyph has no real power, but when personal essence is directed through the glyph, it shapes the essence to create magical effects in the physical world.

The technique is similar to rune magic, but the nature of core essence gives the spellcaster exceptional control of the shape of the glyph. This allows them to create far more subtle,

complex, and intricate patterns than are possible with runes, and it eliminates the need for physical materials.

Glyph magic diverges from traditional rune magic in another way. Rather than empowering the glyph with ambient essence, glyph magic uses the spellcaster's personal essence for its power. Attempting to power a glyph with ambient essence burns out the glyph with no spell effect. In a worst-case scenario, it can even lead to a catastrophic spell failure. Another reason to use personal essence is that the glyph is shaped from bits of the caster's core essence. If the caster accidentally channels corrupted ambient essence through the glyph, there is a very real danger of corrupting one's own core essence.

Using personal essence puts a natural limit on the number of spells the spellcaster can safely cast during a period of time. Once they've depleted their store of personal essence, they must wait until it replenishes before they can cast more spells. To be clear, it is possible to continue casting when one's personal essence is expended, but doing so draws the spell power directly from the caster's core essence. This will inflict painful, potentially deadly harm on the caster.

There are further limitations on glyph magic. To use it, spellcasters must have the natural ability to sense essence. Glyph magic is also exceptionally difficult to master. Casters spend decades perfecting their art and must dedicate their lives to learning the intricacies of the spell formulas used to create glyphs.

There's quite a market for dwarven spell runes. If you find anything that even looks like it might be a spell rune, it's worth hauling back up to the surface.

—BELLYNDA

True. Although if one finds runes embedded in the architecture, it is wise to leave them alone. Aside from the fact that you'll likely destroy the rune trying to remove it, the rune may be of structural significance.

—ISIN

What she's saying is you could destroy the magic that is holding up the roof.

—VRENN

The lesson here is that if your spellcaster has gone pale, is bleeding from their ears and nose, but claims they're "just fine," don't listen. It means they're out of personal essence and burning through their core essence to save your sorry behind.

—CALABRIA



Divine spellcasters are channeling ambient essence? I thought you said that's dangerous?

—DYSART

For arcane spellcasters, yes. Divine glyphs, however, are more resilient and can withstand the raw power of ambient essence. Not surprisingly, there is a great deal of ongoing research into replicating that resiliency in arcane spell glyphs.

—ISIN

This is why you always keep your eyes open for old spellbooks. Just because the wizard doesn't have time to stop and learn the spells, doesn't mean they can't cast them in a pinch.

—CALABRIA

This is also why your wizard will pack two-hundred pounds of spellbooks and then ask you to carry them when their skinny little bodies give out an hour into your trip.

—GRAIMAK

Perhaps you'd rather enter the Deeplands without the support of a trained spellcaster?

—ISIN

He's not sayin' that. He's just sayin' you don't need to bring every book in your library.

—VRENN

## SPELLBOOKS

Spell glyphs are highly complex arcane constructs. They are difficult to learn and each glyph requires extensive practice to master. Once a spellcaster learns a glyph, they must practice it regularly or risk losing their hard-earned skills. It is no different than a blademaker who trains daily to keep their skills sharp. The only difference is where the blademaker's training is physical, the spellcaster's exists purely in the mind.

To facilitate this training, most arcane spellcasters maintain a book of diagrams, formulas, and research notes related to the spell glyphs they've learned or that they hope to learn. These books are referred to, not surprisingly, as spellbooks.

## CASTING FROM A SPELLBOOK

Technically, a spellcaster doesn't need a spellbook to cast a spell with a glyph they've learned. At times, however, it is useful to have the spellbook out for reference. This is especially true when casting particularly complicated or dangerous spells.

Another reason a spellcaster might choose to cast from a spellbook is if they want to cast a spell using a glyph they haven't learned. Casting in this way is difficult and a bit risky, but it's extremely useful if a particular spell is needed immediately. As long as they have a spellbook containing the necessary information, they can cast the spell even if they haven't learned it yet. Many wizards have libraries of spellbooks filled with instructions for casting spells they haven't learned but might need to cast.

## DIVINE AND ARCANES

### SIMILAR YET THE DIFFERENT

The difference between divine magic and arcane magic is an area of particular interest to magical scholars. In many ways, the two types of magic are extremely similar, and yet at a deep, fundamental level, they are quite distinct. The following are two topics of particular interest that may benefit adventurers to consider:

### DIVINE GLYPHS

Recent research by the scholars of Winterkeep suggests divine spellcasting is actually a kind of glyph magic. In the case of divine spellcasting, however, the caster does not consciously form their glyphs. When the spellcaster entreats their patron enaros for aid, a glyph is formed by an undetectable outside force (the patron enaros, one must assume). All that remains is for the divine spellcaster to channel ambient essence through the glyph and the spell is cast.

Despite the cosmetic similarities to glyph casting, divine glyphs are fundamentally different in form and pattern from arcane glyphs. No wizard has managed to reliably shape a glyph using the divine forms, even in the case of divine spells that produce similar effects to their arcane counterparts. The divine glyphs are so complex they defy replication by mortals.

### ARCANES MAGIC AND THE RITUAL OF LIMITATION

There is debate among scholars as to why arcane magic works at all. One would think the Ritual would have prevented all forms of spellcasting that are not divine. The most likely explanation is that the Enaros always intended for Aetaltans to rediscover arcane spellcasting. Both glyph magic and rune magic were hard-earned achievements. They required significant effort, study, and risk to discover and took centuries to perfect. They also have inherent limits on the amount of power an arcane spellcaster can command. These obstacles are self-regulating in ways true magic was not, and they suggest modern arcane magic is a long-hidden gift to the enari from the Enaros.



## ESSENCE WELLS, LEY LINES, AND ESSENCE VOIDS

Ley lines and essence wells are places where there is more ambient essence present than normal. Essence voids are areas where there is less ambient essence than normal. All three phenomena are rare, but as adventurers you will likely encounter one or more of them on your journeys. Typically, they will have little direct impact on you, but under the right circumstances, and especially for arcane spellcasters, their presence may be quite beneficial or potentially dangerous.

### ESSENCE WELLS

There are places in the world where the ambient essence is exceptionally potent. We call these places essence wells. When inside an essence well, spells are easier to cast, personal essence recovers more quickly, and magical effects are more pronounced.

All the known essence wells on the Amethyst Sea basin are controlled by powerful people, beings, or organizations. The ritual chamber atop the Silver Tower in Selentheia is said to enclose an essence well, more than one dragon lair is built atop an essence well, and it is rumored the stonehold at the center of New Erinor is built over an essence well.

Essence wells are invisible and undetectable on the Physical Plane except to those with the ability to see or sense essence. On the Essential Plane, and to those that can see them, essence wells are glowing orbs of brilliant light, shining like stars brought down from the sky.

While some essence wells have diameters no larger than a human's reach, others stretch for hundreds of yards in every direction. As they vary in size, they also vary in power. Normally, the more powerful an essence well is, the smaller it is.

### LEY LINES

Ley lines are rivers of high essence that flow across the world. They are invisible on the Physical Plane, except to those with the ability to sense or see essence. On the Essential Plane, and to those with the gift to see them, they appear as glittering rivers of light that twist and turn, their courses unimpeded by physical barriers. Some flow high into the sky, others pass straight through mountains, and still others plunge into the Deeplands.

The size and power of ley lines range from tiny rivulets to great torrents. Sometimes one line feeds another, while other times a line may split. Occasionally, lines will cross. At these conjunctions, the strength of the lines is compounded, creating places of great power. The arcane college of Winterkeep is said to be built around one such conjunction.

Unlike ambient essence and essence wells, the power and position of ley lines can change over time. Sometimes these changes appear random, with a line that persisted for decades suddenly disappearing. Other times, the changes are linked to outside forces, such as the phases of the moon or a particular astronomical event.

As an example, there is a weak north-south ley line near Stonegate Keep. It runs straight through the pass in the winter, but during the summer it shifts twenty miles to the west. Another example is the Great Ley of Malador, a powerful line extending west across the Phensrelan Ocean from a point roughly half-way between Fortin Mal and the Dragon's Maw. That line only appears during a solar eclipse.

Never fight a spellcaster in an essence well. The amount of power they can summon is, quite frankly, terrifying.

—DYSART

Not to mention the increased magnitude of catastrophic spell failures. At that point it doesn't matter whose side the spellcaster is on. Everyone pays price.

—BELLYNDA

Ley lines. Don't get me started on ley lines. It kills me to think of all the time I've wasted wanderin' the countryside with our wizard, looking for some bit of flighty magic the skinny spellworm insists we find. And for what? A little extra sliver of essence so they can puff up their spells. Bah.

—TORRICA



There is a mad wizard living in the Wilds near the Eastern Marches who claims he knows how to create essence voids. It is probably a lie, but Drakewyn is taking no chances. I heard, the bounty for bringing this wizard in alive was up to four-thousand silver axes.

—GRAIMAK

Wait, excuse me, hold up a moment. If magical devices are drawing in ambient essence, what happens when I take my orb of Aelos into the Deeplands and it starts sucking up corrupted ambient essence? Are you telling me my lamp could turn evil?

—DYSART

In theory, yes. Enchanted objects are generally resistant to such corruptions, but there are examples of such corruption occurring. Where do you think cursed objects come from?

—ISIN

Seems like you scholars might have included a section on that!

—TORRICA

## ESSENCE VOIDS

Beware the essence void! Contrary to what some adventurers and scholars say, essence voids are not myths. In an essence void, the ambient essence has been drained away. This condition may persist for days, weeks, or years. There are even a few voids that have existed as long as the enari have walked the surface of Aetaltis. The infamous Valley of Doom near Stonegate Pass is one such place.

Like essence wells, essence voids vary in strength. Most are nothing more than a slight weakening of ambient essence. Spells are slightly more difficult to cast, personal essence recovers more slowly, and beings with deeply magical natures will feel a general sense of discomfort.

The more powerful an essence void is, however, the more dramatic its effects. Within a powerful essence void, personal essence may fail to recover or even drain slowly away, spells become difficult or impossible to cast, and abilities that stem from magic, such as a fairy's flight, may cease to function.

Essence voids are roughly spherical. They vary in size from a few paces to more than a hundred yards across. Unlike essence wells, their size has no correlation to their power. Some essence voids appear to be natural phenomenon, but most are the result of a catastrophic spell failure.

The current belief is that a particular type of error in a spell glyph leads to a cascading effect that burns off ambient essence in an area. Although theories abound, there is as of yet no consensus on what determines the size and duration of the void. One would expect the surrounding ambient essence to simply flow back into the void, but that just isn't the case.

Fortunately, most essence voids are temporary. Some weaken over time, while others suddenly disappear. Still, it is best to avoid these strange and little understood magical anomalies.

## MAGICAL DEVICES

From the omnipresent orbs of Aelos used as a source of light throughout the Amethyst Sea basin to legendary magic swords and enchanted artifacts from the Age of Magic, magical devices are invaluable tools to adventurers. You are, without a doubt, familiar with such items. Perhaps you or your family even owned a minor enchanted object or two during your youth. But as an adventurer, you should also have a general understanding of how these objects function.

## ARTIFICIAL ESSENCE FORMS

To create a magical device, an enchanter creates an artificial essence form and binds it to a place or object. This essence form is more robust than a spell glyph, but not as powerful as a living essence form. It is empowered by ambient essence, constantly drawing in the power it needs to create a magical effect. Artificial essence forms do not, however, act as essence vessels and do not contain a reservoir of personal essence.



## ATTUNEMENT

It is difficult to create magical devices that operate continuously without the direction of a conscious mind. It is equally difficult to create devices that are immediately operable by anyone that picks it up. This is especially true for devices that create powerful magical effects. As a result, many magical devices must be attuned to a living essence form. The process literally binds the item's essence form to its owner's. The item becomes, in effect, an extension of that person's own essence form. Only one individual can attune to a magical device, since proper attunement requires matching the resonance of a device's essence form to that individual's unique essence pattern.

## RUNE-SCRIBED

Rune-scribed devices are the creations of dwarven runecasters from the Age of Dwarves. Unlike a modern magical device, they function not by attaching an artificial essence form but by inscribing the thing with a spell rune. When the rune is activated, ambient essence is channeled through it creating the magical effect. As with modern magical devices, most rune-scribed devices require the attunement of the user's essence form to the rune or runes on the device.

Some rune-scribed devices remain activated until deactivated. When activated, they continuously draw ambient essence and the magical effect is created. When deactivated, they are inert. Others operate as long as the user concentrates on the device, pulling in ambient essence continuously until the user's concentration waivers. The most powerful rune-scribed devices operate without any intervention from a sentient user. They activate and deactivate as necessary to fulfill their given purpose, channeling ambient essence as needed. Typically, this sort of device requires a certain amount of time to pass before it can be reactivated. Runes used in architecture are of the last variety.

You should talk about what happens if you misplace an attuned item.

—CALABRIA

How do you mean?

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

We were on the trail of a fallen wizard wanted for using blood magic. Along the way he dropped a magic ring he'd attuned to. My partner used the ring to track the wizard. Worked like a magical compass. Handy.

—CALABRIA

This seems unlikely, although in theory—hmm—I need to investigate this further.

—ISIN

The secret to forging rune-scribed devices that operate continuously is one of the prized treasures the mages of my clan are seeking. If we could rediscover the old techniques, it would be an incredible boon to the efforts of the Liberators to hold the Deepland halls they've retaken.

—VRENN



*A long forgotten rune-scribed bridge we discovered in the Wilds near Castle Port.*



## EMBEDDED GLYPHS

It is possible to create single-use magical devices by embedding a spell glyph into an object. The best-known examples are spell scrolls. Any spellcaster can activate an embedded glyph. Doing so draws personal essence from the caster to activate the glyph and create the spell-effect. This technique is single use, in part because the object in which the glyph is embedded is consumed by the energy of the spell.

Although it requires minimal spellcasting skill to activate an embedded glyph, one can only do so if one has the instructions. If the spellcaster that created the device does not convey these in some fashion, research and analysis of the embedded glyph must be conducted to unlock the means of activating it. This is one reason spell scrolls are a popular medium for embedded glyphs. It allows a spellcaster to include both the embedded glyph and the instructions for activating it in one package.

A limitation to this is that one can only embed a glyph in objects made from living or once living material. Paper, parchment, wood, leaves, and similar materials are all viable options for embedding glyphs.

## ALCHEMY AND POTIONS

Aetaltis is awash with ambient essence, and many otherwise mundane plants, animals, and substances have magical properties. Recognizing the inherent magical potential, arcane researchers used essence sense and the fundamentals of spellcasting to devise methods for preparing these materials in a fashion that unlocks the magic within. The result is the science we call alchemy.

The enari and the Alliance developed alchemy independently, but the methods and techniques they use are the same. Alchemists use precise formulas, complex processes, and specialized tools to draw out the magical properties inherent in a substance. Often this involves combining it with other substances and materials, both magical and mundane, to stabilize, enhance, or control the magical effect.

There are some types of stone that will work, if you know what to look for. And the spell doesn't destroy the stone when you cast it. 'Course, it still wipes out the glyph, but you can embed another glyph later.

—VRENN

Normally I avoid saying this, but the claim about how reliquens are made makes no sense. There aren't enough holy materials in existence to meet the need of the Amethyst Sea's clerics. I bet none of the Forge Ash for sale in Alchemist's Alley came out of Modren's forge but rather came straight from the shopkeeper's fire grate that morning.

—BELLYNDA

All things are possible if one has faith. It is arrogant to assume we know all.

—ARIA

## BLESSED OBJECTS

### GIFTS FROM THE GODS

The clerics of the Enaros have the ability to create magical devices as well. There is little we can share with you on why and how they work, since even the clerics are uncertain. They simply trust in their faith, allow the power of the Enaros to flow through them, and create the devices. Very little conscious thought is involved in the process beyond a rough sense of what they wish to create.

#### ATTUNEMENT

Attunement is still required for many divine devices. A key difference is that the wielder must be in good favor with the enaros that helped to create the device in order to attune to it. If they are not, the attempt to attune will fail.

#### RELIQUENS

A reliquen is a divine magical device that works once and is consumed when activated. They are, at least cosmetically, similar in how they operate to devices created with embedded glyphs and alchemical potions. There are a few key differences.

Only a person who has favor with the enaros that inspired its creation can activate the power of a reliquen. It also requires no skill to activate, only faith. When activated, the device does not pull from the caster's personal essence or ambient essence. It is said the essence that empowers the device comes directly from the Enaros.

Reliquens are so-named because they are usually created from relics: objects with holy significance. One might create a reliquen from a bit of bone taken from a long-dead high cleric's skeleton. If creating a divine scroll, perhaps the ink is mixed using ash from Modren's forge. When making a potion, a cleric might mix it using water from a blessed spring. In each case at least some portion of the device or concoction must have holy origins.



Unlike spellcasting, which is immediate in its outcome, the greatest utility of alchemy is that it allows a magical effect to be captured and stored until needed. Anyone can trigger the effect at a later time by invoking the proper trigger. Most commonly the trigger involves imbibing the alchemical concoction (portions), but some require burning (powders), inhaling (vapors), or application (salves).

It is important to remind our good readers that alchemy should only be practiced by trained professionals. Imbibing an incorrectly prepared alchemical concoction can have a dangerous, even deadly, outcome. Not only that, the process of creating alchemical substances is dangerous in itself. The threat of poisonous vapors, out of control alchemical reactions, and even explosion means amateurs should never experiment with alchemy.

## THE FORBIDDEN ARTS

Certain magical techniques lie outside the realm of acceptable arcane practice. In some cases they are truly evil, while in others, merely morally questionable. We group all of these magical techniques under the heading of the forbidden arts. Although we dread to say it, as an adventurer you will almost certainly encounter these vile magics. It is imperative you be able to recognize and defend against them.

### *An Important Note*

*Simply reading about forbidden magic is not in itself corrupting. The idea one may suffer corruption simply by acquiring certain knowledge is a baseless superstition that, as an adventurer, you must overcome if you are to survive your chosen occupation.*

## BLOOD MAGIC

Blood magic involves tearing the personal essence out of a living creature to empower a spell. The process is agonizing for the victim, whether they are willing or not. Furthermore, blood magic always drains a portion of the victim's core essence in the process, causing significant physical suffering and, in some cases, death.

Most blood magic is used for ritual castings. Spellcasters must have time to attune the subject to the spell glyph. They must then exert enough sustained will to tear the subject's personal essence free. This makes it impractical for use when time is a concern.

Be warned! Powerful dark creatures such as wraiths, the Fallen avatars, and abomonae seem unbound by the need to attune. These beings are known to use blood magic at will. Some even keep an entourage of willing supplicants or slaves to use as essence sources for their vile art, draining the victims to lifeless husks in order to power spells they might not normally have the power necessary to cast.

Probably worth reminding readers about the danger of mixing alchemical substances. I knew an orog that drank a couple of potions at random on a dare. Turned his skin purple and bloated his nose to the size of a watermelon. Never recovered.

—DYSART

That is why when I sell potions I always include written instructions describing potential dangers and side effects.

—ISIN

Is that what that bit of paper is? I always thought it was the receipt. I've been throwin' those away.

—TORRICA

And it's called blood magic for a reason. It generally involves cutting the victim or harming them in some way. If the essence drain doesn't kill them, the wounds inflicted to activate the process might.

—CALABRIA



You need to let them know about the slippery slope. The more a person entreats Endroren, the easier it becomes to call on him again in the future. “Just this once” turns into “Just once more” turns into “This is the last time, I swear.”

It always ends the same way: complete corruption and the long, endless fall into darkness.

—BELLYNDA

There are still those fighting in the Deeplands today who employ this forbidden magic. Isn't that true, Vrenn?

—SSYNES

When the choice is between victory and death, one always chooses victory. Every warrior knows this.

I do not hold myself so high as to judge others forced into such a grim calculus, nor should you.

—VRENN

## ENTREATING ENDROREN

In the same fashion that clerics use divine magic, one may call upon Endroren to provide both the divine inspiration to cast a spell and the dark essence to empower it. In most cases the pleas are ignored, but occasionally they are heard and Endroren responds.

As terrifying as this sounds, there are no limits on who may entreat the Dark Lord. No special bond is required, and he is known to respond even when the purpose of the entreaty is for good. The reason he chooses to respond, and for that matter the means, remain a mystery.

We tell you all this: death is a preferable fate to entreating Endroren. No cause is important enough to invoke his power. First, the outcome of the entreaty is always foul—if not at the moment, then at some point in the future. Second, dark essence is deeply corrupting. A single entreaty is enough to corrupt one's core essence almost completely.

## UNDEAD

The living dead, undead, the walking dead: whatever name you give them, they represent a foul stain upon the world. Destruction is the only course of action for those returned from the grave by forbidden magic. There are several types of undead that adventurers should be aware of.

### ANIMATED DEAD

Animated dead are corpses given a semblance of life. They can move, perform basic tasks, and even fight if properly instructed. They are not, however, truly alive. In fact, they are no more alive than, say, a magically animated statue.

The reason an evil spellcaster might animate the remains of the dead, as opposed to a statue or other unliving object, is that the physical forms of once living things retain an echo of their living essence form. When energized with the proper spell and an infusion of essence, the corpse returns to pseudo-life. Not only can it move about, it can even follow simple instructions, thanks to the essence memory of its once living state.

Adventurers are quite likely to encounter animated dead when exploring the Deeplands, and not just those animated by Endroren's followers. When the Dark Hordes burst into the dwarven halls at the beginning of the Age of Darkness, the armies of the dwarven kingdoms were woefully outnumbered. As the Hordes crashed against their defenses, the defenders fell at a frightening pace. All the while, more and more endrori came up from the depths to bolster Endroren's armies.

In those grim hours, the dwarves came up with an unthinkable solution to their plight. Dwarven runecasters created a set of runes that gave the dead the imitation of life. They carved these runes into the skulls of the deceased, and when the runes were activated, the corpse would animate to continue its fight against the Dark Hordes. A noble cause, but an evil path that should never have been walked down. Many of these animated dead still stalk the Deeplands today, and they cannot differentiate between endrori and adventurers.



## NECROMANCY AND BOUND UNDEAD

The animation of a corpse is a minor evil compared to the art of the necromancer. Necromancers call forth the spirits of the dead and then forcefully bind them to corpses using dark magic. The result is an undead monster, not truly alive but not fully dead either. We call these vile creatures bound undead.

The ritual inflicts excruciating pain on the spirit, and this torment, combined with the sudden return to the world of the living with a rotting corpse for a body, drives nearly all the victims of this despicable molestation insane. The deranged monsters that result from this process are violent and harbor a deep hatred for all living things.

Bound undead are not only deadly combatants, but when they inflict injury they draw off a thread of the victim's core essence. This they absorb into the essence form of their own tormented spirit, healing the physical body they inhabit. A long-starved bound undead may appear no different than a magically animated skeleton, but a bound undead that has feasted on victims for years may be nearly indistinguishable from a living person.

## TRUE UNDEAD

True undead are naturally occurring bound undead. For reasons we have yet to discover, occasionally a spirit naturally rebinds with a body. Normally this is their own body, but there are instances of a spirit binding to a different corpse. As with bound undead, most true undead are driven mad by the transition to unlife, but a rare few retain their sanity. Even then, it matters little. The formation of true undead typically only occurs with the spirits of tainted, tormented, or truly evil beings.

## LIFE DRINKERS

Allow us to preface this section by explaining a strange trait unique to some dragons. Unlike you and I, there is no limit to the amount of essence some dragons' essence forms may hold. If they do not use the power, it simply continues to accumulate. (You'll learn more of this in the section on the dangers you will face out in the world.)

When certain power-mad spellcasters realized this, they sought to replicate this trait in their own spirits. As far as we can tell, at least some of them succeeded. The exact method they used to achieve this is unknown, but it appears to involve a spell similar to the dark magic used to create bound undead.

The end result is to remove the limits on the amount of essence they can absorb and convert to personal essence. The ability is amazing, but it comes at a cost. Aside from any corruption they likely suffered, these misguided fools are unable to absorb essence naturally. Instead, they must drain the core essence of others to replenish their reserves.

According to researchers who have studied these fiends, and adventurers who have fought them, the process of draining a victim's essence is aided by the consumption of the victim's blood. It is unclear if this act is truly necessary or if it is a superstitious ritual.

While exploring a Deepland hall in the Donarzheis my apprentice and I came across a band of dwarven bound undead. We were more than a little surprised when they did not attack us. According to these unfortunate creatures, they'd submitted willingly to the process to gain the power needed to defend their village. Sadly, it didn't work. Their village was still razed and these poor bastards are wandering the Deeplands to this day—the ones that got away, that is.

—DYSART

Lies. No tsverg would willingly do such a thing. If you are trying to offend me, you've managed it.

—VRENN

Can we just call them what they are? Vampires. There you go. I said it.

—TORRICA

Vampires are a myth brought from another Alliance world. They are not real creatures. The similarities are purely coincidental.

—ISIN





### CHAPTER THREE

# RELIGION AND THE AFTERLIFE

**I**N KEEPING WITH THE GOALS OF THIS TEXT, WE'VE APPROACHED THIS CHAPTER IN AN ACADEMIC FASHION. Our goal is that when you find a ruined temple, the remains of a long dead priest, or a holy relic, you can use what we've provided here to help you puzzle out exactly what you've discovered. Is it a temple of Larayil? Or a shrine to one of her avatars? Who did the priest whose remains you discovered serve? And to which temple should you deliver the holy relic you acquired?

It would be unwise to assume, even as a loyal follower of our gods and their teachings, you already know all you need to. As you will soon discover, we go well beyond the worship of the Enaros in this text. We also touch on related topics, such as divine cosmology, spiritualism, and the organization of the lyceums. We even break away from our focus on the Enaros to cover topics you may not have as much experience with, including Atlan Centering and ancestor worship.



## THE ENAROS

We begin, not surprisingly, with the Enaros. They are our gods, our creators, and our protectors. Their works are all around us, and their influence is felt daily. Note that when we speak of the Enaros, we include Endroren in their number. Although Endroren is no longer welcome among their ranks, he is technically still an enaros.

Here we will explore the domains of each enaros, their appearance, symbols, colors, and other attributes. Unless you have ecclesiastical training, it is unlikely you know everything we've included here, and these details will prove invaluable to adventurers.

### ALANTRA, THE GREAT MOTHER

Alantra is the embodiment of healing, fertility, and protection. She is the enaros of hearth and home and the chosen enaros of Dalelanders. Healing clerics draw their power from her, and she is the patron of all who provide safety and protection.

Alantra is represented as a mother figure imbued with a deep inner strength. When she appears in mortal form, she is of average height with a full figure. At times, she may appear pregnant, and she exudes an aura of comfort and safety.

Alantra sculpted the mountains, valleys, canyons, and plains of Aetaltis. She is closely associated with the elements of earth and stone, and her colors are earth tones. Her blessings made the soil fertile, so when Grethken began his work, the land lay ready for his seeds. The symbol of Alantra is a chalice.

As the eldest of the Enaros, she is their leader. She listens carefully to the council of the other enaros, but when she makes a decision, she is as immovable as the mountains. During the Age of Enaros, before the fall of Endroren, it is said Alantra and Endroren led the Enaros together, but divine scholars doubt the authenticity of the Enarosian Scroll this information comes from.

### AELOS, KEEPER OF MYSTERIES

Aelos is the enaros of mystery, the night, and the dead. All the spirits of the world are her wards, and she cares for them until they reach their final rest in Lensae's halls. She is the Keeper of Mysteries, but this role also gives her the right to reveal truth, shining light into darkness. Aelos is the chosen enaros of the Ellorians, and she is the patron of archers and spiritguides.

Aelos is represented as a tall woman with pale skin and raven hair. Her eyes sparkle like stars, and her voice is like a distant echo. Her colors are black and silver, and she is associated with the physical elements of silver and feysteel. The symbol of Aelos is a crescent moon crafted from the purest silver.

Aelos created Numos, Aetaltis's moon, as a home for spirits who have not yet gone on to Lensae. There, she rules a kingdom of the dead, offering her protection in exchange for their loyalty. Toletren is her faithful consort, although his love of truth and her love of mystery can place them at odds.

### DROTH, LORD OF TRIAL

War, hardship, and challenge are all the domains of Droth, Lord of Trial. Despite the sorrow often associated with his work, he is not evil. It is generally understood that only through trial can one reach their greatest potential. Droth is the chosen enaros of the drothmals and the patron of warriors.

Why are you using the Dark One's name? Are you trying to corrupt every adventurer that reads this? What if they read it aloud?

—SSYNES

There is no danger in using his name. The idea that to write, speak, or read his name will corrupt someone is a superstition and not a teaching of the lyceum.

—ARIA

I heard that one of Aelos's avatars is actually her son by a human father. A bit of scandal in the holy family?

—BELLYNDA

Over the centuries, there have been numerous stories about children born to a mortal and an enaros. I simply can't say whether they are true. Surely, the Enaros may do as they choose, so it is not impossible in a theological sense.

—ARIA



Droth accepts all curses with pleasure! It shows him you are strong, even in the face of trial. What greater show of strength is there than to curse the very gods!

—GRAIMAK

The fact that only Elendra knows the Soryphyn doesn't stop adventurers from searching for it. Some believe there is a tree in the Elliye Wilds that knows the tune, but not the words.

—CALABRIA

Ssynes says again that using the Dark One's name is a mistake! Ssynes cares little for the approvals of your lyceum. It is wrong to ever use his name, and you tempt fate with your incautious behavior.

—SSYNES

Droth is always represented as a large, rugged, and well-built man. His features are angular and rough, and his countenance is always stern. He is usually represented with his sword, Galodrian, a huge, double-edged steel blade he uses to impart his blessings. Steel-gray and blood-red are his colors, and he is directly associated with the element of blood. His symbol is a representation of Galodrian shaped from the purest steel.

The history of hardship faced by the people of the Amethyst Sea basin have made Droth an all too present figure in their lives. Aetaltans will often say, "May Droth's trials be fair," a saying that means "Let Droth challenge me, but not more than I can survive." Despite a recognition of why trials are necessary, Droth still receives as many curses as praises from the people of the region. Still, most realize being angry with Droth for their trials is like being angry at the rain for falling.

## ELENDRA, THE MUSE

Elendra is the patron of bards and the protector of true love. She is beautiful and wise, but like all those in love, she is vengeful if crossed. Artists believe she provides the inspiration for all art, from song to sculpture. She is the embodiment of commitment, and her name is called upon at weddings and in contractual agreements.

Elendra is represented as a woman who is intensely beautiful, but in a natural, unassuming way. She is best known for her genuine smile that brings warmth and contentment to whomever she gazes upon. Purple is her color, and she is directly associated with flowers and song. Her symbol is the blossoming orchid.

Elendra and Modren are husband and wife. She inspires, he creates, and together they turn inspiration into reality. It is said Elendra is the only being that knows the Soryphyn, an ancient song that is believed to be older than even Endros and Aros. Whoever knows this song can make dreams reality simply by singing it.

## ENDROREN, LORD OF DARKNESS

Endroren is the embodiment of pure evil; not just a mortal evil, but the most perfect manifestation of darkness to have ever existed in our world. Originally the Lord of Magic, Endroren became the master of cruelty, deception, and slavery when he embraced darkness. He is the master of the endrori and the patron of all who walk in darkness.

Endroren is a shadow, shapeless and without form. His voice is a deep whisper that chills one to their soul, and his gaze is felt even if he is unseen. Black is his color, and shadow is the substance with which he is associated. His symbol is a smooth black disc carved from obsidian.

The Lord of Darkness gave up his mantle as the Lord of Magic when he embraced the power of darkness. No other enaros has taken up his discarded role. Despite his new domain, Endroren retains his talent with essence and magic, and he is still the most skilled of the Enaros in bending magic to his will.



## GRETHKEN, THE GREEN FATHER

Grethken is the keeper of plants, the harvest, and the wilderness. His strength gives life to the forests and bountiful growth to farmers' fields. He is the Lord of the Harvest and is celebrated every autumn for his gifts. He works hand in hand with his lover, Vale, as the keeper of the wilds. Grethken is one of the chosen enaros of the Wastelanders, and he is the patron of rangers.

Grethken is portrayed as a large man with a full beard and long, dark brown hair. His hair is intertwined with living vines and his fingernails are made of bark. His eyes continually change color shifting between deep green, burnt orange, and rust red. Grethken's color is dark green, and he is associated with the element of wood. His symbol is an elder oak carved from oak heart.

The relationship between Grethken and Vale is as stable and regular as the passing of the seasons. They seldom work alone, nearly always acting in concert. Each maintains balance within their domains that allows their wards to thrive and survive. Grethken is sometimes thought to lack compassion, since his ways are those of nature rather than desire.

## LARAYIL, SKY KEEPER

Larayil is the mistress of winds, bringer of rain, and queen of the sky. She is also the patron of sailors. Like the wind, she is fickle and changeable, but she is powerful and terrible if brought to a fury. She is the embodiment of beauty, but a surface beauty without depth or substance. Larayil is one of the chosen enaros of the Feylariyans.

Larayil is represented as a stunningly beautiful young woman. Her beauty is radiant and those who look upon her completely lose their wits and reason. Larayil's colors are white and sky blue, and she is directly associated with the elements of crystal and air. Her symbol is a cloud etched upon a crystal medallion.

Mistress of the winds, Larayil has long been both the love and the bane of Aetaltis's sailors. To a sailor, a strong wind is a beautiful thing, but stand too long admiring its beauty and one can find oneself at the mercy of the storm. The same is true of Larayil. Larayil loves her spouse Phensral deeply, but their often-changing moods make their relationship a tempestuous one.

## MODREN, FORGE MASTER

Modren is the Great Builder and embodies construction, fire, and order. He is the keeper of the solar forge and the smith of Lensae. He makes ideas real and turns chaos into order. Modren's power cleanses by burning away that which is impure or by completely transforming a subject into something new. Modren is the patron of craftspeople and was the chosen enaros of the dwarves prior to the Age of Shadow.

Modren is represented as a small, muscular man with bronze skin and fiery red hair. He is always shown with his hammer, Lanil, and his tongs, the Sirnis. With these, he is said to have forged the Deeplands upon which Alantra shaped the surface of the world. His color is fiery red, and he is associated with the element of iron. His symbol is a polished iron hammer.

Throughout history the Enaros have turned to Modren to aid them in their acts of creation. From the sculpting of the enari to the forging of the chains that bind Endroren to the core of the world, Modren had a hand in their construction. He draws his stock from the solar forge of Lensae, and using his mystic tools, he makes real the dreams and desires of the other enaros.

Some outlanders in the Selenthean Wilds believe oak trees are sacred. They refuse to cut them down, and they will leave offerings to Grethken among the roots of the largest oaks.

—CALABRIA

In the west of my homeland, stand the ruins of a mighty temple dedicated to Grethken. An ancient tale claims that when an oak sapling takes root amid those ruins, it is the sign that the healing of the Wastes has begun.

—SSYNES

The ancient High Temple of Modren is located somewhere beneath the Donarzheis Mountains. At its heart sits the Forge of Eternal Fire, a magnificent device where some of the greatest enchanted weapons and armor in history were forged. Its location is a mystery, but some clues point to it being somewhere beneath the mountains of the northern Free Kingdoms.

—ARIA

The creation of the Forge was one of the greatest accomplishments of my people. Many Liberators have died trying to find it.

—VRENN



The Temple of Phensral in Castle Port sells blessed scallop shells that are supposed to keep you safe while sailing. You just wear it on string around your neck, and you'll never suffer a wreck.

—BELLYNDA

And do they work?

—DYSART

I've never been in a shipwreck. Of course, I usually carry about two dozen talismans, so I can't say with certainty that the shell is the one keeping me safe.

—BELLYNDA

Documents recovered from the fringes of the Elliyen Wilds tell of a library in the Stonegate Mountains near a place called Illysyl. They claim it was the largest library ever assembled, and one of Toletren's avatars was the curator.

—ISIN

## PHENSRAL, THE SEA FATHER

Phensral is the Father of the Sea and the master of waves and water. From the smallest rivers and raging torrents to limpid pools and mighty oceans, he is their lord and keeper. His power ranges from the crush of waves upon the shore to the trickle that eventually carves a valley. He is the embodiment of change and thus the patron of all who seek new experiences.

Phensral is normally represented riding upon a wave with the denizens of the sea all around him. He is clothed in a robe of kelp and wears a crown of shells. He is always joyful, and his laugh refreshes even the weariest of sailors. His color is ocean blue and his elements are water and shell. His symbol is the scallop.

Phensral quickly tires of things that do not change. Unfortunately, this has applied to his amorous desires as well. He has had numerous trysts with mortals, various avatars of the Enaros and, if the legends are true, some of the other enaros.

## TOLETREN, LORD OF KNOWLEDGE

Toletren is the Lord of Knowledge. He is also the keeper of history, the master of logic, and the watcher of time. Toletren embodies truth, and his guidance is sought whenever answers must be found. He is also the judge, not because he seeks justice, but because he requires the truth to always be revealed. What others do with that truth is of little concern to him. Although he did not create the newardin, Toletren is the chosen of Newardine that worship the Enaros. Since Endroren's fall, Toletren is also the surrogate patron of wizards.

No one knows what Toletren looks like, for he is always represented in long robes with a hood that covers his face. From within that hood, knowledge and truth are revealed, but never the truth of his appearance. His color is white and he is associated with the element of paper. His symbol is a scroll or tome.

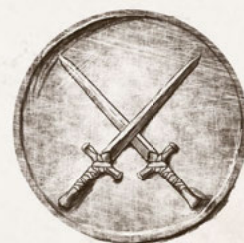
Toletren is said to have designed the Ritual of Limitation. According to the Enarosian Scrolls, he had already prepared the spell before the Enaros even decided a spell of that nature should be cast. Most attribute this to the fact that Toletren does not live in a single time, but moves freely between the veils that divide yesterday, today, and tomorrow.



Alantra



Aelos



Droth



Elendra



Endroren



Grethken



## VALE, THE HUNTRESS

All the beasts of Aetaltis are the children of Vale. She is their keeper and protector, and she often takes on their form to move among them. Her heart is feral, and she is the embodiment of instinct. Violence is in her nature, but only in so far as it is a part of survival and in the natural order of things. Vale is one of the chosen enaros of the Feylariyans and the patron of those that work with animals.

Vale is normally portrayed as a small, lean woman with deep brown eyes. She is occasionally shown clothed in hides, but beyond this she is never shown with any other belongings. Her colors are dark brown and blood red, and the element associated with her is ivory. Her symbol is a natural tooth or claw.

Vale cares little for the creations of the enari. Rather, she is warmed by their passions, instincts, and desires. When civility gives way to raw emotion, only then is Vale truly pleased. Vale is never envious or bitter, and she does not seek revenge. If forced to defend herself or her charges, her fury is unparalleled.

## ZEVAS, THE LORD OF WEBS

Zevas is the embodiment of planning, commerce, and illusion. He is the master of the Web of Fate and can navigate its strings better than any other enaros. He is the patron of merchants and diplomats, but also of thieves. This association with criminals causes the people of Aetaltis to remain wary of him, even if they still respect him as an enaros.

Zevas takes on so many forms that no two representations of him are the same. The only consistent thing about his appearance are his deep, piercing eyes—eyes that seem to know far more than they are willing to reveal. Zevas's color is gold, and the element associated with him is also gold. His symbol is a coin of any size minted from the purest gold.

The Web of Fate is unfathomably complex, and we mortals see only a small portion of it. It is easy for us to make incorrect assumptions about its meaning. For instance, if you are wet, does it mean it is raining? Or that you are underwater? Or that it is hot, and you sweat? Without knowing the complete picture, it is easy to come to the wrong conclusion. Zevas's messages are often like that. He sees the full pattern, but he only offers small pieces of information that require careful consideration if they are to be deciphered correctly. This is how he earned his secondary title as the Lord of Illusions.

There is a group of lunatics in Callios who believe Zevas is dead and has been replaced by an impostor. They've been vandalizing temples and attacking priests and clerics of Zevas. There is quite a large bounty on the group's leader, an elf known as the Scorpion.

—BELLYNDA

I have never been to Callios. Perhaps it is time for a journey south!

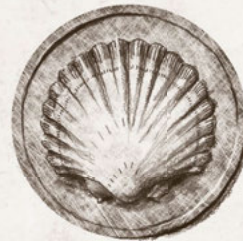
—GRAIMAK



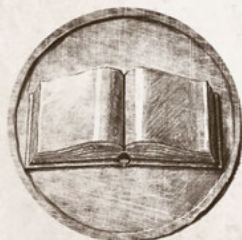
Larazil



Modren



Phensral



Toletren



Vale



Zevas



One should never question the Enaros or speculate about their true forms. Ssynes demands you remove this page.

—SSYNES

Most people don't believe me, but I swear I've met Phensral. It was a beautiful day, and I was walking along a beach in Callios heading toward a small port. I was meeting a ship that was taking me up to Tricos. Seemingly out of nowhere, I come across an old man mending nets in front of a battered shanty. I stopped to chat, and while we're talking I mention my plans to sail north that day. "You don't want to do that," he tells me. "There's a bad storm coming in. Best to wait until tomorrow." I bid him farewell and continued on my way, but his words stuck with me. There was no sign of storms at all, but I couldn't shake this feeling that the old man knew something I didn't. It bothered me so much, I finally decided to postpone my trip by a day. Sure enough, that night a terrible storm rolls in just after sunset. The ship I was supposed to sail on went down with all hands. The next morning I went to find the old man to thank him, and he was nowhere to be found. Even his shanty was gone, as if it had never been there.

—DYSART

You told me you got drunk on Red Coral, passed out in the bar, and the ship left without you.

—CALABRIA

Well, yes, actually, that's true. But the part about the old man really happened.

—DYSART

## THE MANY FORMS OF THE ENAROS

We have described here the most common forms in which the Enaros appear to mortals. This is also the way they are typically represented in paintings, statuary, and other works of art. It is worth noting that no lineage is given in these descriptions. When an enaros appear to mortals, their lineage typically matches that of the person observing them.

For example, if Modren were appear to an elf, he'd take on an elven form, but when he appears before a dwarf, he'd appear as a dwarf. If he were to appear to both the elf and the dwarf at the same time, each would see a person of their own lineage.

For the artist this presents a conundrum. What lineage does one choose when portraying one of the Enaros? The most common choice both among modern and ancient artists, is to select a lineage matching that of the patron who funded the work. Although this is not a hard rule, it may help adventurers trying to puzzle out who built a particular temple, ruin, or other artifact.

### OTHER FORMS

In the same way that the Enaros are not bound to a particular lineage, so too are they unbound by gender. We may refer to them as male or female, but this merely reflects the gender in which they are commonly seen. In truth, they may choose whatever gender they like. The concept of gender may not even apply to them.

It is also commonplace for the Enaros to take forms completely different from our own. Sometimes they appear as animals, other times as a force of nature. Even when they appear as one of the enari or Alliance lineages, they may adopt a disguise if it suits their purpose. This is one way they move unseen among us, watching without interfering in our lives.

### TRUE FORMS

There is a growing belief that the true forms of the Enaros are nothing like our own. They are, after all, omnipotent immortals with power beyond our wildest imaginings. If so, did they ever occupy forms like ours? Or did they shed them when they took on the mantle of an enaros? And are we even meant to know such things? It's a fascinating question.

## AVATARS

The Enaros are served by a cadre of immortal beings called avatars. There are over 350 known avatars, but there may be many more. An avatar serves a single Enaros and is granted mastery over a particular domain of their patron enaros's realm. For example, Kagan is an avatar of Phensral and has mastery over the ocean surf.

Avatars aid the Enaros in their work, acting as their eyes and hands in our world. When a prayer to the Enaros is answered, it is just as likely an avatar will fulfill the request as the enaros themselves. This has led many people to worship the avatars directly, a practice of which the Enaros seem to approve.

Avatars typically appear as a person of an enari or Alliance lineage, although, like the Enaros, they are not bound to any form.



## DIVINE COMMUNION

We cannot hope to describe every way in which Aetaltans commune with the Enaros. Rather, we shall provide a broad overview of how we interact with the divine. Make no assumption that you know all you need to simply because you are a pious person yourself. There is always more to learn, and as an adventurer, you are almost certain to find your horizons quickly broadened. Best to have a sense of what is coming. As an additional aside, in the section which follows, we refer to the Enaros only, but the same guidance applies to communion with avatars.

## MAINTAINING BENEVOLENCE

It is impossible to stress enough how important it is to show the Enaros the proper reverence and respect. They control literally every aspect of our existence, and ensuring their benevolence is the key to prosperity and success in life. This is why most Aetaltans regularly acknowledge the Enaros, recognize their importance in their lives, and reinforce the respect they have for them through worship.

For individuals, this is achieved via short rituals conducted each day at a household shrine. It is unnecessary for every member of a household to perform the rituals if the head of the household is scrupulous in their performance of these on the family's behalf.

Adventurers and travelers are encouraged to carry the necessary accoutrements of worship with them, since they will not have access to their household shrine while on the road. Ideally, the adventurer will visit a shrine or temple near where they are traveling, but if none is available, a proper space can be achieved by diligently cleaning an area and burning incense.

At the community level, the maintenance of the relationship with the Enaros falls to priests and archons in cooperation with temporal leaders. Often this will take place as part of an annual festival to the Enaros, during which well-rehearsed rituals and holy events help to cement the good will between our community and our gods.

## PETITIONING

Assuming one has maintained their relationship with the Enaros, there will arise situations where a person will wish to petition an enaros for their blessings and aid. This is achieved by four paths: prayer, sacrifice, vow, and divination.

### PRAYER

Prayer is the simple act of speaking to the Enaros. Typically, this is done to ask for blessings, aid, or forgiveness. We know both the Enaros and their avatars *can* hear our prayers, but there is no guarantee that they *will* hear them.

We can improve the chances our prayers are heard by using proven prayer forms, praying in a shrine or temple dedicated to an enaros, and offering a suitable sacrifice. One may also employ the services of a priest or hierophant whose knowledge of the mysteries greatly increases the likelihood one's prayer will be heard.

The most intense form of prayer is the vigil. During a vigil, one prays continuously before the altar of an enaros from sunrise to sunrise. Vigils are an excellent means of showing an enaros the gravity of your petition.

I agree that it is the responsibility of our leaders to maintain the community's good relationship with the Enaros, but I've seen people blame a leader for things completely outside of their control. You'll hear things like "You didn't perform the chant properly, so our crops failed" or "If you'd started the ceremony on time, the river wouldn't have flooded in the fall." Sometimes bad things just happen, and it's not an enaros taking a special interest in our personal misery.

—CALABRIA

You are correct. If ever there is a question about why tragedy has befallen a community, it is best to consult with the clerics and priests of the local temples. They can often determine if the event was simply an unfortunate turn of fate or the result of a poorly executed ritual that left an enaros dissatisfied.

—ARIA



Generally, a proper sacrifice is destroyed in some fashion. The breaking of the thing's physical form releases its essential form to the Enaros for their use.

—ARIA

Ssynes always consults the blue stars before accepting an adventure. By tossing the stars, Ssynes can read their meaning and discern if the Enaros support the quest.

—SSYNES

It is always wise to stop and pay one's respects at crossroads shrines.

Aside from the obvious divine benefits, the show of respect is a good way to ingratiate oneself with the locals.

—PORTAND

## SACRIFICE

Many prayers include a sacrifice, since asking something of an enaros without offering anything in return is considered rude and may garner their displeasure. A proper sacrifice must appeal to the enaros's domains of control, be of sufficient worth to capture their attention, and be sacrificed in a way appropriate to their desires. If possible, the sacrifice should occur at an altar in a temple or shrine under the supervision of priests, priestesses, or hierophants.

Sacrifice involves surrendering a thing of value. One might surrender an item directly to an enaros by depositing it in an appropriate place, such as a holy pool or beneath the walls of a newly built house. At other times a sacrifice is surrendered on the altar and claimed by the members of the lyceum on an enaros's behalf to further their holy work.

Blood sacrifice is forbidden by the Enaros. Any sacrifice in blood will undoubtedly draw the ire of the enaros you are seeking to impress. Worse, it might draw the attention of Endroren.

## VOWS

If you do not have a suitable sacrifice, you may instead choose to make a vow. With a vow, you swear upon your eternal spirit to perform a task if an enaros aids you. For example, a farmer might vow to build a shrine to Grethken if he grants them a bountiful harvest.

Do not take vows lightly, and be sure to fulfill the terms of the vow as soon after the fulfillment of your request as possible. To break a vow, delay fulfillment, or fail to fulfill it to the best of your abilities will bring the enaros's disfavor. This disfavor may simply mean they ignore your prayers in the future, or in a worst-case scenario, they may execute an appropriate divine punishment.

## DIVINATION

Although the Enaros rarely explain their purposes to us, one may divine their favor, disfavor, or intent through careful observation. As this is not an instructional text on divination, we will not go into the exact means here, but suffice to say it is a wise adventurer that divines the outcomes of quests, explorations, and challenges in advance of embarking upon them. Even better, one might obtain the services of an oracle, who are experts in divination, if one is available to you.

## TEMPLES AND SHRINES

One may attempt to commune with the Enaros anywhere, for they are, in fact, everywhere. That said, to ensure prayers are heard, it is wise to make use of an appropriate place of worship.

## SHRINES

A shrine is a place set aside for communion with an enaros or one of their avatars. Most shrines are small, consisting of little more than a simple enclosure and an idol. Their placement might be based on holy significance, but it might also be selected for practical reasons. For example, a shrine to Zevas is often erected at the entrance to market spaces. Most proper shrines are erected and maintained by the lyceums. For more information on this, see the section on Divine Governance.

Crossroads shrines are small shrines erected either to commemorate a blessing that occurred there or to fulfill a vow. One finds crossroads shrines all around



the Amethyst Sea basin. In the countryside, they are often found at crossroads, hence the name. In cities, one finds them in all manner of places, from a shrine of Alantra above a tavern's hearth, to a shrine of Toletren set into a wall along a city street, or a shrine of Phensral on a beach where fishermen land their boats.

Household shrines are built near the entrance of a person's home where the family performs their daily worship. They often double as shrines for ancestor worship. Most contain one or more idols representing the family's patron enaros. Household shrines are usually small, no larger than a medium-sized cabinet, but wealthy families are known to build quite elaborate household shrines. Some are almost small temples.

## TEMPLES

A temple is a dedicated space for the worship of the Enaros. The site is typically one of holy significance, although this is not a requirement. They may take many forms, from the marble-fronted edifices of Toletren's temples to the holy groves of Grethken. The exact form depends on which enaros the temple is dedicated to. What differentiates a temple from a shrine are simply the size and the amount of improvement made to the site.

Temples are usually much larger than your typical shrine. Where most shrines are no larger than a small room, a temple may grow to many times this size, even filling an entire city block. They are designed to accommodate large numbers of worshipers and to serve as public spaces for the performance of important community rituals. They may also include a complex of support buildings used to house priests, conduct the temple's day-to-day business, and store relics and religious paraphernalia.

The person or group that builds and maintains the temple, usually a lyceum, also makes improvements to it that make it more appealing to whichever enaros they seek to please. For example, a temple of Toletren will almost certainly include a library filled with rare books collected from across the Amethyst Sea basin. A temple of Grethken, meanwhile, might add an arboretum or seek out and plant a great oak on the temple lawn.

You will be unsurprised to learn that in Callios, the lavishness of one's household shrine is considered a measure of a personal success.

—BELLYNDA



*A follower of Grethken makes an offering at a dedicated ancient shrine.*



You're going to want to pay attention to this section. Understanding how the temples "do business" is as important as knowing which noble is in charge of the land you're visiting.

—DYSART

You're wrong about the Lyceum Endroren. It does exist, and their reach is growing. Just because you don't see them, doesn't mean they aren't there.

—CALABRIA

If you haven't already picked up on this, the lyceums are a powerful force in the Amethyst Sea basin. In some places, their power even rivals that of the local temporal rulers.

—DYSART

And those "temporal rulers" are not amused by this. There are some ugly conflicts brewing, especially in the Free Kingdoms, over who has greater authority: the temple or the king.

—BELLYNDA

## DIVINE GOVERNANCE

Ensuring that one maintains a benevolent relationship with the Enaros is no small thing. If you fail to perform a ritual properly or make an error in the prayer you are reciting, you may not only fail to gain their grace, but you might even curry their disfavor. Perfecting these rituals, prayers, and practices, which we refer to collectively as *mysteries*, is an occupation unto itself. To that end, we Aetaltans have established the twelve lyceums to help us to better interact with the Enaros.

### LYCEUMS

A lyceum is an organization of individuals whose occupation is the proper worship of the Enaros and the cultivation of our understanding of their mysteries. There is one lyceum dedicated to each of the Enaros with the obvious exception of Endroren. There is also the Lyceum Lensae, an order devoted to the study of the broader divine mysteries of our world.

### HIERARCHY

The members of a lyceum are organized into a hierarchy, with each role clearly defined in terms of both powers and responsibilities. The following provides an overall understanding of that hierarchy, although there are sub-hierarchies and additional roles unique to each lyceum.

- ♦ **First Archon** This is the most senior member of a lyceum. It is the First Archon's responsibility to perform the complex annual rites to ensure the lyceum's continued good graces with its patron enaros. They are also the leader of the lyceum in all temporal matters and reside at the high temple complex. Only one person may hold this title, and it is held for life. When the First Archon dies, a new First Archon is selected by a conclave of archons. Nearly all First Archons are also clerics.
- ♦ **Archon** Archons are senior members of the lyceum. Most archons are also the leader of a temenos, an administrative district of the lyceum. They are also responsible for performing their temenos's annual rites. The archon reports directly to the First Archon. They are usually stationed at the most important temple in their temenos but make regular visits to the high temple. Many archons are also clerics.
- ♦ **Priests and Priestesses** Priests and priestesses are responsible for the day-to-day operation of temples and, occasionally, shrines. They serve all who come to the temple with their spiritual needs and report to the archon of their temenos. They assist in the execution of individual prayers, sacrifices, and vows and are responsible for performing major rites for the community they serve. The majority of the lyceum's ordained members are priests.
- ♦ **Hierophants** Hierophants are priests or priestesses specializing in the mysteries of the avatars. Most are assigned to a shrine of the avatar they serve, although some are traveling hierophants, going where they are needed.
- ♦ **Oracles** Oracles are priests and priestesses gifted in the art of divination. They are consulted whenever there are omens to read or signs to interpret. Most oracles are assigned to a temple or shrine.
- ♦ **Acolytes** An acolyte is a student who is learning the lyceum's mysteries with the expectation of eventually earning a place in the lyceum's hierarchy. They



are probationary members of the lyceum and perform most of the lyceum's mundane tasks. Acolytes report directly to the ordained member to whom they are assigned. There is no time limit on how long one may remain an acolyte, and some members never progress beyond this point.

- ♦ **Clerics** A cleric is an individual chosen by the Enaros to wield divine magic. Most clerics already hold a place in the lyceum's hierarchy when they discover their gifts. The descriptor of cleric is in addition to their standard hierarchical title.
- ♦ **Monks** Most lyceums support monastic orders. These consist of individuals dedicated to unlocking new mysteries, expanding understanding of the known mysteries, and safe-guarding the lyceum's artifacts and archives. Monks have a level of autonomy unique in the lyceum's hierarchical structure. They are sworn to serve their monastery's elder, who in turn reports directly to the First Archon. Note that in this case, report is literal, in that the elder monk's only duty is to report their activity. The First Archon does not direct their actions.
- ♦ **Holy Orders** Holy orders are sub-organizations within the lyceum. Most are dedicated to a specific task or goal. The best-known example are the Warders of Alantra.

## HIGH TEMPLES

Each lyceum is governed from its high temple. The high temple is one of the most important holy sites associated with a particular enaros and serves as the seat of power for the lyceum.

The locations of the high temples are as follows:

- ♦ **Aelos** Numos Island off the southernmost point of Pendroth Peninsula.
- ♦ **Alantra** Near the Shield Hills on the eastern edge of New Erinor in Agthor.
- ♦ **Droth** In the Donarzheis Mountains east of Whitehorn Pass.
- ♦ **Elendra** On an island on the north side of Revencos in Callios.
- ♦ **Grethken** In a holy glade along the shore of Starstone Lake southeast of Selentheia.
- ♦ **Larayil** On the island of Delos, around one hundred miles northeast of Selencos in Callios.
- ♦ **Lensae** Next to Eldrith Keep in the Agthorian capital of New Erinor.
- ♦ **Modren** East of Selentheia in the Valley of the Forge, part of a ridge of mountains known as Modren's Arm.
- ♦ **Phensral** Also on the island of Delos, across the cove from the High Temple of Larayil.
- ♦ **Toletren** Adjacent to the College of New Erinor in Lyceum Toletren's compound.
- ♦ **Vale** Northeast of Selentheia atop a towering cliff with a commanding view of the surrounding countryside.
- ♦ **Zevas** On Merchant's Square at the western end of the Great Market of Tricos in Callios.

It is worth noting that this only applies to clerics and clergy who are members of the lyceum. There are other religious orders outside the lyceum system.

—BELLYNDA

Most are quite small and insignificant. Some are heretical. I'd advise against talking about these at all.

—ARIA



The lyceums and temene pay good money to adventurers that return old holy bits and bobs to 'em, especially if you haul it out of the Deeplands so the endrori can't violate 'em.

—TORRICA

They actually hire adventurers for all sorts of tasks. There are lost shrines to locate, ancient temples to reclaim, and holy artifacts that need recovering.

—BELLYNDA

Monasteries are useful when an adventurer needs to undertake research. Not only do they often have well-stocked libraries, many monks are subject experts on a variety of curious topics.

—PORTAND

## TEMENOS

A temenos is an administrative district defined for the management of the lyceum's business. Each one is managed by an archon. Temene can vary radically in size, as there are no restrictions on geographic size or population served. Their borders do not necessarily conform to those of temporal kingdoms, but to avoid diplomatic complications, they usually do. Each temenos is expected to be financially self-sufficient and pay regular tithes to the lyceum. If faced with a financial crisis, however, they may turn to the lyceum for aid.

## LYCEUM TEMPLES

One will find one or more temples within each temenos. The number of temples depends entirely on the size of the temenos and the needs of the populace. A temple is managed by priests and priestesses but is ultimately a holding of the temenos. Temples are not expected to achieve financial self-sufficiency, although there is an expectation that they will contribute to the coffers of the temenos. Often, the cost for the building and maintenance of a temple is shouldered by the temporal powers that rule the realm where the temple is constructed.

## LYCEUM SHRINES

Lyceum shrines are typically built on holy sites of divine significance. They may be a place where an important holy event occurred such as the final resting place of an avatar or the site of an important battle between the Enaros and the forces of darkness. Most are relatively small, but they can grow quite large if they draw pilgrims. Very few shrines have priests assigned to them, but they may have an acolyte caretaker.

Shrines are also the primary lyceum place of worship for one wishing to commune with avatars. Each avatar has at least one shrine dedicated to them. These shrines are generally managed by hierophants who assist the faithful in their rituals.

## MONASTERIES

Monasteries are the divine equivalent of an arcane college. The monks, who may be male or female, study the mysteries of their lyceum's patron enaros. The monasteries also house the lyceum's libraries and vaults. Although some are constructed in isolated locations to allow the monks to focus completely on their work, this is not a requirement. Most of the high temples also have a monastery as part of the administrative complex.

It is expected that a monastery will strive for financial self-sufficiency only in-so-far that it does not disrupt the monks' work. Monasteries produce most of the divine reliquens for their lyceum, although they often undertake more mundane ventures to earn additional income. There is a monastic order devoted to Grethken located in the Dalelands, for example, that is well-known for their fine ciders.



## COSMOLOGY

The heavens above us deserve special attention in our discussion of the divine. It is there we find some of the most important divine constructs in existence. Lensae, Numos, the stars, comets, and a host of other celestial artifacts share this space above our heads. Each has a purpose in the grand cosmology of our universe.

### THE GOLDEN HALL OF LENSÆ

The most important celestial body is the Golden Hall of Lensae. It circles our world each day, appearing in the east in the morning and descending into the west at night. This path was established by Endros and Aros to carry the Golden Hall around the world once per day, ensuring its warming light blessed all and allowing the Enaros to watch over their children.

The Golden Hall is the holiest of holies. It is the home of the Enaros and the final resting place of the dead. For the dead, Lensae is a golden paradise, and to arrive safely at Lensae after death is every Aetaltan's dream. There they await the glorious call to join Endros and Aros in the eternal war. Lensae is also the farthest point to which one can travel from Aetaltis before one enters the eternal void.

### NUMOS

When Lensae's light passes to the other side of the world, the light of Numos shines down upon us. It lies half-way between Aetaltis and Lensae, and like Lensae, it circles our world. One side of Numos glows with a perfect, white light. The other side is cloaked in shadow. As it turns, the light waxes until it is at its full brightness, and then it slowly wanes until its light is completely hidden.

We are the first to admit that Numos holds many mysteries. Why does it wax and wane? Why does its rotation not perfectly mirror that of Lensae? Why does it sometimes appear during the day or disappear completely at night? Perhaps the answers lie in some now lost volume of the Enarosian Scrolls. Or perhaps there are some things we are just never meant to know.

Considering this aura of mystery, it should be no surprise that Numos is ruled by Aelos. She is the keeper of mysteries, after all, and it seems right that her home should leave us with so many unanswered questions.

### THE STARS

Aetaltis is enclosed in a spherical veil of essence. The only celestial body that lies beyond this veil is Lensae, past which is nothing but the endless void. The entire sphere rotates and, as with Numos and Lensae, we can watch as the stars move across the sky.

The Enarosian Scrolls, at least those available to us, do not say what the stars are, but some arcane scholars believe they are exceptionally powerful essence wells. It is thought they might be part of the divine machine that empowers and controls essence in our world. This seems likely, since their position, combined with the position of other celestial bodies, has a direct impact on certain essence anomalies such as ley lines.

I once read about a cult that worships Lensae. They seem to think that Lensae itself is a divine being rather than simply a palace for the Enaros. They believe they can call upon it directly to empower spells. As strange as it sounds, there were reliable eyewitness accounts that suggest their powers are real. Of course, there is no way to know if they actually come from Lensae.

—PORTAND

Ssynes knows the cult of which you speak. Ssynes has encountered them in the Wastes. Their power is great, and it does seem to come from Lensae, but there must be another explanation. Surely the Enaros would not allow such an apocryphal set of beliefs to persist.

—SSYNES



Almost everything in this section is wrong. I hardly know where to begin in correcting it. The Newardine have long understood what these bodies are and how they interact, and there is no more magic to it than a river flowing down a hill. I beg of you, please see me so we might correct this section.

—ISIN

We're all aware of the Newardine's colorful theories, Isin. We appreciate your input, but in this area, we will keep our own wisdom.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

I'll admit, I'm curious as to what Isin has to say. I mean, are we just going to ignore the Alliance worlds? Where do they fit into this cosmology? We know they are not the planets we see in the sky, since according to Atlan records, they didn't see the same constellations we see. I'm more than a little curious about where my people come from.

—BELLYNDA

A fascinating topic for discussion, but not useful to adventurers exploring *this* world. I ask that we table this for now.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

## COMETS AND FALLING STARS

Occasionally, a star breaks free from the veil. When this occurs the star invariably falls toward Aetaltis. As small stars drop from the sky, they shed their essence, leaving a trail of light in their wake. If there is any essence left in the star when it strikes Aetaltis, there may be a large explosion of essence near the point of impact.

The fallen star leaves behind a small lump of metal called star steel. Star steel is highly sought after for both its physical and magical properties. Finding the remains of a fallen star is difficult but not impossible. One of the best places to find and collect star steel is the Icebound Plain, where the dark colored steel stands out starkly against the snow and ice.

Large stars rarely fall. When they do, they may circle Aetaltis many times before they strike the surface. We call these comets, and they are exceptionally bright and may shine in the sky overhead for many days before disappearing over the horizon. They have long, shining tails that extend for a great distance behind them.

Comets severely disrupt the essence of our world. Comets are often portents of evil, and can cause dangerous magical anomalies. Furthermore, there is speculation that when a comet strikes the surface, the results may be catastrophic. There is some speculation that the Amethyst Sea, the Windsinger Sea, and the Pinnacle Gulf were formed when three comets struck Aetaltis.

## PLANETS

Between Numos and Lensae there are a number of curious celestial bodies circling Aetaltis. We call these bodies planets. Like all celestial bodies, their position has an effect on the essence of our world. Exactly what the planets are is hotly debated.

Our suspicion is they are worlds like Aetaltis. One conjecture is they were the early attempts to shape Aetaltis, rejected by the Enaros like a potter tossing away a misshapen pot. Others believe there are enari living on those worlds. Still others suspect they are simply part of the grand celestial machine that drives our reality, like cogs in a mill.





## ASTROLOGY

We already know that movement of the celestial bodies has an impact on our world. This includes both physical effects, such as the tides, and magical effects, such as the power of ley lines. To this end, there is a developing science around divination through the observation of the heavens.

The majority of this work is happening in Selentheia, and the early results appear quite promising. Selenthean astrologers successfully predicted a number of local disasters. The analysis of some of their earlier work also suggests they predicted a number of political upheavals in Callios, although the evidence was not identified until after the fact. It seems astrology may prove a valuable new tool in the diviners' kits.

## DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

No discussion of the divine is complete without an exploration of the fate of our spirit after death. The loss of life does not necessarily mean the end of existence. Not only does one's spirit live on, but the body may continue to function as well. It is even possible to reunite body and spirit to return a dead person to life.

## LIFE AND DEATH

To understand death, one must first understand life. A thing is defined as alive if it has an essential form of core essence—its spirit—bound to a physical form—its body. All living things, from plants and animals to the people of the Alliance and the enari, have this in common. For plants, this spirit is rudimentary and little more than a vaguely formed shell of essence. For sentient creatures, the spirit is a complex essence pattern beyond the capabilities of even the most accomplished mortal spellcaster to replicate.

When a living thing dies, the essence threads that bind its spirit to its body dissolve. At that moment, its primary state shifts from physical to essential, the body is left behind, and the spirit is freed into the Essential Plane. For lesser living things, such as plants, insects, and most animals, the spirit slowly becomes one with the ambient essence of the Essential Plane once it is freed from the body. In these cases, the spirit ceases to exist as an independent entity.

The spirits of sentient beings, however, retain their independence. They persist in the Essential Plane, and those with the ability to sense essence or see the Essential Plane may detect their presence. Transitioning from primarily physical to primarily essential is a deeply disorienting experience, and few spirits are in their right minds immediately after death. They will wander the Essential Plane and efforts to communicate at this stage are generally futile.

Fortunately, this condition is short-lived. Within days, or even hours if the proper last rites are performed, the spirit begins its final journey, drawn inexorably toward Numos.

## THE FATE OF UNCORRUPTED SPIRITS

Upon our deaths, our spirits are drawn up to the Golden Halls of Lensae. When they arrive, they join the Aetaltan armies of light to rest, train, and prepare for the final battle against the forces of darkness. It is a glorious place, and an honorable end to any life.

Visiting astrologers is one of my favorite things to do while in Selentheia. Some are certainly charlatans, but others are absolutely uncanny in their ability to divine the future. Either way, they are always entertaining, and I've never regretted the coin I've spent on their services.

—PORTAND

You act as if all of this business about death is a given. That's simply not the case. Sometimes the spirit is clearly detectable after death, but often it is not. Sometimes it lingers, but sometimes it wanders. This text suggests we have all the answers, but we really don't. I feel like you're misleading the reader by not making clear how much we do not know.

—CALABRIA

You are correct, Calabria, but what the scholars have described here does represent the normal cycle of things. I agree that there is value in pointing out that this is simply a description of the normal event surrounding death.

—ARIA

Pfaw! Glorious only if you're fine with being conscripted by a bunch of liars and hypocrites into war you didn't start.

—VRENN



Anyone else amazed that Vrenn  
hasn't been cursed or struck by  
lightning or something?

—DYSART

*I was struck by lightning, but  
I survived! If that's the best the  
Betrayers can do, then I have  
nothing to fear.*

—VRENN

So, you're sayin' I can do anything  
I want and just make up for it after  
I'm dead? Cause that's a fine deal  
indeed.

—TORRICA

Think again, friend. Numos is no  
paradise. You may get a chance to  
make amends, but you'll pay for  
those crimes. Easier and better to  
keep a clean slate in life.

—ARIA

We always bring a spiritguide  
with us on our adventures. You  
don't want your spirit cut loose in  
the Deeplands. All sorts of nasty  
things can happen to it there.

—GRAIMAK

## THE JOURNEY TO LENSÆ

The path to Lensæ is long and often difficult. It may take months, decades, or even centuries for a spirit to complete the entire journey. This passage is eased by first traveling to Numos. The performance of the last rites by a spiritguide can further smooth the way. Sadly, even then, not every spirit completes the journey. Some find themselves unable to move on, others fall prey to dark powers, while still others are simply lost in the unknown.

### NUMOS

Numos acts as a beacon in the twilight of the Essential Plane, guiding spirits on the path to Lensæ. For those that reach Numos, it also serves as a place where weary spirits can rest and gather their energy for their final journey on to the Golden Halls. Spirits may also receive guidance and advice from Aelos and her avatars to help them complete their journey.

Numos also serves as a place of cleansing for those who have done wrong in their lives. The path to the Golden Halls is open to all, even those we mortals may think of as evil, but only the good travel straight on to Lensæ. The spirits of those who have done wrong or whose spirits are corrupted must remain on Numos until they've paid penance for their past wrongs or cleansed their spirit by learning from their past mistakes.

Numos has a further significance to those who commune with the spirits of the dead. It is the last point at which one can contact a spirit before it passes on to its final rest. Summonings, resurrections, and other spells that require one to contact a spirit only work if the spirit has not moved beyond Numos. Once it leaves Numos, all hopes of calling it back are lost.

### LOST, BOUND, AND TRAPPED SPIRITS

Not every spirit reaches Lensæ. Some simply lose their way. They disappear into the endless ether of the Essential Plane, never to be seen again. Their fate remains a mystery, and every Aeltan fears such an end.

Dark magic can also prevent a spirit from reaching Lensæ. Evil spellcasters may use dark spells to bind a spirit to a body in the form of a bound undead, capture them to drain their essence, or simply hold them prisoner for whatever unholy machinations they are undertaking. Until the spirit reaches Numos, falling victim to dark magic is always a risk.

A spirit might also find itself trapped on Aeltis, becoming a ghost. They are unable to move on, bound to our world by entanglements formed in their previous life. Unfinished business, traumatic events, the presence of powerful magic, or corrupted essence can all hold a spirit back from moving on to Lensæ.

### SPIRITGUIDES

Fear not, adventurer! Perhaps you already know there is a way to avoid many of the awful fates we've just described: spiritguides. Spiritguides are mortal agents of Aelos who use special rituals known as the Last Rites to guide the spirit of the deceased on to Numos. These rituals significantly reduce the time it takes a spirit to travel from Aeltis to Numos, which in itself lowers the risk something unfortunate could happen to the spirit along the way.

The last rites also prevent necromancers and dark wizards from using the body or spirit of the deceased to create undead. The last rites fully unravel the spiritual moorings that connected body and spirit together. This way, necroman-



cers and other agents of darkness can't forcibly bind a new spirit to the body or forcibly summon the spirit back. Conversely, this also makes it impossible to raise a person from the dead with divine magic. The last rites are a truly final act.

Nearly every settlement in the Amethyst Sea basin has a spiritguide in residence. Often the local priest doubles as the spiritguide, but the role isn't always filled by a holy person. A channel to the divine makes last rites easier and more effective, but any person with the proper training can administer the Last Rites. We encourage you to ensure some member of your adventuring party is trained to perform the rites.

For those settlements that do not have a spiritguide, there are wandering guides who travel the countryside to help those in need. They move from village to village, performing last rites as needed, often in exchange for a few meals and a place to sleep. Alternatively, family and friends might transport the body of a loved one to the nearest settlement that does have a guide to avoid a delay of the last rites.

The body of the deceased is not strictly necessary to administer the last rites, but having the body makes the task easier. In addition, if one does not have the body, the rites cannot prevent the body from being used for evil purposes. More importantly, after a full cycle of Numos, it is exceptionally difficult—perhaps impossible—to perform the last rites without a body.

This next section is of particular importance to adventurers. If the body is not in one piece, or only portions of the body are available, these pieces still help to focus the last rites. Similarly, a body that is no longer intact is still somewhat helpful. For example, even the ashes of a cremated body are better than nothing.

## THE FATE OF EVIL SPIRITS

Spirits of pure darkness follow a different path. In this case we do not speak of spirits that are merely corrupted. Rather, this refers to spirits whose core essence is completely composed of dark essence. This includes endrori, abomonae, and the Fallen. These unfortunate souls are not drawn up to Lensae, but rather find themselves drawn down through the earth and into the waiting hands of Endroren. The Dark Lord consumes their spirits, and each one makes him stronger.

There are some who believe the fate of the Fallen is even more terrible. When their spirits reach Endroren, he draws the darkness out of them, which purifies their spirit. He then proceeds to consume their spirit, damning the person to an eternity of torment within the Dark Lord.

### DARKGUIDES

The fate we've described generally only applies to dark creatures. It is possible, however, for good spirits to suffer the same terrible fate. There are followers of Endroren known as darkguides who know a sacrificial rite that redirects the victim's spirit to Endroren regardless of its nature.

### DOOMCALLERS

The Doomcallers are a group that has twisted everything we've explained about the fate of spirits into a collection of perverse beliefs. Simply put, they've posited that if the ascension of spirits to Lensae strengthens the Enaros, sending more good spirits to Lensae is the secret to defeating Endroren. You can learn more about the Doomcallers in *Chapter 6: Forces of Darkness*.

I wouldn't say the last rites prevent a necromancer from enslaving a spirit. Last rites just make it a lot more difficult to use the body or spirit for evil purposes.

—CALABRIA

Sadly, this is true. Keep in mind, however, it takes exceptional power to make use of a body or spirit in necromancy after last rites are complete. Very few dark creatures wield this kind of power, so the last rites are extremely effective under normal circumstances.

—ARIA

Ssynes has encountered darkguides. Not only do they know the dark rites, most are skilled in forbidden magic.

—SSYNES





## CHAPTER FOUR

# ON ADVENTURING IN CIVILIZED LANDS

**W**ITH YOUR ACADEMIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD FIRMLY IN PLACE, WE NOW MOVE ON TO more practical matters. In this chapter we provide guidance for adventurers traveling and adventuring in civilized lands.

We begin with a general introduction to traveling in the civilized lands of the Amethyst Sea basin. We shall cover such diverse and universally important topics such as modes of transport, finding food and locating shelter.

From there we shall offer more specialized advice, focusing in turn on each of the great kingdoms and countries. In addition to the basic topics covered in the introduction, we will include and explore who rules that land, the laws and traditions you need to be aware of, a listing of powerful people and organizations, and what adventure opportunities are available to would-be heroes. You will also find a valuable collection of hints and tips shared by experienced adventurers on surviving and thriving during your travels.



# MAP OF THE AMETHYST SEA

This map on the following page may well be the single most important thing you'll find in this book. It was assembled using maps, charts, and first-hand reports from dozens of different sources to produce the most accurate map of the known world ever created. Furthermore, we sent scholars to perform a painstaking validation of the information it contains, ensuring that if you trust nothing else in the world, you can trust this map.

## GENERAL GUIDANCE

We begin with general guidance for adventurers traveling in the civilized regions of the known world. While every land has its own unique traits, our shared history as part of the Atlan Alliance means one can expect a certain amount of uniformity in what one encounters while traveling.

## THE KNOWN WORLD

The land we colloquially refer to as the "known world" is a region centered on the Amethyst Sea basin. This includes the lands immediately surrounding the Sea as well as those lands just beyond the mountains that enclose it. These lands are a mix of civilized and uncivilized areas, although thanks to our long and proud collective history, even the least civilized regions were tamed at various points in the past. In this chapter we focus only on those places that remain civilized today, covering the other regions—the wilds—in the next chapter.

## PATHS, ROADS, AND HIGHWAYS

Unless adventure finds its way to your doorstep, which I sincerely hope it does not, you will be required to find your own way there. We shall begin our examination of travel in civilized lands by discussing the safest options: paths, roads, and highways.

### PATHS

Paths are simple dirt tracks. They connect small settlements, remote locations, or seldom visited destinations. Most are little more than a trail, varying in size from wide enough for one man to walk down to a pair of ruts for a wagon or cart. Some paths are old roads or highways that have fallen out of use and are no longer maintained.

Few amenities are to be found along paths except for the occasional campsite left behind by a previous wanderer. Guards almost never patrol paths, and the only people one is likely to encounter are locals traveling on their daily business.

The good news is you are unlikely to encounter bandits when traveling by path. There isn't much point in setting an ambush along a path when it might be days before anyone even comes by. On the other hand, most paths are isolated enough that the threat of attack by monsters, wild beasts, and even endrori is much greater than on roads or highways.

### ROADS

Roads are well-established and well-traveled routes between large settlements or important locations. Many are simply glorified paths—wide packed-dirt tracks that see regular traffic. In wealthy lands, however, roads are often paved.

You act like it's a good thing, this "uniformity." I disagree. We're losing what makes our peoples unique.

—VRENN

So sayeth all who witness the inevitable evolution of culture over time.

—CALABRIA

Adventurers should plan to spend most of their time traversing dirt paths. Paved roads were more common during the Alliance period, but today most places are connected by paths.

—PORTAND

You're talking about the northern kingdoms. In Callios and Port Vale, well-groomed roads are the norm, even between minor settlements.

—BELLYNDA

Of course they keep the roads nice down there. All them merchants in their fancy silk clothes would die of fright if they got mud on 'em.

—TORRICA



Legitimate tolls? There's a jest for you. Local despots filling their pockets is all it is. I have not paid one of these "legitimate tolls" in 15 years. It is not difficult to bypass the toll houses.

—VRENN

Readers will take note that the opinions shared are those of the commenter alone and are in no way condoned by the College of New Erinor or its benefactors.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

They do not jest when they warn against crossing a ford at the wrong time. Note the high-water marks along the bank and compare it to the current level. Or ask a local if you're uncertain. Drowning during an incautious crossing is a sad way to end an adventure.

—SSYNES

Dirt roads transform into rivers of sucking mud when it rains, but paved roads remain passable even in the worst conditions. Taking paved roads whenever possible is highly recommended.

One finds ample amenities along roads in the form of inns, taverns, and way-houses (all of which we will discuss later on in this chapter). Even if the distance between settlements is a day or less, enterprising innkeepers often establish businesses along the way to cater to those who are merely passing through and don't wish to enter the town.

Most roads are patrolled by the militia or guards of the region's ruling power. This is useful, since it provides a level of security not found on paths. Unfortunately, if the guards are not honorable, they may demand travelers pay impromptu tolls for use of the road.

Speaking of tolls, be prepared to pay legitimate tolls when traveling on a road. Toll houses are commonly constructed at strategic locations, such as bridges and passes, and they demand payment for the freedom of the road. Most tolls are not overly burdensome; perhaps a few coppers or silvers depending on whether you are on foot or on horseback.

Be warned, adventurer! Attempting to bypass a toll house is a serious offense in most lands. Unless you want a hefty fine levied against you, a visit to the stocks, or worse, it's best to just pay the toll.

Despite the guards that patrol the roads, bandits are a danger on most roads. Rich merchant caravans, craftspeople with loads of goods to take to market, and wealthy travelers all make for tempting targets for criminals. Stay on your guard!

## HIGHWAYS

Many lands maintain highways. These exist not for commerce but for military purposes. They connect the most important strategic locations in the land. They are large, paved roads particularly well-maintained and well-guarded.

Although highways exist primarily to facilitate the movement of troops during times of war, they are not limited to military use. Anyone may use a highway, although one should be prepared to pay steeper tolls (a silver coin at least) and to pay them more often than on a road.

Amenities are similar to what one finds on roads, except the establishments are a bit more upscale and thus expensive. Only the boldest bandits attack travelers on highways. Tangling with the local militia is one thing; tangling with the army is something else altogether. This makes highways one of the safest ways to travel in civilized lands.

## RIVER CROSSINGS

Even in civilized lands, rivers can prove daunting obstacles. Most paths that cross rivers do so at fords. Roads, on the other hand, may provide crossing via fords, small ferries, or bridges. If a highway crosses a river, one nearly always finds a sturdy stone bridge, although in the case of particularly wide rivers, large ferries facilitate crossings.

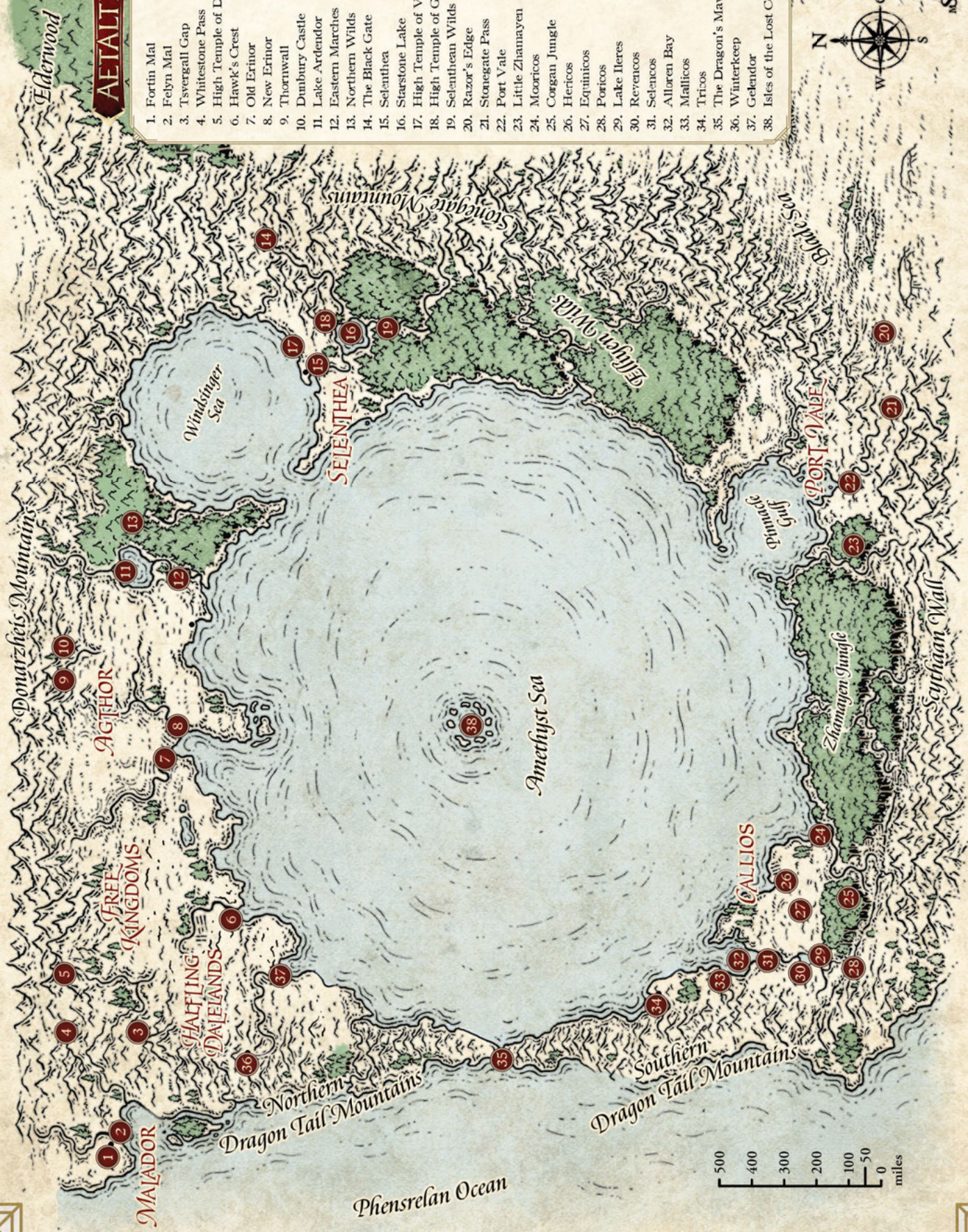
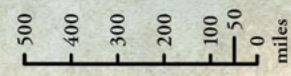
## FORDS

Fords are shallow points in the river that allow for relatively easy crossing. Keep in mind "shallow point" might simply mean at its deepest point, the river comes up no higher than a wagon's bed. It's also worth considering the time of year and recent weather. A perfectly passable ford might become an impassable torrent in the early spring or after a storm.

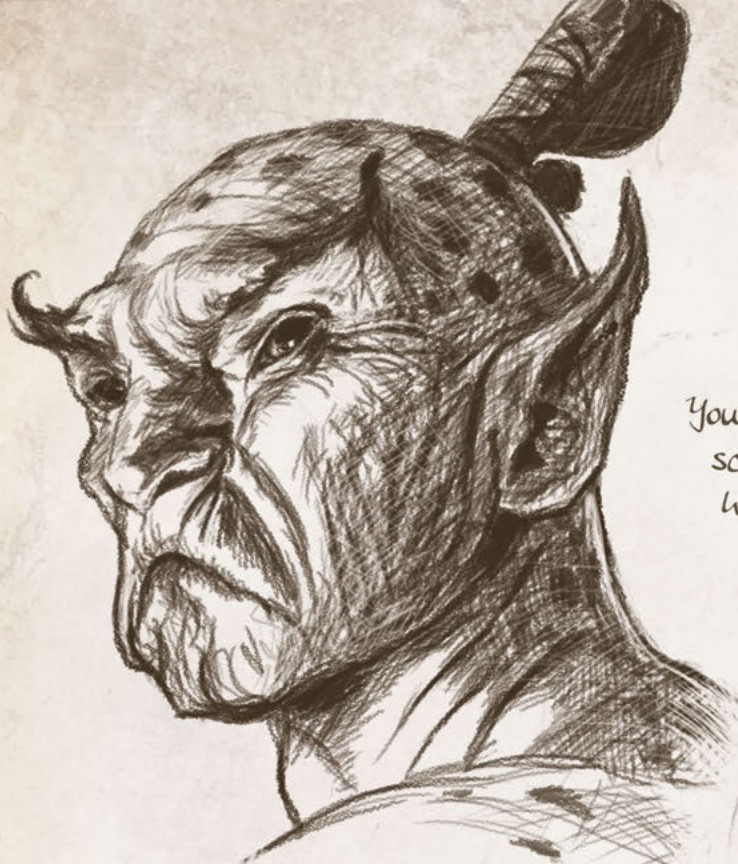


# AETALIS

- Fortin Mal
- Felyn Mal
- Tsvergall Gap
- Whitestone Pass
- High Temple of Droth
- Hawk's Crest
- Old Ernor
- New Ernor
- Thornwall
- Dunbury Castle
- Lake Ardenor
- Eastern Marches
- Northern Wilds
- The Black Gate
- Selenthea
- Starstone Lake
- High Temple of Vale
- High Temple of Grethken
- Selenthean Wilds
- Razor's Edge
- Stonegate Pass
- Port Vale
- Little Zhanayen
- Mooricos
- Corgan Jungle
- Hericos
- Equinicos
- Porticos
- Lake Ileres
- Revenicos
- Selenicos
- Alloren Bay
- Mallicos
- Tricos
- The Dragon's Maw
- Winterkeep
- Gelendor
- Isles of the Lost Coast







*Drotlinal guard, currently under  
the employ of Grezen Gold*

*Young Ellorizan  
scholar near  
Winterkeep*



*a mischievous  
pair of Fairies create  
havoc in the streets  
of New Erinor*



**FERRIES**

Typical river ferries aren't much more than large rafts. If the river is slow and shallow, the ferryman might drive the ferry with a pole. More often, a rope or ropes are tied to trees or piles on each side of the river. The ferry is then fastened to the ropes in some fashion. The ropes guide the ferry, keep it from drifting down river, and may serve as a means of pulling the ferry across if the water is too deep for poling.

Usually, but not always, there are docks on each side of the river where the ferry crosses. Often the ferrydriver lives in a house beside the dock on one side or the other. Few ferries cross at night, so larger crossings might also feature an inn beside the docks. Ferries very rarely cross when the river is high due to the danger of capsizing or being swept down river.

Most ferrydrivers also act as toll collectors. Ferry crossings are never free. Typical fares range from a couple of copper coins to a few silvers depending on the size of the river and whether you're traveling on foot or have mounts and wagons. Closer to large towns, guards and tax collectors might be deployed to the ferry docks to help manage the collection of tolls and to protect the crossing.

**BRIDGES**

It's a lucky traveler that finds a good, solid bridge spanning the river that blocks their path. Whether wood or stone, it's a fine thing to reach the other side quickly and, more importantly, dry. You may spend a few coppers on the toll, yes, but it's well worth the coin. It seems a simple thing, but after spending days on the road, a luxury as simple as a bridge is a wonderful thing.

**LAND TRANSPORT**

Let us next discuss the best means to convey yourself down the strange and wondrous roads you'll find yourself on. Will you stick to the basics, trusting your own two feet? Or would you rather acquire a horse to save your road-weary legs the ten thousand steps from here to there? There are also carriages and caravans, providing additional options for those with the coin who prefer not to travel alone.

**WALKING**

As the poet Delphrik of Malador so wisely stated, "Walking is a balm to the world-savaged soul." Truer words were seldom spoken, which is good since most adventurers will need to convey themselves by foot to their destinations. A well-made pair of boots, ideally with a cushioned sole to provide optimal comfort, are highly recommended. The cobblers of Gelendor have uncanny skill when it comes to fashioning such boots, and we encourage all adventurers to seek out such foot coverings before embarking on their journey.

**HORSEBACK**

One might also consider travel by horseback. Horses allow adventurers to pack additional gear they might not otherwise be able to carry and also helps them arrive at their destinations more rested. Unfortunately, good horses are extremely expensive, and cheap horses generally make you wish you'd saved your silver. Furthermore, they require stabling, daily care, and feeding.

There is another consideration: where adventurers go, horses can seldom follow. Will you bring your horse into the Deeplands with you? Into the magic

Watch out for crooked ferrydrivers. If the only people on the ferry are you and a couple of rough looking folks who just happen to be crossing at the same time, think twice. Odds are they are in league with the ferrydriver and half-way across you'll find out the toll has doubled.

—CALABRIA

Word of advice. The bigger the ferry, the more you'll pay. There's usually a cheaper place to cross if you're willing to walk a few hours upriver.

—BELLYNDA

Some of the bridges from the old times are absolutely stunning. The Sentinel's Walk in Port Vale is one such wonder. Glistening white marble, graceful arches, and gates adorned with a wealth of relief sculptures. The sight of this bridge alone is worth the journey, something every adventurer should see.

—PORTAND

You act as if this is a travel-guide for sight-seeing nobles. What in the depths does an adventurer care about how pretty some bridge is?

—VRENN

Beauty nourishes the spirit. Considering the horrors adventurers will witness, Ssynes thinks a few suggestions such as this would do them well.

—SSYNES



Make sure you get a war-trained mount. Your typical riding horse is worth less than a handful-a-wind in a fight. Even the smell of blood is enough to set them to panicking, much less honest battle. War-training costs a king's ransom, but it's better to spend the gold than to get thrown on your ass in front of a horde of charging endrori. Truly such a thing would be a glorious trial, but it would likely be your last.

—GRAIMAK

Some caravans will only hire lettered guards, particularly if the caravan's cargo is highly valuable.

—DYSART

Letters also provide a basis for negotiating fees. A highly lettered guard can draw a much higher fee than one who only has one or two letters of loyalty.

—BELLYNDA

Carriages? Are they serious? What am I going to do? Hop in a carriage and shout to the driver, "To the Deeplands, my good man!"

—VRENN

soaked ruins of Old Erinor? To an endrori stronghold high in the Donarzheis mountains? Certainly not! Or would you leave them tied up somewhere, at the mercy of whatever wild beasts and monsters might come by and see them as a tasty meal?

We strongly recommend adventurers that travel on horseback hire a groom and guards. The groom can see to the animal's care and needs when you are not around to do so, and the guards will ensure their safety.

### CARAVANS

Merchant caravans, carrying goods overland by cart, wagon, or even sledge, are common sights in all lands. Some are small, nothing more than a couple of produce filled wagons driven by the farmers that grew them. Others are grand processions numbering as many as a hundred wagons long and stretching into the distance with a billowing cloud of dust rising up behind it.

As a practice, caravans do not offer transport to passengers, but they are always in need of quality guards. Guarding a merchant caravan is an excellent means for an adventurer to earn a few coins en route to their destination. It requires some work on the part of the adventurer, but the benefits—including hot meals, good company, and the security of a larger party—make it worthwhile.

And think not of your caravan guard role as a one-off endeavor. Guards who do an especially good job may receive a letter of loyalty from their employer. These letters, marked with the wax seal of the merchant whose caravan was guarded, are used as proof of a guard's loyalty when applying for another post.

### CARRIAGES

If you find yourself in the possession of excess coin, consider travel by carriage. Carriages are fast, safe, and comfortable compared to other forms of overland travel. They cater to the nobility and wealthy merchants, providing service and amenities such as hired guards, meals, and stops at reputable inns.

Generally, carriages run on a regular schedule. As long as you're willing to travel when and where they are scheduled—and you don't mind sharing the cabin with strangers—these scheduled carriages are a fine means of transport. If you're looking for something private, or to travel on an unusual schedule or route, carriages are available for charter in most large towns and cities.





## BOATS AND BARGES

Whenever the option presents itself, we enthusiastically recommend travel by Phensral's Highways. Using a boat or barge to travel the navigable rivers of a realm saves you time and trouble. It's also much safer than traveling overland.

### SMALL BOATS

An adventurer looking for transport by river may wish to hire a private boat. Most are small, oar driven craft with crews of fewer than five sailors. These vessels are fine for short journeys, but less useful for covering long distances. The main advantage is these small craft can navigate shallow rivers and narrow estuaries.

### BARGES

In areas where the rivers are the primary trade routes, river barges are a common sight. These large, flat bottomed craft are pole-driven and rudder-steered. They move slowly, but travel long distances up and down the rivers. Poles and the river current are the primary motivator when they move downstream. When moving upriver, most have mules, draft horses, or oxen that pull the barge with heavy ropes from the bank.

### RIVERBOATS

Dwarven riverboats are a rarity, but they are the best river transportation available in the Amethyst Sea basin. These large vessels have room for passengers, heavy cargo, and more. Manned by crews of 10 to 50 dwarves, they are huge multi-storied ships that look like small buildings floating down the river. Dwarven riverboats are driven by rune magic contraptions that either power banks of interconnected gearworked oars, or turn large wheels like those on a mill. They are difficult and expensive to create, and the dwarves closely guard the secret of their construction.

## TRAVEL BY SEA

To all who have heard its siren song, the call of the open sea is impossible to ignore. Travel by sea is the primary means of traversing long distances around the Amethyst Sea basin. The enari were already adept at the art of sailing when the Alliance arrived and contributed a wealth of knowledge from their world's own rich nautical history. Today, residents of the Amethyst Sea basin skillfully ply the waves for food, trade, and transportation.

### FISHING BOATS

If you're planning a short trip, your best bet is to find a fishing vessel heading in the right direction. These small ships work the coasts with crews of three or four sailors. For a few coins, they don't mind taking some passengers along for the ride.

Safer to travel by water?  
Absolutely—well, except for the river pirates.

—DYSART

And the mudcruppers.

—VRENN

And crimson bilgers.

—CALABRIA

And trenchcrawlers.

—TORRICA

Yes, fine. You've made your point.  
You are a terribly negative group of people.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

Pfft. I've never had any trouble ignoring the "call of the sea."

—TORRICA

You don't know what you are missing, my good friend.

—DYSART

I spent three months marooned on an island the size of a tavern's dance floor four miles off the coast of Tricos. I know exactly what I'm missing.

—TORRICA





I owned a ship once. Take my advice. Be very choosy about your crew.

—DYSART

Are you talking about that crew of pirates you captained?

—BELLYNDA

In my defense, it wasn't until well into the journey that I discovered they were pirates. Although in retrospect, they were startlingly inexpensive when I hired them on.

—DYSART

If you're in the common room, best to sleep with one eye open. Common rooms attract thieves.

—CALABRIA

Always bargain for the private rooms. Most of the time they aren't occupied, and the innkeeper is better off giving it to you at a discount than leaving it empty.

—BELLYNDA

## SHIPS

When traveling long distances, a sailing ship is a better choice. These ships have one to three masts and vary in quality from shabby old sloops to magnificent-gilded galleons. There are only a few true passenger vessels sailing the Amethyst Sea. More often, one finds a merchant craft whose captain, when space allows, takes on passengers for added income. Most have set routes they follow, but gold is a fantastic motivator. For the right price, you might even convince the captain to add an unplanned stop to their itinerary.

## LODGING

It's the odd adventurer that stays in one place for long. Along your journey, you will almost certainly find yourself in need of temporary lodging. Even if you establish a base of operations someday, the adventure probably won't come to you!

## INNS

A good inn is an adventurer's best friend! Even the least reputable inn offers a roof over your head and a warm fire to sit by. If you're lucky, you can also enjoy a home cooked meal, some pleasant company, and maybe even a hot bath. The amenities come at a price of course, but after weeks in the wilds, we assure you, no price will seem too high for the civilized comforts that a good inn offers.

The type of rooms an inn has varies depending on the size of the inn and its quality.

- ♦ **Common Rooms** Most inns have a common room. This is a large, open chamber with space for ten or more sleepers. The nicest common rooms have cots, but straw pallets or a spot on the bare floor are more likely. The typical common room has a large hearth at one end of the chamber that serves as both the room's source of warmth and light. Spots by the hearth are highly coveted, particularly in the winter, so get there early!
- ♦ **Semi-Private Rooms** Semi-private rooms offer bunks for up to six individuals. Curtains divide the bunks offering at least the illusion of privacy. Unless one pays for all the bunks in the room, other lodgers will be placed in the remaining bunks. Semi-private rooms seldom have locks.
- ♦ **Private Rooms** Private rooms vary greatly from inn to inn. Some are little more than a closet with a bed shoved inside, while others are sumptuous suites with multiple chambers and dedicated servants. Low-quality rooms don't have locks, but they'll usually have a bar you can throw across the door at night. High-quality rooms have locks and may even provide keys you can take with you (as opposed to the more common practice where the innkeeper locks and unlocks the room whenever entry is desired).
- ♦ **The Great Room** Most inns have a great room that serves as both farehouse and pub. It is usually situated on the ground floor, just inside the main entrance, and it's used as a gathering place for locals and travelers looking for a bit of company. Boarders can sit by the fire, have something to drink, or swap news of the road. In small settlements, the inn is often the heart of the peoples' social lives. In addition to its stated purpose, the inn's great room may be put to a number of creative uses, from impromptu court room to improvised town hall. At smaller pubs and inns, the great room may also double as a common room after a certain hour.



## STABLES

Large inns often have their own stables, and stabling may even be included with the price of the room. Smaller inns will not have these services available on site, and adventurers will have to seek out a public stable, a farmer with extra barn space, or at worst, tie their mounts out front at the hitching post for the night. Although the stables are usually reserved for animals, more than one innkeeper has turned their stable into a secondary common room when the inn is especially full.

## GUILDHOUSES

Adventurers who are members of a professional guild, religious order, or other fraternal organization can usually stay at any of their group's facilities free of charge. This varies by organization, but as a general rule it is one of the standard benefits of paid membership.

The quality of the lodging depends on the organization's philosophy, the size and importance of the facility, and the adventurer's ranking in the group. Facilities seldom offer anything as crude as a common room, but semi-private accommodations are fairly typical. Most facilities also provide meals for members staying with them. As with all things, there is a limit to any group's hospitality, and adventurers who take advantage of these benefits will end up in poor standing with their organization.

Most guilds and private organizations don't look fondly on members bringing large numbers of guests into the facility. Exceptions are made if the member is of high rank, but for the common member, they are limited to at best one or two guests. This assumes, of course, that none of the guests represent a rival organization, unacceptable ethos, or other conflict of interest with the group's own mission. Most groups do not charge when accommodating guests, but it is proper etiquette for guests to present a gift of around half the cost they would have paid for similar accommodations at a local inn.

## WAYHOUSES OF LARAYIL

The Lyceum Larayil has established facilities to house travelers all around the Amethyst Sea called wayhouses. Wayhouses only have semi-private rooms, none of which have locks. Most also contain a small public shrine to Larayil, but they offer no other amenities. There are a few large wayhouses offering dozens of beds and staffed by a small team of acolytes, but most are little more than a small house with a spare room run by a solitary acolyte of Larayil.

The benefit of a wayhouse is that travelers only pay what they can afford. Even if an adventurer is broke, they may stay at least one night at the wayhouse. Whether or not you can pay, it is customary to assist the acolytes that run it with chores or other work during your stay.

Adventurers will find wayhouses in the most unlikely places. The goals of a wayhouse are spiritual, rather than financial, so the Lyceum Larayil is willing to establish wayhouses in places no intelligent innkeeper would make the investment. From lonely paths along high mountain trails to the scattered islands of the southern coast, one will find tiny wayhouses marked with the symbol of Larayil over their door, waiting for a traveler to wander by.

Telling adventurers to sleep in the stables is terrible advice. They're filled with all manner of vermin. You're likely to awaken with a mouse in your pack, fleas in your hair, and straw down your pants.

—PORTAND

Spoken like somebody who's always had a choice. Not all adventurers are well-dressed halflings. We don't all get a friendly welcome when we show up in town.

—TORRICA

We've talked about this. It's not that you're an adventurer. It's that you start yelling at everyone.

—CALABRIA

I told you. You gotta yell so they can understand you if they don't speak yer language.

—TORRICA

I, myself, hold three guild memberships just for the benefits. Good luck finding a room at the inn on marketday, but flash your guild ring and the doors fly open.

—DYSART

You passed the entrance exams for three separate guilds? I am impressed sir. You must possess rare talents.

—PORTAND

Oh, he's got a rare talent—the talent of getting gold to the right palm.

—CALABRIA

You wound me, good lady. Don't you remember that lovely pot I made you?

—DYSART

That was a pot? I thought it was a door stop. I guess I don't appreciate fine art.

—CALABRIA



Learn an instrument. Singing, playing, and dancing are a regular camp passtime for the caravan teams. If you can play, they're even more likely to invite you to a seat by the fire.

—DYSART

Avoid any place with a—what is the word? Ah, yes. A “dress code.” Avoid such establishments. That is my advice.

—GRAIMAK

Still sore about that time in New Erinor I take it?

—CALABRIA

A well-tanned regith hide is completely acceptable to wear during meals!

—GRAIMAK

Pretty sure it was the bloodstains they objected to, not the hide.

—CALABRIA

Those are badges of honor!

—GRAIMAK

## CARAVAN CAMPS

Most merchant caravans set up permanent camps along their trade routes, especially in remote areas. These camps are located in defensible spots near good sources of fresh water. Each time a caravan visits, they restock the camp with firewood and supplies before they go. Some camps even have simple shelters or rustic cabins.

Established camps like these are excellent places for traveling adventurers to spend the night. As long as you restock the wood and leave the camp in good condition, most merchants don't mind if others use them. Even if the camp is currently occupied by a caravan, the presence of a party of battle-ready adventurers is always welcomed by those traveling the dangerous hinterlands.

## MEALS

One should never set forth on an adventure with an empty stomach! I am certain you already know to pack a sufficient supply of food and drink before setting out, but after a few weeks, we promise you sticks of dried meat, hard bread, and stale water will grow difficult to stomach. Even traveling in civilized lands, you won't have access to a kitchen or larder where you can prepare meals. You will need other sources of food to sustain you.

## PUBS

Pubs focus more on the sale of beverages than food, but most offer simple meals of bread and cheese for hungry patrons. For most of you, this is at least a step above rations. Furthermore, most pubs are filled with folks more interested in enjoying themselves than judging the other patrons, making them a fine place for a group that might otherwise stand out in a crowd. As a result, a tired party of adventurers coated with a layer of dust from the road will receive a better welcome at a pub than they might at a more respectable establishment.

## FAREHOUSES

Farehouses specialize in preparing and serving meals. They offer beverages, but their focus is food. The quality of farehouses varies greatly. Some are quite basic, offering a seat on a bench at a shared table, serving inexpensive stew and other basic dishes. Others are extravagant affairs with private tables, specially trained personal waiters, and elaborate multi-course meals.

## TAVERNS

Taverns fall somewhere between a pub and a farehouse. They have the atmosphere of your typical pub, but serve a wider selection of food. Taverns are common in settlements that aren't large enough to sustain both a pub and a farehouse. Most end up serving as the community hall as well, doubling as the place where the locals come to meet, govern, and celebrate whenever the occasion demands it.

## FARESELLER'S STALL

In larger towns and cities, some merchants set up stalls along the street to sell meals in the same way other merchants sell their goods. We call these shopkeepers faresellers. These stalls don't offer seating. Rather, they sell prepared food you can take with you. Baked meat pies you can hold in your hand, a scoop of stew (bring your own mug), or roast meat and vegetables skewered on a stick are all common menu items. Fareseller's stalls are particularly popular among people who live in cheap urban apartments, since this type of housing seldom includes a kitchen.



### FARESELLER'S CART

Some faresellers serve prepared meals from specially outfitted carts. These are common in markets, outside theaters, or anywhere large numbers of people gather on an irregular basis.

### HUNTING AND FISHING

Put away your pole and bow, friend. While hunting in the wilds is fine, hunting in civilized lands is a tightly controlled activity. In some kingdoms, only the noble class are allowed to hunt, and even then only in certain places. A wandering adventurer caught poaching the lord's game faces stiff penalties, ranging from fines to a lengthy imprisonment. The same goes for fishing. Local guilds often pay a small fortune to secure exclusive fishing rights in an area, and unless you want to anger a mob of local sailors, best to just buy a fish at the market.

## AGTHOR

Agthor is the shining star of the Amethyst Sea basin. It embodies the hopes and dreams of everyone in the region and has achieved a level of success unmatched by any kingdom in the past 300 years. Blessed by wise rulers, fertile land, and good fortune, Agthor is the region's best hope for defeating the rising tide of the endrori.

The Agthor we know is only around 80 years old. The official date of the country's founding is the 25th day of Alantra in the year 343 AC, the date Malinar Drakewyn declared himself the High Lord of Stormkeep, although it wasn't until some years later he adopted the region's old name of Agthor for his new land.

The path to becoming the peaceful and prosperous land you see today was a rocky one. By 343 AC, Malinar defeated the most dangerous of the Agthorian warlords, but it wasn't until the battle of Falinon Fields that he subdued the last of them. Sadly, Malinar never lived to see the peace that followed, since he was mortally wounded in that same battle. He died shortly after accepting his foe's surrender.



Wild creatures belong to Vale alone. Ssynes does not require permission from some pompous noble.

—SSYNES

I'm sure the Warden'll be perfectly happy to accept this very convincing argument. Let us know how that goes.

—CALABRIA

"The shining star of the Amethyst Sea basin?" Laying it on a bit thick, aren't we?

—CALABRIA

Have you been outside of Agthor? They're not entirely wrong.

—PORTAND

They're not entirely right, either. This might describe the coastal cities and the lands along the Dragonsky River, but come out to my home sometime. You don't get peace and prosperity overnight just 'cause some soldier came in and raised a flag. The outlands are a different world.

—CALABRIA

Can someone explain to me why High Lord Drakewyn isn't King Drakewyn? Far as I can tell, Agthor's a kingdom like any other.

—TORRICA

You should have paid closer attention when we reviewed the history chapter. The prophecy told of the coming of the High Lord.

—BELLYNDA

Oh fer the love of Elendra. You can call me an orog, but it don't make me one.

—TORRICA



That “scrupulous and lawful” piece can get in the way of adventuring.

You’re largely free to do as you like in the wilder regions of Agthor, but even if you have the best of intentions, break the law in civilized lands and you’ll find yourself neck deep in trouble.

—CALABRIA

The spoken truth! I spent three months in an Agthorian jail near Elbray after I chased a band of cultists onto the estate of some noble lord. I got the bastards, but the noble still called out the guard and had me arrested, never mind that I’d probably just saved him and his family from a grisly death.

—DYSART

Dignified robes? Ha! Ain’t nobody never looked dignified in one of them robes. Gimme a tunic and trous any day over those things.

—VRENN



## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The largest portion of Agthor’s population is human, although dwarves, halflings, cheebats, and fey make up significant numbers as well. The people of Agthor speak Agthorian, a much-evolved variation of the old Atlan tongue. Most people in the south and west also speak Common, so travelers should have no trouble communicating, even if they do not speak Agthorian.

Agthorians wish to spread the ideals of peace, security, and equality by restoring the once-proud culture of the Atlan Alliance. They believe their mission extends beyond their borders and feel duty bound to spread their ways to the rest of the world—even if rest of the world never asked for their help. Agthorians are suspicious of those who resist their aid and advice, and they are certain if they persist in their efforts even in the face of resistance, the inevitable outcome is a better life for all.

Agthorians are scrupulous and lawful. They follow the laws of the land out of respect for the local authorities and a sense of moral responsibility to society. They take great pride in their culture, to the point they incorrectly assume anyone would be honored by conversion to the Agthorian way of life. This sometimes leads to troubled relationships between Agthorians and the people of other lands.

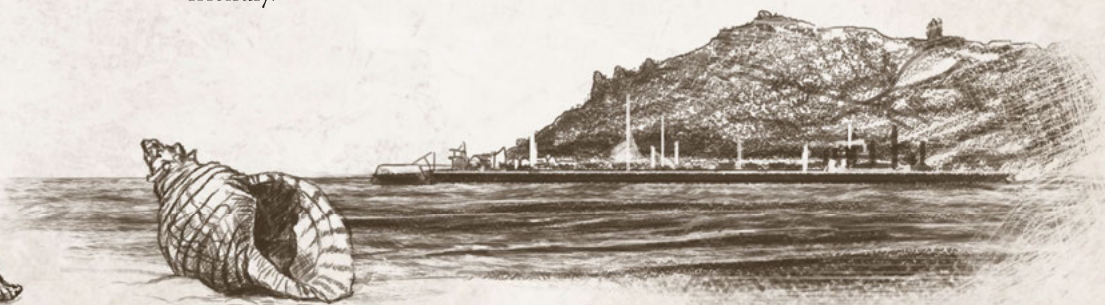
Broad flowing lines and bright colors are heavily used in Agthorian clothing. They keep the number of colors used in any one article small and restrict patterns to simple geometric forms. Women wear dresses and men wear a tunic and trousers, although on formal occasions men wear dignified robes. Women grow their hair long but keep it pinned up with artful ornaments. Men shave daily, regarding excessive facial hair as a sign of barbarism, and they keep their hair cut short and close to the head.

## FRIENDS AND FOES

Agthor maintains strong diplomatic ties with Malador, the Dalelands, all the city-states of Callios, and Selentheia. Trade treaties bind the nations together, and geographic distance has helped limit military confrontations with these countries and kingdoms. Their relationship with the Free Kingdoms, however, is not as peaceful.

The leaders of the Free Kingdoms are convinced Agthor wants to absorb their land, and relations between the two regions are strained in the best of times. Agthor and the Free Kingdoms actually went to war in 407 AC. The only thing that prevented a long and terrible conflict was the invasion of an endrori army in 408 AC.

The two sides put aside their differences to overcome the greater threat. It took two years to defeat the endrori. By the time the fighting ended, both sides had lost their taste for war and a treaty was struck. The peace holds to this day, although it would be a stretch to say the Free Kingdoms and Agthor are friendly.





Agthor must also contend with the Kingdoms of the Eastern Marches. A handful of the warlords Malinar Drakewyn defeated establishing his control of Agthor retreated east to the edge of the Northern Wilds. Spies and scouts later discovered the warlords established new holdings there, some of which are of considerable size and power today. These new kingdoms regularly test the eastern borders of Agthor, but since they are so far from settled Agthorian lands, and because the threat of the failing wards and the Free Kingdoms are more pressing concerns, dealing with them is not a priority at this time.

## LAY OF THE LAND

Agthor's southern border is the coast of the Amethyst Sea. The warm ocean currents provide a bounty of fish and other seafood for the coastal cities. The entire coastal region is dotted with settlements, and it is one of the heaviest populated lands on the Amethyst Sea. The country also enjoys a large number of navigable rivers, the banks of which are heavily populated as well.

The majority of Agthor's territory is the fertile prairie of the Agthorian Plains. Irrigated by wide rivers and warm southern rains, this wide, rolling plain has rich soil perfect for the cultivation of grain crops. In addition, the northern plains offer extensive meadowlands perfect for herding cattle, horses, and sheep.

The Donarzheis Mountains form Agthor's northern border. In the foothills, you'll find relatively productive shallow mines that produce iron, copper, and coal. The Eastern Marches are the official eastern border of Agthor, but long before you reach the Marches, the plains give way to woodlands. These are the first hints of the thick deciduous forests typical of the Northern Wilds. These woodlands produce fine stocks of game and supplies of lumber.

## VILLAGES, TOWNS, AND CITIES

Most Agthorian villages are small farming communities. The houses are wattle and daub with heavy, thatched roofs, although one sees stone buildings as well, if the stone is plentiful. Small towns and villages typically have a central council building where the local government meets, and most have at least one shrine or temple.

Large Agthorian towns and cities are wealthy and clean. The buildings are built from cut stone, plastered or stone fronted brick, or even marble. Their streets are nearly all paved and magical amenities, such as streets lit by orbs of Aelos at night, are relatively commonplace. Taxes and tolls are higher than in other kingdoms, but the benefits of these taxes are enjoyed by all.

## TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

Agthorian roads are well-maintained and feature regular patrols of guards or militia. Inns and taverns are plentiful, and carriage service is available between the largest towns and cities. The highways are the envy of the Amethyst Sea basin. Many of these are restored Alliance highways. The Uminase Highway, which runs the length of the coastline, is especially impressive.

Agthorians take pride in their rich nautical heritage, which they claim is inherited from their Alliance ancestors. Fishing is one of Agthor's primary industries, so you should have no trouble finding boats to hire. Agthor also boasts a large fleet of sea-going merchant vessels. Although Agthorian captains are less eager to take on passengers than Calliosans, they will offer passage at a slightly elevated price.

Stay as far from the land between the two kingdoms as you can. It's filled with irritable soldiery itching for a fight who won't think twice about attacking you "just to be safe."

—BELLYNDA

Even worse, the commanders and nobles entangle adventurers in their schemes, using them as deniable assets to do their dirty work.

—CALABRIA

Unless, of course, you enjoy that sort of thing. I've made more coin taking on "special jobs" along the border than I ever made exploring the Deeplands.

—DYSART

Kingdoms of the Eastern Marches? I think you mean the Warlords of the Eastern Marches.

—TORRICA

By all objective measures, they are in fact kingdoms. We had a vigorous debate with General Borschein on this exact point. In the end, High Lord Drakewyn agreed that, however distasteful it may be, he could not disagree with our scholarly assessment.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

Central council building? He means the pub, right? That's where most villages meet to discuss local business in my experience.

—VRENN

You should clarify that the benefits described are enjoyed by all *citizens*. If you're not Agthorian, you'll be subject to a variety of tolls, fees, and other fines if you want to take advantage of these wonderful benefits.

—BELLYNDA



They're not wrong about this. I never thought I'd "enjoy" a road, but those highways are something else. They're incredibly wide, in perfect condition, and constantly patrolled by Agthorian regular army. Even better are the Resting Groves, guarded stopping points where you can rest, get a drink, and sit in the shade a bit before you head out again. If it's more than an hour to the next town or village, you'll find one.

—PORTAND

A Maladoran merchant company recently launched a riverboat in the Oldbarrow River in the Dalelands, so Agthor no longer holds the distinction of having the only riverboat outside of Malador.

—PORTAND

That quick and certain response from the guards is a good thing... assuming you're not the one committing the crimes. Not that you would, of course.

—DYSART

There's a lot of truth to the point about the welcome adventurers receive in the outer lands. I'd rather help the kind people on the edge of the wilds any day over being barely tolerated by the rich folk along the coast. You won't get a bag of gold from these people, but you'll get a warm welcome, an amazing home-cooked meal, and a sense of appreciation money can't buy.

—CALABRIA

Agreed. Young adventurers often underestimate the worth of such things.

—SSYNES

River travel is exceptionally important in Agthor, and the region boasts a number of large, navigable waterways. Boats and barges regularly make their way up and down the rivers. Agthor is also the only land outside of Malador where a large number of Maladoran riverboats are in operation.

## LAW AND ORDER

Agthorian laws are strict but fair, and well-funded town guards ensure that they are enforced. That said, bandits, thieves, and muggers are no less common in Agthor than anywhere else in the Amethyst Sea basin. The key difference is the town guard is far more likely to come to your aid in Agthor than on the streets of Hawk's Crest or Selentheia.

## ADVENTURING

Adventurers are generally welcomed in Agthor, thanks in no small part to the Declaration of Talimane. Although the Declaration didn't magically make every adventurer honorable, it did open the way for more honorable folk to become adventurers. Over the past twenty years, this has led to a positive shift in who chooses an adventurer's life in Agthor, and thus how they are perceived.

Adventurers are especially welcome along the borders of the outlands. Despite his best efforts, Drakewyn has struggled to field enough troops to keep people safe from the growing number of endrori. Although the people in these regions don't have much in the way of gold or coins, they'll show adventurers a level of hospitality they'd never experience in the secure south.

The areas in greatest need of adventurers in Agthor are the northern and eastern outlands. Lands such as the Duchy of Vaun, which lies at the very edge of Agthor's map, often find themselves waiting days, weeks, or even months for aid. This inability to quickly field soldiers and experts to every place in need is part of why Drakewyn made his declaration in the first place. Because of situations ranging from recently rediscovered Deepland entrances to marauding bands of endrori, there's always someone in need of aid in the outlands.

## ADVENTURE SITES

The following areas are of particular interest to adventurers:

- ♦ **Donarzheis Mountains and the Northern Wilds** Although neither of these are part of Agthor, Agthor offers access to both of these regions. You will find more information about both of these locations in the following chapter.
- ♦ **Old Erinor** Old Erinor is perhaps the best-known adventuring site in Agthor. It is such a distinctive location that we've prepared a special entry describing it later in this chapter.
- ♦ **Scir of Dunbury** Over the past year, the Scir of Dunbury has garnered the attention of Agthorian adventurers. Local authorities are struggling to deal with a rising number of endrori sightings. Towns and villages are regularly threatened by a variety of monsters and dark creatures, and Dunbury Castle lacks the troops to respond to every report. There is speculation an earthquake that occurred near the town of Thornwall a short time ago opened a number of forgotten Deepland entrances in the mountains, allowing an influx of dark creatures to rise to the surface.



## INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following notable people and organizations are active in Agthor:

- ♦ **Aetaltan League of Adventurers** The League is the only adventuring guild in Agthor sanctioned by High Lord Drakewyn. Full membership is granted only to adventurers who have proven themselves honorable, courageous, and heroic. The guild has chapter houses located throughout the Amethyst Sea basin.
- ♦ **Heroes of Agthor** This party of well-known and beloved adventurers long operated out of Dunbury Castle in the Duchy of Vaun, but in recent years they've been spotted across Agthor and beyond. Songs and stories of their exploits are especially loved by bards and can be heard in taverns and pubs across the land.
- ♦ **Lord Calaysis Drakewyn** Calaysis is the Lord of Castle Port and the son of Sarsis Drakewyn, the younger half-brother of Valinar's father, Risis. Until such time Valinar marries or has a child, Calaysis remains next in line for the throne. Calaysis and Valinar have a fractious relationship, although it is unlikely it would ever spill over into armed conflict.
- ♦ **Lady Selenin Drakewyn** Valinar Drakewyn's older half-sister Selenin is a thorn in the High Lord's side. She is charismatic and intelligent, but her belief that arcane magic is evil creates a great deal of friction between her and the High Lord. She resides in Mornmount, a large town in the northwest of Agthor near the border with the Free Kingdoms.
- ♦ **Lyceum Alantra, Lyceum Lensae, and Lyceum Toletren** Three of the Enarosian Lyceums have their High Temples in New Erinor. These serve as both the holy and temporal centers for these important religious organizations. The First Archon of each Lyceum resides at their respective temple complexes, and the devotees who enable the good works of the Lyceums across the Amethyst Sea basin operate from offices there.
- ♦ **High Lord Valinar Drakewyn** Valinar Drakewyn is the reigning High Lord of Agthor. He took the throne in the year 408 AC, and under his wise leadership, the region has enjoyed a period of unprecedented peace. He rules from New Erinor, but is known for traveling throughout Agthor to observe first-hand the condition of his people so he may better understand their needs.
- ♦ **Keepers of Purity** A small but growing religious organization, led by Lady Selenin Drakewyn, which professes all arcane magic is evil and only divine magic is safe to use. To date, their activities have been limited to proselytizing, although there are signs they aim to take a more proactive stance in the future. Based in New Erinor, this group has recently started expanding to the Free Kingdoms.

*Continued on page 106*

I'm going to go ahead and say what apparently these poor scholars cannot. Calaysis is an obnoxious tit who cares about no one but himself. He hates the fact he isn't High Lord, and considering how important it is to him to win at all costs, I can promise you bad things will come of this.

—BELLYNDA

Agreed. He's been gettin' chummy with the "kings" of the Eastern Marches for a while now. Past time for the High Lord to read the writing on the wall.

—TORRICA

I'd like to reiterate that the opinions of our esteemed contributors are their own and do not reflect the official stance of Agthor or its leaders.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

The description of Drakewyn is about what I'd expect from the fellows who wrote this, but to be fair, it isn't far off. As far as autocratic dictators go, he isn't half bad.

—DYSART

Adventurers need to beware of the Keepers of Purity. There are troubling rumors about arcane spellcasters disappearing in areas where the Keepers are active. And you don't want to know what they say about fey. It's scary stuff.

—CALABRIA



## OF SPECIAL INTEREST

## OLD ERINOR

The ruins of Old Erinor are a nightmare realm of magical chaos. Located on the strategic point at the mouth of the Argenforte River and just south of some of the richest agricultural land in the region, it stands as a constant, tangible reminder of the horrors unleashed by the Cataclysm. The ruined city is also a powerful draw for adventurers who dream of finding fame and fortune, just as the legendary Malinar Drakewyn did a century ago.

## HISTORY

At the height of the Alliance's power on Aetaltis, Old Erinor (known simply as Erinor in those days) was second only to Atlanor in richness and beauty. Graceful curving canals wound between majestic marble buildings, and shining towers pierced the sky. In the grand plazas, sunlight played off water cascading from magically enhanced fountains, and down at the docks, the market along the bay was abuzz with activity both day and night. At the center of the city stood its world gate, the largest and busiest of its kind.

Then the Cataclysm came, and it all ended in a heartbeat. When Erinor's world gate exploded, a wave of essence poured out and engulfed the unsuspecting populace. The results were catastrophic and unpredictable. In some places, reality was permanently altered to a state of unnatural madness, while in others, whole swaths of the city were replaced by terrain from an unknown world. The disaster turned the city and surrounding countryside into a patchwork quilt of chaos.

Few travel willingly into the ruins of Old Erinor today, save adventurers. Of the handful of explorers who do enter, most never emerge.

## LAY OF THE LAND

Before its destruction, Old Erinor was the largest city in the region and home to almost 250,000 people. The Alliance built it in a series of concentric circles, with wide canals separating them. On a hill at the center of the city stood the forum, and at its heart was the world gate. The sea port sat on the side of the city facing the Gulf of Agthor. A bustling river port lay on the other side of the city where the Argenforte River flowed into the canals.

Unfortunately, what we used to know of the city matters very little today. According to reports, those areas of the city still distinguishable at all lie in ruins. Even if you know your destination, you may not find it, since entire city blocks have been magically moved to other parts of the city. Many areas are barely recognizable, warped and twisted by magic. Still others are gone completely, replaced by terrain from some other Alliance world.

## UNIQUE AND INTERESTING FEATURES

Runeboats once plied the canals of Old Erinor, carrying travelers around the city in magical comfort. Powered by dwarven runestones, these self-propelled marble ships were enchanted to float as if built from wood. Explorers report some of these magical craft are still operable.

They moved the highways to pass around the ruins of Old Erinor, even built new bridges to cross the Argenforte River, but you can still see the ruins from the road. It's a good way off and the trees obscure most of it today, but you can spot the broken towers above the trees and see the old roads leading to it.

—CALABRIA

The lights are what unnerve me, especially if you approach it by sea. There are nights where the whole thing is lit up like it was three hundred years ago, but get a little closer and they start to wink out one by one until the whole thing goes black.

—PORTAND

Sometimes the lights change as you watch. Once while passing the ruins, we tried to approach. At first, the yellow lights changed to blue. Then, as we drew nearer, they merged into a glowing, green mist, swirling between the collapsed buildings. I wished to continue, but my traveling companions lost their nerve.

—GRAIMAK

But the treasure. Truly, I have never seen such treasure as I saw in Old Erinor. Breathtaking.

—DYSART

And you're not fabulously wealthy today why?

—BELLYNDA

A fair question. We had to abandon all the treasure we collected to escape the Fades. Oh, but the treasure.

—DYSART



## PRIMARY THREATS

The beastfolk are the only creatures that can stand to live in the ruins. Born from the same madness that grips Old Erinor today, they are strangely adapted to this chaotic landscape. They've claimed portions of the city as their own and don't look kindly on intruders.

## OTHER THREATS

Besides the infinite variety of monsters that inhabit Old Erinor, the beastfolk have peppered the area with traps. This is in part to keep out adventurers but also to defend against the other monsters that live here.

## LEGENDS AND LORE

As the wave of pure essence passed over the city, it trapped many victims in a place outside of time. These tortured souls are forced to constantly replay the city's final moments in a ghastly parody of life. Unwary adventurers may find themselves imprisoned in this realm as well, since failing to escape before the replay of the disaster completes traps the adventurer as a permanent fixture in the eternal drama.

In some parts of the city the people were melded with their surroundings, creating new and terrible creatures. People half-stone and half-flesh, multiple people melded into a single, lumbering, many-headed monster, and individuals eternally sheathed in flame are just a few of the horrible combinations of animate and inanimate found here.

Old Erinor also had an extensive network of underground passages and halls constructed by the Alliance's dwarven allies. Some of these are even said to connect to the Deeplands. Due to the dangers of entering the ruins, no Warder has been able to verify whether the seals on these entrances still hold.

No one is sure what happened to Old Erinor's world gate. Most gates were physically destroyed when the Cataclysm struck, but a few are known to have survived. While none of these have been salvageable, explorers have reported that the gate at Erinor is intact. If so, it's possible the gate could be reactivated. Unfortunately, only two people have even caught a glimpse of the gate, so this remains a tantalizing mystery.

There are more different types of beastfolk living in Old Erinor than anywhere I've ever seen.

—DYSART

I have no idea how they survive. It's the most dangerous place I've ever been, and that's saying something. To be quite honest, it's just dumb luck our party got out with our lives.

—BELLYNDA

Based on my time there, I believe a powerful entity of some kind controls the city. There's an order beneath the chaos if you look for it, and it suggests to me the strange going-ons are less random than they seem. If I'm right, it's possible the beastfolk cut a deal with it—whatever it is.

—CALABRIA

Those other creatures are like beastfolk without the beast. Stonefolk, firefolk, woodfolk, and more. The strangest I heard tell of are a tribe of people made completely from glass.

—BELLYNDA

I'm certain there are open tunnels in there, but the fact endrori never come out of the ruins should tell you something about the level of danger.

—CALABRIA

But the *treasure*!

—DYSART



*Old Erinor as seen from our ship on Pendroth Bay.*



Many adventurers are unaware that on the first Laborday of each month, the college raises a tent on the adjacent market square. You can bring any old book, artifact, or trinket to the tent, and the scholars there will attempt to tell you about it. It's an excellent way to learn more about strange things you find or see on your adventures.

—ARIA

And they'll do it for free.

—BELLYNDA

Calling the Compact a document is like calling New Erinor a village. The Compact consists of something like 27 large volumes filled with rules and regulations.

—DYSART

The Compact doesn't just govern the city-states. It contains rules for everything related to diplomacy or commerce at all levels of society. You can't loan your friend a shovel without consulting the Compact.

—DYSART

Well, that's an exaggeration, but I think the scholars will get the idea.

—CALABRIA

An exaggeration? Volume 23, Section 297.45a, On the Loan of Handheld Garden Implements for Use of Fewer Than 30 Days.

—DYSART

Continued from page 103

## KEY LOCATIONS

The following are important cities, landmarks, and locations found in Agthor:

- ♦ **Castle Port** Castle Port is the easternmost city in Agthor. One might almost call it a large town, but its busy port is one of the most important in the country. If one is following the stonewise current around the Amethyst Sea, it is the last deep-water port before Selentheia. The Lord of Castle Port is High Lord Drakewyn's cousin, Calaysis.
- ♦ **College of New Erinor** One of the largest and most respected institutions of learning in the Amethyst Sea basin. The college hosts researchers, students, and professors who specialize in a wide range of studies, from ancient history to the arcane arts.
- ♦ **High Temples of Alantra, Lensae, and Toletren** New Erinor is unique in that it is home to not one, but three High Temples of the Enaros. These temples and their associated temple complexes house the governing bodies of the Lyceum Alantra, Lensae, and Toletren.
- ♦ **New Erinor** New Erinor is the capital of Agthor. It sits at the mouth of the Dragonsky River and is distinctive due to its intertwining canals, which are reminiscent of the Alliance style of city-planning. At its center sits the ancient stonehold-turned-palace known as Eldrith Keep.

## CALLIOS

In the bustling city-states of Callios, wealthy merchants compete for notoriety in an endless parade of pomp, pageantry, and opulent excess. Social climbing is a fine art, and those who hold the wealth hold the power. Home to the Amethyst Sea basin's most influential merchant houses, Callios is a land where gold holds sway over all else.

The country's formal name is the Calliosan League, although most people refer to it simply as Callios. Callios consists of eight city-states, each ruled by one of the great merchant houses. The city-states are bound in a loose alliance by the rules outlined in a document called the Calliosan Compact.

The first version of the Compact was ratified in 242 AC after the overthrow of the old monarchy by the merchant league. The Compact governs appropriate diplomatic and business practices and is designed to avoid conflict and ensure the maximum possible profits for everyone involved. A notable feature of the Compact is while it maintains the absolute sovereignty of each city-state, citizens may move freely between the city-states of Callios and enjoy the same rights wherever they go.





## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The majority of Callios's people are human and cheebat. People from other lineages are found there as well, but in far fewer numbers. The Calliosan tongue is based on old Atlan, but it also makes heavy use of old Cheebatan words. Every Calliosan speaks Common, so adventurers will have no trouble operating in Callios, whether they speak the language or not.

To Calliosans, life is a pageant, and the people of the world are the players. They live for the drama, passion, and excitement life brings, and they drink up its pleasures in whatever form they are found. They live to excess, and at times beyond their means, but few cultures compare in richness and vivacity to that of the Calliosans.

Calliosans are loud, boisterous, and unashamed; embarrassingly so for individuals not used to their ways. They do everything to extremes, pushing boundaries and trying to bring everyone else along for the ride. They see life as an exquisite experience to indulge in, and they're eager to savor the many pleasures life offers.

Ruffles, lace, richly dyed silks, and heavy velvet all compete for attention in Calliosan clothing.

Their attire is further ornamented with jingling trinkets of precious metals, beads, and glittering jewels. The current styles also favor wide-brimmed hats accented with garishly colored feathers. Hair is grown long and worn in flowing curls by men and women alike, a style which requires a great deal of preparation. Calliosans who fund adventuring parties, a popular hobby investment among the wealthy, will often display elaborate embroidery on their clothes and capes that display the many accomplishments of their bonded adventurers.

Something I love about Callios is that any time, day or night, you can find a party or celebration to attend with little to no effort.

—PORTAND

I had a Calliosan patron for a number of years. If you don't mind getting dressed up and being put on display at a party every now and then, it's not a bad way to go.

—CALABRIA



*Mysterious,  
veiled scythaa  
at a market in  
Port Vale*



I think the word you meant to use here was “customers,” not allies.

To the Calliosans, everyone is a potential customer.

—VRENN

Yeah, what they do ain’t war. War is when two sides fight to the finish to achieve unquestionable victory.

I know war. What the city-states engage in is more like a mass duel. Everyone meets in a predetermined place, has time to set up their forces, and then fights for a set amount of time. At the end of it, if neither side surrenders, the leaders of the city-states who ain’t part of it declare a winner. Crazy people, all of ‘em.

—TORRICA

If the city-states would work together, they could solve the problem of the pirate clans in a season, but that will never happen.

Unfortunately, they compete against one another to defeat the clans, each city-state trying to be the one to single-handedly put an end to the threat.

—BELLYNDA

“Friendly engagements” between ships from the city-states over who controls a particular zone of patrol are as common as fights with the actual pirates.

—DYSART

Not only does the jungle dominate the eastern border, but it is always trying to take back land the Calliosans carved out. If farmers abandoned those rich soils, it’d revert back to jungle in just a few years.

—ISIN

## FRIENDS AND FOES

Callios has cultivated strong diplomatic ties to all the other countries and kingdoms in the region. These ties are vital to maintaining their trade empire and even include diplomatic agreements with the oft maligned Port Vale. At the same time, they do not allow any relationship to grow so close it might upset their other allies.

The greatest diplomatic tensions in Callios are between the city-states themselves. Although their relationships are governed by the Compact, the merchant houses that control them are extremely competitive. They cooperate only insofar as they must to achieve mercantile success.

Unfortunately, not every dispute has a peaceful resolution. In fact, at the time of this book’s writing, Tricos and Mallicos are poised to go to war over the control of a newly identified deep port that lies midway between their two territories. Unless the merchant council that rules Callios is able to resolve the dispute, it could be a bloody spring for these two city-states.

There are also the pirate kings and queens. Half a dozen pirate clans prowl the coast from the Dragon’s Maw to the Zhamayen Jungle. Each is led by a self-proclaimed king or queen, and a few have assembled formidable fleets. Although the pirate clans attack one another as often as they attack merchant vessels, they remain a thorn in the side of the Calliosan navy.

## LAY OF THE LAND

Callios has a mild climate, favorable currents, and is rich in natural resources. The coastal regions are rocky and infertile, but the central regions between mountains and sea are relatively well-suited to agriculture. In the southwestern hills, you’ll find some of the greatest deposits of precious metals and gems on the Amethyst Sea.

Callios’s western and southern borders are formed by the southern spur of the Dragon Tail Mountains. The mountains are sparsely vegetated, and they are riddled with harrowing cliffs and hidden ravines. The eastern end of Callios has much more vegetation and rich soil, but it quickly merges with the untamed wilderness of the Zhamayen Jungle.

## VILLAGES, TOWNS, AND CITIES

The cities of Callios are known for their grandiose architecture and monumental public buildings. The merchant houses that vie for power in the city-states construct magnificent edifices to demonstrate their economic superiority to their rivals and the world. Some of this wealth trickles down to the middle- and lower-class citizens, but lines between the different economic classes are quite pronounced.

Towns and villages in Callios only reflect a little of the ostentation seen in the cities. More often, these smaller settlements exist solely to support their city-state patron. They contain buildings of sun-bleached plaster that can barely be differentiated between one another. The houses are typically grouped in tight clusters and connected by narrow alleyways.



## TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

All of the city-states are interconnected by a system of well-maintained and tightly guarded roads and highways. Every river is bridged, typically with a wide stone bridge, and amenities such as inns and taverns are plentiful. There is also a wide selection of “pleasures,” as the Calliosans call them, available along these roads. These range from common brothels to elaborate performance venues to museums of oddities. All are designed to lure travelers in and part them from their hard-earned coin, some by fair means but many by foul.

You can always take the back roads and avoid all of this, but be warned they are almost completely ignored by the city-states. Most are barely maintained, and few are guarded. The goal, of course, is to push you to stay on the main routes so you won’t miss all the pleasures, merchants, and tolls that are found there.

Callios boasts the largest fleet of merchant vessels on the Amethyst Sea, and their captains are always happy to take on passengers to earn a few extra coins. The land has few navigable rivers, limiting river travel to boats and small barges. The exception is the Greater Lorian River flowing out of Lake Ileres. A set of ingenious locks, built during the Dwarven Age, allow travel all the way from Alloren Bay to the port at Revencos on Lake Ileres.

## LAW AND ORDER

Calliosan law favors the wealthiest citizens, but it is governed by a philosophy that has a benefit for the lower classes. Those with wealth and power are held to a higher standard than those of the lower echelons. When a person is found guilty of a crime, the punishment for those with wealth or power is far more severe than anything a commoner might face. Of course, those with wealth often avoid a guilty charge all together, undermining some of the system’s value.

## ADVENTURING

The Calliosan outlands have frequent problems with monsters, both of the natural variety and creatures from the Deeplands. The city-states have little interest in anything beyond a few dozen miles from their capitals, leaving the outlanders to fend for themselves. You will find ample opportunities for heroics in these areas.

The lure of wealth from mining precious metals and gems leads many a greedy prospector to delve too deeply. When a mining team breaks through into the Deeplands, adventurers are called to explore the area and determine the level of danger it poses to the mine and the surrounding communities.

If you wish to stick closer to the cities, there are opportunities there as well. The Calliosan merchant houses avoid open war, but when an issue cannot be resolved at the negotiating table, they sometimes look for creative solutions. They regularly hire adventurers to undertake covert operations on their behalf, and the pay is typically quite good. Unfortunately, this type of work strains the boundaries of “right” and “moral” for many adventurers.

I’m not ashamed to admit I enjoy the pleasures. The museums are a favorite of mine. Some of these are extremely entertaining. There is, however, another reason why adventurers should visit these. Most of the “skeleton of an abomonae” or “sword that once belonged to an avatar” are ridiculous fakes, but every now and again you come across an entrepreneur who got their hands on the real thing. Get them to spill where they found it, and you’re on to your next adventure.

—BELLYNDA

Is that how you found the Fellstar Staff?

—CALABRIA

Indeed, it is.

—BELLYNDA

Most of the ships are owned by the merchant houses, and the captain just works for them. The houses will tell you to book passage through them, but if you slip the coin straight into the captain’s pocket, you can cut your costs in half.

—BELLYNDA



Nothing to add to the story of Blackstone Isle, Dysart? Some additional information about that pirate attack maybe?

—BELLYNDA

I am baffled as to why you think I'd know anything about that at all. I am an adventurer! Not a thief. Although I will say, that was an ingenious operation. Whoever was behind it is surely a force to be reckoned with.

—DYSART



*Calliosan  
trader at  
Hericos*

## ADVENTURE SITES

The following is a list of places of particular interest to adventurers:

- ♦ **Blackstone Isle** To the northwest of Tricos, one finds Blackstone Isle, a ring-shaped island formed by a natural crescent of rocky cliffs that are the remnants of a long-dormant volcano. Long before the island's discovery, a portion of the eastern cliffs collapsed entirely, creating a narrow inlet to a protected cove. A section of the western cliff partially collapsed, although not to sea level.

Around 150 AC, one of Allorean Farsky's war captains constructed a keep in the partially collapsed gap on the west side of the ring. A few years later, she mounted a pair of massive iron doors in a gap on the east side. The result was a naval outpost and royal shipyard of unprecedented security.

The island was abandoned around 200 AC when the royal coffers began to run low. It remained deserted until 375 AC, when it was claimed by a member of Tricos's Golden Star, Alasandro Veras. Veras converted it to his personal treasury. Unfortunately, a pirate attack in 409 AC severely damaged the keep and left Veras nearly broke. Once again, the island fell into disuse.

At some point during the past 14 years, however, pirates took control of the island. Today it is rumored to be under the control of the notorious pirate queen known as Folly. Considering the island's natural defenses, dislodging them from the island may prove extremely difficult and is a golden opportunity for adventurers.

- ♦ **Blade and Banner Mines** Ever since Blade and Banner shut down its mines in the mountains west of Mallicos, adventurers have wanted to find out why. Prior to their abrupt decommissioning 35 years ago, the mines produced a tremendous amount of gold, silver, and platinum. Officially, no one is allowed into the mines, but many adventurers try to get in all the same.
- ♦ **Phensral's Highway** A few miles west of Hericos is an ancient highway. Its construction techniques are similar to those used to build the leyways, but there are no ley lines in the area. Even more puzzling, the road appears to go straight into the ocean and continues along the ocean floor as far as anyone has dared follow it. Who built it, why, and where it leads all remain mysteries.



- ♦ **Titanstone Keep** At the source of the Titanstone River stands a ruin of enormous proportions. The scale of the place has led to speculation it was constructed by and for giants. The river itself emerges from the center of the ruins, not as a trickle but as a gushing torrent. There are suspicions much of the fortress lays beneath the ground, possibly linking to the Deeplands.

## INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following notable people and organizations are active in Callios:

- ♦ **Calliosan League** Collectively, the heads of the eight merchant houses that rule the city-states of Callios make up the membership of the Calliosan League. Although on paper the league is an alliance of city-states, the heads of the eight houses are the real rulers of this land. Twice each year, they meet in Tricos to discuss matters of state.
- ♦ **Lyceum Elendra** The Lyceum Elendra selected Revencos for its high temple in no small part due to the natural beauty of the place. Once established, the Lyceum's presence helped to solidify Revencos as the center of the arts in Callios, and in some people's estimation, for the entire Amethyst Sea basin.
- ♦ **Lyceum Zervas** With Zervas as the patron of merchants and trade, it is no surprise the Lyceum Zervas chose to place their High Temple in Callios. The First Archon lives in a luxurious palace on the grounds of the temple complex. The Lyceum owns a small fleet of merchant vessels that often compete with those of the Calliosan merchant houses, a point of occasional friction between the organizations.
- ♦ **Merchant Houses** There are over three hundred registered merchant houses in Callios. Many have offices in other cities around the Amethyst Sea basin, and the most powerful of these houses rule the eight city-states of Callios.
- ♦ **Queen Folly** Queen Folly is the most powerful of the pirate kings and queens. Her ships have terrorized the coast of Callios for almost twenty years now, and the price on her head is nearly 100,000 silver. It is believed her headquarters is Blackstone Isle near Tricos.

Friction is a nice way of describing the tensions between Lyceum Zervas and the Houses. The Houses are not pleased that their donations to the temple often end up funding Lyceum Zervas's trade expeditions. On the other hand, they don't dare upset Zervas. This places them in an uncomfortable position. The resultant intrigue is fertile ground for adventurers willing to get their hands a little dirty in the affairs of the wealthy and powerful.

—CALABRIA

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*Cheelatan 'Singer', at the docks of Hawk's Crest. One must pay him to stop!*



It's a shame you decided to present Callios in a single entry. Every one of these city-states is a land unto itself. There are similarities between them, for sure, but they offer a veritable cultural buffet of wonders and variety.

—PORTAND

Portand is not wrong. Mallicos, for instance, didn't earn the nickname "House of Cloak and Dagger" for nothing. It's home to some of the most powerful spy networks in the known world, and you've described them here as "short on cash."

—CALABRIA

The mechanical lifts in Poricos are fascinating. The craftsmanship is masterful, some of the finest I've seen. I cannot help but wonder if there was a gearworks nearby before the Cataclysm.

—ISIN

I highly suspect that the wealth of Revencos comes from more than just lock tolls and the sale of scenic villas. There is a rumor circulating that there is something of immense value—or perhaps power—at the bottom of the lake. If it exists, House of the Blue Lily almost certainly controls it, although I cannot begin to guess what *it* is.

—BELLYNDA

## KEY LOCATIONS

The following are important cities, landmarks, and locations found in Callios:

- ♦ **Equenicos** Equenicos sits on a hilltop in the plains, midway between the Titanstone and the Greater Lorian Rivers. It is controlled by the House of the Dragon's Wing, who made their fortunes trading in grain and horses.
- ♦ **Hericos** The city-state of Hericos is the capital of the Calliosan spice trade and the second wealthiest city-state in Callios. Ruled by the House of Destiny, they manage the spice camps east of the Titanstone River and control Callios's spice trade.
- ♦ **High Temple of Elendra** In addition to its role as the heart of the Lyceum Elendra and importance as Elendra's holiest shrine, the complex surrounding the high temple is the most prestigious school of the arts in the Amethyst Sea basin. Sculptors, painters, musicians, dancers, and more flock to Revencos in the hopes of training at this legendary school.
- ♦ **High Temple of Zevas** The High Temple of Zevas is both a holy site and a grand market. Goods from across the Amethyst Sea basin are traded within its walls, and merchants often make use of this neutral ground for contract negotiations and the finalization of trade agreements.
- ♦ **Mallicos** Mallicos is the second-largest city in Callios, but also the poorest. The House of the Blade and Banner, which rules the city, secured incredible wealth by mining the Dragon Tail Mountains for precious metals. Unfortunately, about 35 years ago something happened that caused Blade and Banner to shut down all its mines. The House and its city have been hemorrhaging money ever since, and people are fleeing the city-state for cities with more to offer. Mallicos is attempting to remake itself as a shipping center, but has only achieved moderate success.
- ♦ **Mooricos** South of the plains and west of the Titanstone River is the Cor-gan Jungle. Less dense and dangerous than the Zhamayen Jungle, it is a rich source of rare woods. At the edge of the forest sits Mooricos, the city-state run by House of the Elder Oak who controls the jungle's products.
- ♦ **Poricos** Tucked away in the foothills of the Dragon Tail Mountains, Poricos features a distinctive terraced construction. Ingenious mechanical lifts provide access to the different levels of the city. The House of Lensae's Glory made its fortune trading in gems and precious metals and rule Poricos today.
- ♦ **Revencos** Arguably the most beautiful of the city-states, Revencos was built on a chain of islands along the shores of Lake Ileres. A network of canals run between the islands, and people move about the city primarily by boat. The High Temple of Elendra occupies an entire island on the southern end of the city. House of the Blue Lily, which controls the city, runs an overland trading empire and has caravans operating in every kingdom of the known world. They also control the locks used to bypass the falls on the Greater Lorian River.
- ♦ **Selencos** Every city-state owns fleets of trade ships, but the majority of these are based out of Selencos's deep water port. The city is ruled by House of the Silver Anchor which, curiously, made its fortune not from shipping, but from port management.
- ♦ **Tricos** Tricos was the capital of the Kingdom of Callios in days gone by. It is the oldest city in Callios and is the administrative capital of Callios today. House of the Golden Star, which rules Tricos, made its fortune in banking. Tricos is also home to the High Temple of Zevas.



## FREE KINGDOMS

In the years immediately following the Cataclysm, a visionary group of nobles and military leaders joined together to forge a dream. They conceived of a collective of autonomous kingdoms where each is ruled in whichever way met the unique needs of their people. At the same time, a combined High Court would stand at the ready to provide guidance, leadership, and support in times of desperate crisis or to settle intractable disputes between member kingdoms. That was the dream, anyhow.

As the years passed and less idealistic children inherited thrones from aging parents, the dream of the Free Kingdoms faded. The modern reality is a fractious collection of kingdoms stuck in a quagmire of land disputes, hereditary conflicts, and greed-induced warfare. Every spring, the drums of war beat as dozens of petty kingdoms vie for power, land, and honor. If not for the perceived threat of absorption by Agthor and the real threat of attack by endrori, it's likely the treaties that hold the kingdoms together would have dissolved long ago.

The High Court remains the sinew that binds the kingdoms together. It is the final arbiter of disputes after the dust of war has settled, and it manages the collective's relationships with the outside world. It is the last echo of the dream that inspired the grand experiment of the Free Kingdoms.

Each autumn, when the harvest is over, the kings and queens of the Free Kingdoms travel to Hawk's Crest and come together at the High Court for their annual conclave. They are presided over by the High Queen or High King, an individual appointed to the post for a ten-year term by a straight vote of the collected rulers. The person selected must be of noble blood, but may not rule a kingdom of their own.

The conclave is equal parts diplomatic convention and social gathering. Peace is made, marriages are arranged, disputes are settled, and far too often, new wars are declared. In addition, matters impacting the collective kingdoms are addressed with solutions decided upon by the High King or Queen.

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

More than half the population of the Free Kingdoms are humans. The rest are a mix of drothmal, dwarves, and halflings. Other lineages are rarely found in the Kingdoms. This is due in no small part to the Freefolk's tendency toward xenophobia. Fey in particular must remain alert. Freefolk distrust magic, and in their eyes fey are the embodiment of magic, making them inherently dangerous.

The Freefolk language is a heavily accented dialect of the old Atlan language. Most merchants and public officials also speak Common, but very few among the peasantry do so. Adventurers planning to travel in the Free Kingdoms would do well to learn a bit of the Freefolk language.

Freefolk desire protection from threats of the outside world. They expect the next attack to come at any moment, whether it's from endrori clawing their way up from the Deeplands, a neighboring kingdom trying to steal what they've built, or the arrogant fools in Agthor trying to undermine their way of life. A powerful leader with the strength to protect their people is, in the Freefolk's opinion, the only real solution. Pledge yourself to that leader, serve them well, and they'll keep you safe from the infinite evils of Aetaltis.

I have a love-hate relationship with the Free Kingdoms. On one hand, the patchwork of laws make it relatively easy to go about the business of adventuring. Run into problems in one kingdom? Go 25 miles in any direction and you're over the border. Problem solved. Plus you can find paying work just about anywhere. Everyone needs something in the Free Kingdoms.

On the other hand, every day is a roll of the dice. You go to sleep in a peaceful town and wake up the next day to discover it's at war. In the morning you're traveling through a land where everyone treats you as a hero, and by the afternoon you're in a place where they're trying to burn you at the stake for consorting with dark powers.

It's kind of a beautiful mess if you know what to expect, but a bit of a shock if aren't prepared for it.

—CALABRIA

Is this all the attention you're giving to the Freefolk fear of magic? There are places in the Free Kingdoms where they literally burn people at the stake if they think they're wizards. The Free Kingdoms are not a good place to be if you are an arcane spellcaster.

—SSYNES

Agreed. This deserves significantly more emphasis. And the bit about the fey? I would never travel in the Free Kingdoms openly if I were a fey.

—ISIN

*Continued on page 116*



## THE UNDERCITY OF NORENTOR

Beneath the streets of Hawk's Crest is a labyrinth of subterranean passages winding through the buried ruins of an Alliance city that once stood there. During the Cataclysm, the entire city sank into the ground, and today the streets, houses, temples, and causeways of the old city form an underground metropolis populated by ratfolk, lizardfolk, and worse.

### HISTORY

The city of Hawk's Crest was unwittingly constructed atop the grave of the Alliance city of Norentor. When Norentor's city gate collapsed during the Cataclysm, the magical backlash caused the entire city to sink into the ground. In the time of chaos following the Cataclysm, the city was all but forgotten.

Long after Norentor's destruction, the founders of the Free Kingdoms selected the same strategic site at the mouth of the Serenth River for their capital city. For years, no one knew about the Undercity, but recent expansions to Hawk's Crest's sewers have uncovered the ruins.

As it turns out, the people of Hawk's Crest weren't the first to discover the ruins. Following the Cataclysm, beastfolk of all kinds, especially ratfolk and lizardfolk, made homes in the tunnels running through the ruins. Later, criminals and outcasts joined them, taking advantage of the hidden labyrinth as a place to hide or conduct their illicit dealings. They further expanded the tunnels, eventually creating a shadow city hidden from the people above. Until now, that is.

### LAY OF THE LAND

The swallowing of Norentor was as if someone set the city in a giant hole and then poured liquid dirt over it. Streets, rooftops, parks, and alleys were all covered, but the interiors of buildings whose doors and windows were shut remained clear of debris. This meant a horrifying, lengthy death for any residents trapped inside. Their remains are found throughout the ruins to this day. Over the years, the new residents of Norentor excavated many of the roads, turning them into a web of tunnels that provide passage throughout the Undercity.

They didn't just find out about the Undercity. People had been saying for years it exists. A more accurate statement might be to say that for years, many people didn't believe it existed. That is what changed.

—DYSART

Don't forget the endrori. More than a few endrori lurk in the tunnels of Norentor, and their numbers grow every year. It's a serious problem the High Queen had best resolve soon or she'll regret it.

—VRENN

Perhaps you should mention the other things living down there? The magic from the Cataclysm created some monstrous creatures. They prowl the tunnels still, horrible things one would not wish to encounter into in the dark.

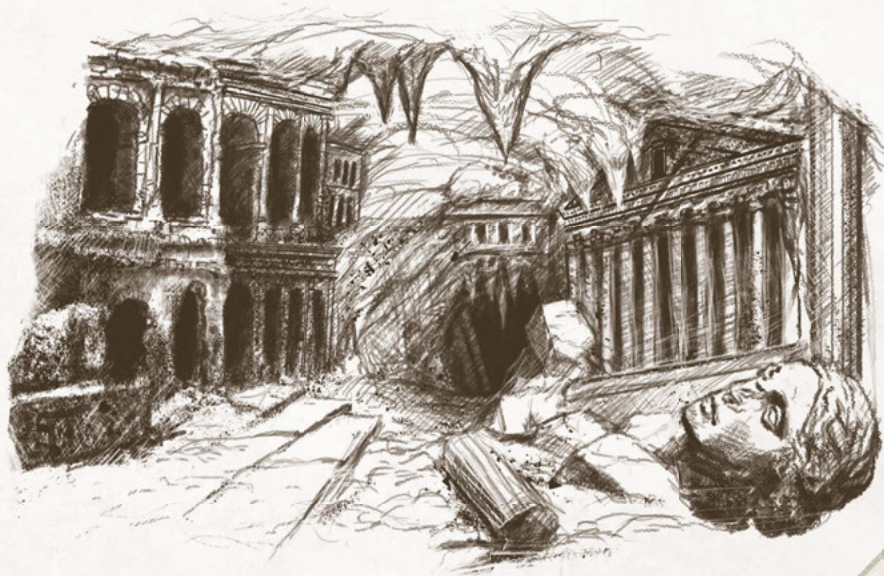
—ISIN

There's a theory that most of the beastfolk in the Undercity are descendants of the city's original residents. Since most types of beastfolk are the result of wild magic from the gates twisting people into monsters. Odds are a lot of these creatures just never left.

—CALABRIA

Beastfolk aren't monsters. They're people like you and Ssynes. Some are good, some are bad, and most just want to live their lives.

—SSYNES





## UNIQUE AND INTERESTING FEATURES

While the surface dwellers in Hawk's Crest did not know about the Undercity, the residents of Norentor certainly knew about the surface. Recent explorations have uncovered many exits out of Norentor and into Hawk's Crest. Apparently, the people of the Undercity have been scavenging from the surface world for years, unbeknownst to the High Queen, her court, and the upper city's residents.

## PRIMARY THREATS

The people of the Undercity don't like surface dwellers. Anyone from above who ventures into the Undercity is likely to end up killed, enslaved, or worse. Most live in loose tribes, and they are fiercely territorial. They are also known to trap the tunnels and passages to deter trespassers.

## OTHER THREATS

A variety of Deepland creatures have found their way up into the Undercity. These creatures, well-adapted to underground life, feed on the Undercity's other residents. The Undercity residents drive most of these out eventually, but some resist removal and have permanent lairs.

## LEGENDS AND LORE

The stories of endrori in the Undercity has led many to believe there is an unsealed entrance to the Deeplands there. This is one of the primary reasons that an urgent call for adventurers has gone out. They need heroes to come and explore the dangerous tunnels of this newly discovered realm and search for that Deepland entrance.

It has become clear the organized criminal elements of Hawk's Crest, and perhaps even a few of the less reputable noble houses, have known about the Undercity for years. The High Court is seeking proof of this so the perpetrators may be prosecuted for failing to report the Undercity to the authorities.

There is evidence a powerful bound undead is operating in the Undercity. The most frightening rumors say he is amassing an undead army and plans an assault on Hawk's Crest. The truth of this has yet to be verified.

Adventurers who have reached the center of the Undercity report its city gate is missing. Rather than being destroyed, evidence suggests it was actually disassembled and moved, although why, when, by whom, and to where remains a mystery.

Some people believe the beastfolk of the Undercity are poisoning the water supplies of Hawk's Crest. Proponents of this theory point to the city's inordinately high incidence of illness as proof.

The Alliance is said to have had a secret college of magic in Norentor. No one is sure what sort of research the college performed but the story is that it was military in nature. They say the study focused on magically altering soldier's bodies to improve their combat abilities.

If you're looking for an entrance, I recommend you check out the warehouses and shops along the wharf. A fair number of these are built right up against the cliff wall, and more than a few extend under the cliff. In the backs of these buildings you'll sometimes find secret entrances to the Undercity. You'll have to pay the building owner a few silver for access, but it's one of the easiest ways in.

—CALABRIA

Can't verify the story about that powerful undead? No problem. I'll verify it. This bloke is not your typical bound undead. He's sane and he's smart. Real smart. And he's got a good number of other bound undead serving him. I wouldn't call it an army, but he's planning something for sure.

—TORRICA

And how exactly would you have come across this information?

—CALABRIA

You ain't the only one with "sources," Cal.

—TORRICA

Blame the Undercity for their annual bouts of plague, do they? It's nothing a few more clean wells, baths, and fountains wouldn't solve. I seldom speak negatively about a place, but that city is filthy.

—PORTAND



This is both a mad way to live and a painfully accurate description of the common Freefolk. I've never seen a more frightened, paranoid bunch. Their nobility does little to soothe them in this regard, since the more their people fear, the more the nobility is needed.

—CALABRIA

So you are calling them cowards?

—GRAIMAK

Absolutely not. They might be afraid, but they'll fight to the death against the things that frighten them. Just make sure that you don't get painted as one of those "scary things."

—CALABRIA

Apparently, you choose not to speak of the countless peasant uprisings by the people who "willingly play their part."

—SSYNES

He's right. Many a noble has lost their head after pushing the common folk too far.

—BELLYNDA

Let's be honest, shall we? Most of the Free Kingdoms' so-called nobility have only been noble for a couple of generations at best. Power in the Free Kingdoms isn't a platform but a pendulum.

—VRENN

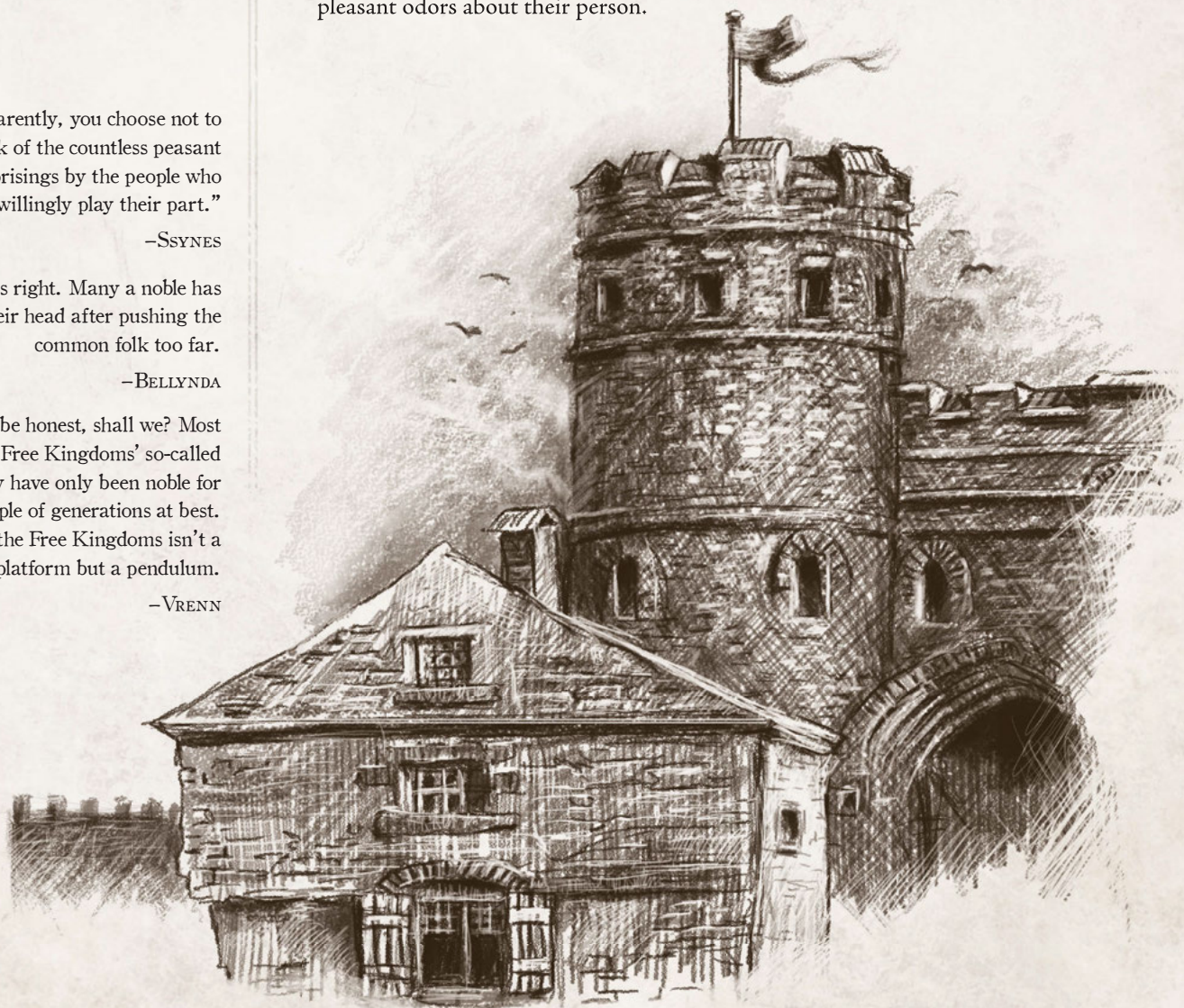
*Continued from page 113*

Freefolk know their role in society and willingly play their part. Some are born to rule, others are born to labor, and failing to know one's place will undermine the security for which everyone works so hard to achieve. This isn't to say the Freefolk don't occasionally feel jealous of the nobility or resentful of their labors, but they are a practical people. Just because you don't like a thing doesn't mean it isn't for the best.

They are deeply religious, and highly suspicious of outsiders, especially fey. They are dutiful and loyal, taking seriously their responsibilities to those both above and below them. In this way one gains honor, and honor is a thing that is never taken lightly.

Commoners live simple lives, and their clothing reflects this. It is sturdy and plain, designed for work, not show. Men and women keep their hair relatively short, never allowing it to grow past their shoulders. Head coverings usually take the form of hoods or scarves. Grooming is saved for special occasions, and outsiders will immediately notice the distinct odor of Freefolk homes.

The appearance of the nobility is similar to that of the commoner only finer. Their clothing is made from high-quality cloth dyed in bright colors. Hoods and scarves are often embroidered with fanciful designs. They accent their clothing with ornaments and jewelry made from precious metal and gems. The nobility also places more emphasis on grooming and go to great pains to avoid any unpleasant odors about their person.





## FRIENDS AND FOES

The only strong alliance the Free Kingdoms has is with Malador. Diplomatic scholars suspect this is because Malador doesn't judge the Free Kingdoms for their many internal conflicts. As long as the Free Kingdoms remain true to their agreements, Malador doesn't much care what happens inside their ally's borders. The relationship is a solid and boring with fair but uninspired trade allowances for each side—which suits Malador just fine.

The relationship between the Free Kingdoms and the Dalelands is best described as uncomfortable. The Dalelanders don't really trust the kingdoms that share a border with them, and they stand stubbornly ready to defend their land if needed. The thing that truly holds the Free Kingdoms at bay, however, is Winterkeep. The circle of mages is officially a part of the Dalelands, and the Free Kingdoms have no desire to make Winterkeep their enemy.

Agthor is the Free Kingdoms' most feared rival. The High Court remains convinced Agthor wants to absorb the Free Kingdoms, and the current peace between them is more of a constrained hatred than a true peace. Each side expects the other to cross the Three Sisters River at any moment and reignite hostilities.

The real reason the Free Kingdoms don't want to engage in war with their neighbors, however, is they're far too busy fighting amongst themselves. The very autonomy and independence the High Court promises each leader also perpetuates a state of constant struggle within the Kingdoms. In the Free Kingdoms, war is a right protected by the Court, whereas peace is a personal choice with no guarantees.

## LAY OF THE LAND

In the eastern Free Kingdoms lay the fertile flatlands of the western Agthorian Plains, while in the west are the densely wooded highlands of the Dragon Tail Mountains. To the south are gently rolling hills marching down to the sea, and to the north stand the towering, snow-capped peaks of the Donarzheis Mountains. Cutting through the center of the nation is the mighty Serenth River, which empties into the Amethyst Sea at the city of Hawk's Crest, home to the High Court.

The Free Kingdoms also control two important mountain passes. The first, Whitehorn Pass, cuts north through the Donarzheis Mountains providing access from the Amethyst Sea basin into the lands of the Icebound Plain. The second, the Tsvergaal Gap, cuts west through the Dragon Tail Mountains and is the only overland connection between the basin and the kingdom of Malador.

## VILLAGES, TOWNS, AND CITIES

Most people in the Free Kingdoms earn just enough to survive and little more. Their homes are simple wattle and daub buildings framed with heavy beams and covered by thick, thatched roofs. Scattered among these humble dwellings are the manors of the Freefolk nobility. Half palace and half fortress, these impressive stone edifices are designed to provide optimal defense while simultaneously serving as a shining symbol of the owners' wealth and status.

Towns with even minor strategic importance are walled and will have a castle to defend them. Additional fortified outposts dot the landscape at key tactical locations. The security offered by these outposts often attract a tavern keeper, a trader, a few farmers, and some craftspeople. They make their livings serving the needs of the soldiers stationed there, and in time may serve as the seeds of a new town.

I wouldn't call their relationship with Malador an alliance. More like a treaty of mutual indifference.

—DYSART

I'm more concerned by whispers suggesting the High Court has been in contact with the Kingdoms of the Eastern Marches. If the High Court recognizes, or worse allies with, the Kingdoms of the Marches, that could spell real trouble for Agthor.

—BELLYNDA

There are an unbelievable number of Deepland entrances in the Donarzheis north of the Free Kingdoms. If the wards keep failing and the Free Kingdoms do not fund a more aggressive effort to reseal them, we'll face an extremely dangerous situation soon.

—ARIA

I concur. In fact, based on my calculations, I expect that the situation will reach a tipping point sometime during the next 8 months.

—ISIN

So you're saying I should cancel my sightseeing trip to the northern Free Kingdoms. Noted.

—DYSART

Bah. There are already Liberators up there clearing the halls as the wards fail. It's just business as usual. Nothin' to get all bothered about

—VRENN



The Serenth is one of the most heavily trafficked rivers I've seen in my travels. In some places, usually near the largest towns and cities, there are so many boats you can almost walk from one bank to the other across their decks.

—PORTAND

The High Court won't admit it, but there is evidence that more than one of the kingdoms are currently under the sway of dark creatures. In one kingdom, the current queen is a shadowmask, and I can prove it. In another, I don't know what is sitting on the throne, but it isn't human, no matter what it looks like.

—CALABRIA

If the proof is so convincing, why hasn't anyone done anything?.

—PORTAND

Cause there are plenty of nobles that'll happily look the other way if the situation works to their benefit, damn the long term consequences.

Same as anywhere, really.

—TORRICA

## TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

There is no consistency to the roads and highways of the Free Kingdoms. The quality of the road and the amenities it offers depends entirely on which kingdom you're passing through at the moment. In some kingdoms, the roads are constantly patrolled by aggressive soldiers, while in others, you can travel for a day without seeing a single guard.

The only exceptions are the coastal highway and the mountain passes. All three of these passes are under the rule of the High Court. They are all well-maintained, well-guarded, and generally safe to travel.

A multitude of ports dot the Amethyst Sea coast, although the most important is Hawk's Crest. In Hawk's Crest, you'll find ships from across the Amethyst Sea basin and can easily book passage to wherever it is you're going. The rivers are heavily trafficked as well, especially the Serenth, which cuts through the center of the Kingdoms. Travel on the Serenth is controlled by the High Court, but when traveling on other waterways, expect the same patchwork of control you find on the roads.

## LAW AND ORDER

There is no common set of laws in the Free Kingdoms. Each ruler sets the law as they see fit and may change the law at any time. Accepted custom in one kingdom may be punishable by death in another. Those not familiar with the Kingdoms are strongly urged to find a local guide to avoid unfortunate legal misunderstandings.

## ADVENTURING

If you know how to fight, you can find work in the Free Kingdoms. There is always a war going on somewhere, and the Freefolk lords and ladies pay well for the services of adventurers willing to take on mercenary work.

The political chaos of the Free Kingdoms also provides cover for dark-hearted souls seeking to grow their personal power. Corrupt mages, blood thirsty warlords, and worse have all used the unrest of the provinces to hide their nefarious schemes. With the Freefolk nobility distracted by their own plotting, it often falls to adventurers to protect the common folk from these evils.

As kingdoms rise and fall, large tracts of land are regularly abandoned, sometimes for years at a time. These places revert to their wild state and are often infested with chaos-spawned beastfolk, vile monsters, and sometimes even endrori. Many lords and ladies of the Free Kingdoms prefer to ignore these problems if they don't pose an immediate threat, since they know eventually some brave adventurer will come along and clear the place out for them.

## ADVENTURE SITES

The following are areas of particular interest to adventurers:

- ♦ **Northern Kingdoms** As you'll read elsewhere in this entry, there has been a surprising number of attacks by endrori in the northern kingdoms. It is unclear whether this is due to the failing of multiple gates, the collapse of a single large gate, or something else altogether. Adventurers are sorely needed in those realms.
- ♦ **Undercity of Norentor** While the bustling capital of Hawk's Crest seems an unlikely place to find ruins or monsters, adventurers who travel there are in for a surprise. The founders of the Free Kingdoms built their capital atop the ruins



of old Norentor, the first Alliance settlement on Aetaltis. According to legend, when the Cataclysm struck, the entire city of Norentor sank into the ground. A detailed description of the site is provided elsewhere in this chapter.

## INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following notable people and organizations are active in the Free Kingdoms:

- ♦ **High Queen Elannia Sareth** The reigning High Queen is Lady Elannia Sareth of Caldor. It is the 8th year of her reign, and despite the fact she is only 39 years old, she has navigated the treacherous waters of the court like a veteran diplomat. Under her guiding hand, the western kingdoms have finally achieved peace, something that seemed quite impossible prior to her work. The greatest challenge she faces now is the rising number of endrori attacks in the northern kingdoms.
- ♦ **Lyceum Droth** The Lyceum Droth operates out of a large complex of buildings on the northeastern side of Hawk's Crest near the old foundry. Unlike most Lyceums, the High Temple is not part of this complex. Rather, the High Temple is located on a windswept mountain peak east of Whitehorn Pass.
- ♦ **Neithelian League** Of particular interest to adventurers is the recently assembled Neithelian League. This collection of relatively small kingdoms has come together recently to fight off an endrori uprising that threatens their lands. Of especial note to our readers, the kingdoms have put forth a call for adventurers to aid them in their fight. For this reason, we've provided a more detailed description of the kingdoms in this alliance on the following page.
- ♦ **Keepers of Purity** This Agthorian based organization professes all arcane magic is evil and only divine magic is safe to use. Not surprisingly, this antagonist view of arcane magic has easily attracted followers in the Free Kingdoms. The High Queen is keeping a careful watch on the group, since its leader is Lady Selenin Drakewyn, the half-sister of High Lord Valinar Drakewyn of Agthor.

## KEY LOCATIONS

The following are important cities, landmarks, and locations in the Free Kingdoms:

- ♦ **Hawk's Crest** The great city of Hawk's Crest lies at the mouth of the Serenth River. It is the largest city in the Free Kingdoms and the seat of the High Court. Its port hosts ships from throughout the known lands, and it sits on the great coastal highway that runs from Gelendor to Castle Port.  
Much of the city is built on cliffs overlooking the river and sea, and sweeping bridges over the river connect the eastern and western districts. One of the first sights of Hawk's Crest a traveler is likely to see is the Atlan Light. This towering lighthouse was constructed by the Alliance at the height of their reign, and it still stands today, guiding ships into port.
- ♦ **High Temple of Droth** The High Temple of Droth is a massive, looming stone structure carved into the slopes of Mount Galodrian. It has more in common with a fortress than a temple, having none of the fancy relief carvings, gold leaf, and elaborate decoration typical of a High Temple of the Enaros. The First Archon of the Lyceum does not operate out of the High Temple. Rather, that honor is held by the First Shield, who is blessed to endure the hardships of life in the temple on behalf of the First Archon.

*Continued on page 124*

Lot of folks underestimate the High Queen. That's a woman with her eye on the prize, and the prize she's eyein' ain't playin' negotiator for every petty squabble the kingdoms drag into court.

—TORRICA

I've begun to suspect the same. I don't believe she is as dedicated to the dream of the Free Kingdoms as she lets on.

—ARIA

The charter allows the High Queen or King to consolidate power in a time of universal crisis. So, purely hypothetically of course, would something like a major endrori uprising in the northern kingdoms do the trick?

—CALABRIA

If anyone should be worried about the Keepers, it's Drakewyn. Selenin is a snake, and I wouldn't put it past her to strike a deal with the Kingdoms if she thought it would advance her efforts to clamp down on arcane spellcasting.

—TORRICA

I've been to the High Temple twice, and it nearly broke me both times. I cannot wait to return.

—GRAIMAK



I think a little honesty about why you're including this section is warranted. These kingdoms are a thorn in the side of the High Queen. They are outliers in every sense, from their geographic location to their views to their leaders. If their power grows, they represent a dangerous departure from the otherwise religiously conservative human-centric traditions of the Free Kingdoms, and a potential fracture in their collective front against Agthor. It takes no stretch of the imagination to conclude why Drakewyn might wish to elevate the importance of these kingdoms.

—CALABRIA

They have found some of the old "gearmen" in the ruins. They no longer work and they haven't been able to fix them, but they are truly strange. The ones I have seen look like newardin made out of metal.

—GRAIMAK

## THE NEITHELIAN LEAGUE

The Neithelian League deserves special attention from adventurers. This confederation of five small kingdoms controls one of the least developed and most dangerous regions of the Free Kingdoms. Every day they face countless dangers, from endrori warbands to bandit gangs to monsters out of the wilds. These constant threats provide ample opportunity for adventurers who wish to travel to the region. An additional point one should consider is that these five kingdoms receive little to no support from the High Queen in Hawk's Crest, so adventurers like yourself are often their only hope for outside aid.

### HISTORY OF THE ALLIANCE

After the sudden dissolution of the Golden Scythe mercenary company following the failed Siege of Vorscythe, many of the leaderless mercenaries turned to brigandry. After they were driven from the heavily populated Serenth River valley by the more powerful kingdoms there, the villains turned their attention to the smaller, more remote kingdoms occupying the northeastern crook of the Donarzheis Mountains. When these five outsider kingdoms called on Hawk's Crest to aid them, their pleas fell on deaf ears. With no one else to turn to, they turned to one another and signed a defensive pact to combat the raiders. Thus the Neithelian League was born.

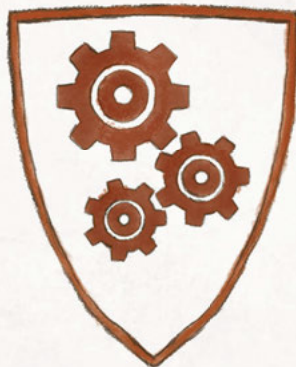
### KINGDOMS OF THE ALLIANCE

The League consists of the free kingdoms of Bleikendor, Darkav, Fisselwood, Galewyck's Bastion, and Thistlefeld. Their pact is primarily defensive, although it does include some favorable trade arrangements.

#### BLEIKENDOR

Two years ago, a young dwarven noble named Norweth Bestelkett lay claim to the long-abandoned ruins of the old kingdom of Bleikendor. He'd grown frustrated by his inability to advance his position in the southern kingdoms, so he set out to find the nearly forgotten remnants of this once wealthy land. Using an ancient map, he rediscovered its location, and in 421 AC, the High Queen approved King Bestelkett's claim.

The kingdom today isn't much more than a fortified town amid the ruins of the old capital, but the industrious followers of King Bestelkett have high hopes for their future. They've already reopened one of the old surface mines, which





were the cause of both the old kingdom's wealth and—when miners accidentally broke into an endrori infested Deepland Hall—its downfall.

Unfortunately, King Bestelkett has yet to locate the real prize: the fabled newardin gearworks. This secret workshop is said to have produced wondrous gearworked devices for the old Bleikendorians, from mechanical drills to autonomous mine carts. If the gearworks has somehow survived the intervening centuries and Bestelkett can revive it, it would be a jewel in the crown of the restored kingdom.

#### DARKAV

Founded in 390 AC by the unscrupulous warlord Velnik Bloodletter, the great plan for Darkav was to reopen the old dwarven trade route through Darkav Pass. Sadly for the king, he never bothered to ask why the dwarves abandoned the pass in the first place. It turns out the mountains in the area are thick with monsters and endrori, a fact unchanged since the pass fell into disuse more than two hundred years earlier. Less than a year after the kingdom's acknowledgment by the High Queen, an army of dark creatures gathered at the border and marched on the only partially finished Darkav Castle.

Never those to allow honor to get in the way of self-preservation, Velnik, his son, and his knights fled in the night. In their haste, they left behind the entire castle staff. At that moment of crisis, Velnik's cook, a halfling woman named Altiss Triplechins, seized command. Unable to flee or fight, she devised a plan to lure the advancing dark army into the pass and used Velnik's abandoned stash of precious dwarven storm powder to collapse the walls on top of the enemy.

The surviving staff, deciding this kingdom building business wasn't so difficult after all, decided to remain. Granted there was no chance now of ever reopening the pass, but this was of no concern to the victorious servants. They crowned Triplechins queen and sent word of her ascension to the High Court. Earlier this year the venerable Queen Altiss Triplechins died comfortably in her sleep, and the crown passed to her granddaughter, Queen Altissama Triplechins.

#### FISSELWOOD

For centuries, people carefully avoided the wide, forested valley that constitutes the kingdom of Fisselwood. In fact, for most of its existence, it was known not as a kingdom, but simply as "the Haunted Wood." Rumors of restless spirits luring travelers to their deaths in the forest depths, strange mists swallowing people up never to be seen again, and tales of a mad fey queen living alone at the forest's center and performing magical experiments on trespassers all helped to ensure the area remained uninhabited and unadulterated for centuries.



If the gearworks exists—and that is a big “if”—discovering its location could prove world-changing. There are tales that say the tinkers there created not only devices that could move on their own, but machines that could think.

—BELLYNDA

Well, that's terrifying.

—DYSART

I think you mean “fascinating.”

—ISIN

Some of us at the High Temple believe that there is a dark power at the center of Fisselwood. If this is the case, it makes the stories of strange happenings much more worrying. And if in fact there is something there, I can't help but wonder if the new king knows and what his intentions are.

—ARIA



## THE NEITHELIAN LEAGUE CONT'D

I can't being to guess why Pullusilva is doing this. The Freefolk's notorious animosity toward the fey means he's going to have a hell of time holding his land. So far, all the opposition to his kingdom has been limited to the court, but come spring I expect we'll hear war drums.

—BELLYNDA

Ssynes has spoken with druids from the Bastion. They say they are the guardians of the Green Mother and she is a powerful being, older than the Enaros. Ssynes believes the Green Mother is a tree of some sort, but Ssynes cannot be certain. Non-believers are not allowed past the border and the druids would say no more.

—SSYNES

I highly recommend a visit to the shrine in Thistlefeld. It's quite beautiful and you can truly feel the power of the place. And the story of the site is fascinating. They even claim Uvoyshae was buried with the spear he used to kill the abomonae and that it lies upon his breast to this day. Isn't that lovely?

—PORTAND

Buried with his abomonae killing spear, you say? Where is this place again?

—DYSART

This changed in 420 AC, when an elven lord going by the name of Theron Pullusilva came to the forest with his followers and staked a claim to it. He's established a small settlement on the edge of the wood, and last year he formally petitioned at the High Court to have his claim recognized. When a lengthy debate on the topic among the Free Kingdoms' member states seemed unlikely to ever reach a conclusion, the High Queen ended discussion and put the matter to a vote of the council. When the votes were tallied, Fisselwood had (narrowly) become the newest addition to the coalition.

Since then, King Theron and his people have remained largely isolated by neighbors to the south who are distrustful of the "King of the Haunted Wood." For his part, Theron has not done much to ease their discomfort around having a fey kingdom in their midst, but his engagement with the other kingdoms of the League may signal an end to the kingdom's policy of isolation.

## GALEWYCK'S BASTION

The Bastion, as it is commonly known, is the oldest kingdom in the League. In fact, at 374 years old, it even predates the founding of the Free Kingdoms. It was built originally by Fellweather Galewyck, an Alliance scholar, as an academic retreat. Sadly, the Bastion never achieved the success Galewyck hoped. By the time of his death in 85 AC, he was one of the kingdom's only inhabitants.

On the day of Fellweather's death, however, a secretive circle of druids took control of the kingdom. They immediately closed the borders, and cut off communication with the outside world. As the Bastion was already nearly forgotten by the rest of the world, the changing of hands passed without interest by anyone except the handful of remaining citizens.

The circle still rules the Bastion to this day. Its current ruler, a druid called Maleiol the Raven-Haired, took up the Silver Sickle in the year 406 AC. Although in theory they are an official member state of the Free Kingdoms, their participation in the Neithelian League is their first formal interaction with the outside world in over three centuries.

## THISTLEFELD

Thistlefeld began as a shrine to a fallen avatar of Grethken known as Uvoyshae. According to legend, during the Age of Darkness, Uvoyshae fought a powerful abomonae somewhere to the northeast in the Donarzheis Mountains. Although Uvoyshae defeated his enemy, he suffered a mortal wound. His followers laid him to rest beneath a large hill called Avantlyll, meaning the "Hill of the Avatar" in the fey language.





For centuries the site was forgotten, but around two hundred years before the arrival of the Alliance, a cleric of Grethken rediscovered it. She built a shrine atop the hill, followed by a monastery. Eventually, a small town grew up around the hill, and in 223 AC, an order of Grethken's paladins, the Order of the Thistle, replaced the monastery with a castle to defend both the settlement and the pilgrims to the shrine.

Since that time, Thistlefeld has been ruled by the Order. A paladin is appointed by the High Temple of Grethken to serve as the Guardian, and that paladin serves at the pleasure of the temple for as long as is deemed necessary. The most recent Guardian, appointed in 419 AC, is the human paladin Imlyss Valmaer, a native of the region. The kingdom knows and trusts the man and they are very pleased with his rule.

#### VALLEY OF THE CAT

The Valley of the Cat is an oddity, but after some disagreement, we decided it merited inclusion here. Although not actually a kingdom—that is to say, it is unrecognized by the High Court in Hawk's Crest—our sources claim the creatures living in the Valley of the Cat are semi-official members of the League. The large, forested valley nestled between two arms of the mountains is occupied almost entirely by beastfolk. No one is certain how long they've lived there, although there are suspicions the first of their kind settled in the valley almost immediately after the Cataclysm.

According to reports that have come out of the region, the valley people's chieftain is a terrifying beastfolk with cat-like animal qualities. The rumor is that he emerged from the valley and offered to form an informal alliance. If this is true, it raises a host of questions, not least of which is how the agreement was brokered and certified. The thought of a literate beastfolk doesn't really merit consideration. If true, it would also be the first such arrangement of its kind with a tribe of beastfolk in recorded history. Clearly, additional investigation is warranted.



Ssynes finds the representation of the Valley's people and leader distasteful. Ssynes expected better of scholars and intellectuals.

—SSYNES

If you have a correction, we welcome it.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

Very well, although Ssynes doubts your sincerity. Their leader is a deeply honorable warrior called Jarrus Blackheart. He is a wise and just king to a people steeped in rich traditions. In many ways, their society is far more "civilized" than your own. You would do well to learn from their people rather than denigrating them as you've done here.

—SSYNES

I will pass your comments along for consideration.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

Sssyk syssskish nyiska!

—SSYNES

My Scythaan is poor. Can you repeat that?

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

You don't want him to repeat that, sweetheart. Best to let it go.

—BELLYNDA



Note that they said “not completely overrun.” The war did some real damage in the Dalelands and many halflings died or were enslaved.

The endrori just never achieved total control there.

—TORRICA

Rumor has it the dragon died on the Fields of Goloth during the final battle with Endroren.

—ISIN

Many people forget the Dalelanders aren’t the soft, easy target they seem. Not only are they tougher than they look, they love their traps, and they’re damned good at building them. It’s all part of the Dalelander mantra of protect and prepare.

—CALABRIA

Damn the Dalelanders and their traps. Don’t go where you are not invited when you visit the Dalelands. I still have scars from my last visit.

—GRAIMAK

I’ll admit, I kind of like the idea of having a say in who rules me.

—DYSART

Oh, please. You’re gonna let the idiot farmer down the lane have a say in who rules? Yeah, that sounds like a great plan. Good luck with that.

—TORRICA

*Continued from page 119*

## HALFLING DALELANDS

The Halfling Dalelands is an idyllic country of rolling hills, wooded mountains, and pleasant meadows. It also holds the unique distinction of being the only populated region in the Amethyst Sea basin not completely overrun by Endroren’s Hordes during the Age of Darkness. This is due to the land’s protection by the Great Dragon Gellellynway, who defended the Dalelands throughout that dark time. No one has seen the dragon since the end of the Great War, but the Dalelanders are still peaceful thanks to the relatively recent establishment of Winterkeep within the borders of the Dalelands.

Although on paper the Dalelands are officially a kingdom, the King’s and Queen’s roles are purely ceremonial. Instead, they use a quite mad system of government they proudly refer to as a constitutional monarchy. It is hopelessly bureaucratic, involving “ministers” and “departments” and a “High Minister.” Its most outlandish feature is that citizens are permitted a say in who controls the government. It’s more than we have time to get into here, but suffice it to say it makes little sense to anyone outside the Dalelands.

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The vast majority of the people in the Dalelands are halflings (hence the kingdom’s name), although there are a handful of humans, fey, and dwarves. Orog are deeply feared by Dalelanders due to violent encounters with ogres, but they still do their best to show orog visitors appropriate hospitality.

The Dalelander language is derived from Old Dalelander (the language of the halflings who inhabited this region prior to the Age of Darkness), with influences from both the Old Atlan and Old Dwarven languages. In urban areas, a decent number of people speak Common, but out in the country you’re lucky to find more than a handful that speak it.

All a Dalelander wants out of life is good food, good friends, and a cozy house in the country. The Enaros help anyone who tries to take that away! Dalelanders know the good things in life don’t come free, and experience tells them there’s always someone that will try to take what they’ve got. That’s the reason they live by a simple motto: protect and prepare. Be prepared for anything, and vigorously protect the people, things, and ideals you hold dear. Do that, and things will always work out in the end.

Dalelanders are easy-going and slow to anger. They are generally kind-hearted and love to laugh, but push them too far or threaten the people and things they care about, and you’ll quickly discover despite their small stature, they’ve got some giant-sized fight in them. They’re also slow to forgive. It’s said the anger of a Dalelander runs as thick and deep as the roots of an old oak.

Most Dalelander clothing is dyed deep hues of natural colors. They accent these muted shades with splashes of bright green, apple red, or floral yellow. Men wear their hair short, and women grow their hair long but keep it braided. Most women wear hats or bonnets when in public.



## FRIENDS AND FOES

The Dalelanders avoid entangling alliances and work equally hard to avoid making enemies. They maintain a peace with their neighbors in the Free Kingdoms, which, though uncomfortable at times, seems stable. They remain friendly with Agthor and Malador, have no interest in those mad people down in Callios or over in Selenthea, and have no relations (or interest in establishing any) with Port Vale.

The greatest ally of the Dalelanders is Winterkeep. As the Dalelanders tell it in the *Hearthtales*, the Dalelanders are the ones who revealed the location of the ancient tower to the wandering scholars who founded Winterkeep. They also helped keep its location secret for many years, and some *Hearthtales* suggest they defended it more than once against invaders in those early years.

Whatever the truth, the Dalelanders and the wizards of Winterkeep are close allies. On paper, Winterkeep is part of the Dalelands, but in fact they are autonomous. One might call them a city-state if the wizards desired to control anything beyond the walls of their tower and the town that surrounds it.

## LAY OF THE LAND

The majority of the Dalelands are gently rolling hills broken up by lush river valleys. Vineyards and orchards cover much of the landscape, dotted here and there by small towns and villages. In the foothills of the Dragon Tail Mountains, shepherds herd flocks of sheep in the highland meadows and hunters stalk the woodlands.

There are quite a few stands of old forest in the Dalelands. These primeval woods have stood since before the Age of Darkness and are home to secretive communities of fey. They are truly ancient forests, and to non-fey, they are as foreboding as they are beautiful.

The ruling council of wizards from Winterkeep and the ministers of Gelendor are as thick as thieves. It's more than a simple alliance. There is something more going on there, but as to what that is? Well, Toletren help me, but I can't figure it out.

—BELLYNDA

That seems a bit far-fetched. Frankly, I just think you're still ruffled over that deal of yours the Minister of Trade blocked.

—CALABRIA

Ssynes has seen the old forests of which they speak. They are places of ancient power and there are creatures there other than the fey. Elder creatures, from a forgotten time. Be wary.

—SSYNES





You act as if all this trust and kindness is a good thing. It's disturbing, is what it is. No one is that nice.

—GRAIMAK

Forgive us if we take your opinion with a grain of salt. After all, you're the one who refused an offered blanket claiming, "If Droth wanted us to be warm, it wouldn't be snowing."

—CALABRIA

One shouldn't assume that one can outrun their bad deeds. Dalelanders are prodigious storytellers and rumor runners. Behave poorly in an out of the way southern village on Marketday, they'll be talking about it in Gelendor by Aleday.

—PORTAND

## VILLAGES, TOWNS, AND CITIES

Scattered throughout the countryside are pleasant rural communities made up of thatched roofed cottages, long low barns, and exquisitely tended orchards. Most halfling villages are built around a central mound, natural if possible, but man-made if one doesn't stand where needed. As long as weather permits, this hill serves as everything from town hall and wedding chapel to courthouse and city park.

Large towns and cities are uncommon in the Dalelands, but the few that do exist have the air of a large rural village rather than a truly urban environment. Large trees grow between rows of brightly painted houses, there's always space left for small garden plots, and city parks double as both orchards and grazing land for livestock.

The communities also have a much more welcoming air than most cities in the Amethyst Sea basin. Complete strangers are treated as old friends, no one is too busy to offer directions, and it's common to find a merchant who will trust you to pay them back next week for something they give you today.

## TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

Within the large towns and cities, roads are cobbled or paved and are diligently maintained. Some of the roads between these larger settlements are paved, but just as many are not. There are no highways to speak of in the Dalelands. Most overland travel is on back roads, many of which are so ancient they've been worn into deep hollow ways covered over with a thick roof of tree branches. Dalelanders love to travel by carriage, and one can find a large selection of carriage services available for travel between the larger towns.

Dalelanders dislike ocean travel, and the Dalelands don't have much of a trade fleet to speak of. Ships are so uncommon that Gelendor is the only deep-water port in the entire kingdom. River travel is common on all the navigable rivers, and long slow barges loaded with trade goods drift lazily along.

Unique to the rivers of the Dalelands are houseboats. Some Dalelanders live in these long, thin, barge-like boats, spending their lives drifting up and down the kingdom's rivers. They'll often moor at a town for a few months or even years until the desire to move on strikes them, at which point they'll head out once more.

## LAW AND ORDER

In the Dalelands, the law is more of a tradition than a set of rules. Most folks obey the law simply because they always have and can't imagine doing it any other way. If someone gets too far out of line, social pressure from the community at large helps to encourage the wrongdoer to straighten up and make things right. On the rare occasion this doesn't work, or when a crime is particularly serious, the halflings send for a wizard from Winterkeep to help sort things out. Every town has a militia manned in rotation by the citizens. They can fight if they must, but they mainly serve to inform visitors of local customs and perform ceremonial duties.



## ADVENTURING

The Dalelanders don't like trouble, and if someone else is willing to take care of a problem for them, they'll let them. Although Dalelanders are generally suspicious of adventurers, they won't hesitate to ask an adventurer for aid if trouble comes up. Not surprisingly, they are effusive in their thanks in the form of food, gifts, and hospitality.

As a rule, Dalelanders don't go exploring, which has led to many areas of the Dalelands going untraveled for centuries. As a result, every now and then, a creature or thing from days long past comes down out of the high hills or deep forests, or a shepherd stumbles upon a forgotten ruin while chasing a lost sheep, or some other accidental discovery reveals something ancient and unknown the Dalelanders simply aren't equipped to deal with.

## ADVENTURE SITES

The following are areas of particular interest to adventurers:

- ♦ **Bleakwood** The southern border of the Dalelands is marked by the place where the Dragon Tail Mountains curve east and march down to the sea. The forest covering those low rolling mountains is called the Bleakwood. The Dalelanders never enter the Bleakwood. It isn't a law, and there doesn't seem to be any fear associated with it, but they never, under any circumstances, enter that forest.
- ♦ **Brogen's Hall** There is an old Hearhtale that tells of a group of halflings that gave up on the surface world and built a great hall somewhere in the Dragon Tail Mountains. Assuming the story has any truth to it, there is no evidence or record of where the hall might have been. Miners and quarrymen working in the central spur of the mountains, however, sometimes come down with odd artifacts. These include gold jewelry, bits of carved stone, and once, even a magic ring. These artifacts don't look dwarven, but they don't exactly look halfling-made either.
- ♦ **Widow's Tears** There are a chain of islands in the Amethyst Sea just south of Dalelander territory called the Widow's Tears. The islands are surrounded by rocky shoals, and more than one ship has met its doom on them. Wise captains steer far clear of them. Of interest to adventurers are reports of ruins on the island. The ruins appear to be quite substantial, although there are no historical records of any Alliance settlements in the area. The difficulty of reaching the islands safely has left them unexplored for now.

## INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following notable people and organizations are active in the Dalelands:

- ♦ **High Council of Gelendor** The High Council of Gelendor is the ruling body of the Dalelands. There are fifty-five members on the council, all of them halflings and all of them exceptionally old. Each councilor represents a region of the Dalelands, selected by the collective village councils of the region they represent. The council is infamous for the snail's pace at which they make decisions. Debate and discussion on even the simplest topic may go on for days, all with ample breaks for lunch, snacks, tea, and cider.

I am embarrassed to say we've been unable to determine much more about the Bleakwood than we've written here. If any of you have experience or knowledge that would help to expand upon this, we would appreciate it.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

I'll give you a hint. It rhymes with Fellellynway.

—VRENN

Don't listen to Vrenn. The truth is, it's just another silly Dalelander tradition. There's nothing up there but trees, squirrels, and birds.

—BELLYNDA

Precisely. Just an old story. Nothing to see and no reason to go. Best to leave it be.

—PORTAND



You've been awfully quiet, Portand.  
Seeing as we're talking about your  
hometown, I figured you'd have a  
bit more to say.

—CALABRIA

I've always been cautious when it  
comes to writing of my home. It  
is difficult to be objective in such  
matters, and I feel it is often best  
left to others to describe that which  
is too close to our own hearts to see  
clearly.

—PORTAND

Or you're just saving the good stuff  
for the next issue of *The Wayward  
Wanderer*. When is that due out?  
Next week, is it?

—BELLYNDA

What? Never! You wound me, good  
lady. But yes. It will be available  
at fine booksellers throughout  
Gelendor on Restday.

—PORTAND

Winterkeep welcomes visitors, but  
if you have specific business it is  
wise to send a note in advance of  
your arrival. Our wizards are  
exceptionally busy.

—ISIN

*Sleeping orog we met in Gelendor where  
he had found work as a farmhand. This  
impressive fellow recounted to us  
proudly that he had just eaten  
3 hog, 1 goat, 16 fowl and 2  
bales of hay before collapsing into  
a haystack and falling into a deep  
snoring sleep!... I sharpened my stylus!*

- ♦ **High Minister Bythedowns Gipple** High Minister Gipple is a truly ancient halfling who has held his seat for just over a decade now. By all accounts, the High Minister is one of the greatest ever to serve the Dalelands. He is a master at taking parties with two deeply entrenched opinions and drawing them slowly together until they are in total agreement before they even realize he's led them there.
- ♦ **King Addlevine Thendawilder III** King Addlevine is relatively young—only around fifty or so—and has only held the throne for 7 years. He is a jovial fellow who enjoys tales of adventure. More than one adventurer who has done a service for the kingdom have received personal invitations from the King to visit the palace and tell tales of their exploits.
- ♦ **Queen Milliecent Thendawilder** Queen Milliecent is a quiet woman who prefers the company of her books to that of the court. Still, she willingly plays her part in the royal theater, and is liked, if not loved, by the people. She has a soft spot for the fey and has a number of fey handmaidens.

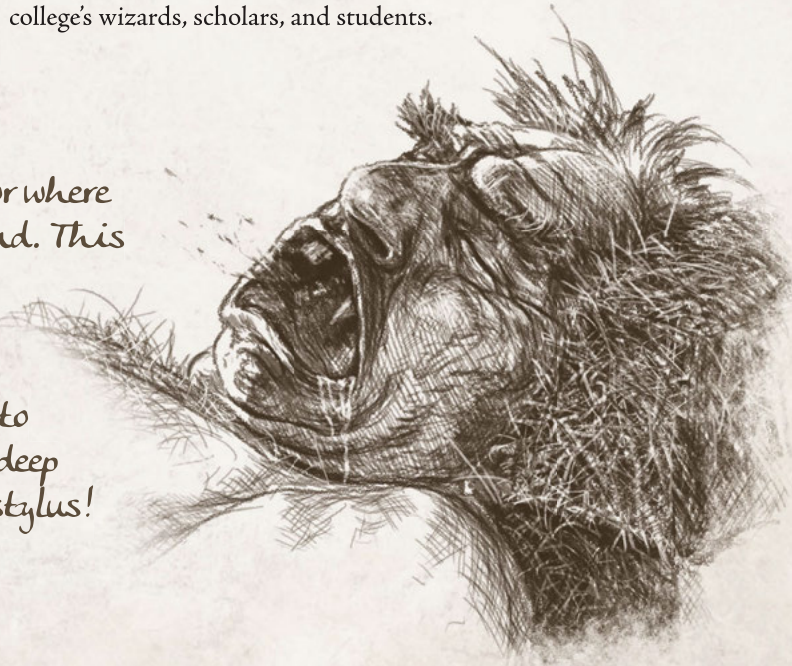
## KEY LOCATIONS

The following are important cities, landmarks, and locations found in the Dalelands:

- ♦ **Gelendor** Gelendor is the only true city in the Dalelands, and no other Dalelander town comes close to it in size. The city boasts the region's only deep-water port and is the terminus of the great coastal highway that runs from Gelendor all the way to Castle Port in Agthor.

Although technically a city based on the population, Gelendor feels more like a collection of small towns. It has ample open spaces where sheep and cows graze, huge trees line the streets, and at least within districts, everyone knows everybody else.

- ♦ **Winterkeep** The legendary College of Winterkeep is located in the northwestern corner of the Dalelands. It sits high in the Dragon Tail Mountains accessible only by a long and winding road that zig zags up the tree covered slopes. The college itself is actually a collection of buildings clustered around the great keep at its center. Just beyond the walls of the college is the town of Winterkeep, a relatively young settlement that supports the needs of the college's wizards, scholars, and students.





# MALADOR

Sitting on the rocky, windswept coast of the Phensrelan Ocean, the land of Malador is as hard as the people who live there. Home to the largest population of dwarves anywhere in the region, Malador is a new beginning for the dwarven people. Malador has its critics, however, even among other dwarves. Some claim that in their attempt to free themselves of dependence on others, the Malador-ans have become as cold and unfeeling as the rocky cliffs which loom over the coastline.

According to dwarven legends, an expedition of tsvergaal, the parent lineage of both dwarves and halflings, came across the ocean during the Age of Dawn. They set ashore at the mouth of the river Cregairn Creek where they established the city of Dor Falen Mal.

As the years passed, the tsvergaal differed on whether their future lay above or below the surface. The two groups split, and the people that eventually became the halflings traveled east into the Dalelands. Centuries later, the people that became the dwarves began delving into the Donarzheis Mountains. Shortly thereafter, Dor Falen Mal was abandoned.

It wasn't until the Age of Shadow, after the dwarves were forced from their homelands, that the ruin of the ancient city was resettled. Seeking a sense of place in the new world, a large group of dwarven refugees decided to return to their roots and headed west toward the long-abandoned land of Malador. They founded two sister cities on the ruins of Dor Falen Mal: Fortin Mal and Felyn Mal.

Against all expectations, the dwarves not only survived but thrived. They discovered the rough land north of their city, the Kahl Hills, was rich in surface veins of iron, coal, and other minerals. With deep mining an extremely dangerous prospect in the modern world, the discovery of these resources allowed Malador to prosper.

This is ridiculous. We didn't magically split into two different people. Tsvergs are tsvergs and tsaals are tsaals. The only thing that we have in common is that our people came to the Amethyst Sea together, but our two lineages have always been distinct.

—VRENN

For those who are not familiar with the terms, our friend is using the dwarven language names for dwarves and halflings.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

The origin of your people isn't up for interpretation. The history is written in the Enarosian Scrolls. We know the truth already.

—ARIA

I think you mean it is written in a copy of a translation of a text that is a copy of a lost original that is alleged to have been written by the Enaros. Seems to me there's plenty of room for interpretation.

—CALABRIA





Maladorans tolerate worship of the Enaros by outsiders, but I strongly suggest you use discretion. You can have your beliefs, but rub it in their faces and things get unpleasant quickly.

—DYSART

Speaking from personal experience, are we?

—BELLYNDA

Not personal experience, but I did travel with a cleric who believed it her duty to bring the dwarves back to the path of righteousness. The morning after her second day of preaching to a camp of dwarven miners in the Kahl Hills, we found her tarred, feathered, and hog-tied outside the town gate. She was fine, otherwise, but she got the message and left that afternoon.

—DYSART

What a brutal response. How is that considered acceptable?

—PORTAND

Sounds to me like she got off easy.

—VRENN

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Almost the entire population of Malador is dwarven, although there a handful of humans and halflings living there. Most of the population lives in or around the cities of Fortin Mal and Felyn Mal, with a scattering of people living on the road to the Tsvergaal Gap or up in the northern reaches around the mines of the Kahl Hills.

The people of Malador speak Maladoran. The language is derived from the Old Dwarven tongue. It's difficult to say how many Maladorans speak Common, since they generally refuse to do so. If you can't speak Maladoran, Deeplander, or some other dialect of Dwarven, you'll have a hard time getting people to speak to you at all.

Maladorans are determined to prove that by working together as one they can achieve greatness without help from anyone on the outside—especially the gods. They stubbornly persist in pursuing challenging tasks to prove doubters wrong (even if the doubters are right), and they're willing to take the longer, more difficult path if it means they can achieve their goals without help. As long as they remain loyal to one another and work hard, they know they will always succeed.

Maladorans are proud and opinionated. Once they've made up their minds on a subject, they stick doggedly to that decision and will see it through to the bitter end. This makes them quite industrious and leads to many great accomplishments. It also makes them difficult to deal with in situations that require compromise or change.

Maladorans wear plain-cut clothing dyed in deep earth tones. They decorate their clothing with polished steel ornaments forged into dramatic geometric patterns of angles and curves. All genders wear their hair in intricate braids decorated with beads. The same is true for the beards of male dwarves. The braids and beads often represent aspects of the dwarf's clan, achievements, or loyalties.

## FRIENDS AND FOES

The Maladorans have a straightforward diplomatic relationship with their nearest neighbor, the Free Kingdoms. The relationship boils down to a policy of "you mind your business, and we'll mind ours," along with a smattering of simple trade agreements. The only point of occasional tension is the Free Kingdoms' control of the Tsvergaal Gap. The Maladorans would prefer shared control of the pass, something which the Free Kingdoms have long resisted.

Outside of their relationship with the Free Kingdoms, Malador is distinctive in its notable lack of relationships with other kingdoms. As long as what happens outside Malador doesn't negatively impact Malador, they don't really care what others do.

There is some tension on the northern border. Where the Dragon Tail Mountains end there is no barrier between the Icebound Plains and Malador. With the expansion of the mines in the Kahl Hills, a few Icewalker tribes have taken to raiding the dwarven settlements. So far, the Maladorans have limited their response to strengthening their defenses, but there is talk of a future military response to drive the raiders back.



## LAY OF THE LAND

The land west of the Dragon Tail Mountain's northern spur is cold, wet, and unpleasant. Most of the landscape is made up of rocky hills with occasional copses of scrub wood forests. Even the rivers are rock strewn and rough, filled with rapids and waterfalls. Winters don't bring much snow but icy winds off the ocean bring cold, and nearly constant, rain. In the northern reaches of the realm, on the wide-open highlands of the Kahl Hills, the hills are covered with both active and abandoned mines, as well as the remnants of the villages built to support the mines while they were in use.

## VILLAGES, TOWNS, AND CITIES

Maladoran architecture is focused on function over form. Excessive artistic flourishes are considered a vulgar waste of resources. Every structure in a Maladoran settlement has a particular role, and if it no longer serves that role, it is disassembled so its resources can be redistributed to more useful structures.

Towns and cities conform to the geography if needed but otherwise aim for an orderly and well-planned design. Villages use a traditional wheel shaped plan where all structures face in on a central square. This both emphasizes the tight bond of community valued by Maladorans and also provides a strong defense against attack.

## TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

The Maladorans take great pride in the quality of their roads and bridges. Maintenance is continuous to ensure they remain in excellent repair, and anywhere worth getting to has at least one paved route leading to it. Carriage services are uncommon and seen as frivolous.

Navigable rivers are heavily trafficked, especially the Stolgraden River, which provides a direct connection between Fortin Mal and Felyn Mal and the mine country in the north. Of all the vessels traveling these rivers, most notable are the great riverboats. Wonders of engineering and magic, their mighty paddle wheels churn the water as these multi-storied boats rumble up and down the rivers.

There is a myth that dwarves don't like the sea, but the Maladorans prove this view incorrect. They have a strong maritime tradition, and their sturdy sea vessels travel up and down the coast of the Phensrelan Ocean, through the Dragon's Maw, and into the Amethyst Sea. Maladoran captains are known to take passengers, but only if they can work. You're either part of the crew, even if just temporarily, or you're not on the ship.

## LAW AND ORDER

Maladoran law is followed to the letter and strictly enforced. Personal interpretation of the law is never appropriate. If something requires interpretation, then it wasn't written clearly enough in the first place and needs to be redesigned.

Fortunately, Maladoran law tends to be clear and simple. In the end, it boils down to basic concepts such as "don't hurt anyone," "help anyone in need," "pull your weight," "and do as you are told by those in authority." Any person who follows these basic guidelines should be fine while visiting Malador.

Ain't anyone going to talk about how bizarre Malador is? I mean, adventurers should know what they're in for.

—TORRICA

I'm sure your opinion on this would prove enlightening, but I caution you to use a less judgmental tone.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

Fine. I'll try to be "nice." To start with, there aren't any nobles or commoners. According to Maladorans, everybody is on the same level. The craziest way you see this is in how much you get paid for your work. It don't matter whether you're a dung-hauler or a general in the army, you get the same pay. This goes for adventurers too. Do a job for Maladorans and you'll get your 2 silver a day, just like everybody else. And the market? Every price is set. You want a cloak? Don't matter if you get it from one merchant or the next, it'll cost you exactly the same anywhere you go. And if you want to piss someone off, try haggling. They hate that. And here is the crazy thing—they don't even keep the money you give 'em. It all goes back into the community coffer and the merchant gets—you guessed it—their 2 silver a day.

—TORRICA

That's all true, and it's a bit odd if you're not used to it, but there's another side of the coin. If you're a Maladoran, you never pay for food or housing or clothes. These are provided at no cost to every member the community. You get sick? They heal you. Need tools to do your job? They're supplied for you. Your house burns down? Everyone in town shows up the next day to rebuild it. It's quite clever, really.

—PORTAND

Sounds like a nightmare to me!

—BELLYNDA



I don't mean to be the fly in the ointment here, but all this talk about how Malador operates isn't entirely true. People are people. All this "community and cooperation" stuff looks great on paper, and yes, a lot of it is true in Malador, but the Maladorans haven't gotten rid of greed, corruption, and the many other evils that are in our natures.

The reality of Malador is more along the lines of "everyone gets equal treatment, unless you know a guy." And a few coins placed in the right hand will ensure that you get treated just a little more fairly than the other guy. I'm just saying that yes, Malador is pretty odd, but when you get past the rhetoric and stated ideals, there's a lot that you'll find familiar.

—CALABRIA

The folks on the borderlands seldom ask adventurers for help, but if you offer, and especially if you've got a dwarf on your team, they'll say yes. What's more, they're damned generous with their thanks. The modifications to my warhammer are evidence of that.

—VRENN

## ADVENTURING

Adventuring in Malador is a bit unusual. Adventurers are welcome and appreciated, as long as they behave. If you do a service for the people, expect to have all your needs met. What you won't get are rewards or special treatment. If you're looking for glory and wealth, you're in the wrong place.

## ADVENTURE SITES

The following are areas of particular interest to adventurers:

- ♦ **Kahl Hills** The Kahl mines are not deep mines, but miners still manage to break through into the Deeplands on occasion. Malador always sends troops to help in these situations, but by the time the Maladoran bureaucracy reacts, a great deal of damage may already have been done. As a result, any adventurers in the area will find themselves welcomed by miners who find themselves in this fix.

Some claim the Kahl Hills were a fey forest prior to the Age of Darkness. Many miners insist the ghosts of the fey who died here still walk the hills. Others have a less magical, but no less incredible, explanation. They believe some of the fey survived and still live in the broken wilds of Kahl. If either of these explanations is true, there may be fey ruins in Kahl, and possibly treasure from the Age of Magic.

- ♦ **Northern Borderlands** The border between Malador and the Icebound Plains is constantly under threat of attack from Icewalker raiders. All the villages are heavily fortified and the populace remain on constant war footing.

- ♦ **Dor Vergall** In the high reaches where the Donarzheis Mountains and the Dragon Tail Mountains meet, there are entrances to an incredibly ancient Deepland Hall. Local legend suggests this was the place where the dwarves first entered the Deeplands after they split with the halflings. The difficulty of reaching these entrances prevented most from being awarded, but there are no reports of endrori within the vicinity of the halls.

*A Maladoran Miner named Gorman Briendelkett we met at Tsvergaal gap.*





## INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following notable people and organizations are active in Malador:

- ♦ **Liberators** The loosely organized group of zealots known as the Liberators have strong ties with Malador. The Liberators have sworn to retake the Deeplands from the endrori no matter the cost. Every one of them is ready to surrender their lives for the cause.

The Liberators primarily operate in the Deeplands beneath the Donar-zheis Mountains in the northern reaches of Agthor and the Free Kingdoms. The majority of their financial and material support comes from Malador. Maladorans feel great respect for the Liberators' work, and hold in high honor those willing to give up their easy life in Malador to go join the Liberators.

## KEY LOCATIONS

The following are important cities, landmarks, and locations found in Malador:

- ♦ **Felyn Mal** The Two Sisters is the name Maladorans use when referring collectively to the twin cities of Fortin Mal and Felyn Mal. Felyn Mal is the older of the two and is built upon the ruins of the ancient city of Dor Falen Mal. According to local history, a series of devastating storms struck the city around 500 years ago, leveling large portions of it and killing thousands.

Some of the residents chose not to return, instead founding Fortin Mal less than a mile up the river. Many chose to remain, however, rebuilding Felyn Mal even stronger than before. The city's architecture is distinctive, with low stone buildings that have roofs which slope away from the sea, making them highly resilient against winter storms blowing off the sea.

- ♦ **Fortin Mal** The site chosen for Fortin Mal is protected from the treacherous winter storms that blow in off the ocean by a range of high hills. Its port is smaller than Felyn Mal's and it is less suited to docking larger ships, but the practical benefit of its safety from storms means that it is now the larger of the Two Sisters. Malador's governmental agencies and leadership are all located here, although officially, Felyn Mal remains the capital of Malador.

## PORT VALE

In the city-state of Port Vale, those with the ability to seize power make the rules, crime is just business, and anything is for sale if you have the money to pay for it. The other nations of the Amethyst Sea basin wouldn't deal with the city at all except that it controls a vital trade link between the Amethyst Sea and the lands beyond Stonegate Pass.

Port Vale is ruled by the notorious crime boss, Blythorn Blackwick. Blythorn, or "Mayor Blackwick" as he is more commonly known, maintains the facade that Port Vale is no different than any other city in the Amethyst Sea basin, but his laws allowing anyone to openly carry martial weapons, his weekly gladiatorial battles at the old arena, and his support of the only legal slave market in the region all suggest otherwise.

Port Vale was once a jewel in the crown of the Atlan Alliance. Its pleasant subtropical climate, rich farmland, and strategic position near Stonegate Pass helped the city to grow and thrive. As wealthy merchants and nobles flocked there, Port Vale became known for its magnificent architecture and easy-going lifestyle. The Cataclysm, however, brought the city's good fortune to a violent end.

I respect the Liberators' devotion to the cause and all, but those buggers are mad. The ones that don't end up dead (which most of them do) actually build houses in the Deeplands and live there. If all the Deepland kingdoms couldn't hold the endrori back before the Age of Darkness, how do these fools think they're going to pull it off with a handful of dwarves and some makeshift barricades?

—TORRICA

And that is why we only allow tsverg to join their ranks. You'll never understand what the Betrayal means to us. You can't possibly understand the hole in our spirits left by the loss of our homeland. If you did, then you'd speak of the Liberators with more respect.

—VRENN

Let's not pretend every dwarf loves the Liberators. More than one young dwarf has been lured away from the farm by Liberator recruiters who spin pretty tales about their glorious cause and a promise of a new Dwarven Age. Most of those children are never seen again, leaving a pair of weeping parents back home hoping that whatever horrible end their child met, it was at least swift and painless.

—BELLYNDA



To think that Newardine would not fit into the society of Port Vale represents a misunderstanding of the Newardine culture's way of thinking. We neither condone nor support criminal and violent behavior, but we also recognize that under certain circumstances such actions are the most logical path to accomplishing one's goals. History suggests that, in time, the people of Port Vale will evolve past their criminal natures. For now, their culture works within the context of the setting. Passing judgment is not useful.

—ISIN

They keep slaves. How dare you defend these villains?

—SSYNES

I do not defend. I explain. And I did not say their actions are moral or ethical. I said they are logical under the circumstances.

—ISIN

When we meet in the future, you'd best be ready to "explain" yourself to my blades.

—SSYNES

Let us set this conversation aside for now. It is worth pursuing, but this is not the place for it.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

The first blow was the explosion of Port Vale's city gate, which stood on a now-ruined island in the Pinnacle Gulf. The blast sent waves of arcane power rushing over the city. The uncontrolled magic did little to harm the buildings, but it triggered a host of mystical maladies among the inhabitants. From people suddenly manifesting bizarre arcane powers to grotesque physical transformations, it twisted and warped the city's people in horrifying ways. Many did not survive the experience.

The arcane blast was only the first torment in store for the city. Not long after the explosion, a massive tidal wave thundered across the gulf and slammed into the city. According to reports, it was as tall as the amphitheater's walls, and it hit with such force only the largest buildings remained standing when the water retreated.

The third and final blow came one day later when a surge of refugees poured into the city. Most came from the devastated countryside, but many also arrived by ship from the ruined island of Atlanor. With crops devastated by the wave, the rainy season on its way, food supplies dwindling, and the Alliance government in tatters, civility broke down. Power shifted to those with the might to seize and keep it. The wounds of that brutal period never fully healed, and those scars led to the corrupt society that defines Port Vale today.

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

People of every lineage are represented in Port Vale. Humans hold a slight majority, but not by much. The other lineages are almost evenly represented. Even newardin, whose demeanor seems poorly matched with the chaotic criminal nature of Port Vale's other citizens, are found in relatively large numbers compared to elsewhere in the Amethyst Sea basin. The Valorian tongue is a dialect of old Atlan closely resembling Common. Common is also spoken extensively in the city and the land around it, so adventurers should have no difficulty operating there.

Personal power, security, and survival are the focus of a Valorian's life. There is no sense of civic responsibility beyond what helps a person improve their own circumstances. Some challenges are too much for an individual to handle, and these require allegiances and assistance, but a Valorian always keeps their personal goals in mind. They're not out to change the world or even their homeland. They just want to live as comfortably and safely as they can today.

Lies are more common than truth in Port Vale, making Valorians deeply distrustful. They are habitually suspicious of others' motives, and only give their trust if they have some way to ensure the other party will not wrong them. They regularly push for oaths, pledges, and collateral from others, even for the smallest things.

The common Valorian wears scant clothing. At most, men and women don a sleeveless tunic that hangs down just above the knees and is bound at the waist with a belt. Sandals are the typical footwear. Even wealthy citizens wear similar clothing, although theirs is made from fine silks and decorated with gold and silver embroidery. Men wear their hair cut close to the head and women wear theirs in tight curls. Facial hair is considered uncivilized. Both women and men highlight their features, facial and otherwise, with elaborate applications of makeup.



## FRIENDS AND FOES

The closest thing Port Vale has to a friend is the country of Malador. The two have a simple agreement focused on trade. Port Vale also maintains an agreement of non-interference with the keepers of Stonegate Pass. The dwarven militia that controls the pass does not interfere with the business of Port Vale and Port Vale lets the dwarves manage the pass as they see fit. The agreement was signed over fifty years ago, and there has been no official diplomatic contact between the two groups since.

Relationships with the other kingdoms and countries of the Amethyst Sea basin are non-existent. Most find the Valorian lifestyle repulsive, especially the Valorian acceptance of the slave trade, and thus they have no interest in establishing diplomatic relations. Again, geographic distance is likely the only thing that prevents more idealistic kingdoms like Agthor from taking action against Port Vale.

## LAY OF THE LAND

Port Vale is surrounded by gently rolling hills that rise gradually into the Stonegate Mountains to the southeast. Light tropical forests cover many of the hills, although in the northeast they give way to the unnatural flora of the Elliyen Wilds. To the west, the forests grow more and more dense until they meld into the heavy undergrowth of the Zhamayen Jungle.

For most of the year, the weather is sunny, the temperature warm, and a refreshing breeze blows in off the sea, but during the last weeks of Aelos and the first weeks of Dawn it rains nearly every day. Most of the land surrounding the city is wild, since the rulers of Port Vale strictly limit settlement outside of the city in order to maintain their power base.

## VILLAGES, TOWNS, AND CITIES

The modern city of Port Vale was constructed on the ruins of the old Alliance metropolis of the same name. Once a sparkling gem of the Alliance, the city has fallen far. Grand temples have been converted into filthy taverns, partially ruined theaters host bawdy plays, and once grand boulevards are home to criminal lords, street walkers, and illicit potion and spice sellers. Every pleasure, no matter how immoral or illegal, is for sale in Port Vale if you know where to look for it.

Most of the towns and villages that surround Port Vale are dank and squalid, with houses little more than thatched roof shacks. There are a few larger towns which are ruled by bandit lords or other criminals. These exist only because Mayor Blackwick hasn't bothered to close them down or has some personal interest in their continued existence.

The only exceptions are the settlements along the road to Stonegate Pass. These are significantly better maintained and are ruled from lush villas by cronies of Blackwick. They charge tolls to the passing caravans and offer overpriced amenities to travelers.

Actually, before the wards started failing, there was talk in Agthor about cleaning up Port Vale—through diplomacy if possible or force if necessary. Fortunately for Port Vale, the idea was abandoned thanks to the rising threat of endrori attack and the trouble along the border between Agthor and the Free Kingdoms.

—CALABRIA

Of course, one could simply avoid Port Vale altogether. Every few years, one of the great merchant houses starts talking about building a new port farther along the coast and bypassing Port Vale altogether when it comes to trade goods coming and going through Stonegate Pass. Unfortunately, what usually happens is the merchant house making the plans suddenly receives an unexpected influx of capital from an anonymous investor. Within a week, the plans are abandoned.

—BELLYNDA

Either that or pirates suddenly start targeting that house's ships. Soon the plan is abandoned, at which point the attacks mysteriously end.

—DYSART

The bottom line is this—when you're traveling around Port Vale, the wise adventurer assumes everyone everywhere works for Blackwick. Do that, and you'll be safe. Well, *safer*.

—DYSART



Never sail on a Valorian vessel?  
I heartily disagree. Some of the  
most fun I've had was while sailing  
on Valorian ships.

—DYSART

Sure. As long as you sleep with  
your dagger under your pillow and  
one eye open.

—TORRICA

Well, of course. I should think that  
goes without saying.

—DYSART

It's not complicated. Either  
Calliosan agents are taking  
out the spicers to ensure they  
maintain their hold on the spice  
market, or Blackwick's goons are  
knocking them off because these  
"entrepreneurs" aren't giving him  
his cut.

—TORRICA

I'm not sure about that. I was out  
there when some spicers got killed.  
They found the bodies and, well,  
let's just say I've never seen goons  
or agents do that to somebody.

—CALABRIA

## TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

The only road that is maintained at all outside of the city proper is the road leading to Stonegate Pass. The wealthy criminals that control the road are each responsible for keeping their portion of the road in good repair. Every other old Alliance highway and road has fallen into disrepair and are terribly overgrown.

Port Vale has a merchant fleet of sorts. A decade or so ago they allowed any captain willing to pay an annual fee to fly their flag. Not surprisingly, the captains that take Port Vale up on this offer typically have difficulty gaining permission to fly any other country's flag. Their only military vessels are a small fleet of independent privateers who are given free rein to enforce Valorian maritime law as they see fit. It is highly recommended you never travel on a ship flying the Valorian flag.

There are a few navigable rivers in the area, but the only one that sees any regular traffic is the Adamiak River. Port Vale is built at the mouth of the Adamiak, and barges will take goods upriver as far as the Lost Avatar Falls, beyond which the river is not navigable. The pleasure boats of the wealthy are also a regular sight on the river.

## LAW AND ORDER

Port Vale still adheres to the old laws of the Alliance, but most Valorians treat the law as a set of suggestions rather than rules. Law enforcement and adjudication is executed only as directed by Blackwick, and the interpretation of the law serves whatever purpose the mayor has in mind. Bribery and corruption are deeply entrenched in Valorian government agencies, and almost any law can be ignored by paying off the right person.

## ADVENTURING

Blackwick does little to patrol the lands around Port Vale. His disinterest in the people beyond his walls means the people of the countryside have no one to turn to other than adventurers when a threat arises. Port Vale provides an excellent starting point for adventurers exploring the Deeplands of the Stonegate Mountains, the Elliyen Wilds, or the Zhamayen jungle.

## ADVENTURE SITES

The following are areas of particular interest to adventurers:

- ♦ **Kalbak's Caverns** Behind Lost Avatar Falls is an extensive cavern complex. There are no indications it connects to the Deeplands, but all manner of strange beasts inhabit these subterranean tunnels. There are rumors a powerful Alliance wizard known as Kalbak the Conqueror used the caverns after the Caraclysm as his fortress and laboratory, and his experiments are the source of the unusual creatures. A variety of strange arcane artifacts recovered from the caverns along with tales of adventurers falling victim to magical traps has reinforced this belief.
- ♦ **Little Zhamayen** East of the Boroboro River is a stretch of jungle often referred to as the Little Zhamayen. It's not actually little, stretching at least 100 miles from north to south and east to west, but compared to the Zhamayen itself, it is relatively small. A few daring entrepreneurs are trying to set up illicit spice harvesting operations in the area. Spicers go into the jungle but never come out, endangering this burgeoning industry.





- ♦ **The Pinnacles** Pinnacle Gulf earned its name from the massive towers of stone that jut out from the water in Dolphin Bay. There are scores of pinnacles scattered throughout the bay, some standing as tall as 300 feet. Although they appear natural, a number are hollow. Stories of pirate hideouts, forgotten dwarven halls, and wizard's towers occupying the pinnacles abound, and recent exploration suggests there may be some truth to the stories.

## INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following notable people and organizations are active in Port Vale:

- ♦ **Mayor Blythorn Blackwick** Officially, Blythorn Blackwick is the lawfully elected mayor of Port Vale. If you ask the locals, however...they'll also tell you he's the lawfully elected mayor of Port Vale. But if you ask the locals away from eavesdroppers after buying them a few drinks and sliding a few coins across the table, they'll tell you Blackwick is a brutal crime boss that holds absolute power in Port Vale through fear, favors, and blackmail.

## KEY LOCATIONS

The following are important cities, landmarks, and locations found in Port Vale:

- ♦ **The Amphitheater** The centerpiece of Port Vale is its amphitheater. Gladiator battles are held there every week, and the top prizes are quite generous. More than one adventurer has signed up for these contests in the hopes of earning some extra income. Most gladiators, however, are not volunteers. They are slaves, some taken by force, some enslaved over unpaid debts, and some choosing enslavement over prison for whatever trumped up crimes Blackwick's agents charged them with.
- ♦ **Fallen High Temple of Phensral** Thirty years before the Cataclysm, a glorious temple dedicated to Phensral was erected overlooking the bay. The Lyceum Phensral christened it their new High Temple and built an extensive religious complex around it.

Sadly, the temple and the surrounding buildings suffered significant damage during the Cataclysm. Even worse, the First Archon was killed along with most of the Lyceum's leadership. Initially, plans were drafted to rebuild the temple, but when the city fell into chaos and corruption, those plans were abandoned.

Today, a contingent of optimistic young priests, priestesses, acolytes, and clerics have reoccupied the temple. They are making efforts to clean up the complex and rebuild what they can, but the cost is prohibitive, and the locals aren't making it easy. It's not uncommon for them to repair a building one day, only to find the building materials stripped and stolen the next.

I have heard stories that the pinnacles are hollow. There are even rumors that they are entrances to tunnels that go straight through the world and emerge from another set of pinnacles on the other side. If it's true, sound like tsverg work to me. I'd like to get a look at them and find out.

—VRENN

You do not want to get on Blackwick's bad side. Cross him, and he'll make you pay, no matter how long it takes, no matter how much it costs, or no matter how hard you fight back.

—DYSART

The priests, monks, and clerics rebuilding the temple are desperate for help. The lyceum wrote the temple off ages ago, and the entire rebuilding project is the dream of a handful of faithful followers. I can't imagine they'd pay you, but if you're looking for a way to make Phensral happy, there's plenty of opportunity there.

—CALABRIA



Adventurers should take note that the only safe means of traveling to Selenthea is by sea. Land routes east from Agthor are blocked by the Northern Wilds, while the Elliyen Wilds prevent passage north from Port Vale.

—PORTAND

Selenthea is a weird place, but it's one of the few places in the known world where orogs don't have to prove themselves to gain acceptance. Orog in Selenthea are just big people—nothin' more, nothin' less.

—TORRICA

It's a wonderfully accepting place. As long as you're not infringing on the rights of another or dabbling in the dark arts, pretty much anything else is acceptable.

—CALABRIA

## SELENTHEA

"A seething mass of geniuses, lunatics, and heroes," is how the poet Mellia Aswith once described her home, the city-state of Selenthea. This bustling metropolis sits on the edge of the Elliyen Wilds and is hundreds of miles from any other civilized nation. Founded by a circle of wizards and protected by a legendary order of valiant knights, it is a place where dreams are made and broken every day.

Although technically a magocratic city-state under the control of the wizards of the Silver Circle, whose borders end at the city walls, over the past few decades the Circle has extended their protection for miles in every direction. With a host of towns, villages, and even fortresses now tied to Selenthea by protective treaties, it has truly become a country in its own right. There is an expectation that any day now, Selenthea shall re-declare their borders and join the other great countries of the Amethyst Sea basin.

### PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Humans, dwarves, and fey are the three largest populations in Selenthea. The remainder of the population is made up from people representing every other lineage in nearly equal proportions. It is, without a doubt, the greatest melting pot of peoples and cultures in the region.

The official language of the land, Selenthean, is a dialect of the Old Atlan tongue primarily used among academics. The result is a language that is oddly formal for a society so free from other formal social conventions. Adventurers, however, needn't worry about learning Selenthean. So many people have come to Selenthea from other lands, that nearly everyone speaks Common.

Selentheans are determined to forge a new path into the future. They have thrown off the shackles of tradition and are carving a better world out of the wilderness—both figuratively and literally. Not everyone is pleased by their disruptive new society, but with the backing of the mages of the Silver Circle and the Selenthean Knights, there are few outside of Selenthea who can stand in their way.

Selentheans are notoriously informal in every aspect of their lives, something that regularly results in unintentional insult when dealing with people from other cultures. They are extremely proud of their innovations and are eager to show off what they've built. They're quick to point out flaws in the way others do things, while simultaneously explaining the clever new way they've devised to perform the same task. Selentheans are unashamed iconoclasts, vigorously challenging ideas both new and old as a way of life.

Most Selentheans wear whatever they like whenever they like. They choose their clothing for purely personal reasons rather than the demands of society. Some may place a premium on comfort, wearing loose fitting tunic and trousers at all times. Others dress to make a statement, sometimes abandoning practical considerations altogether. Still others are focused on utility, choosing the right clothes for the job. Hair is worn loose and long for both men and women, although for practical purposes it might be pulled up under a hat or braided.



## FRIENDS AND FOES

Although Selentheia has loose trade agreements with the other kingdoms and countries in the Amethyst Sea basin, they've avoided binding alliances. They prefer their freedom, and do not wish to get pulled into other people's conflicts. The other side of this coin is they have no major disputes with the other great kingdoms or countries.

It is good they've managed to maintain peace, since Selentheia has troubles enough already. The Black Gate, once the largest and most important entrance into the Deeplands in the Amethyst Sea basin, is sealed, but the mountains around it are riddled with smaller Deepland entrances. The wards that seal many of these are starting to fail.

Attacks by organized forces of endrori are growing more commonplace every year. Small armies, often led by wraethdari, emerge regularly, and it has taken every bit of Selentheia's magic and might to hold them back. This is in addition to the countless small bands of endrori raiders that pop-up in the hinterlands, attacking villagers, colonists, and travelers all across the countryside.

## LAY OF THE LAND

The city of Selentheia is built on a group of islands at the mouth of the Gyllen River. The islands are connected by magically constructed bridges, and the entire city is dominated by the Silver Tower, the massive headquarters of the Silver Circle, which sits on the central isle. The silvery-white tower was erected almost entirely with magic and stands as one of the modern wonders of the Amethyst Sea basin.

Beyond the walls of Selentheia is an untamed wilderness. Most of the land is covered by thick forest, and the foliage grows increasingly dense and difficult to traverse as one moves southeast toward the Elliye Wilds. There are hills and highlands to the east where a spur of the Stonegate Mountains, known as Modren's Arm, stretches down toward the sea. To the southwest along the Windsinger Sea's southern shores, vast salt marshes blend land and sea into a single, vast swamp.

## VILLAGES, TOWNS, AND CITIES

The land around Selentheia is not completely wild. Scattered about are castles, small towns, and villages carved from the unforgiving wilderness. Many were founded by young nobles who, for whatever reason, have no hopes of inheriting land in their home countries. They come to Selentheia with a chest of gold and a dream of building a kingdom of their own in the vast, untamed forests. Sadly, this is easier said than done. Travelers in the forests around Selentheia will find as many of these would-be kingdoms abandoned as they find occupied.

Every settlement that hopes to survive is walled, either with stone or palisades. The houses are typically constructed from wood, an abundant resource in the region, and their builders make use of heavy beams, plank siding, and chipped shingles. Glass is rare, since there is no glassworks in the region, so most windows are covered with grills and shutters.

There are deep concerns among the other kingdoms of the Amethyst Sea that Selentheia's magical research will place Selentheia at a strategic advantage if relations ever sour. I've heard whispers, wondering if something shouldn't be done to slow down their progress.

—BELLYNDA

I cannot speak to the diplomatic repercussions, but I will note they are advancing their arcane mastery at an unnaturally rapid pace. It has raised questions among academics like myself as to how they are accomplishing this feat.

—ISIN

Well, whadda you know? I guess newardin do feel at least one emotion after all. Jealousy.

—TORRICA

The ruins are everywhere. All the land within a couple of day's walk from Selentheia is dotted with abandoned farmsteads, empty villages, and unfinished castles. The good news for adventurers is that you can almost always find a place to shelter for the night when you're on the march.

—DYSART

Assuming, of course, something else isn't already sheltering there.

—CALABRIA



I've always wondered why the Black Diamond chose Selentheia. Why not Port Vale?

—DYSART

The Black Diamond is a tightly run ship, and the members see their organization as a respectable professional guild. Operating out of Port Vale, which is essentially run by thugs, wouldn't fit their style.

—BELLYNDA

This is a point of contention between the Knights and the Circle. The Knights are the ones pushing to expand the borders of the city-state, but the Circle doesn't have any real interest in doing so. The Circle has only agreed to the current expansion to mollify the Knights. It'll be interesting to see what happens if the Knights keep pushing and the Circle says no.

—CALABRIA

## TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

Most of the roads outside the walls of Selentheia proper are little more than trackways. The only maintenance most receive is the clearing of fallen trees. The responsibility of maintenance generally falls to whoever's home the trackway leads to, since they are the ones who benefit the most by its continued existence. Recently, however, there is talk of paving some of the more heavily traveled roads leading out of the city.

Selentheia has an excellent port, and many merchant ship captains call the city home. There are always a host of merchant vessels from around the Amethyst Sea at the docks, and Selentheian captains are more than happy to take on passengers. The only catch is that most captains are heading south on the stonewise currents around the sea, so if you're heading back to Agthor or the lands in those parts, you might be in for a long trip.

The rivers around Selentheia are largely unnavigable. This is due to countless waterfalls and rapids, as the land often slopes steeply down from the mountains to the sea. The Gyllen is navigable for a few miles distance, and in the city itself, boats are one of the primary means of getting around.

## LAW AND ORDER

A detailed codex of laws governs proper behavior in Selentheia. There is little that happens in Selentheia that the Silver Circle doesn't know about, so if you commit a crime, someone will find out. On the other hand, enforcement of the law and punishment for infractions is inconsistent. In a land ruled by eccentric mages and scholars, whose plots and attentions change as quickly as the wind, the application of the law tends to shift based on their most recent whims and desires.

Selentheia's loose approach to law enforcement has attracted its most infamous residents: the Black Diamond. The Black Diamond is the largest and best organized guild of thieves and assassins in the Amethyst Sea basin. They secretly operate guild houses in cities throughout the basin, but their headquarters is in Selentheia. Most people assume them to have an agreement of some kind with the Silver Circle, since their operations there are a well-known "secret."

## ADVENTURING

The Silver Circle only extends rudimentary protection to the settlements beyond its walls. Fortunately, the Knights of Selentheia have dedicated themselves to independently protecting the fledgling kingdoms that dot the countryside, but their numbers are limited. With a wide variety of strange and dangerous creatures prowling the wild lands, plus endrori coming down out of the mountains on a regular basis, there is plenty of work for adventurers looking to help the Knights protect remote settlements.

The greatest draw to Selentheia for adventurers is its close proximity to the Elliyen Wilds. Hidden in the thick undergrowth of this immense forest are the ruins of one of the most powerful fey kingdoms that ever existed. Those who can survive its dangers often return with amazing treasures. The wilds are covered in greater detail in the next chapter.



## ADVENTURE SITES

The following are areas of particular interest to adventurers:

- ♦ **The Black Gate** Northeast of Selenthean, in a protected vale of the Stonegate Mountains, stands the Black Gate. This massive Deepland entrance is at least 200 feet tall and twice as wide. Before the Age of Darkness, the dwarves called this place Barator Bayithdor. It served as the most important trade route into and out of the Stonegate Mountain Deeplands. A thriving market town grew up around the entrance, and people from across the Amethyst Sea basin came here to trade.

This is also where the first of the Dark Hordes emerged from the Deep-lands, and it acted as a primary conduit for endrori traveling from the depths below to the surface world. When the Great War ended, sealing this entrance was beyond the abilities of any mortal Warder. They say Alantra herself came down and erected the seal that blocks the gate today.

This seal is where the Black Gate earned its name. Just inside the gate is a wall of black stone that completely seals off the entrance. The wall is without blemish, mirror smooth, and constructed of a stone never seen on Aetaltis before or since.

There are no signs the gate is failing, but the mountains around the gate contain countless Deepland entrances. These were sealed after the war, but as is the case elsewhere in the region, many of the wards are failing.

I believe you've understated the danger the endrori pose in the lands just outside Selenthean's circle of protection.

—BELLYNDA

Agreed. I know of nowhere else on the Amethyst Sea where endrori operate with more impunity. There are even recent reports of endrori building fortifications and establishing settlements in the mountains around the Black Gate.

—ISIN

*Enigmatic Selenthean newardin go about their errands.*





It may be hard to believe, but the Knights really are as honorable as their reputation suggests. Normally, this sort of group has some shadowy underside, but not them. What you see is what you get.

—CALABRIA

Here is the thing I've always wondered. None of this stuff you've written bothers anyone in Selentheia? A shadowy circle of mages sending down orders from a magic tower? All while living on the edge of the Elliyen Wilds? And next door to the Black Gate? People are fine with this? Seriously? No concerns at all?

—TORRICA

I can't speak to all of those things, but I will say this. People will overlook a great deal if you provide them with freedom, peace, and prosperity. That's what the Circle delivers, and as long as that continues, I don't think people will see being ruled by a mysterious circle of wizards as any better or worse than being ruled by some stranger who inherited a throne from their parents.

—BELLYNDA

## INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following is a list of key players and organizations who hold power in Selentheia:

- ♦ **The Black Diamond Guild** The Black Diamond Guild is a professional order of thieves, burglars, spies, and assassins that operates out of Selentheia. They take pride in their work and conduct themselves as true professionals. Only the most skilled agents are accepted into their ranks, and their services do not come cheap. They appear to have an alliance of sorts with the Silver Circle, although the terms of the arrangement are unknown.

The Guild has no interest in petty theft, banditry, or other base criminal endeavors. Selentheia has its fair share of these problems, but the Guild avoids getting involved in such things. The exception is when some low-ranking criminal's operations get in the way of the Guild's business. Punishment for such transgressions is swift and final.

- ♦ **Knights of Selentheia** The mercenary knights who the mages originally hired to escort them from Winterkeep stayed on at the end of their term. Known today as the Knights of Selentheia, they are the sworn protectors of the city, and they are always looking for new recruits.

A contingent of knights always remain in the city, but they also send out squads to patrol the countryside. These mounted and heavily armored warriors travel about checking in on the forts, settlements, and homesteads that are popping up all around Selentheia. They do not enforce the laws of Selentheia when on patrol, but they are honorable and fair, dispensing justice where and how they deem necessary.

- ♦ **Lyceum Grethken and Lyceum Vale** The Lyceums of both Grethken and Vale operate out of Selentheia. They share an extensive compound constructed on an island on the eastern edge of the city. The compound is home to the First Archons of both Lyceums and house the priests, priestesses, acolytes, clerics, and functionaries that run the Lyceums' operations. The High Temples are located outside the city in more natural surroundings.

- ♦ **Silver Circle** The Silver Circle is the organization that rules Selentheia. Although membership in the Circle numbers in the thousands—many of whom are not actually wizards—the central ruling body is a cabal of twelve powerful wizards. This body holds absolute power over Selentheia and the surrounding countryside, and has done so since the founding of the city.

The product of their rule is shared out to the masses through the lesser members, but the means by which decisions are made is opaque. Even the identities of the twelve are a closely guarded secret, as is the means by which one attains a seat in the ruling cabal.

*Had a rare glimpse of a wild fey today—a sprite.  
Until now I had thought them only myth!  
It was a brief and eerie encounter, no more than  
a few seconds that set the hairs on my nape  
on end! As soon as it espied us it was away,  
vanishing imperceptibly into the green.*



## KEY LOCATIONS

The following is a list of important cities, landmarks, and locations within Selentheia:

- ♦ **High Temple of Grethken** The High Temple of Grethken is a phenomenal structure crafted from living wood using powerful divine magic. It stands in a holy glade beside Starstone Lake. Since the temple lies outside the city, an order of warrior clerics is sworn to remain at the temple at all times to protect it from intruders or attackers.
- ♦ **High Temple of Vale** On a towering cliff northeast of Selentheia and overlooking the Windsinger Sea stands the High Temple of Vale. The temple is a circle of enormous stones surrounding a huge fire pit. A raging fire burns in the pit day and night, fueled by a divine fire that can never be extinguished. Ceremonies are held at night, and as dancers circle the fire, the light from the flames casts wild shadows through the gaps in the stones, creating shimmering animalistic forms in the air around it.
- ♦ **Silver Tower** The Silver Tower is the centerpiece of the city and the symbol of the Circle's might. The twelve leaders of the Circle reside there along with many of the Circle's highest-ranking leaders. The top floor is said to have been built around a powerful essence well and is used for the casting of the Circle's most important ritual spells.

Surrounding the tower are a complex of buildings that house both the various ministries that handle the day-to-day governance of the city as well as the buildings that house the College of the Silver Circle. The entire island is walled using the same glistening white stone used to construct the tower. Access to the island and the tower is strictly controlled, and trespassers are subject to hefty fines, lengthy imprisonment, or worse.

When they say access to the tower is strictly controlled, that's an understatement. The amount of protective magic they employ is truly impressive. And the guards do not have a sense of humor.

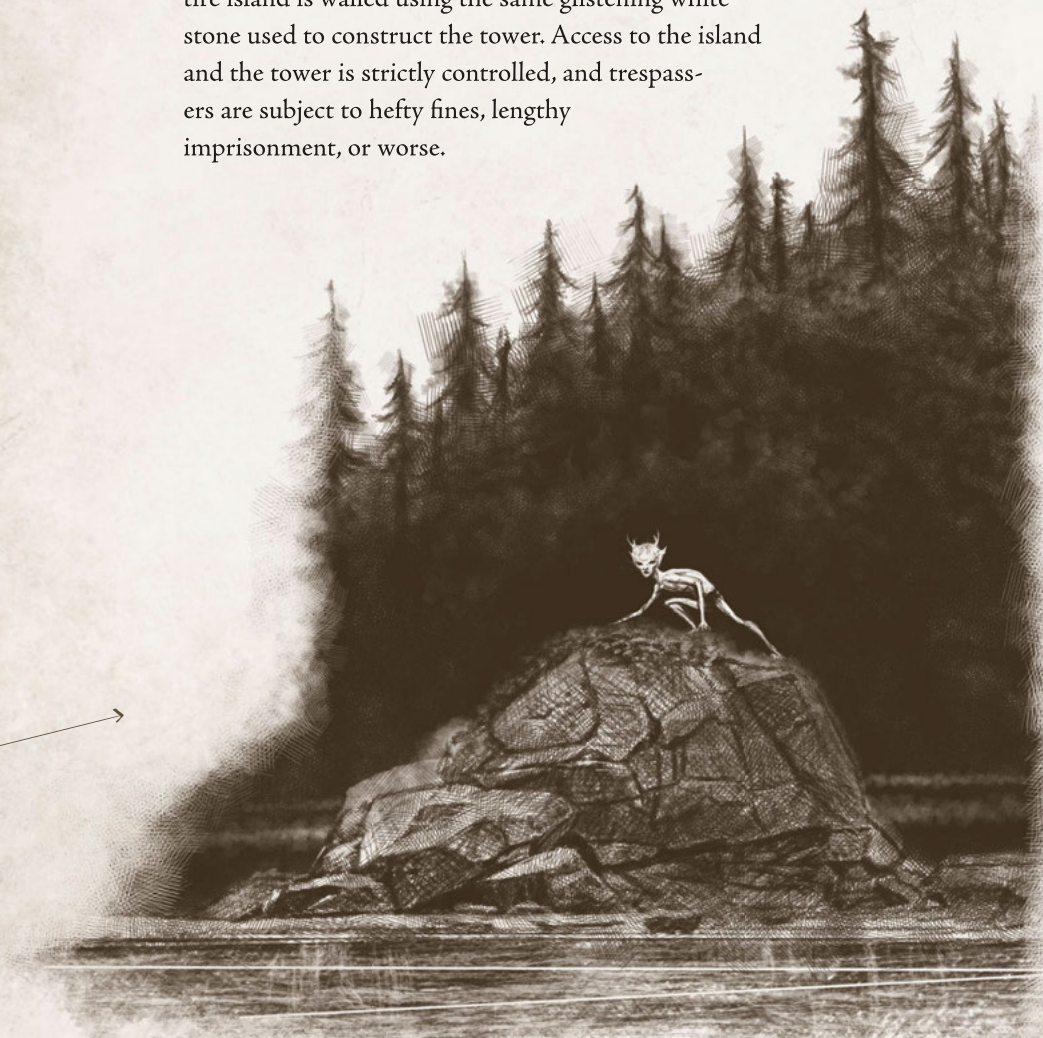
—DYSART

The security is appropriate. If there is an essence well in the tower and someone with ill intent gained control of it, the outcome could prove catastrophic.

—ISIN

And how exactly do we know "someone with ill intent" ain't the Circle? Seems like a question we should be askin'.

—TORRICA





## OF SPECIAL INTEREST

## THE HEROES OF AGTHOR

While on the road to Castle Port, Eathen had the good fortune to share a meal with the respected group of adventurers known as the Heroes of Agthor. These bold heroes serve as a shining example of what young adventurers should strive to become. The following is a summarized record of his encounter.

## ON MEETING THE HEROES OF AGTHOR

You couldn't imagine my surprise today when, upon stopping at the White Heron tavern, we encountered none other than the Heroes of Agthor. My visit with them was brief, but our party shared a table, and in that time, I learned a great deal about the famed party of adventurers. The following are a few of my first impressions. I plan to write a more complete account when we get to Selentheia.

I met the Heroes a few years ago, before Marchward joined them. Scholarae Winswood's descriptions match my own assessment. An all around fine group of adventurers.

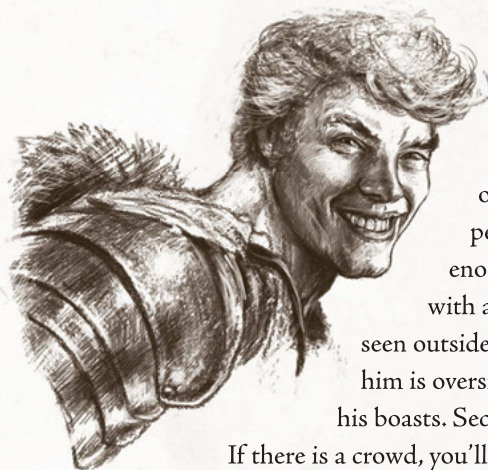
—PORTAND

Bah. The Order of Anlord is no true order of Droth. They are more worried about how they look than how they fight.

—GRAIMAK

Sounds like somebody is still sore about losing to Borsef in the Castle Port wrestling tourney last year.

—CALABRIA



## BORSEF FLAXTON III

When one thinks of the adherents of the Enaros, an image of someone basking in contemplative peace often comes to mind. Borsef is not that person. First and foremost, he is quite enormous: over six feet tall and endowed with a sculpted, muscular physique seldom seen outside of Valorian statuary. Everything about him is oversized, from his gestures to his voice to his boasts. Second, he is decidedly not contemplative.

If there is a crowd, you'll find him at the center of it, and if there is revelry, he always joins in.

In retrospect, his lack of self-contemplation is not all that surprising. He is part of a little-known holy sect of Droth called the Order of Anlord. Anlord's teachings say that one achieves purity in Droth's eyes through the constant and punishing quest for physical and athletic perfection. By this measure and my personal assessment, Borsef is well on his way to enlightenment.

That said, he is more than muscles. To hear his companions tell it, he is a stalwart and courageous companion. Each had tales of Borsef risking all to defend them with little thought to his own safety. I also noted that even with all the attention he received from the locals, he never took advantage of their good will, even going so far as to buy multiple rounds for the room. In a way, I feel this is perhaps the measure of a true hero: not what gifts they have, skills they've developed, or treasures they've obtained, but rather, how they choose to use them.





## KJELD "TOOTHPICK" HETHKETT

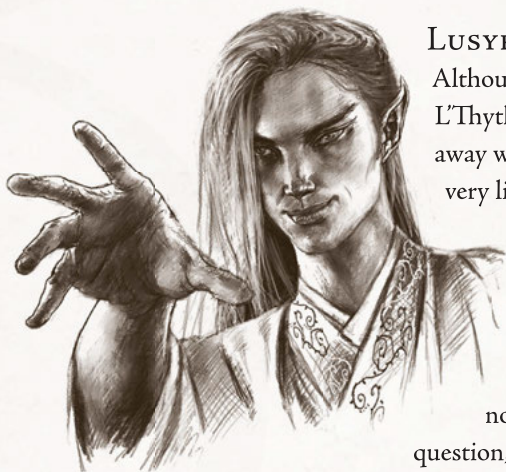
Where Borsef was very much the man he appeared to be, Kjeld was quite the opposite. He's an older dwarf with the stern demeanor and scars one expects of a seasoned Liberator. Although I felt a bit intimidated by him at first, when I finally sat down for a private conversation, he turned out to be quite jovial; a good-natured fellow with a playful, if somewhat dry, sense of humor.



I'd hoped to have him tell me about the Deeplands, but he waved off my questions and instead asked me all about where I'd come from and "who my people are." After listening attentively, he went on to talk at length about the children of a widow he'd befriended. As he sat there chewing the end of his pipe, talking about the children, he sounded for all the world like a doting grandfather rather than a famed and hardened warrior. If you ignored the armor, marked with the chips and dents of countless battles against the endrori, and the massive war mattock leaning against the wall beside him, you might quickly forget this was the same warrior who once stood toe-to-toe with a dragon in her nest.

The bit about Kjeld and the dragon is true, but what they don't say is that instead of fighting it he befriended it. In fact it's the dragon that gave him his nickname.

—BELLYNDA



## LUSYEN L'THYTHALIEN

Although I spoke to the elven wizard Lusyen L'Thythalien as much as the others, I walked away with the uncomfortable feeling I'd learned very little about him. Or, perhaps more to the

point, I learned only that which he wished me to know—nothing more, nothing less. Now, whether what I learned is the truth is likely another matter entirely. I say all of this

not as an insult or to call his honor into question, but rather to reinforce the idea being a

hero is less about what you are, and more about what you do—and Lusyen has done quite a lot of good.

Tall, golden-haired, and possessed of delicately handsome features, Lusyen fits every physical stereotype we've come to know of the Elloriyan people. He is also joyful and fun-loving, but with an air of mystery that makes him all the more intriguing. And yet, beneath the surface lies another person. For instance, one struggles to discern whether his good humor is genuine or laced with cleverly veiled sarcasm. And at moments when no one is watching, his entire demeanor changes, and he appears as cold and distant as a snow-covered mountain peak.

When did this meeting take place? I heard Lusyen left the Heroes a few years ago, although where he went no one is saying.

—DYSART

I heard he died battling the arch lich he and the Heroes had been hunting.

—BELLYNDA

It would not be the first time he has died.

—GRAIMAK



## THE HEROES OF AGTHOR CONT'D

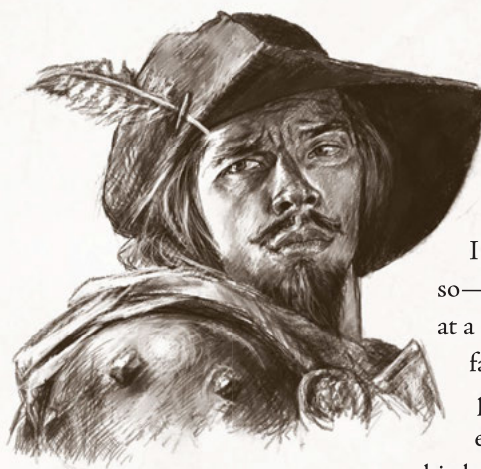
But I challenge you again with a question based on my early comments about judgement based solely on one's actions: does any of what I've told you about Lusyen so far matter? Or is the real measure by which to judge this man the many Deepland gates he has helped to seal? Or the fact he very nearly gave his life to save his companions, coming so close to death, in fact, his survival wasn't discovered until he appeared unexpectedly at his own funeral? I argue that latter, and I believe all good-thinking folk will agree upon consideration.

This guy is a man after my own heart. It's about time someone started speaking the truth about our world. We need change.

—CALABRIA

He keeps talkin' like that, he'll get change alright—at the end of a rope.

—TORRICA



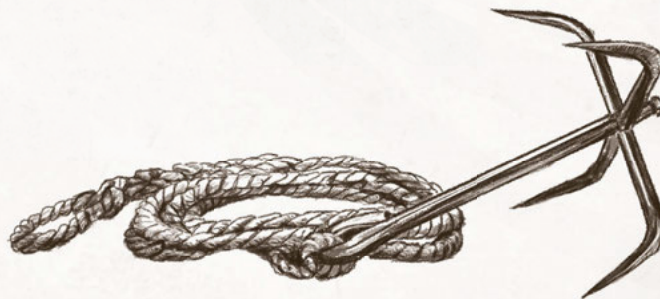
## LEUCARETH

I am sorry to say I did not have the opportunity to speak directly with the famed warrior-mage Leucareth. He was engaged the entire time in what I can only describe as—and I hope he will forgive me for saying so—fomenting a minor rebellion. Sitting at a large round table with a group of local farmers, he and they loudly debated the problems of a government where one earns power, wealth, and fealty through birthright alone. More than once I heard

Leucareth shout at a disgruntled farmer, "Then maybe you should do something about it rather than just complaining!" It was a vigorous and fascinating intellectual discussion, and I admit I wanted to abandon my observer status and join in the debate.

As to the man himself, he is tall and powerfully built, and in almost every way looks the part of the skilled heavy fighter I've heard he is. The one notable difference from others of his ilk is his fastidious grooming. He even went so far as to pull out a small comb to tidy up his immaculately trimmed goatee in the middle of making one of his impassioned arguments.

Curiously, I saw no sign of the magical ability he is said to possess. Obviously, he looks nothing like the bookish wizards one is accustomed to seeing back at the College, so in terms of appearance there is no hint. He carried no staff, I saw no wand at his belt, and there was no sign of a spellbook of any sort. At least for now, I will have to trust the tales of his mastery of destructive magic.





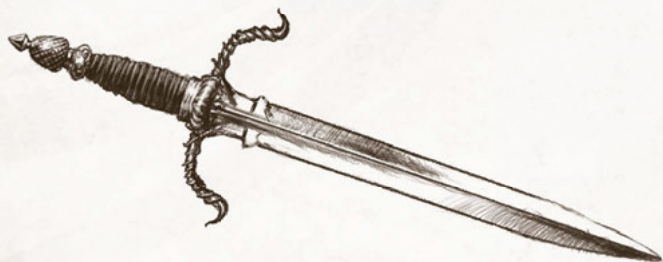
## ARON MARCHWARD

I located the famed swordsman Aron Marchward sitting casually off to the side of the party, cleaning a finely crafted parrying dagger I later learned he calls *Swordbreaker*. He welcomed me, having learned my intent by observation, and happily offered to tell me whatever I'd like to know. I found Marchward to be practical, polite, and altogether gentlemanly. Although he remained thoroughly professional throughout our conversation, every now and again I caught a wry smile or mischievous grin, suggesting a roguish nature hidden beneath his soldierly exterior.

I learned he began his career as a mercenary, although he took pains to clarify he wasn't "that kind of mercenary, you know the ones I mean." Rather, he explained, he only fought if the cause was just and the employer honorable. He's quite widely traveled, having adventured in lands from the north of Agthor to southern Callios.

Marchward is the most recent addition to the Heroes of Agthor. Their paths crossed while Marchward was hunting a dark sorceress who had been terrorizing the villages north of Castle Port. When they learned of Marchward's purpose, the Heroes joined him in his quest, and together they finally tracked the fiend down and put an end to her depredations. Afterward, as Marchward tells it, he decided to "follow along for a bit to see what sort of trouble we can get into."

And that is my initial account. As I stated, I do hope to come back to my notes and write more detailed entries for each of the Heroes. In particular, I wish to put to paper the story Marchward told me about his first encounter with the aforementioned sorceress down in Callios. In the meantime, I leave you with a simple assessment: without doubt, these fine heroes are exactly what Lord Drakewyn hoped for when he called upon adventurers to join the fight against the darkness. We can only pray that more of their ilk choose to join in our cause.



Marchward comes from a long line of foresters. Apparently he grew tired of the corruption among the nobles he served, and decided he could do more for the world on his own.

—CALABRIA

So what's the deal, here? They're all men. Don't the Heroes allow women into their club?

—TORRICA

A fair question, and one I happen to know the answer to. This is only the current incarnation of the team. The roster has changed quite a bit over the years. In the past, the team included a number of female members, including some you might know. I assume you've heard of the famed Selenthean sword fighter Abigon Santis? Abigon was one of the group's founding members. Then there's Paige Tinyfoot, the famous Dalelander rogue. She was the team's leader for two years before she left to pursue personal goals.

—PORTAND

I guess you could call "stealing the Starbreaker diamond from the Grand Treasury in Hericos" a "personal goal."

—DYSART

They catch her yet?

—BELYNDA

Not that I'm aware of.

—DYSART

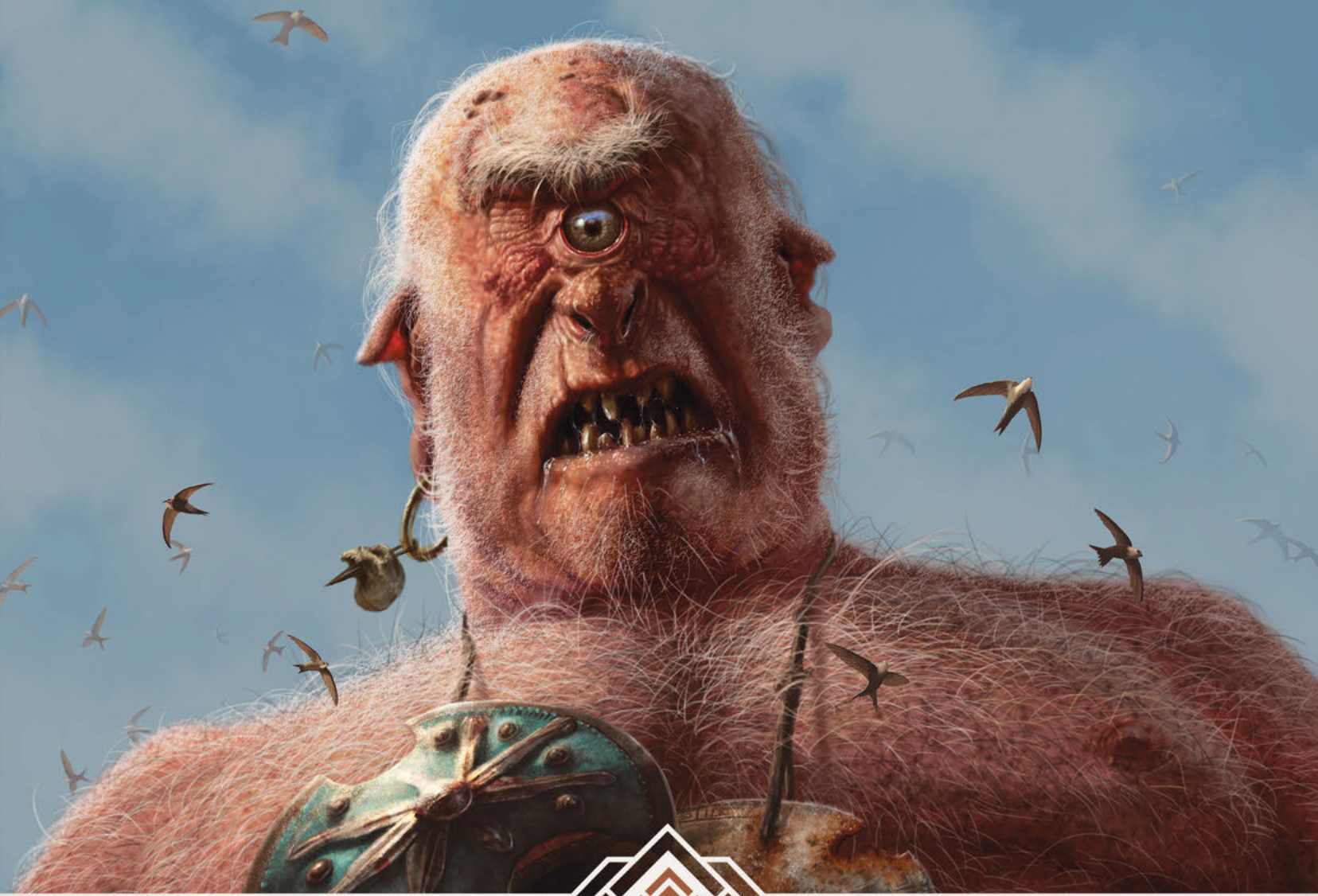
Ha! So much for them bein' "stalwart examples of what a hero should be."

—TORRICA

And I believe we will close comments on this chapter here. Thank you, all.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS





## CHAPTER FIVE

# ON ADVENTURING IN THE WILDS

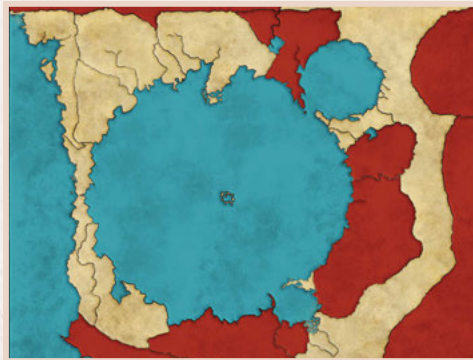
**I**F ONLY EVERY ADVENTURE TOOK PLACE IN CIVILIZED LANDS! HOW MUCH EASIER THINGS WOULD be if you could spend the night at the inn, wake up rested, follow the paved road to your chosen adventure site, spend the day tromping about the ruins, and return to the inn for another good night's rest. Sadly, this is far from the norm.

More often, adventurers are trudging along for days through trackless wastes, hacking their way through the undergrowth of forgotten forests, or clambering down the moss covered stones of a rough hewn crack in the side of a hill. There are no roads, no inns, and certainly no other travelers. It is you and your companions against the untamed wilderness of the Amethyst Sea basin.



# THE WILDS

Spend enough time adventuring, and you'll eventually find yourself trekking through the wilds. What are the wilds? The wilds are any region of the known world not under the direct protection and rule of a sovereign kingdom or country. These lands are untouched—at least in recent history—by foot or plow.



Some wilds are mundane wilderlands, such as blowing deserts, humid jungles, craggy peaks, and deep forests. You'll find a scattering of magical dangers there, but on the whole the threats are primarily mundane. The Northern Wilds to the east of Agthor are an example of this type of wild.

Then there are magical wilds. These are places wholly or partially magical in nature. The Blade Sea, the Elliyeen Wilds, and even some regions of the Zhamay-en Jungle and Scythaan Wastes fall into this category. These are places where the wild state of the land is due at least in part to magical alteration. You're far more likely to encounter magical creatures and essence-touched threats in a magical wild than you would in a mundane wild.

Finally, there are remote ruins which, for the purposes of this book, we are including in our discussion of the wilds. These are all but forgotten settlements, abandoned so long ago that they are effectively wilds today, even if signs of past occupation are found all around. The Deeplands are the most famous of this type of wild, and the dangers they present may be mundane, magical, or both.

## GENERAL GUIDANCE

We begin with general guidance for adventurers traveling in the wilds. While every location has its own unique traits and perils, this information and advice will prove useful no matter where you travel.

## THE KNOWN WORLD

In the previous chapter, we discussed the extent of the known world. Although many of the wilds described in this chapter are unexplored, we still consider them part of the known world. That is to say, we can place them on a map and find our way to them should we desire.

## PATHS, ROADS, AND HIGHWAYS

Be wary of any paths or roads you find in the wilds. If it is not clearly unused or overgrown, you should immediately ask yourself, "Who is traveling through such an inhospitable place regularly enough to keep this path clear?" Nearly always, the answer is not good. The remnants of the old highways, however, are another matter.

That's as good of a definition of the wilds as I've seen, but it doesn't mean that some King or Queen or thug with a sword won't try to tell you the land is theirs. Most nobles map their borders well into the wilds, despite the fact they don't have the soldiers or the resources to enforce that claim.

—TORRICA

The Deeplands aren't all ruined cities, you know. The bits adventurers typically care about are, but the caves and caverns we've never inhabited were there long before we arrived. Much of it we never touched and it's as much a natural wild land as anything you find on the surface.

—VRENN

Except unlike a surface wild, the Deepland wilds are filled with endrori, corrupted monsters, and similar nasties.

—DYSART

I would say that is a very important difference.

—GRAIMAK

Keep in mind that finding your way to a place is not the same thing as finding your way through it, or more to the point, out of it.

—VRENN



I once encountered a stretch of Alliance highway in the southern Dragon Tails that magically looped back on itself. Took us two days to figure out what was happening. We only got away from it by hacking a path straight into the forest away from the road.

—DYSART

Whaddaya mean the dwarves of old were master engineers? You saying we ain't up to the level of our ancestors? Come to Malador, and I'll show you a thing or two.

—VRENN

Apologies, Master Vrenn. No offense intended. Naturally, we meant to say they were just as skilled as dwarves today.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

### FORGOTTEN ALLIANCE HIGHWAYS

The Alliance was known for its excellent roads and highways, and nearly every Alliance settlement was connected by a network of fine, paved roads. Contrary to what the balladeers suggest, only the elite traveled between settlements by city gate. This made the Alliance's roads vital to both trade and defense.

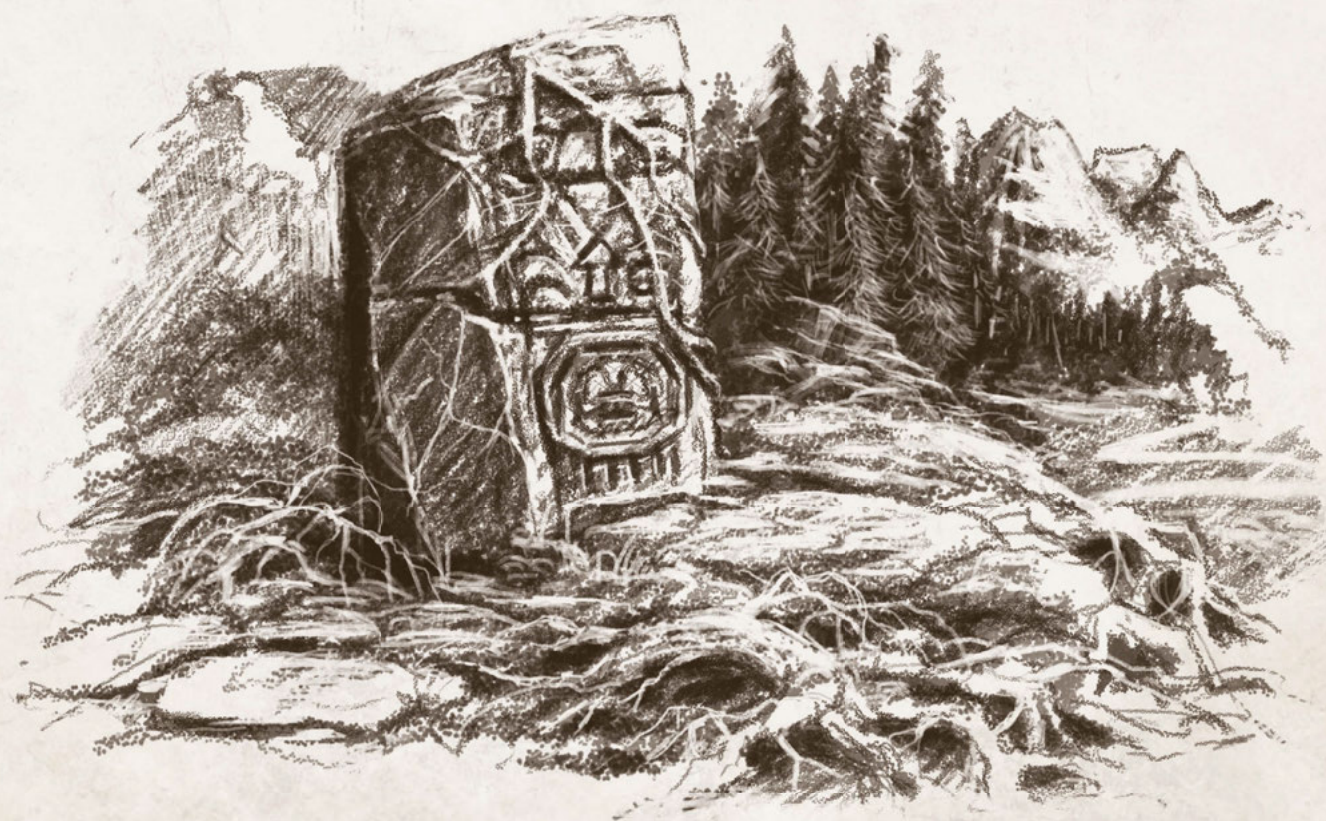
In civilized lands, many of the Alliance highways remain in use today, but in the wilds, many more fell into disrepair after the Cataclysm and were forgotten. Even when they are overgrown, however, it's much easier to travel along an old Alliance highway than hacking a new path through the wilderness.

Do not, however, become complacent when traveling old Alliance roads. When the Cataclysm destroyed the gates, the magical carnage often left the settlements and their surroundings uninhabitable and dangerous. The cause varied from sudden infestations of monsters to unpredictable essence storms. Keep in mind there are, after all, reasons some of these old highways were abandoned and forgotten.

### OLD DWARVEN HIGHWAYS

The dwarves constructed impressive stone highways of their own during the Dwarven Age. To find one today is rare indeed, but if you do, there is a very good chance it remains navigable. Not only were the dwarves of old master engineers, they reinforced some of these old roads using rune magic.

Maps from before the Age of Darkness (or at least the copies of the maps that survive today), sometimes show the paths of old dwarven highways. You should also watch for the stelae that once marked the dwarven roads at two-mile intervals. These five-foot tall pillars of stone were engraved with the distances to important locations. They also included directional markings telling what lies in either direction.





Over the years, many fell over and were lost beneath the foliage while others were scavenged for their stone to use in other construction projects. Some remain, however, offering not only an easier way to find your path but tantalizing hints about what lies at the end of the ancient road they once marked. Follow the path and one may discover the ruins of forgotten fey cities, the entrance to lost Deepland halls, or similar wonders of the past.

### LEYWAYS

During the Age of Magic, the fey constructed their own roads around the Amethyst Sea. Some of these they set down along the paths of ley lines. Very few of the old leyways remain, and many of the ancient lines have long since faded. Some still exist, however, bound by magic to the ley line they follow, and they remain in remarkably good condition.

### RIVER CROSSINGS

River crossings in the wilds are far more treacherous than in civilized lands. In fact, novice adventurers may be surprised to learn that river crossings can prove some of the most dangerous challenges they'll face.

### FORDS

It can take many hours of trudging up and down a river to locate a decent ford, especially if you have carts or animals. Even if you find one, remain alert at all times. Loose stones can break a horse's leg, a hidden hole can plunge you into an ice cold river, or an unexpected surge of water due to a storm ten miles up the mountain, can suddenly swell a stream and wash you away.

### RAFTS

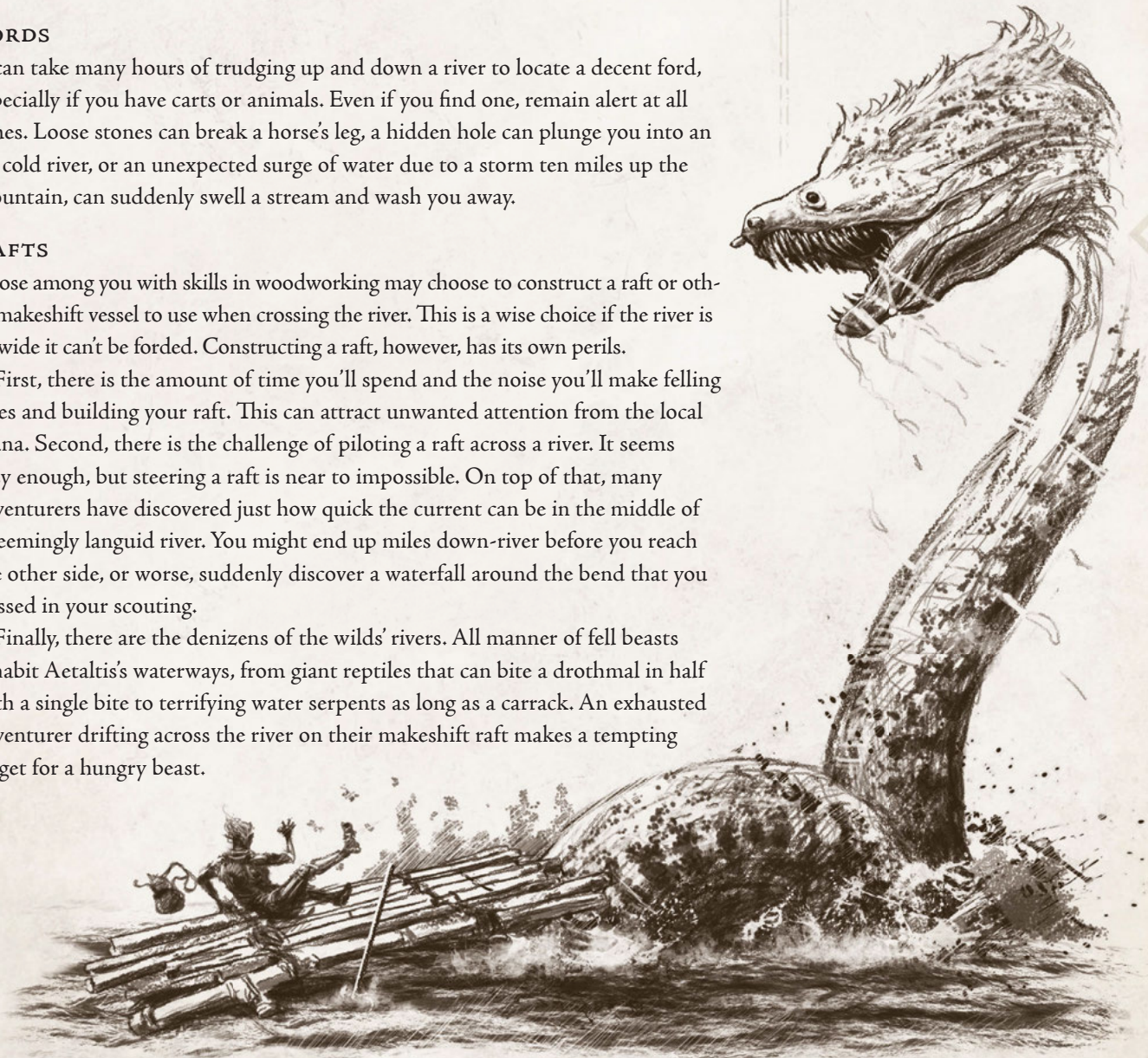
Those among you with skills in woodworking may choose to construct a raft or other makeshift vessel to use when crossing the river. This is a wise choice if the river is so wide it can't be forded. Constructing a raft, however, has its own perils.

First, there is the amount of time you'll spend and the noise you'll make felling trees and building your raft. This can attract unwanted attention from the local fauna. Second, there is the challenge of piloting a raft across a river. It seems easy enough, but steering a raft is near to impossible. On top of that, many adventurers have discovered just how quick the current can be in the middle of a seemingly languid river. You might end up miles down-river before you reach the other side, or worse, suddenly discover a waterfall around the bend that you missed in your scouting.

Finally, there are the denizens of the wilds' rivers. All manner of fell beasts inhabit Aetaltis's waterways, from giant reptiles that can bite a drothmal in half with a single bite to terrifying water serpents as long as a carrack. An exhausted adventurer drifting across the river on their makeshift raft makes a tempting target for a hungry beast.

I've only ever found one of leyway. It just ran for a few miles through the middle of a deep forest. Whatever used to lie at either end was long gone, but the road remained. Paved with some sort of blue stone, and the damned thing not only looked like it was laid down yesterday, but by night it'd glow in the moonlight. Incredible.

—CALABRIA





Pack animals aren't just for supplies. They're also how you get all your treasure back to town.

—BELLYNDA

Of course, this depends on your definition of treasure, Bellynda. Most of the time "treasure" fits in a backpack or saddlebag.

—CALABRIA

Ha! Remember the time she made us haul that massive carved bed frame, the one with the big Z on it, back to town through five miles of heavy forest? And then she couldn't sell it because everyone recognized it and were too terrified of the wizard who once owned it?

—TORRICA

Bah. Fools, the lot of them. That wizard was long dead. And it was a gorgeous maple bed frame.

—BELLYNDA

Porters? Hirelings? Spoken like someone who has never gone on an actual adventure. The last thing you need is a bunch of well-meaning but largely inept laborers following you into the wilds. You'll spend all of your time keeping them alive and none of your time actually adventuring.

—TORRICA

True, but a competent and courageous torchbearer is worth their weight in gold. The good ones let you focus on the adventure rather than worrying about whether your lantern stays lit.

Plus, an extra set of eyes watching your back never hurts.

—BELLYNDA

Did you know that in Selenthea there is a Torchbearers Guild? They started it up last year. Apparently they already have more than 20 members.

—PORTAND

## BRIDGES

Every now and then you'll discover an ancient bridge spanning a river in the wilds, since most of the region's wild lands were inhabited at some point in the past. The roads that lead up to the bridge might be completely overgrown, but the bridge may yet remain. The only caution we offer here is the obvious one. Test the bridge's strength before crossing! It's bad enough to be plunged unexpectedly into the river, much less doing so with a rain of old stone falling down all around you.

## LAND TRANSPORT

In the wilds, your most reliable means of transport on land are your own two feet. For long expeditions, however, you may need more supplies than you can easily carry on your back. In that case you'll need to consider other options.

### PACK ANIMALS

A sturdy pack mule or donkey with a mild disposition is one of the most useful and valuable companions you can have on an adventure. When shopping for such a beast, if they show any sign of aggression or disobedience *do not buy*. Adventuring is difficult enough without an ornery pack animal providing new challenges daily.

If possible, find an animal trained to weather combat. These animals are exposed to the sights, sounds, and smells of fighting during their training. They won't bolt at the first sign of trouble, disappearing into the forest with all of your expensive adventuring gear. Unfortunately, such training generally doubles the price, so expect to pay for the benefit.

Dwarven adventurers out of Malador tell us they have taken to using large goats as pack animals. Goats are troublesome beasts to have on the farm, but their sure-footedness and ability to eat almost anything make them fine pack animals for adventurers. They are also small enough to take into places like the Deeplands, something you'll struggle to get a donkey or mule to agree to without significant protest.

### PORTERS

Adventurers might also consider hiring porters. There is no shortage of people desperate for coin who would agree to accompany you on your adventure for the purpose of carrying your extra equipment. The best porters will also assist with tasks such as setting up camp and preparing meals while you're away.

Of course, porters come with all the problems typical of hirelings. Thieves and bandits are known to masquerade as porters, only to rob their employer blind the moment their back is turned. Even if they aren't thieves, dealing with the needs of your porters becomes a job in itself, and demands you pack even more equipment. On top of that, few porters are warriors, so you'll likely need to get guards to protect the porters while you're away.

### TORCHBEARERS

Torchbearers are porters specially trained to accompany adventurers. They are a hardier stock than the typical porter, featuring greater physical and mental stamina than your typical servant. Their name comes from their original purpose; to carry a torch or lantern, leaving the adventurer's hands free for fighting. Many eventually go on to become adventurers in their own right.



## WATER TRANSPORT

We've already touched on the topic of rafts. One can always lash together a passable raft if need be, but there are dangers. The following entries further explore the topic of water transportation.

### TRAVEL BY RIVER

Traveling by river is a good way to cover large distances quickly, but when exploring the wilds, you are usually limited to small boats. Waterways in the wilds are largely uncharted, and unless you can lift your boat from the water to portage past rapids, falls, and other dangers, you won't get far.

### TRAVEL BY SEA

One might not think of the sea as one of the wilds, but there are endless miles of uncharted waters. Even on the Amethyst Sea, captains tend to stick to known trade routes. A complete discussion of nautical exploration is beyond the scope of this book, but we hope to address the topic in a future publication.

## SHELTER

You won't find a friendly inn when traveling the wilds. You'll need to resort to more primitive means of shelter. The smart solution is to purchase a high-quality tent. A good tent is heavy and not cheap, but it can make the difference between life and death if the weather turns on you.

Caves and ruins are tempting shelters, but it will come as no surprise that you should demonstrate extreme caution when sheltering within. Search the location thoroughly before settling down. You don't want to awaken halfway through the night to find that you're sharing a cave with a hungry carnivore, or worse yet, discover that the cave extends farther and deeper than you initially imagined.

## FOOD AND WATER

The smart adventurer packs all the food they need for their journey. Specially prepared ration packs for travelers are easy to find and purchase, and they ensure you will get all the necessary nutrients to sustain your physical form. Also, pack extra! Many adventures take longer than expected, and you don't want to run out of food half-way through.

Water is another matter. It is heavy and difficult to transport, making it unrealistic that you'll carry all the water you need. Instead, pack what you can and then remain constantly vigilant for places where you can restock your supply. In general, the closer you are to the source, the more certain you can be that it is safe.

Exhibit caution when collecting water from still pools. Even crystal clear still water may be foul for drinking. If taking water from a stream, scout up river first. You don't want to fill your skin only to round the bend and discover some animal carcass lodged under a log and rotting in the current.

Finally, when in doubt, heat the water to a hearty boil, let it cool, then fill your skin. The heat drives out evil, and like a cat escaping a bath, it'll flee the water leaving it pure for drinking. Just be certain not to breathe the vapors that come off the water, as you may inhale the evil coming off the liquid.

I urge you to reconsider your decision to leave out a discussion of sea travel. Half my adventures have involved sea travel. It's an important topic.

—BELLYNDA

If you do find an inn in the middle of the wilds, go the other way. It's always a trap. I'm speaking from experience here.

—DYSART

Driving out the evil? Dangerous vapors? These explanations for why you boil the water are ridiculous. Yes, you can boil water to purify it, but it has nothing to do with evil. I thought you said these scholars were experts?

—ISIN

Oh, here we go again. Madame Know-it-All is here to teach us what is what. You do as you will, but I'm not breathin' the vapors from evil water.

—VRENN



Bah! If the kill is fresh there is no  
need to cook it. Enjoy it raw as  
Droth intended. Eat quickly enough  
and it'll still be warm!

—GRAIMAK

Oh, my. I think I'm going to be  
sick.

—PORTAND

And you wonder why I hate the  
Enaros.

—VRENN

Do not curse their names. You  
will only bring sorrow down upon  
yourself.

—ARIA

Bah. What more can they take  
from me?

—VRENN

## GATHERING WILD FOODS

If your food supply runs out, you can forage for food if you must. The wild lands are home to many varieties of edible plants and fungi. A knowledgeable adventurer can survive quite well on just the things found growing in wilds. Spend time with an expert on local flora before your journey to learn what wild foods are safe to eat.

Unfortunately, not every place an adventurer visits is a land of fertile abundance. High mountains, rocky wastes, and other inhospitable environments don't yield much in the way of edible plants. The process of foraging is also time consuming. If an adventurer is in a hurry to reach their destination (as they invariably are), they don't have time to comb the woods for hours in search of nuts and berries.

## HUNTING AND FISHING

A safer means of supplementing your food supply is by hunting or fishing. Unfortunately, like gathering wild food, hunting takes time. You must not only find suitable game, but once your target is brought down, dress and butcher the animal. The positive side of this is that very rarely is one poisoned by wild fish or game. As long as the animal looks healthy and you've thoroughly cooked the meat, it is typically safe to eat.

## DEEPLANDS

The Deeplands were once the homeland of the dwarves, but after the Age of Darkness, the Enaros turned these vast underground caverns into prisons for the creatures of darkness. The dwarves who fled the Deeplands escaped with little more than their lives, leaving vast hoards of treasure unclaimed in the lands below. The Deeplands extend under almost every bit of land in Aetaltis and, according to legend, even under some of its seas.

## HISTORY

The Deeplands have existed as long as Aetaltis. Before the coming of the dwarves, they were an underground wilderness, a maze of interconnecting caverns honeycombing the deep places of the world. When the dwarves discovered these underworld realms, they felt immediately at home. They knew they were destined to make the Deeplands their own.

Over the centuries, the dwarves delved deeper and deeper, carving glorious halls, bustling cities, and underground highways out of the living stone. The majesty and glory of the dwarven kingdoms is legendary today, with claims they surpassed even the grandest cities of the Age of Magic or the Alliance in their wonder and beauty.

Few have seen these lost lands since the end of the Great War. Only adventurers and Liberators dare enter the darkened depths of the Deeplands, and many of these bold heroes never return.

## LAY OF THE LAND

The Deeplands are more than just common caves and tunnels. There are caverns so massive they contain subterranean lakes, rolling hills, forests of towering mushrooms, or wide moss-covered plains. Deep cracks in the stone form valleys and canyons. In some regions, magma boils from below and heats the air to sweltering temperatures, while in others, the air is so cold water freezes. There is even wind—some natural, some encouraged by clever dwarven engineering.

And of course, there are the towns, cities, outposts, and other settlements abandoned by the dwarves during their exodus. These range in size from a half-dozen improved caverns hidden at the end of an isolated tunnel to massive cities rivaling





anything seen on the surface today. Wide, paved highway tunnels connect the largest settlements, while stairs, ladders, ramps, locks, and even gearworked elevators provide access to different levels.

## UNIQUE AND INTERESTING FEATURES

In additions to tunnels, the Deepland halls are interconnected by a web of underground canals. Using ingenious machines, complex locks, and rune-enchanted channels, the flow of water was artfully controlled, allowing swift movement between cities and kingdoms. Many of the canals are still navigable, but some of the machines that manage the flow of water have ceased to function, turning once peaceful waterways into deadly cataracts.

## PRIMARY THREATS

The endrori are the greatest danger to any adventurer traveling in the Deeplands. Endroren's creations made this realm their own after their imprisonment and are found throughout the Deepland halls. Most live in scattered tribes, but some have established towns and even cities that teem with endrori and monsters of every kind.

Some of the largest caverns actually have their own weather. I know, 'cause I seen it. There we were, marching along across a mushroom plain, when all of a sudden it starts raining. One of the most wondrous things I've ever experienced.

—VRENN

There are old tsvergi songs that tell of a Deepland sea somewhere beneath the Stonegate Mountains. Now that would be a sight.

—VRENN



Avoid the abomonae? You have to know they're there to avoid them, and by then it's already too late.

—TORRICA

I'm certain there are still dwarven clans living in the Deeplands, but good luck trying to make contact.

They didn't survive down there all these centuries by talking to strangers.

—CALABRIA

So they're cowards.

—GRAIMAK

You take that back you no good snow-munching bastard!

—VRENN

Peace, friends. Please allow me to clarify. They are not, as you so crudely put it, cowards. They are clever and wary. They choose their battles and keep their secrets. This is one of the few ways a person may survive an extended stay in the Deeplands.

—ISIN

Each time they cut into the forests of the Elliye Wilds, they stir up a hornet's nest of trouble. When you clear the forest of a normal wild, you displace deer and squirrels and maybe a bear. The beasts that come crawling out of the woods when you chop down a section of the Elliye Wilds are something else altogether.

With the number of foresters that have died just this year, one hopes they'll finally learn their lesson.

—GRAIMAK

## OTHER THREATS

During the Age of Darkness, the abomonae and other dark spellcasters conducted dark magic experiments on the animals and plants of the surface, not unlike Endroren did during his years of exile. They twisted their subjects into monstrous versions of their original form. Like the endrori, most of these monstrosities were driven into the Deeplands after the Great War. Many perished, but some thrived in their new surroundings. These creatures reproduced, and today they threaten any who dare to enter the Deeplands.

There are also darker creatures than the endrori in the deeps. The abomonae were among the first creations of Endroren, and those that survived the Great War lurk in the deepest regions of the Deepland Halls. These are creatures of pure darkness, and they are far more dangerous than anything else found in the deep realms. Avoid the abomonae at all cost.

## LEGENDS AND LORE

Some say the Deeplands under the Donarzheis Mountains are haunted by the ghosts of the dwarves trapped there when the Deeplands were sealed. These lost souls think they are still fighting their ancient war, and they attempt to drive out anyone, endrori or otherwise, who trespass in their realms.

There are other stories that suggest not all of the dwarves who stayed in the Deeplands perished. Most likely these are Fallen dwarves, since the only means of survival would have been to embrace Darkness and join with the endrori. Some adventurers returning from the Deeplands, however, tell a different tale. They say that there are good dwarves living in the Deeplands today, fighting the endrori and ready to lend aid to those who support their cause.

It is said portions of the Deeplands beneath the Stonegate Mountains are free from endrori. No one is sure why this is, and the few who investigated never returned. The most likely explanation, based on certain signs reported in recent years, is that an Elder Dragon has taken up residence in these halls. If this is true, the place is best left undisturbed.

## ELLIYEN WILDS

When an arrogant elven queen failed in her bid for godhood by means of magic, the resultant magical backlash twisted the once beautiful forest kingdom of Ellor Nyall into a nightmarish realm of essence warped madness. Even the endrori avoid this land and left it largely untouched during the Age of Darkness. This suggests that the ruins of the once great fey cities, including Ellor Nyall's opulent capital, still lie somewhere deep inside the forest.



## HISTORY

Since we've already told the story of Ellor Nyall in the first chapter of this book, we will focus here on more recent events associated with this strange land. Selentheia,



sitting as it does on the doorstep of the Elliyen Wilds, has taken a great interest in the twisted forest. The wizards of the Silver Circle greatly desire the forgotten magical secrets of the fey, and they send regular expeditions into the wood.

Selenthean colonists have also undertaken an effort to cut back the forest along its northern border. They hope to reveal ruins they believe lie just inside the forest's northern border. This is going poorly. The magically warped plants of the forest return so quickly you can almost watch them grow. Within a month the plants have returned to consume everything out to their original border.

## LAY OF THE LAND

Ellor Nyall was a kingdom of rolling hills, wide flatlands, and gently curving coastlines. Before the disaster, much of the land was covered by a thick, deciduous forest marked by burbling brooks and leaping streams. Although the hills and brooks and plains still lie somewhere beneath the unnatural foliage, no other hint of that once idyllic landscape exists today.

When the Queen's spell failed, trees gained malevolent sentience, the pollen of flowers turned to poison, rivers flowed with blood, and the very fabric of the land warped into something out of nightmare. Every hill, valley, and highland are thick with this otherworldly flora. Today this cursed wood extends from the coast of the Amethyst Sea in the west to the foothills of the Stonegate Mountains in the east. In the north, its border follows a roughly parallel line that runs along the southern shore of Starstone Lake, and in the south, it ends at the Bellwyn River.

## UNIQUE AND INTERESTING FEATURES

Casting spells in the Elliyen Wilds is an uncertain prospect at best, and downright dangerous at worst. The simplest spell failure can result in a catastrophic outcome. Even a successful casting can prove disastrous, since adventurers have seen harmless spells unexpectedly boosted to uncontrollable levels.

## PRIMARY THREATS

The magical disaster did not spare the animals of Ellor Nyall. It twisted even the most passive forest creatures into terrible monsters that attack intruders without provocation. Stags with flame antlers, giant bears with treacherous spines, and packs of undead wolves are just a few of the horrors purported to stalk the Elliyen Wilds.

## OTHER THREATS

In the Elliyen Wilds paths appear and disappear without warning, strange mists transport victims hundreds of miles from their original location in an instant, and seemingly clear springs induce madness in those that drink from them. This makes just moving through the wilds a dangerous proposition at best, even if you don't encounter any of the deadly plants or animals that call the place home.

## LEGENDS AND LORE

Adventurers report that there is a strange race of beings lurking in the Elliyen Wilds that are half-plant, half-fey. They are elusive and cunning, and they attack anyone who invades their lands. We believe these creatures are the descendants

I'd avoid casting spells in the Elliyen Wilds if you can manage it. I knew a chap who cast a simple light spell. The spell's pattern got tangled in some kind of warped essence form, fed off the pattern, and next thing he knew, he and his entire party were blinded. Permanently, mind you. We're not talking an uncomfortable flash. Only two of them managed to stumble out of the woods alive. Tragic, really.

—PORTAND

I agree the danger is heightened, but statistically, it is an acceptable risk. You are just as likely to encounter a monster you cannot defeat as fall victim to a catastrophic spell failure.

—ISIN

Oh, well, when you put it that way.

—DYSART



This makes it sound like it's a good idea to go out there looking for the lost wonders of the Elliyen Wilds.

To any adventurers reading this book, it is not worth it. You will die. You will never return, much less come back with treasures. Go somewhere else. Anywhere else.

—BELLYNDA

With respect, you're allowing the unfortunate death of your companions color your advice. Yes, there is a danger, but for many it is worth it. As for the level of threat, I'd rate it no higher than some of the Deeplands halls of the Donarzheis.

—CALABRIA

I keep telling you, girl, they are not dead. I wish they were...for their sakes.

—BELLYNDA

It is incorrect to say the endrori did not enter the Icebound Plain. Not only did they venture into the plain, but they remain there to this day.

There is a region in the far north where at certain times of year, night lasts for months. The endrori there, living on the surface in great cities they constructed during those long cycles of darkness.

—ISIN

Ha! Stories told to frighten Icewalker children. You probably believe there are fey living beneath the Amethyst Sea, too.

—GRAIMAK

Actually, that one is true. I've seen them!

—PORTAND

I'd like to ask that we please stay focused on the topic at hand. Thank you.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

of the resident fey who could not escape the magical backlash from the Queen's spell. As the wild essence washed over them, they were transformed into a new sort of being and bound permanently to the forest.

It is also worth noting that not everyone believes the Queen died in her attempt to achieve divinity. Some say she survived and still rules her broken realm from the ruins of Ellor Nyall's capital. With no subjects left to rule, it is said she raised the bodies of the dead who act out a vile parody of life in the kingdom before its destruction.

There is one thing that keeps adventurers coming to the Elliyen Wilds, despite the danger: treasures of every kind await salvage by those able to survive its threats. The Queen's spell spread so quickly that few people had time to gather their belongings. Magical plates that warm food with a touch, animated statue servants, chests of gems, and hoards of precious metals are just a few of the treasures recovered from the Elliyen Wilds in recent years.

One of the greatest lost wonders of Ellor Nyall is its library. No one knows exactly where it stood, but tales from the period claim it was the greatest repository of the written word ever assembled. Besides the many tomes of lost knowledge it almost certainly contains, it is said to have housed at least four of the legendary Enarosian Scrolls.

## ICEBOUND PLAINS

Far to the north of the Amethyst Sea basin lie the frozen reaches of the Icebound Plains. Separated from the southern realms by the nearly impenetrable wall of the Donarzheis Mountains, this forbidding land is home to howling storms, frigid temperatures, and a variety of unusual creatures especially suited to this icy climate. It is also the homeland of the drothmals.



## HISTORY

The Icebound Plains have been wrapped in eternal winter since the Age of Dawn. It wasn't until the drothmals arrived sometime after the creation of the Blade Sea, that anyone lived here at all. Not even the endrori bothered with it. Most indications suggest that the plains remained untouched by the endrori during the Age of Darkness. To this day, the only people who make the plains their home are the nomadic tribes of drothmals who revel in the constant hardships the Icebound Plains offer.

## LAY OF THE LAND

From hills and valleys to mountains and plains, the same geological features found everywhere around the Amethyst Sea basin are found on the Icebound Plain. The key difference is that the Icebound Plains are permanently covered by ice and snow. There are a few pine forests along the southern and western edges of the plains, although for the most part the land is barren.



## UNIQUE FEATURES

Portions of the plains are riddled with ice caverns. The drothmals occasionally use the entrances to these caverns as temporary shelters when traveling. The only permanent residents of these ice tunnels are the strange collection of monsters that prowl the Plains. It is not clear how deep the caverns extend, and whether they connect with the Deeplands.

## PRIMARY THREATS

The Icewalkers are the most dangerous threat on the Icebound Plains. The Icewalker tribes, which are made up almost exclusively of drothmals, are every bit as ferocious and uncivilized as most people in the south are led to believe. There is no guessing how an intruder will be greeted, although in general, the opportunity to fight for one's life in unarmed single combat is offered as a means of earning safe passage.

## OTHER THREATS

Crystal serpents, polar bears, packs of ice wolves, and the legendary white roc are just a few of the creatures that live on the Icebound Plains. Almost everything on the plains is a carnivore, and it is wise for travelers to give anything you encounter a wide berth.

## LEGENDS AND LORE

To survive the frigid temperatures of the Icebound Plains, many of the creatures that live there have magical adaptations to their environment. These adaptations make certain parts of these creatures highly prized magical reagents. Examples include the ice fire glands of the white roc, crystal serpent scales, and the blood of ice dragons.

Recently, a group of explorers returned from the Plains with tales of a city frozen beneath the ice. They were unable to decipher who built the city or how it came to be frozen, but additional expeditions are planned to discover the truth.

One tantalizing tale is that in the southeastern reaches of the Plains, near the edge of the Elderwood, sit a handful of permanent settlements. The culture of these people, who are all drothmals, is significantly different and more civilized than that of the Icewalkers. Unfortunately, not much more is known of these strange people as no expedition has reached the settlements since the Cataclysm.

If you travel to the Icebound Plains, you will almost certainly pass through the town of Frozen Hope. It sits at northern edge of Whitehorn Pass, the passage that connects the Amethyst Sea basin to the Icebound Plain. It is nearly lawless, filled with Icewalker mercenaries traveling to or from wars in the south, and home to countless prospectors coming up in search of the rumored veins of gold said to lie near the surface of the mountains to the northwest. Heavy drinking, lots of fighting, and some of the toughest characters this side of Port Vale are common to Frozen Hope. Its reputation makes it a popular place for handling business one might want to keep from the prying eyes of the more law-abiding nations in the south.

If the caves are full of monsters, why in Endroren's name do the Icewalkers sleep in them?

—DYSART

The entire plain is a deathtrap. The ice caverns are more of a "choose your trial" thing. Survive a deadly storm out in the open? Or fight ice monsters in the caves? It's up to you!

—BELLYNDA

So the plains are basically a deathtrap.

—DYSART

Yes! Wonderful, isn't it?

—GRAIMAK

You call my people "ferocious and uncivilized?" You need not resort to flattery. I like you already.

—GRAIMAK

So what you're saying is that if we want to do something illegal, we should go to Frozen Hope.

—DYSART

What? No! That's not what I was saying at all. I was warning adventurers *not* to go there, or at the very least to be cautious.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS

I don't know. It sounds pretty great to me. I'm definitely planning a trip up there soon.

—CALABRIA

Ask for me if you visit! If I am in town, we will share a barrel of Heartwine!

—GRAIMAK



Ssynes does not know if the tales of scythaas living in the Zhamayen are true, but many of my kind believe these tales. They say these jungle scythaas have smooth skin the color of leaves and flowers, and they speak a strange language completely unlike our own. Ssynes is not so certain. Ssynes has seen no proof, only stories.

—SSYNES

## ZHAMAYEN JUNGLE

Beneath the thick canopy of the Zhamayen Jungle lie strange and forgotten wonders: the crumbling ruins of an unknown ancient civilization, treasures left by a lost lineage of scythaa, and a diverse collection of deadly dangers unparalleled in the Amethyst Sea basin. All this and more awaits any adventurer that enters the realm sometimes referred to as the green hell.



The towering trees of the Zhamayen Jungle form a thick canopy over the forest floor, leaving it in a state of perpetual twilight even on the brightest days. The heat is sweltering, and daily rain showers leave the air so thick with humidity that breathing becomes difficult. Beneath the leafy vaults, heavy undergrowth chokes the ground, in places forming an impassable mass of vines, bushes, and smaller trees.

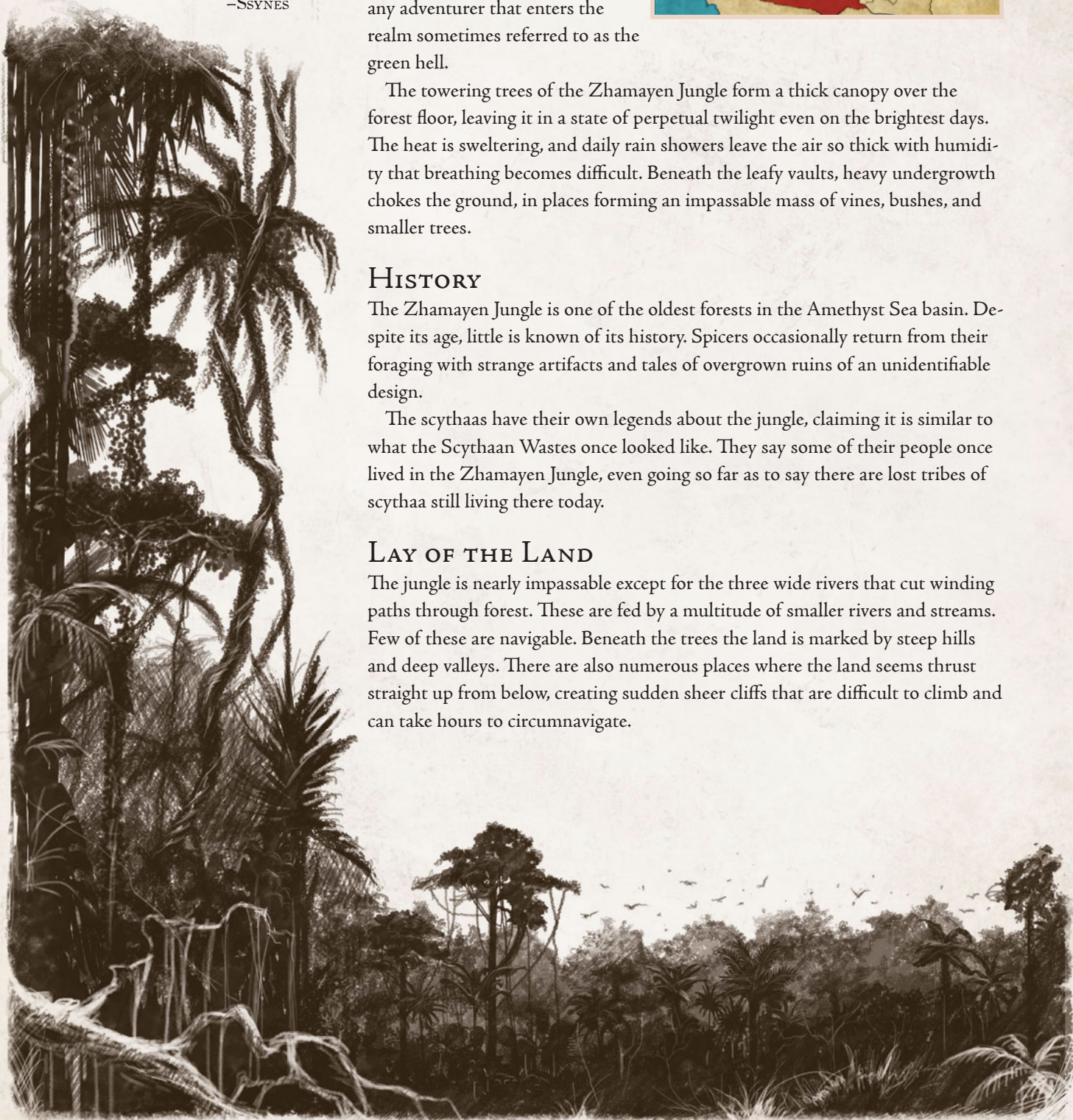
### HISTORY

The Zhamayen Jungle is one of the oldest forests in the Amethyst Sea basin. Despite its age, little is known of its history. Spicers occasionally return from their foraging with strange artifacts and tales of overgrown ruins of an unidentifiable design.

The scythaas have their own legends about the jungle, claiming it is similar to what the Scythaan Wastes once looked like. They say some of their people once lived in the Zhamayen Jungle, even going so far as to say there are lost tribes of scythaa still living there today.

### LAY OF THE LAND

The jungle is nearly impassable except for the three wide rivers that cut winding paths through forest. These are fed by a multitude of smaller rivers and streams. Few of these are navigable. Beneath the trees the land is marked by steep hills and deep valleys. There are also numerous places where the land seems thrust straight up from below, creating sudden sheer cliffs that are difficult to climb and can take hours to circumnavigate.





## UNIQUE AND INTERESTING FEATURES

The southern border of the Zhamayen Jungle is a single titanic cliff. It stretches for more than a thousand miles from east to west and is over two thousand feet tall at its highest point. The wall is riddled with caves and tunnels, many of which lead directly into the Deeplands. While some passages near the east and west ends of the wall were sealed following the Age of Darkness, warding the rest is an impossible task. Many remain open, providing easy access to the surface for endrori and worse.

## PRIMARY THREATS

The jungle itself is the greatest danger to those traveling in this region. Poisonous plants, sweltering heat, insect-borne disease, and the scarcity of potable water makes it difficult to travel more than a mile or two into the forest without serious threat of injury. And while daily rain showers are normal in the region, during the late summer it rains continuously for months on end, resulting in flash floods and mudslides.

## OTHER THREATS

The jungle's darkness and isolation make it an attractive lair for all manner of terrible creatures. From the native fauna, many of which are quite deadly by their nature, to magically twisted beasts that found their way there after the Cataclysm, the jungle is filled with dangerous monsters.

There are also large numbers of endrori and other Dark creatures living there. The heavy canopy makes the forest floor dark enough to protect them from Lensae's light, allowing the vile creatures to move about by day as easily as they do at night. There are even rumors of an endrori city hidden somewhere in the deep center of the jungle.

The only people that live in the jungle are isolated tribes of primitives who somehow survive its depths despite the constant danger. Most of these people know little of the outside world, and when others make contact, encounters with these wary, cautious people too often end in violence. Best to avoid the territory of these primitive folk if at all possible.

## LEGENDS AND LORE

Scattered throughout the jungle are monolithic stone ruins from a lost civilization. No one knows—at least not with any certainty—who built these structures. Some say they are from a lost nation of scythaa, while others insist they were constructed by a forgotten race of enari. Whatever the truth, adventurers have recovered fantastic treasures of silver and gold from among the ruins.

Dwarves once inhabited the Deeplands inside the Scythaan Wall. Little is known about these kingdoms, but not for lack of trying. Scholars, explorers, and treasure hunters alike are drawn to the Wall hoping to unlock its secrets. There are some explorers who believe that the legendary Deepland passage to the dwarven homeland across the Phensrelan Ocean lies somewhere beneath the Wall.

There are also whispers that the spice merchants of Callios are embroiled in a secret war deep within the Zhamayen Jungle. A Dark Horde led by a powerful wraethdari is said to have emerged from the Deeplands and the merchants of Callios are spending a small fortune to fight this threat. The reason for the secrecy is that the Calliosan merchants fear if they ask for help from other nations, those nations will refuse to leave once the enemy is defeated, undermining the Calliosan monopoly on the spice trade.

We believe that the isolated tribes of primitives they mention living in the jungle are descendants of spicers who got lost and never found their way out.

—BELLYNDA

The ruins spoken of below are not scythaan. They are old. Terribly old. Older than anything Ssynes has ever seen.

—SSYNES

If you want to know more about these ruins, the next time you are in Hericos, stop by the Old Green Box. Ask Kepler about the m'ghor. That is all I will say for now.

—BELLYNDA

The war is no rumor. I earned my weight in gold a few years ago to go in and rescue a company of soldiers that were captured by the endrori after one of the battles. It's a vicious war, and frankly, I don't think the Calliosans are winning.

—TORRICA

I fear you're telling tales again, my friend. First off, I have it on good authority from some spicer associates this is a rumor designed specifically to scare off outsiders trying to poach spice. Second, there isn't enough gold in the Amethyst Sea basin to pay you your weight.

—DYSART

Oh, ho ho. Laugh it up tinder sticks. Where do you think I got the gold to pay off the price those scum lickers in Port Vale had on my head?

—TORRICA



Most of you won't believe me, but those "plateaus" aren't natural. They're all that's left of the enormous tower-cities built by the drothmals prior to the Age of Darkness. They weren't called drothmal back then, and they definitely didn't live like the Icewalkers. I've seen some of the ruins found there, and they are impressive. I there's a great deal more to discover in these plateaus.

—DYSART

Bah! You should let past sins die. The Blade Sea was indeed my people's homeland, but better to leave our past buried. That's where it belongs.

—GRAIMAK

If you ever travel through the Maw, look for the ruins. They're absolutely amazing. You can see the stumps of bridges that crossed between the cliffs, as well as balconies and buildings carved right into the cliff side. I do hope that someday I can explore these ruins.

—PORTAND

Sure. That sounds great. I mean, except for all the dragons.

—TORRICA

## OTHER IMPORTANT SITES

There are a handful of lesser and more distant wilds adventurers would benefit from knowing about. We've provided a brief commentary on each of these sites here. For sites not easily identified on the map found in *Chapter 4*, we've included a small map showing their location. It is our hope, with High Lord Drakewyn's blessing, that we may one day produce in-depth studies for each of these locations, as well as expansions on those previously mentioned.

### BLADE SEA

Beyond the Stonegate Mountains is a massive plain extending so far to the east that we're uncertain as to how far it is to the other side. It has only a few rivers and even fewer still bodies of water. The greatest challenge is that the entire plain is covered with ten-foot tall grass as sharp as razors. When the powerful winds that race across the plain begin to blow, anyone standing among these grasses can be cut to ribbons.



During the Age of Shadow, as the people of the Amethyst Sea sought new homes, a few brave dwarves decided to explore the Blade Sea. They built massive wagons that raised them above the deadly grass, and since no draft animal could survive on the ground, they mounted huge sails on the wagons. These were the first stonships. The stonships used today look almost exactly like sailing ships, only mounted on massive wheels.

The only thing that breaks up the plains are rocky plateaus that rise high above the grass. Dwarves settled many of these, hollowing them out and building towns to serve as ports for the stonships. These towns have grown in importance since the Cataclysm, when a large contingent of Newardines set off for the far side of the Blade Sea to found their own cities. Today, stonship captains carry valuable trade goods back and forth, from the Amethyst Sea basin to the distant Newardine Empires.

### DRAGON'S MAW

The narrow pass that links the Amethyst Sea to the Phensrelan Ocean is called the Dragon's Maw. The Maw is close to fifty miles long, and the cliffs that line it range from a hundred feet high to nearly two thousand feet tall. At its widest point, the Maw is just over two miles wide, but much of the passage is less than a three hundred feet across.

The towering cliffs that line it are riddled with tunnels and caverns. Dwarven legends say that during the Age of Magic, a powerful dwarven empire controlled this pass. It is unknown what became of that legendary empire or the dwarves that lived there.

Today, the Maw is controlled by the great dragon Molenarysyll, known more commonly as Doomwing. She and her spawn lair in the cliffs' caverns. They typically demand tribute from any who pass through the Maw and punish those



who refuse. Fat cattle, jewels, and precious metals are her preferred offerings.

## DONARZHEIS MOUNTAINS

The massive mountain range that marks the northern border of the Amethyst Sea basin is called the Donarzheis Mountains. These towering peaks are some of the tallest found anywhere in the region. With the exception of Whitehorn Pass, they are impassable. The tallest peaks in the range are snow-covered all year long, and terrible storms hide the peaks behind clouds during the winter.

Prior to the Age of Darkness the entire mountain range and the Deeplands below were ruled by one mighty kingdom. When the Dark Hordes attacked, the people of this powerful kingdom, led by King Hethkett III, held the forces of darkness back longer than any other dwarven realm. Their sacrifice allowed the dwarves, fey, and halflings living on the Agthorian Plain to prepare a defense against the initial assault of the Hordes. Even after the entire Deepland kingdom was overrun, Hethkett's armies refused to retreat, fighting a guerrilla war against the endrori.

Tragically, their final defeat came at the end of the Great War when the Enaros imprisoned the Dark Hordes in the ravaged Deepland halls. When told of this plan, Hethkett's great-great grandson, who led the kingdom by that time, refused to give up the ancestral homeland of his people. His followers stood by him, and even when Modren himself pleaded with them to come to the surface, they refused. In the end the survivors of this once mighty nation, over 50,000 battle-hardened souls, were locked beneath surface with the minions of the Dark One. No one knows their final fate but to this day it is believed their spirits still haunt the Donarzheis Mountains and the Deeplands that lie beneath.

## ELDERWOOD

The Elderwood is the oldest virgin forest in the known world. Older than even the Zhamayen Jungle, it is said that Grethken himself planted the trees that grow there. For those that have seen the forest, this seems a believable claim. The trees, most of them ancient pines, stand more than four hundred feet tall and the trunks are as much as fifty feet in diameter. The most notable inhabitants of the Elderwood are the last of the First Born, the lensari giants created by the Enaros at the same time as the Great Dragons.



## ISLES OF THE LOST COAST

Before the Cataclysm, a large island sat in the center of the Amethyst Sea. The Alliance chose this island as the location for Atlanor, their capital on Aetaltis. The island had a mild climate, abundant farmland, and a position easily defensible against attack. The Alliance built their largest world gate at the center of the city, as well as multiple city gates. These connected it with the rest of the Alliance colonies on Aetaltis and the Alliance homeworlds.

When the Cataclysm struck, all the gates of Atlanor exploded at once. The

The Donarzheis are not impassable. There are many places one might cross if you are bold and do not fear death!

—GRAIMAK

It's easy to forget that prior to the Age of Darkness, many dwarves lived on the surface. There were dwarven villages, towns, and cities all across the Agthorian Plains, growing crops and sending the food back to feed the people of the Deeplands. A lot of these were wiped off the map by the Dark Hordes, but you can still find some of the ruins. They're well worth exploring. A great number of the dwarves you meet today are descended from those surface-living dwarves.

—CALABRIA

A Selenthean explorer told me there are fey living in the Elderwood as well. They do not worship the Enaros, but rather following the an ancient form of druidism—older even than the form practiced in the Amethyst Sea basin today.

—PORTAND



I've heard that the Cataclysm didn't destroy the center of the island, but just dropped it beneath the waves, a bit like the way Norentor sunk into the ground. They say you can see the entire city and the surrounding countryside right beneath the surface, just waiting for anyone who can get down to it.

—DYSART

If that's the case, I wouldn't mind finding one of the flying ships they say were moored there when the Cataclysm hit.

—BELLYNDA

The storms are not the only danger to visitors of the Lost Coast. My research supports the theory that something came through the gates immediately before the Cataclysm struck. Accounts from those who made it to Port Vale lead me to believe that at least some of those beings, whatever they are, survived and are living on the islands.

—ISIN

The Wastes, as you call my homeland, are still beautiful. True, we wish to restore them to their proper state, but it is clear the person who wrote this has never visited my home. Towering pillars of stone sculpted by the wind rise above shifting seas of sand, gracefully curving dunes the size of mountains rise nearly to the sky, and vast plains of stone stretch for miles, painted in a thousand shades of crimson and orange.

—SSYNES

force was so tremendous it shattered the island, carving out the center and leaving a ring of smaller islands around the outside edge. Few of the city's people survived.

Today this ring of islands is called the Lost Coast. It's nearly impossible to reach thanks to a veritable wall of magical storms that surround the islands. These essence-laced storms are dangerous not just because of the wind and waves, but also the wild magic that lashes anyone passing through them. The magic is known to destroy, transport, or transform people and things that are touched by it, seemingly at random.

## NORTHERN WILDS

The Northern Wilds lie just to the east of Agthor and extend all the way to the shore of the Winding Sea. In the south, they extend right up to the coast of the Amethyst Sea, while in the north, they extend into the foothills of the Donarzheis Mountains.

We suspect that at least two fey courts hold power within the Northern Wilds. Like most of the modern fey courts, they are extremely secretive, but there is evidence that portions of the Northern Wilds have been altered using fey magic.

The Northern Wilds is also home to the holiest druidic site in the region. In the northeastern corner of Lake Ardendor sits Gaelensy Isle. This island is home to the druids' sacred grove, as well as a sacred stone circle. There are also a number of sacred groves and holy landscapes in the mainland wilds to the east of the island.



## SCYTHAAN WASTES

Once a lush land of rolling hills, breathtaking vistas, and rich farmland, the land known today as the Scythaan Wastes is a barren desert of sand and stone. Plant life is scarce except near the occasional oasis, and animal life is limited to the toughest and most vicious of creatures. The only civilized areas are the handful of walled cities scattered throughout the desert where Wastelander nomads come to trade the arts and crafts they create for much needed food and supplies.

There is, however, treasure to be had for those willing to risk the dangers. Buried beneath the sands are the ruins of once glorious scythaan cities. The ancient scythaa filled their cities with fabulous works of art. Statues, paintings, jewelry, glasswork, and countless other wonders are said to lie among the ruins.





## SELENTHEAN WILDS

The Selenthean Wilds stretch from the borders of Selentheia south to the Elliyeen Wilds.

Technically, they are a part of the Elliyeen Wilds, but the magical twisting of the forest here is slightly less intense than in the Elliyeen Wilds proper. Most adventurers and explorers who claim to have visited the Elliyeen Wilds, actually visited the Selenthean Wilds.



The Selenthean Wilds were the last region touched by the wild magic that tore apart Ellor Nyall after the Queen failed in her attempt to achieve divinity. The land here had only just begun to transform when Grethken brought the wild growth to a stop. As such, while the forest here is still unlike anything else on the Amethyst Sea, it is slightly less alien than the forests within the greater Elliyeen Wilds.

The same sorts of dangers exist in the Selenthean Wilds as the Elliyeen Wilds, from awakened trees to animal abominations. At the same time, many of the same rewards await anyone willing to plumb the depths of this once rich fey land. The Silver Circle is even offering to fund adventuring parties willing to help settlers establish footholds inside the borders of the Selenthean Wilds.

## STONEGATE MOUNTAINS

The Stonegate Mountains form the border between the Amethyst Sea basin and the Blade Sea. They are not as tall or forbidding as the Donarzheis, but they're still a formidable range. Due to their position, wedged between the Elliyeen Wilds and the Blade Sea, the mountains and their highlands have remained largely uninhabited (and unexplored) since the end of the Age of Magic.

During the Age of Magic, a thriving dwarven kingdom controlled the range. Unlike most dwarves in those days, the dwarves of the Stonegate Mountains had a good relationship with the fey that ruled the nearby kingdom of Ellor Nyall. A great amount of trade took place between the two kingdoms, and the legends even suggest the two people worked together in the construction of their kingdoms. Their cooperation created what were said to have been the most beautiful Deepland Halls in all of Aetaltis.

The Queen of Ellor Nyall's ill-fated quest for godhood ended the partnership. The fey were killed or fled, and the surface entrances to the Deeplands in that area were quickly overgrown. The kingdom of the Stonegate Mountains found itself isolated from the outside world except by Deepland passages. As time passed, the population dwindled and the great kingdom diminished until it was finally destroyed during the invasion of the Dark Hordes.

Today, no one knows what the once breathtaking halls hold. They may be home to dark creatures, or perhaps they are still intact, ignored by the Hordes since there was no one there to kill. There are rumors, however, that a powerful dragon may have taken up residence in one of the halls.

If you ask me, the only difference between the Selenthean Wilds and the Elliyeen Wilds is the name. I'd bet a pound of gold the real reason they renamed this region was to trick people into trying to settle it. No one in their right mind, other than adventurers I guess, are going to enter the Elliyeen Wilds. Ask a farmer to set up a new farm in the Selenthean Wilds, though? Oh, well, that doesn't sound so bad, does it? Well it is bad, and that farmer and their family are going to die a horrible death.

—TORRICA

I heard that most of the Stonegate Deeplands are infested with Darkholders. Whether this happened recently or if the Stonegate dwarves fell sometime during the Age of Darkness, I couldn't say.

—CALABRIA

The Lyceum Alantra is very concerned about the Stonegate Deeplands. Our most ancient lyceum documents, those that survived the Cataclysm, say the avatars themselves warded the Stonegate entrances. If the Stonegate wards are failing like those in other areas, however, I can't imagine how we'd reach them with the Elliyeen Wilds blocking the way. There are efforts underway to mount expeditions looking for safe passage between the sea and the mountains.

—ARIA





## CHAPTER SIX

# THE FORCES OF DARKNESS

**T**HE GREATEST THREATS TO BOTH YOU AS AN ADVENTURER AND OUR WORLD AS A WHOLE ARE Endroren's creations and followers. For this reason, we have dedicated an entire chapter to describing these fiends. Read carefully and take note. No matter where you travel, civilized or uncivilized, in known or unknown lands, the forces of darkness await. The more you know of them, of their ways, and of the powers they possess, the better your chances of survival.

ABOVE | Captain 'Og Chopps, *by Russell Marks*



## ENDRORI

Spawned by dark magic, the endrori are the twisted embodiments of the enari's darkest aspects. These vile fiends desire nothing less than the destruction of everything we hold dear. They will not stop until we lie dead at their feet.

The endrori are creatures of pure evil. Study of captured endrori have revealed spirits composed entirely of dark essence. As we discussed earlier in the chapter on magic, most scholars do not believe dark essence is corrupted essence. It is something else entirely. You cannot cleanse it because evil is its true form. Thus, whatever is made from dark essence is itself inherently evil.

The endrori are vicious combatants. They have no pity and show no mercy. Many will fight to the death, no matter the odds. They would rather inflict just a bit more pain before they fall than flee to fight another day. They never surrender, except as a means of convincing you to let down your guard.

They thrive on death and destruction. When they attack a village, they kill everyone they don't take as a slave. When they kill, they do it in the most horrific and painful ways possible and often desecrate the remains of their victims. Once the killing is done, they tear down every structure, burn every plant, slaughter every animal, and poison the wells. If on the march, they continue this process of destruction while cutting a charred path through the intervening landscape. They only stop if they are crushed by a more powerful opposing force.

Endrori have a limited range of emotion. They feel fear, hatred, anger, lust, greed. All our basest emotions are realized in these vile monsters. But they know nothing of love, or comradeship, or kindness. They are known to mimic these when they have need, so beware the helpful endrori.

If you must, you can bargain with them. Fear and greed are their greatest motivators to honor an agreement, but do not expect any agreement to last. If faced with a greater fear or a stronger desire, they will abandon their promises without a second thought.

They vary in their intellect. Some, such as ixits, are little more than vicious beasts. Others, such as the wraethdari, are frighteningly intelligent. The rest fall somewhere in between. And as with our own people, every individual is unique.

I say to you again, the endrori are an embodiment of evil. This is not a subjective hatred or an overstatement to incite adventurers to war. This is a statement of fact. Yes, they think, and yes, they reproduce, but in the end, they are creatures truly born of darkness. They are, in a very real sense, weapons—made from flesh rather than steel, but weapons all the same.

## IXITS

Ixits are the dark forms of fairies. They fly in tight swarms, sweeping down from the shadowy ceilings of high caverns, surging over their prey, and stripping it to the bone within moments. Their hunger is insatiable.

Ixits are the same size as fairies but have leathery red skin, beady black eyes, and wings that resemble a bat's. Their mouths are filled with needle-sharp teeth, and their fingers end in vicious claws. Ixits seldom land on the ground. If they must stop flying, they prefer to cling to walls or ceilings. Ixits wear no clothing and use no tools or weapons.

I have heard speculation that Endroren created the endrori not just to assault us physically, but to attack us spiritually. He wished to confront us with the worst aspects of who we are, laid bare and on display. The desire is that we will revert to these same base instincts in an effort to destroy the endrori and become that which we are trying to defeat.

—PORTAND

We get it. Endrori are bad. Kill endrori. You don't have to keep saying it.

—TORRICA

Actually, he does. Every few years some knuckle-headed surface dweller gets the idea that the endrori can be saved. They embark on a mad quest to make contact with endrori and lead them to the light. In a best-case scenario, the endrori slaughter the fool. In a worst-case scenario, an intelligent endrori uses the person to bypass our defenses, open a ward, or otherwise clear the way for the dark creatures. The end is always the same: death.

—VRENN



I've seen a wraethdari control an ixit swarm using only its thoughts.

The swarm became an extension of the wraethdari, serving as eyes, ears, claws, and shield depending on what it needed.

—CALABRIA

There's a dwarf in the wilds of Agthor near Dunbury Castle that can do the same thing. No idea how it's even possible.

—TORRICA

That bit about goblins and clothing and weapons? Not exactly true.

I've seen goblins in chainmail, using shields, even executing basic maneuvers.

—TORRICA

That's only true if something else is leading them. An orc or a wraethdari or the like.

—BELLYNDA

Yes, but when that leader is gone they don't just abandon what they've learned. Torrica is correct. One shouldn't make such assumptions when it comes to goblins.

—VRENN

Ixits are found in swarms of up to 100 individuals. They are only slightly more intelligent than the typical animal and behave as such. They are, however, far more vicious than mundane animals. They immediately attack any living thing they encounter, whether they require sustenance or not.

In the Deeplands, ixit swarms rest in the ceilings of large caverns, in ruined dwarven towers, or in natural chimneys and chutes. Swarms of ixits sometimes stumble upon passages to the surface. When this happens, they inhabit the same types of structures as bats, except with far more deadly consequences for people living in the area.

Ixits love to kill. When they've downed their prey, they raise their voices in a terrifying chorus, singing hideously in an unintelligible parody of the fey language. The sound of this vile music, the ixits' bloodsong, will shake the spirits of even the most hardened warrior. Ixits prefer the blood of their victims over the flesh and will fight amongst themselves for the pleasure of lapping it up.

## GOBLINS

The sniveling race known as goblins make up for what they lack in bravery and strength with sheer numbers. Swift and agile, they swarm over enemies, bearing them down to the ground and then tearing them apart with razor sharp claws and teeth. Goblins are the dark form of halflings.

Goblins are short, wiry, and quick. They walk with a stooped gait and may even drop to all fours when moving quickly or crossing broken ground. They have greenish skin, coarse black hair, and ears that taper back to an extreme point. Goblins rend their victim's flesh with their claws and have sharp teeth ideal for tearing meat. Goblins wear primitive clothing and seldom use weapons more advanced than slings and spears.

Goblins live in loose tribes that regularly split due to the goblins' notoriously fast reproductive cycle. These tribal breaks are violent affairs, leaving no small number of combatants dead on both sides. Goblin tribes are ruled by the strong, although goblins tend to question authority, so leaders must provide constant physical reminders of their power.

In the Deeplands, goblins are found living in one of three states. Some live nomadically, traveling the halls in search of Deepland creatures to feed on. Others settle in primitive villages in empty Deepland caverns. Still others live among orcs, performing menial tasks and drudge work in exchange for food, shelter, and protection.

On the surface, goblins converge on the nearest source of food. Well-traveled caravan routes, small villages, or pastures where animals graze are all tempting targets for goblins. They retreat to the shadows of ruins and caves by day and then set out to hunt by night.

Goblins are opportunists. They take the path of least resistance and hate to exert more effort than necessary. They are easily dispersed by a foe that can prove physical superiority. If they cannot escape, they may use guile and deception to save themselves, only to return later and attack again. When in large numbers, they grow bold, having learned that even a powerful foe can be overwhelmed by a sufficiently large mass of goblins.



## ORCS

The violent warriors known as orcs are the dark form of the dwarves. Orcs are driven to conquer. Their powerful builds and a natural desire for control at all costs make them well-suited to this endeavor.

Orcs are about the same height as humans. They have green-gray skin, wiry black hair, and sickly yellow eyes. Many have tusks, fangs, or a combination of the two, and a few have claws. Orcs walk upright, wear clothing, and outfit themselves with all manner of weapons, armor, and equipment.

Most orcs live in militant warbands. Male orcs are naturally larger and more powerful than female orcs, so they are usually the leaders, but there are no social restrictions that stop a female from taking command if she can.

In the Deeplands, orcs live in communities ranging in size from small villages to large cities. In many cases they've taken over the abandoned ruins of old dwarven settlements and turned them into dark metropolises.

On the surface, they are most often found in traveling war parties. When a war party leaves the Deeplands, they do so with a specific objective in mind. Whether hunting slaves to work the Deepland mines or seeking surface strongholds to mount attacks from, orc war parties are focused and disciplined compared to the other endrori.

Orcs are the most industrious of the endrori. They construct defenses, forge weapons, and form societies that are a dark mirror of our own. In many ways, they are the most like us of any endrori, and this makes them incredibly dangerous.

## PECKS

Pecks are the dark form of the sprites. The term "mean-spirited" doesn't begin to describe the cruel nature of the peck, but it is a step in the right direction. Pecks live to inflict pain, whether physical or emotional. They are masters of illusion and twist reality to meet their dark desires.

Peck bodies are the same general shape and size as sprites. Unlike sprites, they have pale gray skin and cold blue eyes. Their long limp hair ranges in color from a dark, blackish-blue to white, and their teeth are sickly yellow. Pecks wear civilized clothing and make use of whatever tools, gadgets, weapons, and armor they can scavenge.

Pecks live in family groups of three to ten individuals. They are often forced to live as nomads, since their sadistic tendencies make them unwelcome even among other endrori. Family groups are fiercely loyal to one another when defending against outside threats, but if a member of the family does something to upset the others, they won't hesitate to turn on them.

Most pecks dream of finding a way to the surface. Hurting other endrori gives them pleasure, but it's nothing compared to the agony of surface dwellers. The relatively peaceful and trusting nature of the good people of Aetaltis make them easy prey for the pecks' deceptions. Pecks particularly enjoy crushing the naive illusions of the innocent.



*Eye of a Peck*

One of the things that makes orcs so dangerous is that adventurers see in them a reflection of our own cultures. It leads adventurers to let their guard down, thinking they can negotiate, trade, or even "save" the orcs they encounter. That is a mistake.

—ISIN

It's yet another of Endroren's tricks. We see the trappings of civilization and immediately assume "civilized" is the same as "good." This is one of our own flaws, and he uses it against us. That is his way.

—SSYNES

Like any endrori, pecks enjoy the kill, but it's the slow, painful torture leading up to death that is the real joy for these monsters. I've even heard rumors that they draw strength from the pain of others.

—CALABRIA

For pecks it ain't enough to just torment their victims. They use illusions to create a sense of comfort and calm in their victim before they spring their trap. Makes the pain that much more delicious for them.

—VRENN



Ssynes disagrees that they are less affected by Lensae. Skaahs suffer just as much from Lensae's light as other endrori. They just do not care. Their faith is so strong they ignore the discomfort and pain.

—SSYNES

There is mounting evidence that the skaahs' ability to endure the light of Lensae is more than a matter of willpower. We now have reason to believe they simply do not suffer the same physical discomfort when exposed to sunlight common to all other endrori. The reason is unclear, but there is suspicion that the skaah magically altered their bodies at some point during the Age of Darkness.

—ISIN

I have some ancient scrolls that a scholar friend tells me date back to the Age of Darkness. They seem to hint at an aggressive breeding program among the skaahs. Is it possible they just bred the trait out of themselves? Like a farmer breeding sheep for thicker wool?

—BELLYNDA

A fascinating idea and not outside the realm of possibility. I should very much like to see those scrolls someday.

—ISIN

## SKAHHS

The reptilian skaahs are the dark form of the scythaas. They are extremely well-organized, industrious, and have only a slight aversion to the light of Lensae. The skaah are religious zealots who place their worship of Endroren, and that which they believe will please him, above all else. The only thing that keeps them from becoming a greater threat are their relatively small numbers and slow rate of reproduction.

Skaahs are tall, lean, and muscular. They have no hair and scaly hides that range in color from dark red to pale green. Leathery wings protrude from their backs which they use to glide on the wind. The skaahs' hands and feet end in claws, and like their scythaan progenitors, they have a long tail. Unlike the scythaas, their tail is not prehensile. It is long and thin with a leaf-shaped protrusion at the end used to help steer them while gliding. They wear armor, wield weapons, and use tools, just as the good people of Aetaltis.

The skaahs' leathery wings allow them to glide on air currents. They can use their wings underground if there is a large enough area, but they work best on the surface. With strong enough wind currents, such as those found in the high mountains, a skaah can take flight from level ground. They also spit sticky globs of highly flammable phlegm. It is difficult to remove this material, and it ignites with the slightest touch of flame. Once lit, it continues to burn for close to five minutes.

Skaahs live in matriarchal tribes led by priestesses of Endroren. They believe the priestesses speak directly to the Dark Lord, and they are slavishly obedient to their leaders. They are isolationists when it comes to other endrori and seldom work with any creatures except other skaahs.

In the Deeplands, skaahs live in the largest caverns they can find so they can make use of their wings. They will often go to war with orcs over spacious caves and large Deepland halls. On the surface, they prefer high mountain regions where strong winds and powerful updrafts allow them to fly with fantastic efficacy. Skaahs build settlements and fortifications when living on the surface, using overhanging cliffs to provide partial protection from Lensae's light.

Skaahs see themselves as the holy warriors of Endroren. They think nothing of giving their lives to further Endroren's aims. It is fortunate for the people of the surface there are so few skaahs, since the skaahs' religious devotion to serve Endroren overcomes the aversion to Lensae's light common to all endrori. They are also highly organized.





## TROLLS

Trolls are the dark form of the drothmals. They are powerful enough to tear you limb from limb, vomit acid so caustic it melts through steel, and are endowed with magic that heals their wounds almost as quickly as you inflict them. They are indiscriminate killing machines that even other endrori fear.

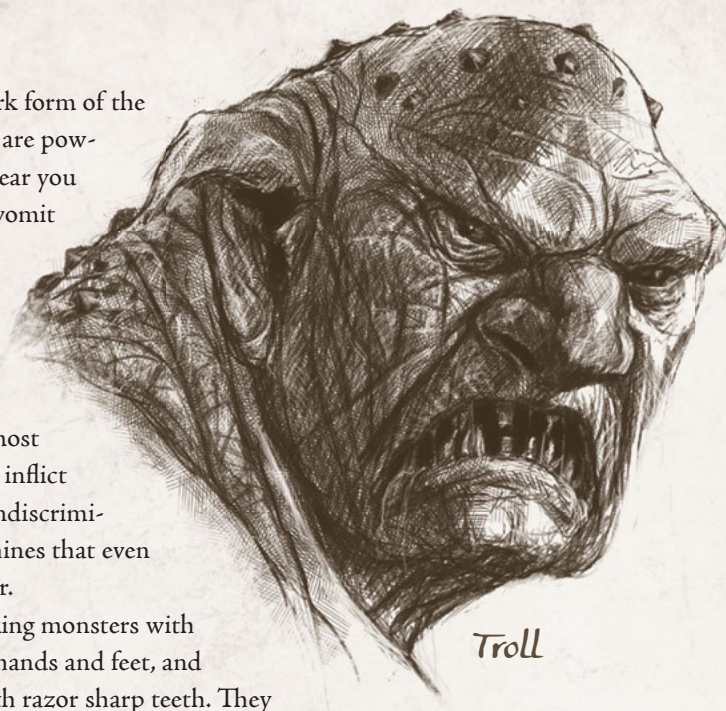
Trolls are hulking monsters with long arms, huge hands and feet, and mouths filled with razor sharp teeth. They have thick skin that ranges in color from gray to dark green, beady black eyes, and tufts of coarse black hair on their heads and bodies. They walk with a pronounced stoop, a trait that belies their true height of over nine feet. If trolls wear clothing at all, it is extremely primitive. They often fight bare-handed but may arm themselves with crude clubs. Strong-willed endrori leaders are known to have trained trolls to wear armor or fight with more complex weaponry, but usually attempts to do this just anger the troll and result in the trainer being killed and eaten.

Trolls are solitary creatures. Their tendency to eat anything and everything they can find makes them dangerous even to other endrori. When trolls encounter one another, they exhibit one of three reactions: they mate, they fight, or they fail to notice one another at all and go on their way.

As long as there is a food source nearby, a troll likes to stay in one place. As soon as that source is depleted, it moves on without waiting for the food source to replenish. In the Deeplands, trolls inhabit caverns near goblin villages, live on the shores of underground lakes, or skulk about in the ruins of old way stations along the Deepland highways.

Occasionally, trolls wander out onto the surface. This is almost always accidental, although once the troll discovers how rich hunting is on the surface it is uncommon for them to return to the Deeplands by choice. When daylight comes, the troll retreats to some shadowy hideaway, like the underside of a bridge or the barn of its most recent victims.

Trolls, while more intelligent than the typical animal, are simple-minded creatures. Their thought processes revolve around their carnal needs, and their favorite solution to any problem is to smash it. They are extremely impatient and quickly lose interest in anything they can't eat or kill. They nearly always fight to the death, being too stupid to know when they cannot win a battle. Fortunately for trolls, there are few battles they can't win.



Fire is the bane of trolls. Whatever dark magic heals their wounds is powerless to repair damage from fire.

—GARIMAK

And burn the carcass! I don't care how much you've chopped the beastie up after you've beaten it. Burn the damn thing to ash when you're done or the buggers will come back!

—VRENN

That acid of their's ain't nothin' to sneeze at. It'll melt the flesh from a person's bones faster than you can get it off. That's not a way you want to go.

—TORRICA

People don't believe me, but while traveling the Icebound Plains I saw a blue troll. Instead of acid, it spit some sort of steaming liquid that froze whatever it touched.

—DYSART

I know the creatures of which you speak! My brother fought one. The fiend sprayed his hand with the stuff you describe, and when my brother punched the thing with that hand, the hand shattered like glass. A dark trial indeed.

—GARIMAK



I've seen under those cloaks.

Without the shadows, they look like an elf that was burned up in a fire. Nasty, bony, hairless, fang-toothed fiends. The only time they lose the shadows, though, is for a few seconds after they are defeated.

A heartbeat after that, their body turns to smoke.

—GRAIMAK

I think it wise to explain the danger of a creature that is at once, both physical and essential. In the simplest terms, it means the thing can not only attack your body, but it can quite literally attack your spirit. A blow to one's core essence is not a thing easily healed.

—BELLYNDA

If one of the Fallen has a child, is the child born corrupt? Like the endrori whelps?

—DYSART

You needn't fear. The Fallen are unable to procreate.

—ISIN

## WRAETHDARI

The wraethdari are the dark forms of the elves. They are spiritually bound to the power of dark essence in the same fashion their progenitors are bound to pure essence. This binding has transformed the wraethdari into creatures of pure shadow who exist simultaneously in this world and on the Essential Plane.

Wraethdari are imposing figures whose bodies are perpetually wrapped in shadow. The veil of darkness that surrounds them has a flowing, cloak-like shape and almost completely obscures their features. The only visible facial feature of the wraethdari are their eyes, which burn like two red-hot coals from beneath the cloak of shadow.

Wraethdari are solitary by nature, although if their dark designs require it, they have the dangerous ability to organize the other endrori into armies. They lead these armies as long as it suits them and will abandon their minions as soon as the task is complete. What the wraethdari do or where they go when not pursuing some vile scheme is unknown, since they typically only appear when they have a particular plan or goal.

Wraethdari are cold and calculating. They pursue their aims with emotionless focus and accept nothing less than perfection from those who serve them. Failure and mistakes are met with swift and terrible punishment.

Wraethdari can meld with shadows and use them to move at incredible speeds. At night, in the Deeplands, or anywhere bereft of light, the wraethdari can cover more than a hundred miles in an hour. Wraethdari can also animate shadows, creating tainted creatures they can command over long distances.

Wraethdari have the power to control other endrori. Even the strongest willed orc or most powerful skaah priestess are helpless when a wraethdari commands them. Wraethdari cannot die. When defeated, they simply lose cohesion and their spirit returns to Endroren, where they reform in his dark heart and begin their ascent to the surface once again.

## THE FALLEN

Endroren's imprisonment prevents him from taking direct action against the surface world and those who live there. He ruled Aetaltis for a thousand years, however, and echoes of his dark power still stain the essence of the world. This corrupted essence can influence the greedy, the weak-willed, and those with a natural propensity for evil.

One who starts down this path is known as an Initiate of the Shadow. Over time, through acts of cruelty and evil and in calling upon Endroren's divine power, they draw more and more of the darkness into themselves. Slowly, their body and spirit are transformed.

When the process is complete, the initiate is irrevocably changed. Their body becomes a twisted version of its former self, their spirit is completely suffused with darkness, and their mind becomes as dark and corrupt as that of any endrori. Most who go through this transformation die. Those who survive become one of the Fallen.

The appearance of the Fallen varies, although there are a few physical traits they have in common. The first is an aversion to the light of Lensae. This aversion is not as strong as what the endrori experience, but they prefer to avoid its light. The second is increased strength. Fallen are almost always stronger than their previous, uncorrupted form.



The Fallen serve as living conduits for Endroren's power. By entreating him, they can perform powerful acts of sorcery in a fashion similar to that of clerical divine magic. Despite the Fallen's utter corruption, channeling this dark power still ravages their body and spirit. Each time they call upon Endroren, there is a chance the power will consume them.

Many fallen remain on the surface after their transformation. They attempt to blend back into normal society and corrupt the people of the world from within. Some strive to convert others to darkness, forming shadow cults to guide new initiates along the path to becoming one of the Fallen. Others work to undermine the beliefs, powers, and traditions that keep us on the path of light.

One terrifying trait of the Fallen is their tendency toward cannibalism. They are known to drink the blood and feast on the flesh of their victims. For most, this behavior is rooted more in dark ritual than a need for sustenance. The Fallen believe feasting upon the dead allows them to absorb the power of that person's spirit.

In terms of their intellect, most fallen are just as intelligent as they were in their previous life. Their personalities remain intact as well, albeit with their darkest traits magnified in their new form. Without exception, however, the Fallen are cruel and twisted. They feel only the darkest desires and have no sense of compassion, guilt, or love. They lie without a thought and will do anything to get something they want. And in the case of the Fallen, anything truly means anything.

## BLOODBORN

Bloodborn are the fallen form of the elves. They are dark spellcasters of the highest rank, and the elves' natural tie to magic makes the bloodborn equally gifted when calling upon the dark essence of Endroren. Bloodborn regain expended essence naturally, but they can also restore their personal essence by drinking the blood of their victims.

They look similar to a normal elf, except they have pallid, sickly complexions, and their stringy hair is as white as snow. Their eyes are sunken and so blood-shot they look like glittering crimson pools. Bloodborn teeth are longer and sharper than a common elf's and are known to grow even longer at the scent of blood.

Bloodborn personalities are as unique as those of the elves. Some are reclusive while others crave company. Whatever their personality, all bloodborn selfishly pursue pleasure and personal gratification. When something ceases to amuse them—whether a person, a place, or an object—it is discarded. Many shadow cults are led by bloodborn.

## CREEPERS

Creepers are the fallen form of halflings. These filthy creatures lurk amid the refuse of society. They haunt crypts, sewers, and dank cellars, living off that which the world has forgotten. Creepers seem pitiable at first glance, but they are cold killers who willingly slaughter anyone that stumbles into their territory.

Creepers look like emaciated halflings with stringy hair and sallow complexions. They are typically covered in filth and have no concept of nor interest in hygiene. They seldom speak except to spit curses, and their sunken eyes glitter with feral cruelty.

Taking out shadow cults is honorable work for adventurers. They exist in every part of the Amethyst Sea basin. Most are led by charismatic fallen who lure the weak, the vulnerable, and the desperate into participating in their dark rituals. They promise wealth, power, or whatever it is the victim desires, and often they can deliver—at a cost. Once the person starts down that path, it's difficult to escape.

—ARIA

I keep hearing there aren't any fallen cheebat. Seems unlikely.

—TORRICA

To date, there is no credible report of a fallen cheebat. We know of cheebat who have experienced corruption, even those destroyed by it, but not of fallen cheebat.

—ARIA

Any explanation for this?

—DYSART

Easy. Unlike all of you, we know a bad deal when we hear one.

—BELLYNDA

Bloodborn are also prolific experimenters. And thanks to their complete lack of moral restraint, they are willing to try things with arcane magic, alchemy, and enchantment no legitimate scholar would even consider. Quite a few of the more horrible magic monsters you're likely to encounter are the result of bloodborn experimentation.

—CALABRIA



These ankle-biters are a nightmare for graveyard keepers. They creep silently into the yard and dig up the bodies. They prefer something that's been in the ground just a week or two, but they'll eat older corpses. I've even heard cremation won't stop them, since they'll eat the ashes.

—TORRICA

A gang of darkholders once went to work undermining the walls of Hericos. No one even knew they were there until a good two-thirds of the south wall collapsed. The ones that weren't crushed just carried on digging, even when the militia attacked to drive them off. They managed to undermine another twenty-five feet of wall before they were finally stopped.

—BELLYNDA

A favorite task for darkholders is opening new passages into the Deeplands. Most of the new Deepland entrances opened in the past ten years or so are the work of darkholders.

—VRENN

Most live alone or in small gangs of four to five individuals. They are scavengers, preferring to feast on corpses rather than trying to take down a live victim. If no meat is available, creepers will consume any rotting thing they can find. Fresh food has little interest for them.

Creepers make nests out of garbage, often hidden in sewers, back alleys, and mausoleums. They are pack-rats, and their nests may contain any number of useful and valuable items. Creepers are greedy for possessions. The items needn't be beautiful, functional, or even costly. The creeper simply wants to possess them.

Like the halfings of the Dalelands, creepers are consummate trap makers. They regularly set traps around their nests to protect their possessions, but many times they simply build traps for the joy of hurting others. If you wander into an area and discover traps set seemingly at random, beware, for you are likely in the territory of a creeper.

## DARKHOLDERS

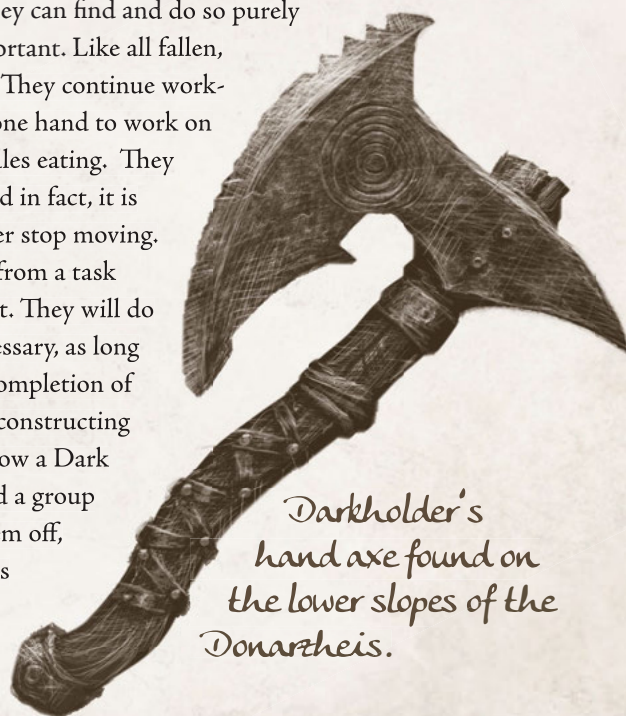
Darkholders are the fallen form of dwarves. They work at every task with tireless, single-minded determination, becoming so focused on their efforts they're known to work themselves to death. Any attempt to interfere with their plans is met with violent resistance.

Darkholders look like stockier versions of their dwarven counterparts. They have thick skin the color of cold gray stone, black oily hair, and black eyes. Darkholders are stronger and tougher than the typical dwarf, although they are slightly shorter.

Darkholders organize into crews. The oldest darkholder leads, and all others follow their orders with perfect obedience. As soon as that leader dies or is killed, the next oldest darkholder immediately takes up the mantle of leader. The new leader may slowly guide the crew in a direction more suited to their own desires, but the previous leader's schemes are never abandoned. They are always seen through to completion.

Darkholders eat whatever they can find and do so purely for sustenance. Taste is unimportant. Like all fallen, however, they prefer raw flesh. They continue working even while they eat, using one hand to work on their task while the other handles eating. They do not need to sleep or rest, and in fact, it is unusual for a darkholder to ever stop moving.

Darkholders do not deviate from a task once they've set their mind to it. They will do this to their destruction if necessary, as long as the losses don't jeopardize completion of the project. If darkholders are constructing a bridge over a gap that will allow a Dark Horde to reach the surface, and a group of adventurers start to pick them off, they will ignore the adventurers as long as the losses do not threaten the bridge's completion.



*Darkholder's  
hand axe found on  
the lower slopes of the  
Donartheis.*





*Deathwalker  
riding a corrupted  
grey cat.*

## DEATHWALKERS

Deathwalkers are the fallen form of the drothmals. While the drothmals take pride in their ability to endure pain, deathwalkers don't even notice it. These dark warriors barely register wounds and will continue to fight well beyond the point any mortal should be able to. They are fierce warriors and battle with unbridled savagery.

Deathwalkers are slightly taller than the typical drothmal and have heavier builds. They do not shave their hair into topknots but rather let it grow loose and wild. Deathwalkers have saber-like fangs used primarily for striking the killing blow to the throat of a downed foe. Their skin color is similar to the drothmals although in more pale shades.

Deathwalkers travel in small warbands. They may join forces with a group of endrori for a time or fight alongside other fallen, but only so long as they are given opportunities to kill. As soon as the opportunity for slaughter dries up, the deathwalker moves on. Deathwalkers are true carnivores, eating only meat. They prefer to gorge upon the raw, fresh flesh of sentient people over any other food.

Unless a deathwalker thinks siding with someone will increase their opportunities for slaughter, they try to kill the person instead. Deathwalkers have very little control over this desire and sometimes forget whose side they are on mid-battle. It isn't uncommon for a deathwalker to kill all their foes and then turn on their allies.

Deathwalkers have a sense of touch but do not have a negative reaction to pain. They recognize when they've been hit but just don't care. They bleed, but their blood is such a black, viscous fluid that it barely flows from their wounds. A deathwalker can lose a limb and show little or no reaction.

Deathwalkers fill me with such a burning fury that I can barely control my blood lust. I've hunted many dark creatures, but none have I taken such pleasure in destroying as the handful of deathwalkers I have killed.

—GRAIMAK

The fact that deathwalkers don't feel pain makes them absolutely terrifying to encounter. It doesn't matter how badly they are injured; they keep on fighting like they just stepped onto the battlefield.

—CALABRIA



A thing drained by a leafbane keeps its shape, but when you touch it, it crumbles to ash. This is terrible enough when you see it happen to plants, but to see a person or animal disintegrate under your fingers is chilling.

—CALABRIA

Most of their prey don't even put up much of a fight. Victims that spend enough time within the proximity of the leafbane's power lose their will to live, much less battle. At some point they just lay down at the leafbane's feet and let it happen.

—BELLYNDA

Everyone knows the verse from that old poem, right?

*"Walking with his bag of gifts  
He sprinkles roses on your lips  
A whispered word into your ear  
And now your time is finished here."*

—The Nightshade's Whisper

—CALABRIA

Roses don't sound too bad.

—PORTAND

The line about roses is in reference to the rose petals the nightshade uses to cover the scent of their plague carrying concoctions. It is a useful indicator of their presence.

—ISIN

*This ruin was the haunt of a nightshade! They are fond of dwelling near the Elligen wilds because of the abundance of poisonous plants they can collect and employ in the business of plague making!*

## LEAFBANES

Leafbanes, the fallen version of sprites, are the walking embodiment of decay. Plants, animals, and people alike wither with a touch from the leafbane's desiccated hand. Like sprites, they are found primarily in the wilds, but they live there not for the wild purity but rather to destroy the beauty of the natural world.

Leafbanes have dry flesh pulled taught over their bones. Their eyes are so sunken the sockets appear like pits above the hard angles of their cheekbones. Leafbanes are nearly hairless except for the few long, loose wisps of hair that manage to retain their hold on the leafbane's head. Despite their appearance, and a notable cracking noise when the leafbane moves, they are every bit as spry as a sprite.

Leafbanes are gripped by an endless sorrow. They have no tears, so they cannot cry, but their faces are locked in a permanent expression of pain and suffering. Too many adventurers make the mistake of pitying the leafbane, letting their guard down and subsequently paying the price for their indiscretion.

Leafbanes travel alone and avoid direct physical confrontation. They feed on the ashen remains of the things they destroy with their powers. Leafbanes are constantly moving from place to place and destroy everything they can along the way. When they need to rest, they curl up on the bare ground with no notice of inclement weather or other environmental factors.

## NIGHTSHADES

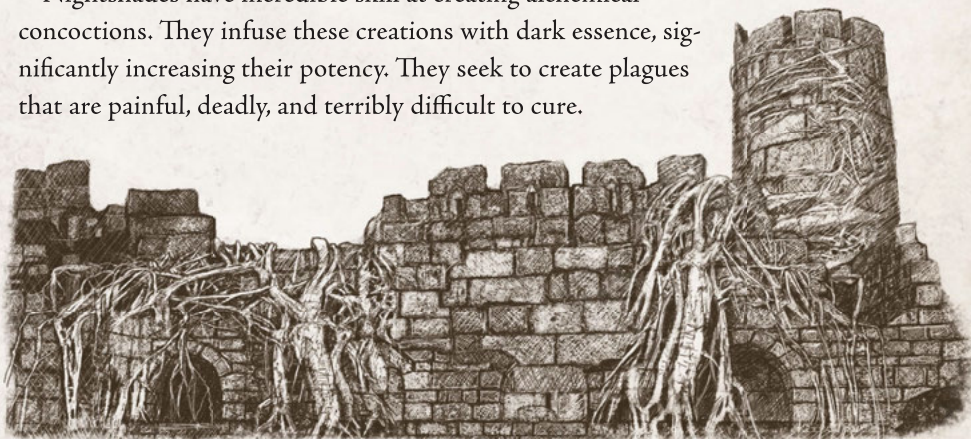
Nightshades, the fallen form of the newardin, travel the countryside spreading magical diseases. Their sole desire is to watch their victims suffer. They move in the shadows and may spend years preparing one of their special creations, choosing the worst possible moment to unleash it upon the world.

Nightshades stand around seven feet tall and look like emaciated versions of their newardin counterparts. Their eyes are speckled with green dots, and they have the unnerving tendency to grin—something the typical newardin never does.

Nightshades shun all other creatures. They live solitary lives hidden away in secret laboratories. There they conduct their experiments and search ancient alchemical tomes for new ways to kill. Whenever they perfect one of their vile concoctions, they venture forth on the darkest night to spread the newly formed plague. The nightshade remains close by to watch first-hand the results of its handiwork. This offers adventurers a brief opportunity to destroy it before it disappears again.

Nightshades are cold, calculating killers. They are infinitely patient and may take years perfecting the ideal disease before unleashing it. They prefer to avoid physical confrontations and fade away into the shadows at the first sign of trouble.

Nightshades have incredible skill at creating alchemical concoctions. They infuse these creations with dark essence, significantly increasing their potency. They seek to create plagues that are painful, deadly, and terribly difficult to cure.





## OGRES

The thunderous bellows of ogres, the fallen form of orogs, can shake the nerves of even the most seasoned warriors. These fiends have surrendered the trappings of civilization that their non-fallen counterparts cling to. They fight like crazed beasts, live like base savages, and are known to eat their victims alive.

Physically, ogres resemble orogs in every way except that they are slightly stronger and a bit more resilient to harm. While most fallen lineages experience a significant physical change, this is not true for ogres. This lack of physical transformation among ogres has led to a great deal of speculation about the true nature of all orogs.

Unlike orogs, ogres have thrown off all aspects of civilization. They live in primitive tribes where the strong rule and the weak are slaughtered. They give in to their every desire and feast upon the bodies of their enemies.

Ogres prefer to live in isolated caverns. Their belongings consist of a few ratty hides and a pile of corpses to snack on. Some ogres choose to live in endrori cities or towns, selling their services as warriors in exchange for food and shelter.

On the surface world, ogres are particularly dangerous because they don't have the aversion to Lensae's light that many of the Fallen and endrori do. They can strike anytime, anywhere, and hit with acute cruelty and vicious abandon. Even survivors of ogre attacks are left emotionally scarred by the sheer brutality of the ogre's methods.

Ogres kill without hesitation and revel in the pain of their victims. One of their more gruesome traits is an insatiable taste for sentient flesh. The slightest hint of blood in the air is enough to throw an ogre, particularly a hungry one, into a berserker rage.

## SHADOWMASKS

Shadowmasks are the fallen form of humans. They have an otherworldly charisma they use to lure their targets into making choices that lead to catastrophe. They desire to inflict the greatest amount of pain and suffering possible, both physical and emotional, and then they feast upon their victims' exquisite torment. The most talented shadowmasks lure the same victim back time and again, convincing them to make the same mistakes over and over.

Shadowmasks look like an idealized version of their pre-fallen form. If they were young and healthy, they become stronger and more beautiful. If they were old and weak, they



*A most charming young woman who joined us at our table in a tavern at Castle Port. I was fair under her spell but Ethan was uneasy for us and we found other accommodation for the night. He told me after, that although he wasn't sure, he thought her likely a Shadowmask!*

It isn't as hopeless as it sounds. The blood of the nightshade that created the disease can be infused into a potion that will cure it.

—CALABRIA

How wonderful...as long as you don't run out of blood before you run out of victims.

—DYSART

If you're not an alchemist, could you just drink its blood? Would that cure you?

—GRAIMAK

In theory, this could work. That said, there is a strong likelihood you'd also suffer corruption, so I would not recommend it.

—ISIN

Plus the whole "drinking a Nightshade's fresh blood" part.

—DYSART

Bah. I've had worse.

—GRAIMAK

[The fact that ogres and orogs look exactly alike also makes it damned hard to know which one you're dealing with.

—DYSART

Yeah, an orog buddy of mine always had to wait for us outside of town. Folks wouldn't give him the benefit of the doubt.

—TORRICA



I've seen a few friends try to blame their ills on shadowmasks. End of the day you're responsible for your own dumb choices. Not like anyone made you do it.

—TORRICA

Are you certain about that? What you've described is the signature of a skilled shadowmask. A series of disastrous choices made by an otherwise reasonable person, all of which culminates in catastrophe, seemingly all due to the person's own failing. When that happens, look around at the people the person recently met or befriended; new paramours, mentors, even innocuous aides or servants, people who have come into their life of late that suddenly, perhaps inexplicably, become a vital part of their world.

—BELLYNDA

now appear kindly, unassuming, and blessed with the wisdom of age. The fall can even magnify a human's dark qualities if that is beneficial, such as a cruel killer that grows terrifying in a way their victims can't put a finger on but from which they are unable to look away.

Shadowmasks live among us, blending in seamlessly with the good people of the world. They wriggle their way into positions of power and trust, and then begin to work their evil. They subtly guide their victims down paths that seem right and good, but have dire, unforeseen consequences. These might be swift and simple, like convincing someone that doing a thing "just once" couldn't possibly go wrong. In other cases, their manipulation might be more complex, taking years to build up a house of cards the shadowmask tumbles at the most inopportune time to create the worst, most far-reaching outcomes.

Shadowmasks can consume any vice to excess and suffer no ill consequences. It also seems they can, to some extent, read the thoughts of their victims. They somehow know exactly what the victim wants or needs and knows precisely how to lure the person down the most destructive path. This is all in addition to their uncanny, likely magical, charisma.

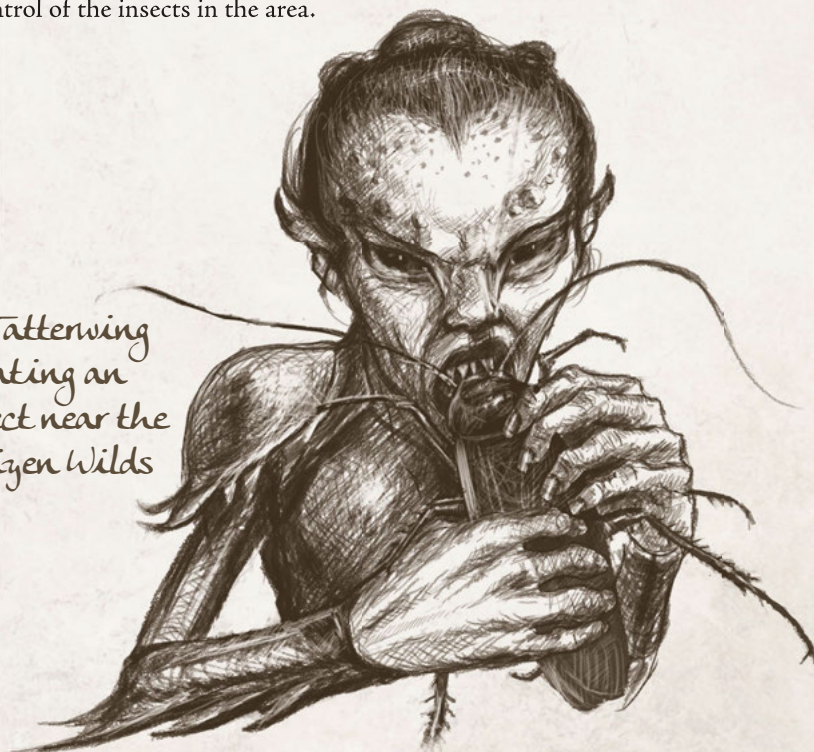
## TATTERWINGS

Tatterwings are the fallen form of fairies. They have an uncanny affinity with insects. They fly into battle accompanied by a cloud of hornets, wasps, and mosquitoes, and as the insects swarm the target the tatterwing swoops in for the killing blow.

Tatterwings look like sickly fairies with moth-eaten wings. Since fairy flight is largely magical and the wings are primarily for steering, the tatterwings are clumsier fliers than fairies. Tatterwings can call and command swarms of insects. Insects of all kinds heed the call and race to serve the tatterwing.

Tatterwings nest in high belfries, dark caverns, and dusty attics. They eat insects, although they are always happy to eat sentient flesh if the opportunity presents itself. They do not get along with others of their kind and often fight for control of the insects in the area.

*A Tatterwing  
eating an  
insect near the  
Elligen Wilds*





Tatterwings take pleasure in summoning insects to infest the homes and belongings of their targets. They watch with pleasure as the infestation makes the life of the target a study in misery. When the horror of the infestation reaches its height, the tatterwing moves in for the kill.

## VENOMKIN

Venomkin are the fallen form of the scythaas. They are stealthy killers who strike from the shadows when their victims least expect it. Not only are venomkin natural assassins, they have a venomous bite. Untreated, the venom of the venomkin kills within hours.

Venomkin look like scythaas except that their skin is a blue so dark that it appears nearly black. Their teeth are elongated and are as sharp as razors. They also have two large fangs they use to inject their victims with their infamous venom. Venomkin have elongated claws and grow a dagger-like rear talon on their feet. Their tails are prehensile but whip thin.

Venomkin often pass themselves off as members of the shakdar, the Wastelander guild of honorable assassins. In this way they infiltrate the underworld of the Amethyst Sea basin and gain access to the resources of the most powerful criminal organizations. Venomkin live among the criminals and kill anyone who discovers their true nature.

Venomkin are solitary by nature and hardly speak to others, much less socialize with them. They eat anything a scythaa will but, like all fallen, they crave the taste of sentient flesh.

Venomkin want to bring low the great kingdoms of the Amethyst Sea basin by killing the people in power. They work for underworld organizations so they may acquire the resources they need to strike at high level officials. Venomkin may use underlings to help them prepare, but they always perform the final act of assassination personally. The killing blow is the climax of the murder, providing the venomkin with a feeling of sheer ecstasy.

## OTHER DARK CREATURES

The endrori and the Fallen are not Endroren's only soldiers. The following are just a few of the other dark enemies you may encounter.

### ABOMONAE

The abomonae are dark creatures of incredible power. They are the first creations of Endroren, and they are his most loyal servants. Every fiber of their being is suffused with darkness. They are so vile, that their very presence in a place can corrupt the ambient essence.

It is unclear where the abomonae came from, since it is known Endroren could not create life on his own. This is the reason he used enari prisoners as the foundation for the endrori rather than creating new creatures. The most likely explanation is that the abomonae are the corrupted avatars of Endroren.

If it is true, that the abomonae are corrupted avatars, this makes them nearly deific beings. The avatars wield incredible power over not just our world but our reality. Dark versions of these entities, and the idea they might rise again at any time, is a terrifying thought.

Abomonae are known to have complete control over endrori and other dark creatures. Endrori under their command are compelled to obey. This makes

I once battled a venomkin with a spine on its tail, like a scorpion's stinger.

—GRAIMAK

Fascinating. Unique physical abnormalities are not uncommon among the Fallen, but this is one I've never heard reported. I do wish I could have seen it.

—ISIN

Fear not, for I saved it. I will show it to you someday if you like.

—GRAIMAK

A recent proposal presented to the Silver Circle in Selentheia is that the abomonae are more akin to dark elementals. If true, this would make them, in a sense, sentient dark essence. Not truly living creatures like ourselves or even the endrori, but a mimicry of life. Quite a fascinating theory.

—ISIN

Pretty sure it won't matter what they are if you run into one of them. They'll kill you just the same.

—VRENN



These Doomcallers are mad. What is wrong with these people?

—VRENN

The minds of most people are easily confused by false logic. You read correlation as causation, allow emotion to overcome reason, and generally let your imaginations influence your behavior. The Doomcallers are perhaps an extreme representation of this phenomenon, but they are not unique in terms of your tendency toward the belief of obvious fallacies.

—ISIN

I bet you're a lot of fun to grab a drink with at the tavern.

—TORRICA

I've been told that I am not, but thank you for that thoughtful statement.

—ISIN

Dark Hordes led by abomonae far more dangerous and destructive than those with a wraethdari at their head. They have also been known to animate the dead, travel through shadows, create bound undead without the need for ritual, and drain the essence from any living thing nearby to power their spells.

## CORRUPTED ANIMALS

The presence of Endroren, the abomonae, and other dark creatures on the surface throughout the Age of Darkness led to the corruption of many animals, both mundane and magical. Some of this was due to the corrupted ambient essence seeping into their core essence and twisting them. In other cases, the corrupted creatures were the result of dark experiments designed to twist the animals into monsters.

In the centuries since the Age of Darkness, many corrupted animals were hunted down and killed while others were forced into the Deeplands. Some survived on the surface, and the offspring of these creatures still stalk the world today.

Wherever you encounter them, be prepared for a fight. The corruption makes these creatures significantly more aggressive than their natural counterparts. Most will attack you on sight.

Some acquire unnatural abilities, such as an immunity to pain or venomous bites. Many have notable physical alterations, such as the growth of horns or spines, lengthening and sharpening of the teeth and claws, or the growth of bony plates on the skin. Rarely, but most dangerously, in some creatures the corruption is so deep their attacks can actually corrupt the core essence of their victims.

Despite the horror these creatures can evoke, remember they are, in the end, animals. Although they do not experience the fear or self-preservation instincts of their uncorrupted counterparts, tactics or techniques effective at fighting a normal animal of the same type will typically prove effective against the corrupted versions.

## DOOMCALLERS

Doomcallers are not, strictly speaking, agents of darkness, but their actions aid Endroren, so we felt it appropriate to discuss them here. They are a religious sect that promotes the destruction of Aetaltis as the only way to defeat Endroren. They believe the Enaros did not kill Endroren at the end of the Great War because they were not strong enough and could never be.

It is the Doomcallers' belief that fighting and killing the endrori is just helping Endroren to gain more power. In time, they believe, Endroren will have gained enough strength by feasting on dark spirits that he will break his bonds to emerge and destroy the Enaros. To that end, the Doomcallers are actively working to aid the forces of darkness in their attempts to return to the surface and defeat the good people of Aetaltis. Authorities have repeatedly discovered Doomcallers breaking down the wards that seal the Deeplands or digging new passages into the Deeplands.

Why would anyone do such a thing? And how is this expected to help bring about the destruction of Endroren? By the Doomcaller's twisted logic, the death of the good people of Aetaltis will directly empower the Enaros, giving them the strength they need to finally kill Endroren and eliminate all darkness from the world. If every good person in the world is killed, then the power of our spirits will flow to the Enaros. The fastest way to do that is to free Endroren.



## FORGOTTEN ONES

Endroren spent many years perfecting the dark arts he used to create the endrori. During that time, he spawned countless monsters. Many were so hideously corrupted that even Endroren could not bear the sight of them. Know that some of the forgotten ones, or perhaps their descendants, still roam our world.

There is no standard appearance for the forgotten ones. Some look like terrifying, nightmare versions of normal creatures, while others might appear as nothing more than a pile of pulsating flesh covered with mouths and eyes. Endroren observed no limits in his experiments, and anything his dark imagination could devise he attempted to bring to life.

The forgotten ones are spawned from corruption, so they are, on the whole, evil creatures by nature. Most are no more intelligent than animals, although there are stories that suggest some might be significantly more advanced. Whether these are animals that gained greater intellect as a result of Endroren's experiments, or more terrifyingly, his early experiments on the enari, we do not know.

## INITIATES OF THE SHADOW

Members of shadow cults are known as Initiates of the Shadow. These are individuals who are purposefully progressing down the path of the Fallen. They hold misguided dreams of power and believe that by pledging themselves body and soul to Endroren, they will find what they seek.

Most never achieve their goal. Somewhere along the path they falter. The luckiest of these find their way back to the light. Others die before they achieve their fall, either killed by the dark powers they are invoking, executed by authorities, or even used as sacrifices. Of the few that achieve complete corruption, most of these die during their transformation. Only a handful become fallen.

Despite these terrible outcomes, there are always those desperate, vulnerable, or weak enough to slip down this path, despite the obvious dark end most initiates meet. Initiates come from all walks of life, occupations, and lineages. Some are skilled warriors while others are accomplished merchants. The danger they pose to adventurers depends entirely on these skills and the temporal power the initiate wields. The greatest challenge is that there is no easy way to tell them apart from a common person.

To achieve corruption, however, initiates must commit truly evil acts. This makes them a clear danger that must be confronted. Since many initiates are redeemable, we urge you to take them alive if you can. At the same time, High Lord Drakewyn recognizes that the initiate may make such mercy impossible. Do what you can, brave heroes.

Aside from their strange powers, the sheer variety of the Forgotten Ones is a large part of what makes them so dangerous. There is no rule for what they can or can't do, what powers they may wield, or more importantly, how one goes about killing them.

—BELLYNDA

There is a Forgotten One living in the Donarzheis Mountains northeast of the Windsinger Sea. It looks like a dragon, but I assure you—it is not. It breathes streams of pure shadow that corrupt everything they touch.

—GRAIMAK

Here's a lesson for adventurers: people are idiots.

—TORRICA

Well that seems unnecessarily rude. I've found that most people are quite lovely when you get to know them.

—PORTAND

Fine. People are idiots, although some of those idiots are quite lovely. Happy now?

—TORRICA

I imagine that's enough for today. We'll reconvene tomorrow to go through the remaining material.

—SCHOLARAE MILLONAS





Exploring the outskirts of the Elligen wilds, I noticed a very interesting dead gnarly old tree. On closer inspection it appeared to come alive! Happily I spotted the peril in time, leaping clear as the leafbane hidden in the branches fished out a withered hand to touch me!



An Orc captain roars an order to his subordinates at a camp near the Black Gate.



Goblin  
matriarch





Ixit swarm  
attack!

A Wraethdari  
commander





## CHAPTER SEVEN

# OTHER DANGERS

**A**LTHOUGH THE MINIONS OF ENDROREN ARE THE GREATEST THREAT FACING AETALTIS, AS adventurers you'll likely face a host of other enemies as well. Unfortunately, with the limited space available in this book, we can't possibly provide a comprehensive list of the myriad monsters, beasts, and abominations you will encounter on your adventures. Rather, we've included a sampling of fiends both common and bizarre, with the hope it will provide at least a basic understanding of the possible foes that await you.

ABOVE | Steelblade Clawfist Faces His Greatest Trial, *by Russell Marks*



## BEASTFOLK

One well-known outcome of the Cataclysm was the magical melding of two or more distinctive objects or creatures into one. It was as if the things tried to occupy the same space simultaneously, but instead of being crushed together, they literally became a single new thing. Arcane examination of the resultant essence forms revealed that the change went deeper than their physical shapes and materials. The magic somehow wove multiple forms into one, creating a new essence form with traits taken from each of the contributing forms.

Unfortunately, this phenomenon was not limited to inanimate objects. Many people, animals, and plants suffered the same fate. Blessedly, most were killed by the unnatural pairing, but not all.

Those that survived had become literal monsters, and sadly, they were often treated as such. Many were hunted, driven out of civilized lands, and quite often killed. To be fair, the transformation drove many of them mad, so in far too many cases they had in fact become dangerous. Still, behind the madness lay the mind of a person very much like you or me.

Over the years, a few of these poor souls met others with similar metamorphic traits. When this occurred, some discovered—certainly by accident—that they could reproduce, and the offspring of these pairings carried the traits of their parents. So it was that some of these new creatures survived and multiplied.

In this section, we will describe one group of these metamorphosed creatures, beings we call the beastfolk. These are the descendants of people who found themselves combined with nearby animals. Although there is significant variation within each group, a number of common forms have emerged.

A word of warning about the beastfolk. Most beastfolk can think, reason, and build just like we can—albeit with varying levels of intellect and sophistication. This does not make them potential allies. Many are vicious, cruel, and dangerous. The reasons are many, ranging from centuries of mistreatment at our hands, to the madness inflicted by the change, to alliances with the powers of darkness. They are not innately corrupt or evil, but they are often quite dangerous. Use extreme caution when dealing with beastfolk of any kind.

The following are the most common types of beastfolk an adventurer might encounter.

### GNOLLS

Gnolls are the descendants of people who were melded with dogs, wolves, hyenas, and other canines. The bestial nature of their animal counterpart remained dominant in gnolls, and while they are intelligent, they have a violent nature similar to what one finds in wolves and wild dogs.

### KOBOLDS

Kobolds are small, reptilian humanoids with dark red skin. According to the kobolds, their people originated somewhere in the mountains of the Northern Wilds. They claim they are descended from dragons, although there is no proof of this.

### LIZARDFOLK

The lizardfolk are thought to have arisen from a melding of people from a variety of lineages, although primarily human, with crocodiles or alligators. Like gnolls, we believe the animal natures of the lizardfolk remained dominant after their transformation. Lizardfolk are considered extremely dangerous.

A friend of mine once found a water pitcher in an Alliance ruin. The damned thing was made completely from fire. Not on fire, mind you, but from fire. Best he could guess, it had been sitting on the stove to heat when the Cataclysm struck. The clay and fire combined, and the fire pitcher was the result. Completely useless, but definitely an oddity worth getting a look at.

—DYSART

Don't forget that they're only talking about the essence forms that survived the process. The majority of the time the combination caused both essence forms and physical forms to shatter, leaving nothing but bits of warped material lying all around.

—CALABRIA

You've placed the kobolds in the wrong section, friend. Like the kobolds told you, they aren't beastfolk. They are descendants of a great dragon and its halfling lover. If you want proof, there are Hearhtales going back to the Age of Magic that feature kobolds.

—PORTAND

Can you ever call a Hearhtale "proof?"

—BELLYNDA

Avoid lizardfolk! Those ornery scalebacks will happily take a bite out of you the first chance they get.

—TORRICA



Ratfolk are no trouble by themselves or even in small groups, but get a bunch of them together, like the big clans living in the Undercity, and you're in for a serious fight.

—CALABRIA

Assuming they haven't gotten into the bone yet, fire is the best way to get them out. After they get to the bone, though? Well, you better find something to bite down on.

—TORRICA

There are more than a few dragon cults. These are people who believe the great dragons are divine, only one step beneath the Enaros in their celestial importance and power.

—BELLYNDA

## RATFOLK

Ratfolk are the outcome of people merging with rats. It pains me to say it, but these creatures are every bit the vermin normal rats are. They dwell in sewers, ruins, and on the edges of civilization, feeding off the refuse of our world.

## CRYPT BEETLES

This small beetle is about the size of a human's palm and has an iridescent shell the color of blood. They feed primarily on bones, which is why they are regularly found in crypts, coffins, and burial chambers. This is, of course, how they earned their name.

Crypt beetles are perfectly happy to consume old, dry bones, but they actually prefer fresh bones. Note that we said "fresh" and not "dead." Crypt beetles are dangerously bold and will not hesitate to attack a living creature. They use their mandibles to burrow into the flesh and then begin feasting on the bones beneath. They are exceptionally difficult to dislodge once they've gotten under the muscle tissue, so it is advised that you remove it as soon as it starts burrowing.

## CRYSTAL SERPENTS

The legendary crystal serpent is found primarily in the Icebound Plain. It spends most of its life on land, but it is an excellent swimmer. It feeds mainly on seals and aquatic birds but it is perfectly happy to hunt bipedal prey. When threatened, it breathes a cloud of frigid air cold enough to freeze flesh on contact.

Crystal serpents are over sixty feet long and two feet in diameter. For the most part, they look like giant snakes, but they derive their name from the layer of ice which coats their blue-white scales, giving them the appearance of being made from crystal. Although this crystalline coating is quite beautiful, it is not as fragile as it appears and offers significant protection for the beast.

## DRAGONS

Dragons are some of the most powerful and feared creatures in the known world. Some of these enormous, reptilian beings have intellects that rival our own and the ability to cast spells. Many can breathe goutts of fire, poison gas, or even acid, and some can fly. Their scaled hides are as tough as armor, and they can slice a person in half with a single swipe of their claw.

## GREAT DRAGONS

The most powerful dragons are the great dragons. They are incredibly ancient, nearly as old as the Enaros, and phenomenally powerful. Their numbers will never increase, however, since they cannot reproduce with their own kind.

There is no limit to the amount of personal essence a great dragon's spirit can hold. This enables them to cast countless spells, often of unparalleled power. There is, however, a limitation on their magical potential: they do not regain essence naturally in the way we do. They need a powerful source of essence to draw on, which is why they tend to build their lairs on essence wells or ley lines.

A great dragon may take any form it chooses. Although dragons cannot reproduce with their own kind, they can use this polymorphic power to reproduce with other creatures and beings. Common dragons, hydras, wyverns, and similar dragon-kin are examples of the offspring of these mixed pairings.





## COMMON DRAGONS

Allow us to begin by noting that the term “common dragon” is merely a means of differentiating them from great dragons. It is, however, a misleading term, since they are anything but common. The first of these creatures were born of unions between great dragons and some other creature or being. The exact parentage of the first common dragons is a topic of great intellectual interest.

The majority of dragons encountered today are not those firstborn common dragons, but rather their descendants. Unlike great dragons, common dragons can reproduce with one another. All of the chromatic and metallic dragon types you are likely familiar with are common dragons. Like their great dragon progenitors, common dragons have neither a limit to the amount of personal essence they can store, nor do they regain essence naturally.

It is worth remembering that while no common dragon comes close to the power of great dragons, some common dragons are extremely ancient and exceptionally powerful. If a creature can destroy an entire city on its own, the question of whether it is a great dragon or ancient common dragon is purely academic.

## OTHER DRAGON-KIN

In addition to great and common dragons, there are a variety of other dragon-kin. These include the many-headed hydra, the wyvern, forge wyrms, and a host of other dragon-like creatures. Admittedly, there is some uncertainty about whether all of these creatures are dragon-kin or if they are merely dragon-like.

I have heard from more than one person who knows about these things that there are at least two great dragons living among us in the Amethyst Sea basin today. I don't mean hidden in lairs or sleeping away the centuries atop hoards of treasures. I mean shape-shifted into human or elven form and living right beside us.

—CALABRIA

I've been told the same. As a matter of fact, I have it on good authority that at least one of these dragons holds a position of some importance in one of the great kingdoms.

—BELLYNDA



Recent research at Winterkeep seems to back up the druidic explanation of elementals. It's an intriguing area of study with the potential to greatly enhance our understanding of essence forms.

—ISIN

The thing I like about elementals is that you can negotiate with them if you know how. Offer up some rare piece of wood to a fire elemental or give an earth elemental a handful of valuable gems, and you can almost always get them to do what you need them to.

—BELLYNDA

A Selenthean scholar recently put forward an interesting theory suggesting that these wild fey are in the grip of something she calls *essence madness*. She claims a fey's bond with essence can grow so strong, it overwhelms their mind. Over time, they lose touch with the real world, seeing it as little more than a web of interconnected essence forms. This leads to a marked loss of compassion and empathy, which manifests as the strange and anti-social behaviors observed among their kind.

—ISIN

## ELEMENTALS

Druids tell us that elementals are natural elemental forces given sentience through a bond with a nature spirit. According to the druids, our entire world is a living thing, and it can separate off bits of its own spirit to create discrete living entities. The key difference is that while the nature spirit appears to have free will while separate, it is not truly independent, but rather it is a temporary manifestation of Aetaltis's own spirit. When the elemental is destroyed or after an indeterminate amount of time, the nature spirit is absorbed back into the spirit of our world.

Elementals manifest naturally in places where the pristine form of an element exists. For instance, a fire elemental might manifest in the heart of a volcano, or a water elemental might manifest at the point where a spring bursts forth from the ground. In some cases, the elemental remains bound to the place of their birth, but there are also instances where they've wandered far from their point of origin.

It is also possible to use magic to summon an elemental. Note that the term *summon* is used loosely, since the Ritual of Limitation prevents instantaneous travel, even for spirits. Rather, using specially designed spells and rituals, the caster calls out for nature spirits within range of the spell and convinces them to bond with the elements the caster has prepared.

Elementals are not bound to a particular form, although they generally appear as humanoid creatures made completely from their chosen element. Their size and power are determined not by the availability of elemental material, but rather by the power of the spirit that inhabits the element.

Spells that call elementals exert a level of control over the elemental summoned, but since elementals are sentient, control is not guaranteed. Nature spirits have personalities. Some are kind, others are cruel. Some are greedy, while others are generous. Spellcasters who summon elementals should be prepared to bargain with the nature spirit to get what they desire.

## FEY, WILD

There are fey living in the darkest corners of the region's oldest forests who have completely thrown off the trappings of civilization. Some cling loosely to the Feylariyan culture, but many more behave in a fashion so bizarre and erratic, one wonders if they aren't in the grip of some form of madness. Most are wary of strangers and will avoid them, but others are quite bold. These fey not only pose a serious threat to adventurers, but they seem to take joy from tormenting their victims before killing them outright.

## FORGE WYRMS

Forge wyrms are dragon-kin that live in and around pools of lava. Their bodies exude tremendous heat, especially when they are agitated. Followers of Modren believe that the Enaros of the Flame and Forge created forge worms to guard his holy sites.

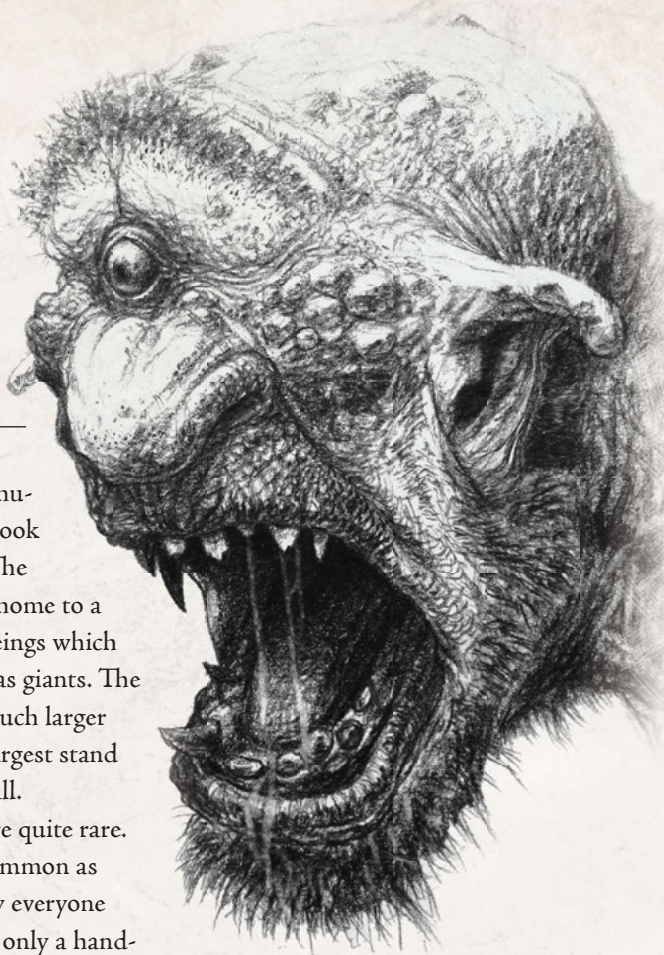
Forge wyrms are around 9 to 12 feet long and resemble enormous lizards with long, powerful tails. Their flesh is fiery red, and their eyes glow with an inner fire. Forge wyrms are slow on land, but move through lava with incredible speed and grace.



## GIANTS

Firstborn Giants and giant-kin are towering humanoid creatures that look like enormous atlans. The Amethyst Sea basin is home to a wide variety of these beings which we refer to collectively as giants. The smallest giants aren't much larger than an orog, but the largest stand more than thirty feet tall.

Giants of all kinds are quite rare. They are about as uncommon as dragons, which is to say everyone has heard of giants but only a handful of people have actually seen one. This is for the best, since most giants are violent and mean-tempered.



Giants look like enormous atlans? This seems an odd way to describe them. If anything they look like gigantic elves or towering halflings. There weren't even any atlans on Aetaltis when the Enaros created the firstborn.

—PORTAND

## FIRSTBORN GIANTS

All the giants of Aetaltis arose from the firstborn giants, a group of beings commonly referred to as the firstborn. The firstborn are one of the two lineages of lensari with which we are familiar. The other lineage are the great dragons. Firstborn are exceptionally large, averaging around thirty feet tall.

Like the great dragons, the firstborn cannot procreate with their own kind. They can, however, procreate with lesser creatures, just like the great dragons. They do so by use of their innate ability to change their shape. The offspring of such unions are the creatures we call common giants.

## COMMON GIANTS

All other types of giants are called common giants. As is the case with common dragons, common giants are not at all common. The name is simply a means of differentiating them from their firstborn progenitors.

Common giants are smaller than firstborn giants, seldom standing more than twenty feet tall. Where the firstborn tend to have features most people find pleasing, most common giants are misshapen and may have distinctly inhuman features.

Since common giants can procreate with one another, over the years there have developed a number of distinct varieties of common giant. The best known of these are the one-eyed cyclops, the two-headed ettin, and hill giants. Hill giants, the smallest and most common of the common giants, are only a little over ten feet tall and are often mistaken for ogres or orogs.

I met a hunter in Selentheia who claims there is an entire town of firstborn living in the Elderwood. Now that would be something to see, wouldn't it?

—DYSART

Maybe they just look bigger when they're trying to step on ya, but seems to me I've come across common giants bigger than twenty feet.

—TORRICA

Ssynes agrees. The echsee of the Wastes are at least twenty-five feet tall.

—SSYNES



I've never spent so much time running from something so small as I did the time we disturbed a green swarmer nest. Despite their size they're mean as dwarf spit, and they have *so many* teeth. They're the reason I refuse to go back to the Zhamayen.

—DYSART

I'd give my axe for a grey cat mount. Noble creatures, they are. I envy my ancestors who rode upon these mighty creatures.

—VRENN

To fight a pack of ice wolves is a true trial indeed! Droth has blessed me three times with such an opportunity. See these scars? This is where their bite froze my flesh. And see this necklace? These are the teeth that made the mark!

—GRAIMAK

## GREEN SWARMERS

Green swarmers are small reptilian creatures, no larger than a large cat, that run on two legs, have long thin tails, and long sinuous necks. Individually, they pose only a minor threat, but they are almost never encountered alone. More often they travel in swarms of 10 to 50 individuals and move with uncanny coordination, not unlike the coordinated flight patterns observed in large flocks of small birds.

Green swarmers are carnivores. Like wolves, they use advanced hunting tactics, including herding prey toward the main swarm with their high-pitched, undulating cries. Once the prey is within range, they attack as a group, focusing as many attacks as possible on a single target before splitting off to attack another.

## GREY CATS

Grey cats are saber-toothed cats the size of horses that were once the preferred mounts of tsvergic nobles. They were bred for war and served their riders with utter devotion. Only a few tame grey cats remain today, and most of these are in Malador. The rest have returned to the wild.

Grey cats look like large lions with no manes. They have glistening gray fur reminiscent of marble and dark grey eyes. Grey cats have saber-toothed fangs and their jaws extend open much farther than a normal large cat's, allowing it to bring its fangs to bear.

Grey cats live in packs with a single male and multiple females. Packs aren't particularly dangerous to travelers or adventurers except when the pack is hunting. Packs are confident enough that they ignore most intruders on their territory if they aren't hungry. Rogue males with no pack are solitary wanderers and are far more territorial. They will attack with little provocation.

## HULLERS

Hullers are heavy, four-legged beasts that stalk the plains of the Blade Sea. They are six feet tall at the shoulder and twelve to fifteen feet long. Their bodies are covered with a bony shell that protects them from the deadly blade grass of their home. Hullers are unpleasant beasts, prone to attack anything that threatens or startles them.

Hullers earned their name from the thick horn that grows on their forehead. The beasts are powerful enough to tear open the hull of a stonship with their horn and do so fairly regularly. They also have a long prehensile tongue that can shoot out ten feet from their mouths. The tongue is as tough as the huller's hide and it secretes acid. Normally the huller uses it to grab and burn through the blade grass, but it can just as easily slice through a wooden stonship hull or burn off an adventurer's leg.

## ICE WOLVES

Ice wolves are magical creatures that live on the Icebound Plains. They are named not for their habitat, but rather for their bite. An ice wolf's bite is colder than the most frigid winter nights in the Donarzheis Mountains. It not only tears the flesh, but literally freezes the tissue.

Ice wolves travel in packs of five to seven. Their behavior is similar to that of a normal wolf, although there are indications they are more intelligent than their non-magical brethren.



## KEESKAS

Keeskas are four-legged, six-eyed reptilian beasts about the size of an exceptionally large ox. These beasts are native to the Scythaan Wastes. They have clawed toes, a long, forked tongue, and a tail they keep curled. Adult keeskas have nine to fifteen horns that protrude from the back and side of the head in a rearward facing fan shape. They also have backward-pointing bony spikes extending from their shoulders and upper chest.

The keeskas are the preferred beast of burden among the Wastelanders. They keep the animals for transport, as a beast of burden, and even for companionship. They believe that the first keeskas were Vale's pets, and she gave them to the scythas as a boon at the end of the Age of Darkness. Wastelanders refuse to eat the meat of the keeskas.

There is no creature as wondrous as the keeska. Proud, beautiful, and graceful, they are a blessing to my people.

—SSYNES

And the smell? That a blessing too?

—VRENN

They smell no worse than you, my friend.

—SSYNES

## REAVERS

Reavers are carnivorous Deepland worms that slither through stone like an eel through water. They locate their prey by sensing the vibrations made by the target as it moves. Once a victim is identified, they leap out of the solid stone to attack. If they hit, they latch on and begin chewing their way through the victim. If they miss, they dive back into the stone and disappear.

Adult reavers are three feet long and approximately four inches in diameter. They have ridged gray skin the color of granite and no eyes. Reavers sense vibrations using special membranes at the bottom of four short holes near their mouth. These holes amplify the vibrations that reach them.

## SKRAAGEN

The Icewalkers of the Icebound Plains have domesticated a powerful beast they call the skraagen. Skraagens are lupine creatures the size of a horse that are the preferred war mount of the Icewalkers. They are extremely fast and have a powerful leap. They are exceptionally sure-footed and can pounce about on stone, ice, and snow with ease.

## SLURKERS

The slurker is a gelatinous creature that can grow as large as a drothmal. Its body is malleable, allowing it to ooze under doors, down drains, and into small crevices and cracks. A more unusual trait is its ability to mimic the shapes of things it has oozed over in the past. The slurker uses this mimicry to lure prey.

In its resting state, the slurker appears as a semi-transparent pool or pile of gelatinous material. Streamers of whitish blue material run through the body, shifting and twisting like vinegar poured into oil. When it oozes over its victim, it secretes acid to digest the meal. It is at home in the water as it is on land.







# OUR ESTEEMED CONTRIBUTORS

**T**HE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS GENEROUSLY SHARED THEIR CANDID INSIGHTS INTO THE MATERIAL presented in this text. As per the wise command of High Lord Valinar Drakewyn, we are honored to have received their unvarnished additions to this carefully researched, scholarly work.

## ARIA ETHINDAN

Archon Aria Ethindan is a senior servant of the Lyceum Lensae in New Erinor. She has devoted her life to the service of the Enaros and is an expert in all subjects theological. In her early years of service to the temple, she traveled with the Shield of Courage adventuring company as a means of learning first-hand about both our world and the dark creatures plaguing it. Today she oversees the Lyceum Alantra's Order of Exploration and Guardianship.

## BELLYNDA DROMATHERIA MEGGLE-MODDLE

Mistress Bellynda is the founder of the Platinum Rose Trading Company, one of the most successful and respected overland trading companies in the Amethyst Sea basin. She has generously taken time away from her retirement to assist us in the preparation of this work. In addition to her expertise in trade, transport, and travel, she spent her youth as a member of the Platinum Rose Adventuring Company, one of the first bands of adventurers to explore the Golgebesh Ruins of the Western Zhamayen Jungle.

## CALABRIA CRANE

Calabria Crane began her career as a bonded adventurer in the city-state of Tricos. After five years of exemplary service to her patron, she set off on her own. She's cheated death in the caverns of the Dragon's Maw, walked with the Firstborn Giants in the Elderwood, and scaled the highest peaks of the Stonegate Mountains in her quest to rediscover the lost city of Llyl'syandor. Her greatest claim to fame is she is the only person to have survived three expeditions into the ruins of Old Erinor.

## SIR DYSART DRAYMORE

We are honored to welcome famed explorer Sir Dysart Draymore of Endelwine as a contributor to this work. Sir Draymore has traveled extensively in the lands of the Amethyst Sea basin and beyond, and his knowledge of its countries and its people are without equal. He's served as council to the High Queen of the Free Kingdoms, spent a year as captain of the merchant vessel Dysart's Folly, brokered the Kardarian Trade Compact in Callios, and held the post of Mayor in Torvelade for a year.

## GRAIMAK ONE-EYE

The accomplished drothmal warrior and mercenary known to us as Graimak One-Eye served in eight separate successful military campaigns and participated in twelve adventuring expeditions. He single-handedly defeated the Beast of Jorga, won the Mayor's Cup in the arena of Port Vale, and just last year recovered the Icadian Crown.

## ISINISHNOKEENNOKIR

Our esteemed colleague from Winterkeep, who we shall refer to as Isin per her request, is a skilled practitioner of the arcane arts. She serves as Provost for the Department of Research and Explorative Studies at Winterkeep, and she is the only member of her order to have memorized all twenty-two of the Elsilyne Formulae. In some circles, it is said she is the world's greatest expert on the topics of magic, spellcraft, and essence. In addition, she spent three years adventuring with the Three Blades Adventuring Company.



## PORTAND APPLECLAPPER

We are pleased to include the thoughts of Mr. Portand Appleclapper, a Dalelander of impeccable reputation and a prince among halflings. Portand spent two decades traveling the Amethyst Sea and writing about his adventures for *The Wayward Wanderer*, an immensely popular broadsheet disseminated monthly in Gelendor. Most notably, he is one of the few explorers to ever lay eyes upon the Isles of the Lost Coast.

## SSYNES TARACH

The accomplished adventurer Ssynes Tarach has dedicated his life to unlocking the lost secrets of our world. He's stalked the windswept valleys of the Scythaan Wastes, stood upon the prow of a stonship as it raced across the Blade Sea, and pierced the green wall of the Elliyeen Wilds. We are fortunate he passed through New Erinor when he did, so he might contribute to this work, but if all goes as planned, by the time you read this he'll be trekking the frigid expanses of the Icebound Plains.

## TORRICA "SCARMAKER" KELIKOS

It is our honor to welcome to our advisory group Torrica Kelikos, one of the most accomplished adventurers, explorers, and treasure hunters of our time. She is perhaps best known for liberating the Sun Spear of Nimonas from the City of Blue Mists, although her defeat of the Ettin King of Cragendor has inspired a number of ballads that are tavern favorites. When she completes her work here at the College, Torrica is planning an expedition to the Icebound Plains to explore one of the cities rumored to be frozen in the ice of Clawbreaker Reach.

## VRENN DORMIN SKEARGENKETT

Vrenn Dormin Skeargenkett, Scourge of Tevaren and Keeper of the Dwarven Heartflame, has shared his unparalleled experience about what lies in wait for adventurers traveling the Deeplands. He earned his expertise on the field of battle, slaying endrori in their lairs and engaging in countless battles with the vilest of the Dark Lord's minions. He has survived one-hundred and thirty-seven delves into the Deeplands, and there are few, if any, who know those shadowed realms as well as he.

## NOTABLE SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTORS

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We also wish to extend our thanks to the scholars, researchers, and collegiate experts who contributed to this

work. It is thanks to their tireless labors in the library, the scriptorium, and in the field that this book rests in your hands today. In addition, we wish to give special praise to the following contributors.

## PROVOST VESTYN WINEMAN

The driving force behind this project is none other than Provost Vestyn Wineman, the head of the Department of Discovery and Exploration. Provost Wineman is an expert in the burgeoning field of Discovery and Exploration, and even participated in the now famous Deepland expedition to Dor Urthin Fel in the spring of 415 AC. His unflagging determination, wise guidance, and steadying hand were instrumental in completing this book in such a short period of time.

## EATHEN WINSWOOD

The notes of the traveling historian Eathen Winswood were instrumental in the assemblage of this tome. We encourage those seeking even greater insight into what lies in wait for adventurers to seek out the newly published volume *The Collected Missives of Eathen Winswood: A Journal from the Edge of the World*. Copies are available for rent or purchase from the library at the College of New Erinor.

## AMBROSE PREVITT

The illustrations in this book are the work of one Ambrose Previtt. Previtt and Winswood are research partners, and they traveled together with the Crimson Thorn Adventuring Company. Previtt's stunning visualizations of the people, places, and things they encountered add immeasurably to our understanding of the world in which we live. We hope you find his illustrations as enlightening as we did.

## RALLIS MILLONAS

Our respected colleague, Scholarae Rallis Millonas, served as the liaison between the members of our academic team and the adventurers and lay experts whose comments appear in this text. The good gentleman also moderated the lively discussions wherein those selfsame contributors provided us with their unique, energetic, and at times unorthodox points of view. His efforts are deeply appreciated by the team. We also wish him a speedy recovery and offer our assurance that everyone has lost their way into the bottle on occasion.



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**A**n enormous “Thank You!” to the absolutely amazing people who made all of this possible. It is only as a result of your support, patience, and encouragement that we were able to bring this project to life. You are the true Champions of Aetaltis.

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