

*“When the two moons converge,
The high one, beguiled by those of the blood, will
read the words of the ancient text.
The seals will weaken and the bound ones will
escape their prison.
The lord of the city of two names will seek their
allegiance.
Verily, they will teach him the path of shadows,
He will open the doorway between worlds and
usher in an age of darkness...”*

-The Talmosan Revelations



THE SURVIVORS GUIDE TO THE AGE OF BLOOD

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The ravaged world we find ourselves living in is vast, stretching some five thousand leagues from east to west, and half that distance from north to south. The migration out of the cradle of life at the beginning of the Age of Steel saw many of these lands populated by the various peoples of Simarra. During this period, travel was a slow, dangerous ordeal.

During the Age of Plenty however, the great distances separating our cities and kingdoms became irrelevant. We used the stone gates to travel across the continent easily, swiftly, as if moving from a kitchen into a dining hall. We used the Taer' las Brennath crisscrossing our lands to send messages back and forth from city to city and even travel on ships designed to make use of the mana-streams.

Our world grew smaller.

We marveled at our understanding of mana shards, our apparent mastery of the mana wells. Never once did we pause to consider that the enrichment of our society would ultimately prove to be our greatest weakness; an unforeseen chink in our armor that abominations from another world would exploit to gain near- total dominance over Simarra. Our naivety has cost us dearly, darkening our world once again, severely hampering our ability to unite against this common foe.

The keza-drak control all major stone gates on Simarra. Despite our most valiant efforts to retake some of the major gates, we have only managed to gain control over lesser gates. These lesser portals facilitate limited travel, usually to remote locations and never covering long distances. Exactly how many of these lesser gates exist is not known, but the more we find and control, the more options we have.

As it is, travel from region to region is a dangerous undertaking, fraught with all manner of perils. As mentioned before, our dependence on the stone gates worked against us in more ways than one. People who have spent most of their lives traveling from one part of the world to another by simply stepping through a portal suddenly need to familiarize themselves with the particulars of overland navigation. They have to deal with the elements, have to learn to hunt and survive, and those are just mundane concerns which surface when traveling in this terrible new world.

Our enemies hunt us incessantly. The keza-drak and Sundaari are a pestilence upon the people of Simarra. Those of us who aren't slain are taken as prisoners slaves to serve or be sacrificed to dark gods - if they're lucky.

Some are rumored to be twisted, mutated into something else. Brigands and tyrants are also a plague upon the once-free lands of Simarra, carving new kingdoms out of the ashes of war.

Indeed, these degenerate oppressors use the apocalypse to gain lands and territory, lording over the meek, providing brutal protection in exchange for complete subservience. For those of us who risk the journey from freehold to freehold, having to trespass upon the domains of these petty tyrants is nearly as dangerous as traveling through the regions controlled by the keza-drak.

Such is life in the Age of Blood.

—Elohan Salaistriem



A WORLD RAVAGED BY YEARS OF WAR

Welcome to the land of Simarra. The world you are about to discover is filled with great peril. A race of beings from another world have come to subjugate the once-peaceful inhabitants of Simarra, driving them into scattered pockets of civilization who hold onto a tenuous thread of hope that one day they might reclaim their world, throwing back the darkness, bringing the light of peace to those who survive.

Fell beasts roam the lands once again, coming out of the desolate places of the world to prey on the already beleaguered survivors of this war-torn age. Corruption and favoritism plagues the free people of Simarra, driving yet another wedge into efforts of Simarrans to unite against the darkness, which sweeps across the land.

Yet, in spite of all the madness, the horrors and desolation, hope still remains.

A WORLD OF ADVENTURE

The Age of blood plunged Simarra into a darkness lasting nearly a decade. Amidst the backdrop of war, valiant heroes set out to re-discover the world around them. Brave men and women of all goodly races on Simarra come out of the darkness to fight against those who would enslave them. Narmrothan horse lords patrol the Trachan Steppes, holding back the advance of the keza-drak horde their unparalleled mastery of horsemanship allowing these bold men and women to conduct guerrilla-warfare campaigns against the slower armies of their enemies.

The enigmatic shodonai plague the keza-drak in the southern regions of Simarra, striking at vital supply lines while free companies such as the Skull Hammer Squadron roam the land, taking the fight directly to the keza-drak, engaging them wherever they are found.

Many adventurers hazard wild places of the world, seeking new havens for the countless refugees of the war. Others sift through the wreck and ruins, searching for lost ascendant technologies, which may turn the tide against the forces of darkness. Insurgents and spies strike deep into the heart of Agärazôn's empire, mounting terrorist attacks, freeing slaves, their efforts to destabilize the keza-drakian chain of command playing a vital role in the war for Simarra.

A WORLD ABUNDANT WITH MANA A WORLD NEARLY CORRUPTED BEYOND REPAIR

Mana is both a vibrant, flowing force of energy, which permeates the world, infusing every living thing with the spark of life, and a corrupting bane on those who seek to master its mysteries.

A residue of the primal forces used to create Simarra remains ingrained upon the world as a dynamic force, capable of being shaped and molded as the shaper desires. This substance is known as Mana. Indeed, even in these dark times, there is mana and those brave souls who wield it, standing as living reminders of how the world was created. To the devout, these people remain the most visible evidence that the Gods have not yet forsaken the world. At the same time however, they are stark examples of what happens when someone attempts to channel too much of Enâra's cursed life force.

- A treatise on Mana, by Elohan Salaistrien

Mana manifests in a number of different forms on Simarra, from mighty powers wielded by the wizards of the Arcanus League, to mana wells of pure energy located at junctions of Taer' las Brennath. Mana shards act as enhancements for magical energy, oftentimes amplifying the ability of adepts who use them while casting spells.

aviki are versed in the craft of learning to control enigmatic ascendant technology which is borne of the manipulation of mana shards. Spirit binders and bone shamans fuel their powers by summoning and binding the dead into fetishes.

Those who wield mana are both respected and feared for their potent ability and the knowledge it takes to manipulate it. The adepts of Simarra are truly brave heroes, exposing themselves to attack from all manner of vile horrors just by casting a single spell, as Enâra's madness has begun to taint the very essence of the world, a final curse on the people of Simarra in a time when all hope is fading.

Sundaari blood magi walk the land once more, ignoring old laws forbidding the use of their treacherous magicks that use blood as a source of power. Tainted magi embrace the horrific seepage from the threshold realm, and in so doing, become unholy vessels of Enâra's madness.

A WORLD LITTERED WITH CAST IRON PHANTOMS OF A GOLDEN AGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Simarra is a world in which technology and mana share an enigmatic co-existence. Adventurers roam the world seeking to find and master the enigmatic legacy of their predecessors, the Order of the Avikus, who created ascendant technology, the likes of which can be found almost anywhere in the known world.

Privateers sail the treacherous waters of the black coast, raiding keza-drak ports and attacking ships at sea with explosive black powder weaponry made from knowledge gained from clan Volagar during the

Age of Steel. Magi also travel the lands of Simarra as the remnants of the Arcanus League seeks to destroy the (they believe) dangerous ascendant technology before its secrets are unleashed upon an already ravaged world.

A WORLD OF MYSTERY

The blood throne setting is a vast, largely unexplored world, the primary continent stretching some five thousand miles from East to West, and another two thousand miles from North to South.

A number of large islands lay off the coastlines though most found predominantly in the southern waters known as the Sea of Storms, a massive chain of islands found to the Southwest of Simarra. Many mysteries surround these islands. Rumors say that the Sundaari built temples there during their banishment from Simarra during the Age of Plenty and still practice their dark rites deep within the jungles of the nameless land.

Planar travel plays a major role in the history of the Blood Throne campaign setting, providing an excellent backdrop for numerous stories. With the Dead Lands, the madness-tainted Threshold Realm, and the Great Rift (which leads to the home world of the keza-drak) just waiting to for exploration, this book provides narrators with every tool necessary to extend campaigns beyond the comparatively tame boundaries of Simarra.

It is written that during the Age of Steel, there was a bleak period of time when mana was thought to have abandoned the world. During these uncertain times the people of Simarra erected great aqueducts, lavish bathing houses, and other antediluvian constructs. What were these strange amalgamations of metal, gears, cords and wire used for?

Few of us living in these grim days know for sure.

They say that the Trade Lords knew, once upon a time, but where those enigmatic folk might have disappeared to... This is also a mystery. "Find the Trade Lords, and you'll have your answer," people say, but I am not sure I believe them. I think the key to unlocking the secrets of the "ascendant technology" lies hidden within the devices themselves, and, coiled around that mystery, rests the truth of what the future holds for Simarra.

-Elohan Salaistriem

THE CREATION MYTH

The following story has been told and re-told over the ages, and is commonly accepted as what really happened when Simarra was created.

The new world hung there in the void, a featureless mass of primordial ooze and pure, white-hot mana. While the fire of creation raged, Kel-Zedon ("The Shaper," as he is known to mortals) stepped forward and cupped the mass into his hands, molding and forming a globe. He took three smaller orbs and hung them in the void around Simarra, giving those creatures that would inhabit the world two moons to light their way during the night, and a blazing hot sun to warm them during the day. As Simarra began to cool, The Shaper fashioned mountains, valleys, great canyons, vast plains and lofty plateaus onto the face of this newly formed mana-earth.

Gimbureth wept at the sight of the rugged beauty that Kel-Zedon had created, her tears forming rivers, lakes and vast oceans. Her twin Iragreth drew a cut in her breast and poured her heart's blood upon the lands of Simarra. Everywhere her blood fell, trees, grass and all manner of plant life sprang into being. Vathrim looked upon the face of Simarra and whispered softly. The sound of his voice gathered force and became the four winds, blowing across the world.

Uzgora, the daughter of mystery created the mists and secret places of the world, traced her fingers across the face of Simarra, lacing the world with Taer' las Brennath and the potent Sathaen Stones. Torrodoth fashioned the molds of the elder races and all living creatures, and lastly, Enâra took some essence from each of the gods and sprinkled it across the globe. As she did so, the molds that Torrodoth had constructed came to life, and the races of Simarra were born.

LEXICON

The Blood Throne setting has its own unique terminology. The following section lists a number of terms you will encounter when reading this book. Some are place-names, others proper names of individuals or historical periods. Each has a short description to help you familiarize yourself with this world and the people who inhabit it.

Aberrant Gods (Ascendant gods): Aberrant gods are lesser beings created by some of the elder gods during the Primordial Age. The aberrant gods went on to create their own races, including orcs and gnomes. It is unknown how many aberrant gods exist. Even in the present Age of Blood, there are rumors of new aberrant gods making themselves known to the people of Simarra.

Age of Blood: Present-day. Marked by the betrayal of Agärazôn and the coming of the keza-drak, the Age of Blood began when the Betrayer opened the stone gates and plunged the world into darkness.

Age of Plenty: The longest age of Simarra. A time of peace matched only by the bliss, that was the Primordial Age. Many great developments happened during this time.

Age of Steel: The end of innocence and immortality for the elder races.

A great period of strife and war lasting nearly a thousand years, the beginning of the Age of Steel marks the exodus of the people of Simarra from the Cradle of Life. The elder races begin to mingle with aberrant races and for the first time there was bloodshed on Simarra.

Agärazôn (The Great Betrayer): An othrännän, Agärazôn is directly responsible for the opening of the Stone Gates and the resulting invasion of the keza-drak. He has set himself up as the overlord of Simarra, ruling from his seat on the Blood Throne in the wicked city of Thel-Kaza.

Ailindra Ungoril: A Sundaari high priestess of the evil god Thûrak. Ailindra taught Agärazôn blood magic and the ways of the Zôrùn-Ahmrê (Brethren of The Flesh).

Anadriendra Udalanarae: (The Crone of the Fell Marshes) Anadriendra Udalanarae is an ancient elven witch of unspeakable power. Nearly as old as Simarra itself, Anadriendra founded the first of the old covens and is rumored to have been the first person to use mana shards (though history teaches it was Thengrin Tarelion who discovered mana shards). In an act of vengeance, Anadriendra transformed the once-fertile nation of Talmosa into a vast swampland and is rumored to live somewhere in the marshes to this day. Her crones delivered the Talmosan Revelations to the city of Tadar-kesh in the 333rd year of plenty.

Ardrennen Falls: A free hold on the edge of the wild lands. One of the last remaining sanctuaries in Simarra for refugees of the war, Ardrennen falls is a city of roughly 400,000 people. It sits on the eastern side of the keza-drak mountain range around a waterfall of the same name, which plunges some 10,000 feet into a mysterious region commonly known as the "Wild Lands."

Ascendant Technology: Enigmatic technology; a fusion of mana shards and technology to create weapons and devices capable of a wide range of effects. Some pieces of ascendant technology include water purifiers, flying machines, pulse lances, war gloves and giant battle drones called

O'rak-dra. Ascendant technology was born of a need to find a way to combat dragons during the Hunting Times, a period during the Age of Steel when the great serpents were brought to near-extinction.

Asha-Tor (The Summerland, Heaven, The First Home): According to myth, the Asha-Tor is a dimensional realm created by the elder goddess Enâra at the dawn of time. Her priests (labeled heretics by the arrogant Arcanus League) preach that Enâra created the Asha-Tor as a place of retreat from the vastness of the void as well as a home for the Elder Gods who were born when she split herself into seven separate entities. Later, Enâra decreed that all souls would come to the Asha-Tor to rest from their toils on Simarra.



aviki: The pluralization of avikus (See below).

avikus: A mana smith; one who uses mana shards and is capable of creating ascendant technology. An avikus is an adept who is capable of tapping the latent energy of a mana shard in order to fuel powers or create devices powered by mana shards. Most aviki belong to an organization known as the Order of The avikus.

Azruun Badlands: A dangerous, blighted region deep within the Vaskraall Wastes reputed to be the ancestral home of the shodonai.

Blood Throne: The Blood Throne is Agärazôn's seat of power in the wicked city of Thel-Kaza. Forged of blood, steel and bone, many say the throne is sentient and requires daily sacrifices to sate its thirst for blood.

Blood Wars: A period in time during the early years of the Age of Steel when a sect of Volsparan elves were persecuted for wielding vile magicks that corrupted the lands. These renegade elves would later be known as blight elves.

Cradle of Life: Devastated by years of war, the cradle of life was once the home of all the elder races of Simarra. All creatures – even the gods themselves – lived in the cradle of life during the primordial age. When the primordial age ended and the Age of Steel began, the elder races began to migrate out of this region, eventually traveling to all areas of the world, forming the myriad cultures which exist today.

Daelians: Humans and elves who live in the vast Daelian wood, a region of Simarra just south of the Cradle of Life. Most Daelians are scholars who use memory shards (A type of mana shard) to store historical records. The memory vaults of the Daelian scholars are extensive and purported to hold the knowledge of every event in the history of Simarra.

Dassurri Basin: A fertile region of Simarra.

Droghedia: A volcanic peninsula, home to a race of fire-dwarves known as clan Volagar. The dangerous blasted region is one of the last holdouts for those who still oppose the keza-drak.

Drogon Felslayer: An orc warlord who led a revolt against Battlemaster Ghúchok "Seven tongues," the leader of the Saran-Ghori orcs. Drogon Felslayer formed a new orc nation – the Morash-Ghóran – and swore fealty to Agärazôn and the keza-drak.

Dundran'Kal: An othrännän advisor to the Saran-Ghori orcs.

Durrigan Flameheart: Durrigan Flameheart is the ancient thane of clan Volagar and founder of Gündûm-Zog, the ancestral homeland of Clan Volagar.

Elder Gods: The first gods; creators of the elder races. Their names are Enâra, Thûrak, Iragreth, Gimbureth, Kel-Zedon, Torrodoth, Vathrim and Uzgora.

Elohan Salaistriën: A Volsparan elf and scholar who has taken it upon himself to chronicle the events of the Age of Blood.

Enâra: (The First Mother, The Fallen Goddess, The Mad Goddess): The first god-form and creator of all others. Enâra is a tortured shell of her former glory, imprisoned in the nefarious Threshold Realm by the elder gods at the end of the Age of Steel in retribution for betraying them. Exposure to the chaos and taint of that plane has driven her insane.

Galburak: An aberrant god of flame. Galburak is the patron deity of fire-dwarves.

Ghaskrii: Winged reptilian creatures that inhabit the floating landmasses of Simarra. They ride the air currents, attacking land dwellers wherever they find them.

Ghúchok Seven-Tongues: The leader of the Saran-Ghori orcs.

Gimbureth: One of the elder gods. Gimbureth reveres nature in all its forms.

Gündûm-Zog: The ancestral home of clan Volagar. The city of Gündûm-Zog lies in a secret location deep in the world.

Hadrannath: Hills that ring the cradle of life. Here the Primordial Age, were built many temples dedicated to the elder gods. The keza-drak destroyed most of these temples when they invaded.

Iragreth: Elder Goddess. She reveres both nature and love. Iragreth is the Twin of Gimbureth.

Japira Xutlu: Ancient ruler of Tadar-kesh. Japira rejected the Talmosan Revelations and the serpent goddess Zashtazzra killed her for her blasphemy.

Kapurra Beast: Giant lizards with great leaping power. The shodonai domesticated them using them as beasts of burden. shodon warriors ride them in battle.

Kel-Zedon (The Maker): An elder god, Kel-Zedon is the patron deity of all engineers and artisans. Legend says he molded the world with his hands during the creation of Simarra.

keza-drak (The Great Horde): keza-drak are hideous beings who come from another dimension. They are towering monstrosities, often measuring over 7 ft. tall and weighing well over 300 lb. Their bodies are covered in tough, chitinous protrusions and they have slightly elongated heads, emphasizing a sloping forehead and their cavernous mouth with razor sharp teeth. Despite their appearance, the keza-drak are master tacticians, bred for war and conquest by their god, Urkog-Drall. The dark god created the keza-drak to further his own ambitions regarding the utter conquest of all things, mortal and immortal alike.

King Bread: The ruler of Thelstaad Keep and head of the Storm Brigade. King Bread is a noble man who commands a force of 5000 men. These valiant men

have been pushed out of the fallen Thelstaad keep and have been forced to take refuge in Racktharen Hold.

Kiv'Larast: A legendary sanctuary for dragons, rumored to exist somewhere deep within the earth. Legend says they created Kiv'Larast to escape persecution by the elder races during the hunting times. Others claim that Kiv'Larast is also a vast trove of relics including the most powerful pieces of ascendant technology.

Korduc Barrens: The Korduc Barrens is a blasted region north of the cradle of life. Many rebellious factions of keza-drak have formed their own Black Kingdoms in this war-ravaged wasteland and constantly war against each other and anyone else they deem as a threat.

Kotarrans: Once self-styled protectors of the cradle of life, these half-giants were originally giants but were cursed by the elder god Vathrim for their arrogance. Vathrim reduced the once-conceited giants to half their size, decreeing that, until they learned humility and redeemed themselves, they would remain a shell of their former might.

Mana: Mystical energy often speculated to be the lifeblood of Simarra. Adepts use it when harnessing their powers. Aviki harness it in mana shards.

Mana Shards: Sometimes referred to as mana stones, mana shards are physical manifestations of mana and are primarily found near Taer' las Brennath nexuses and in other areas of high ley line activity such as henges. Mana shards contain latent power that can be harnessed and used as a source of energy that can fuel ascendant technology or even boost adept powers.

Megath-Tor: The first city of the elder races, created during the Primordial Age. Considered the most holy place in the world Megath-Tor, it was the focal point of countless wars throughout the ages. Most recently sacked again by the keza-drak at the end of the Age of Plenty, rebuilt and renamed Thel-Kaza, the city of the Blood Throne.

Moran-gûr: Capital city of the Shield Wall dwarves. With no communication received from Moran-gûr since the keza-drak invaded and is it rumored to be under siege.

morargrim: Demonic servants of the evil god Thûrak. morargrim are adepts capable of immense power, but their true weapon is the ability to shift into any form, making them supreme spies. The morargrim have played humanity against each other since their creation during the age of steel. They caused the hunting times and sparked the ascendant wars.

Morash-Ghóran: A tribe of orcs who have aligned with Agärazôn and the keza-drak. Drogon Felslayer leads them.

Naeth-Kügraz: A keza-drak held seaport on the Gulf of Rana where many slaves change hands.

Naeth-Kügraz is the second largest source of keza-drakian power on Western Simarra, dwarfed only by Thel-Kaza.

Narballa Henge: The Narballa henge is the second largest known nexus of Taer' las Brennath on Simarra. It is the site where Agärazôn betrayed his fellow God Spawn and proclaimed his loyalty to Thûrak. The place is now a ruin supposedly inhabited by vile beasts that have come out of the Threshold Realm.

Narmrothans: Narmrothans are nomadic horse clans who roam the Trachan steppes fighting the keza-drak wherever they find them.

nekarim: The nekarim are mysterious beings, revered by the shodonai. Some say they are gods, but none outside the shodonai have ever actually seen one of the nekarim, and the shodonai are not forthcoming with information regarding this subject.

Numarath: A broken haunted land in eastern Simarra once the homeland of the Narmrothans, said to have been ravaged by spirits and undead from the dead lands. The keza-drak avoid it like the plague, and none who have entered that realm have ever been seen again.

O'rak-dra: Great and terrible machines of war that are powered by ascendant technology, used to fight dragons during the hunting times. None exist today, though some claim that there are hidden schematics, secreted away from the general public, even from the order of the avikus. Using these schematics one could rebuild the dreaded o'rak-dra for use against the keza-drak. Agärazôn also seeks them out.

Order of the avikus: A society founded to teach people how to use mana shards and ascendant technology.

othrännän (God Spawn): othrännän are the children of Enâra, created at the end of the Age of Steel to serve the elder races as advisors. Blessed with uncommonly long life, many of the othrännän lived to see the end of the Age of Plenty only to fall by Agärazôn's hand.

There are rumors that some escaped the massacre at the Narballa Henge and secretly work to unite the people of Simarra during these dark times.

Primordial Age: Arguably, the longest age in history, but unproven due to lack of records, this was the time when the gods lived on Simarra and the elder races were immortal. The loss of immortality for the people and the diminishing of the gods from Simarra marked the end of the Primordial age.

Sarangak Forest: A wicked place in Eastern Simarra, the Sarangak forest is home to blight elves who twist and corrupt all they touch.

Saran-Ghori: A tribe of orcs allied with Narmrothan horse clans in an effort to fight back the keza-drak, led by Ghûchok Seven Tongues.

Sargolia: A remote nation in Eastern Simarra

isolated from the rest of the world by a mountain range known as the Sargolian Wall. Rumors tell that the keza-drak overran Sargolia within the first chaotic days of the invasion. Now it is a blighted region, hotly contested by jihran bear men and sargolian insurgents.

Sathaen Stones: Sathaen Stones are massive obelisks that mark the presence of Taer' las Brennath. They comprise the great henges dotting Simarra (such as the Narballa Henge and Sedrin Henge) and were used in the construction of the stone gates during the Primordial Age.

Sedrin Henge: The largest known Henge on Simarra, the Sedrin Henge is located in Megath-Tor (now known as Thel-Kaza). This gate is where the vast majority of keza-drak invaded at the end of the Age of Plenty.

Sedrin Oracle: A shodonai priestess who was, until recently, a slave in Thel-Kaza. She received her visions at the Sedrin Henge, and has since escaped to an undisclosed location. She has sent out a call to heroes, asking them to seek her out and hear her most recent vision.

Seguire Gnomes: Seguire gnomes are craftsmen and gadgeteers without peer. Their cunning and ingenuity have led to the development many strange wondrous devices, expanding on developments the Shield Wall dwarves have made in steam-powered technology. The seguire have also made headway in the use of enigmatic Ascendant Technology. Most still live in the wild lands, though over the centuries (and especially recently) a great number have ventured into the world.

Segurion: The aberrant god of the seguire gnomes.

Shek-Tar Gnomes: The shek-tar gnomes are domineering cannibals, known to keep slaves for both work and consumption, mostly wyldlings, though sometimes seguire gnomes or humans. Skek-tar care little for nature and follow one of the aberrant gods, an un-named aberrant god of trickery and domination. They sacrifice to honor Shetek-garak -their god - building monuments in his glory.

shodonai: One of the most enigmatic cultures on Simarra, the shodon warlords rode out of the treacherous Vaskraall Wastes in the latter days of the Age of Plenty.

Calling themselves shodonai, these people, brought with them a number of oracles claiming the world was about to plunge into a terrible darkness, eclipsing all the horrors of the Age of Steel. shodonai are natural psychics who manifest their powers at puberty. These powers are marked by stones that grow out of their bodies in various places.

Simarra: The continent in which the Blood Throne game is set.

Stone Gates: Stone gates are portals which, when working normally, are used to travel instantaneously

from city to city. Their creation facilitated trade between all nations on the massive continent of Simarra including remote nations such as Sudeja, as stone gates are found everywhere.

However, at the dawn of the Age of Blood, Agärazôn used vile magicks to twist the function of the most powerful stone gates, fusing them open, keying all of them to facilitate travel to and from the Threshold Realm instead of connecting from city to city. This treachery allowed the keza-drak to invade all major cities in Simarra simultaneously. Many stone gates exist in the world. Not all of them have been found.

Sudeja: A remote nation in North-Eastern Simarra. Nothing has been heard from Sudeja since the invasion began over ten years ago.

Sundaari: Vile humans who venerate Thûrak and practice blood magic. The Sundaari are responsible for many atrocities that occurred during the Ascendant wars. They sacked Megath-Tor twice and subjugated Kotarrans to untold horrors including the creation of urrumäz - mutated half-giants.

Sundamar Peninsula: Homeland of the Sundaari.

Tadar-kesh: The capital city of Talmosa.

Taer' las Brennath (The Blood of the Mother Goddess): Lines of mystical energy which crisscross the world, intermittently connecting at nexus points, often referred to as mana wells.

Talmosa: A swamp-plagued nation in the southern-central region of Simarra. Rumors say that the Talmosans (and their goddess Zashtazzra) have struck an alliance with Agärazôn.

Tarud Mesa: A rugged region north of the Trachan Steppes.

Tazâri-Chock: Keza-drakian generals.

Theladrin Order: The secret council of othrännän, rumored to have disbanded. During the Age of Plenty, the Theladrin Order would meet regularly to discuss the happenings throughout Simarra in order to avert any disasters. The betrayal of Agärazôn was their biggest failure.

Thel-Kaza (The Fallen City, Megath-Tor, The City of the Blood Throne): Located in the now-devastated Cradle of Life, Thel-Kaza is the newest incarnation of Megath-Tor, having been razed and then rebuilt into a byzantine metropolis of degradation and depravity. It is the seat of power for Agärazôn's growing empire and the largest concentration of keza-drak in the world.

Thelstaad Keep: A Stronghold on the western side of the Shield Wall Mountains, Thelstaad keep was once a base of operations for King Breaod and the Storm Brigade, sacked recently by the keza-drak.

Thengrin Talerion: Founder of the Order of the avikus. Thengrin discovered Taer' las Brennath and tapped the first mana wells.

Throrongrar: The dwarven name for the Shield Wall dwarves.

Threshold Realm: A wicked extra-planar dimension said to connect to other dimensions, possibly all known planes of existence. The keza-drak came through the Threshold Realm to invade Simarra with the aid of Agärazôn. Enâra is imprisoned in this realm and her madness corrupts it.

Thugash-Tor(The underworld, Hell, The Abyss): The Thugash-Tor was created by Thûrak when he was cast out of the Asha-Tor by Enâra. It is a place of unending torment.

Thûrak (The Fallen one, Lord of Darkness, Ruler of the World): One of the elder gods, Thûrak was cast out of the Asha-Tor when it became apparent that he strove to undo everything Enâra and the others had created. In turn, Thûrak, created the Thugash-Tor and the dreaded morargrim. His hand guided the fall of Agärazôn and rewarded his betrayal.

Thusparri: (Wind Lords) The Thusparri are tall, stocky elves who have taken to living high in the mountains where they can be close to the great eagles, hawks and griffons they ride. Thusparri have been driven from many of their lofty mountain aeries by the keza-drak, but still fight valiantly against the encroaching darkness.

Togrun Ael-Shodai: Leader of the shodonai, Togrun was slain during the invasion. Togrun's death sparked a schism in the shodonai, prompting many people to travel north, seeking vengeance for his death.

Torrodoth: Elder god and patron deity of the Shield Wall dwarves.

Trachan Steppes: A rugged region in Western Simarra and home to the Narmrothan horse clans.

Ubrathil Keep: A dwarven stronghold 200 miles north of Ardrennen Falls. Ubrathil keep was recently sacked by the keza-drak, and is thought to be a base of operations for excursions into the deep earth.

Ungchuk Goblin: Wicked subterranean creatures who feast on the flesh of humanoids. The ungchuk have a strong hatred for fire dwarves and hunt clan Volagar incessantly.

Urkog-Drall: (Destroyer of Worlds) The god of the keza-drak.

Urrumâz Half-Giant: Mutated half-giants who serve as shock troops in Agärazôn's army.

Uzgora: Elder goddess of magic and mysteries.

Vaskraall Wastes: A desert in Southern Simarra.

Vathrim: Elder god. Vathrim created the giants of Simarra because he wanted a warrior race to protect all others and cursed the kotarrans for their arrogance. Vathrim is a noble god who reveres strength and honor.

Volagar: Fire dwarves who were cast out of Moran-

gûr for heretical devotion to Galburak. Fire dwarves have a number of fire-related abilities and are the creators of black powder weapons, which are common in Simarra. They live in volcanic citadels in the Ash Mountains of Droghedia.

Volspar: Volspar are a culture of elves found in Eastern Simarra. They tend to live on the ground, deep in forests, or in large cities.

Volugrash: A renegade sect of dwarves who broke from clan Volagar over religious differences, claiming intolerance and promising vengeance.

Wild Lands: A vast stretch of territory some 2000 miles wide and 10,000 feet below sea level. The wild lands are largely unexplored. Expeditions into the region during the Age of Steel failed driving settlers out of the region. The wild lands are the homeland of the seguire and shek-Tar gnomes.

Zashtazzra: An aberrant goddess, the serpent goddess is the patron deity is all Talmosans and is the one credited with the creation of the lizard folk who dominate the region.

Zôrùn-Ahmrê: (The brethren of the Flesh) Zôrùn-Ahmrê are Sundaari interrogators and hunters. These adepts are well versed in torture and interrogation. They use blood magic to hunt down runaway slaves or assassinate enemies of Agärazôn.

Zukuk-Chock: keza-drakian battle priests, fragmented due to a schism in the sect. Most still follow the god of the keza-drak: Urkog-Drall, while others have shifted allegiance to the elder god Thûrak. This infighting has spread throughout the keza-drak, precipitating a civil war, which has effectively halted the conquest of Simarra.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE AGE OF BLOOD

The following section takes a brief look at the events and people that have shaped the current situation that dominates the Blood Throne setting.

THE COMING OF THE KEZA DRAK

They came in droves; countless multitudes of keza-drakian warriors flooded through the great gate into the dreaded Threshold Realm to swear fealty to Agärazôn. The fires of their camps lit up the region as far as the eye could see, illuminating the black void with an orange glow. The keza-drak used the Threshold realm as a staging ground for their armies. Agärazôn ordered massive citadels built within the Threshold Realm to protect not only the great gate, but also all the other portals into Simarra from the tainted horrors that roamed the nether-wastes. Warlords developed a battle plan while their forces massed. They would maneuver invasion forces to each of the great gates and simultaneously fall upon the unsuspecting people of Simarra.

The morargrim constructed great magical beacons - waypoints to guide the keza-drak through the endless night and swirling mists of the Threshold Realm to the various portals dotting the sub-plane. After what seemed to Agärazôn an eternity, all was ready.



THEL-KAZA: CITY OF THE BLOOD THRONE

Since the beginning, there was Megath-Tor, "The First City", once home of the gods and a bastion of peace and tranquility for all. Megath-Tor had withstood the chaos of the Age of Steel and restored to its former glory during the Age of Plenty. Nevertheless, as the Age of Blood dawned and war exploded in every corner of the known world, Megath-Tor finally fell under the weight of over half a million invaders from another world.

Under the guidance of Agärazôn, the keza-drak sacked the city, tearing down the great icons of a fallen people and replacing them with idols of their own making. Megath-Tor was rebuilt into a sprawling, byzantine metropolis of wickedness and degradation, forever hence to be known to the people of the world as Thel-Kaza; the living monument to both Thûrak and the god of the keza-drak: Urkog-Drall.

Agärazôn built his palace on the remains of the ancient abbey next to the Sedrin Henge. In the great hall at the center of the immense complex, the lord of Simarra constructed an altar to Thûrak; an ornate throne composed of steel, bone and flesh. Thûrak himself blessed the Throne, imbuing it with sentience and an insatiable thirst for blood.

In a diabolic weeklong ritual involving the sacrifice of over a thousand innocents, Agärazôn proclaimed himself High Priest of Thûrak and sat on the Blood Throne. As he did, the artifact drained all the blood from Agärazôn's body and bestowed indescribable power upon the fallen othrännän. Agärazôn, the lord of the world, commander of the keza-drakian legions, chief of the Morargrim and the first true disciple of Thûrak, was reborn an avatar of Thûrak.

All across Simarra, wave after wave of keza-drakian legions rushed through the open gates to attack the oblivious people of the world.

City after city fell to the warlords and their battle-hardened armies. The people of Simarra fled into the wilderness to escape the great horde of alien fiends who slaughtered or enslaved all who stood in their way. Agärazôn himself led the attack on Megath-Tor. The city - already in the throes of conflict between the shodonai and the Arcanus League - fell to Agärazôn's legions within a fortnight, scattering what remained of the Order of the avikus and the Arcanus League to the winds.

All the shodonai who had come north from the Vaskraall wastes and survived the conflict with the Arcanus League perished in the fight against the keza-drakian horde. The mysterious people had come to Megath-Tor to defend the city of their ancestors in accordance with the Talmosan Revelations, believing it to be their destiny to either throw back the horde or die trying. Within six months, nearly every major surface city on the continent had fallen to the invading horde. Agärazôn proclaimed himself Lord of the World and renamed Megath-Tor, calling the city Thel-Kaza.

The Age of Blood had begun.

THE RETURN OF THE BLOOD LORDS

Therefore, after nearly a millennium of peace, the betrayal of Agärazôn plunged the world into a period of war and darkness greater than anything Simarrans had ever known. The self-styled lord of the world issued a call across the lands for all Sundaari to return to Thel-Kaza and rekindle the ancient sacrificial fires in accordance with Thûrak's divine will.

The offspring of the ancient Sundaari flocked to Thel-Kaza and began practicing the ancient rites in accordance with the old ways. The teachings of the vile aberrant goddess Mordureth - antediluvian secrets of dark sorcery and potent blood magic - passed on again to the would-be disciples of the sinister daughter of Thûrak. Sundaari blood priests erected temples in every conquered city, proclaiming to the subjugated masses that salvation could be theirs if the people willingly renounced the elder gods and took the blood mark of Thûrak.

It was either that, the priests said, or be thrown into bondage as slaves or sacrificed to the dark gods. While a surprising number of people chose death, a great many people of all races and creeds took the mark, willingly pledging fealty to Thûrak in exchange for a chance at life in the new world.

THE CONQUERING GOD

Agärazôn's treachery was not only a betrayal of the people of Simarra and the othrännän; It was also open rebellion against the elder gods themselves, for another divine being - Urkog-Drall; god of the keza-drak - crossed into the nether-regions of Simarra.

The god of the keza-drak bided his time as the invasion of Simarra began, concentrating the full force of his influence in the world towards his children as they conquered city after city. Of course, Urkog-Drall perceived the elder gods immediately upon entering the same dimension as they. The elder gods also became aware of his malign presence and knew Agärazôn and Thûrak had thrice betrayed them.

The elder gods massed to challenge Thûrak and this would-be usurper, only to be overthrown in defeat again and again. Each defeat made Urkog-Drall bolder in his pursuit of the elder gods. As his armies conquered in the world below, his power grew. Wholly defeated and concerned only with their survival, the elder gods fled the nether world to hide on war-torn Simarra.

THE DESTRUCTION OF KIV LARAST

As Agärazôn planned the conquest of Simarra, he knew that he would have to deal with the dragons of Kiv'Larast. The draconic tribes who had survived the Hunting times and flourished underground during the Age of Plenty held too much power to be allowed to take on major roles in the war. Moreover, they were the keepers of ascendant technology. If the people of Simarra gained access to the ancient vaults of ascendant technology, the balance could very well shift in favor of the people of Simarra. Agärazôn knew he could not allow that to take place.

Agärazôn gathered the morargrim together. To this point, Agärazôn's agents had been busy hunting down the remaining othrännän, gathering magical relics from the shattered Chantries across the world, and obtaining ancient tomes of knowledge. The time had come to deal with the potential threat of Kiv'Larast.

Agärazôn commanded the morargrim to take a force one hundred thousand strong consisting of elite keza-drak warriors and Sundaari blood magi down into the bowels of the earth and destroy or enslave the dragon tribes. He bade them destroy the homeland of the dragons, and bring as much ascendant technology as possible back to Thel-Kaza for use against the forces of light.

Following their dread lord's instructions, the morargrim led their army through the secret entrance and down into the deep earth. The way was difficult; for draconic seers had received visions of the coming conflict, and had bid their leaders prepare traps for

the invading hordes. In addition, there were other creatures besides dragons in the bowels of the earth, and they cared nothing for the wars of the surface much less the precious agenda of the morargrim.

Thousands died before they ever got within sight of the borders of Kiv'Larast. However, the morargrim kept coming, for Agärazôn would brook no failure. Death would be infinitely more preferable to the morargrim, were they to return with reports of anything less than complete success. Six months after they left the surface world, a force of forty thousand battle-weary warriors returned to Thel-Kaza with word of the campaign against Kiv'Larast.

The ancient home of the draconic tribes had been destroyed. Those dragons that had not died in the fighting either had fled deeper into the recesses of the underworld or been captured. As for the enigmatic ascendant technology, much of it was feared lost.

The dragons set cunning traps designed to collapse access to the vaults containing the most dangerous of the technology. The morargrim were able to recover a few relics that might be of use in the war, but thousands of lives had been lost trying to reclaim them, and with only marginal success. The morargrim remained confident that the forces of light - who by then had overcome their shell shock and had begun to forge an organized resistance - were not going to be able to recover anything else from the tomb that was Kiv'Larast.

The morargrim and Sundaari had encountered numerous dormant spells and incantations, presumably left by the dragons that fled the destruction of their homeland. Designed to bring doom upon any fool who disturbed them, these dangerous constructs littered the ruins, waiting for unwary fools to come and set them off. The morargrim remained convinced that, even if they did try, anyone going into that place would meet a gruesome fate.

RECENT EVENTS

The war for Simarra has raged for nearly a decade. Many changes have taken place during this dark period, all of which affect the free peoples of Simarra for good or ill. Indeed some of these events have had a drastic impact the forces of darkness and their ongoing struggle for domination of the continent.

THE SACK OF THELSTAAD KEEP

Once an enduring symbol of strength and stability, Thelstaad Keep was besieged by a force of ten thousand keza-drak for five bloody years. The siege ended with an overwhelming assault in which thousands of keza-drak died taking the keep.

Even more unsettling were the strange weapons they used to break the backs of the defenders.

Monstrous steel constructs functioning in a manner similar to catapults belched black smoke as they battered the mana shield protecting the keep with projectiles that exploded upon impact with the energy barrier that faithfully protected the keep and its defenders. Shock troopers wielding savage weapons pulsing with energy rushed to the mana shield, cutting through the barrier as if it were mundane steel. The barrage eventually overloaded the mana shields, bringing them down.

In the end, the majority of the ragged defenders pulled back into Spire-reach Pass to prepare for the advance of the keza-drak. Two-hundred brave heroes remained, facing their deaths in a valiant effort to stall the horde for as long as they could, buying time for their brethren to retreat into the narrow pass and join up with the Shield Wall dwarves in their mountain holds.

The sack of Thelstaad Keep was an ill omen of things to come for the people of Simarra, marking the beginning of a dark period that would see the keza-drak make use of technology stolen from previously conquered worlds in their quest to bring the ragged people of Simarra to heel. Yet, the ever-resourceful heroes of the world have found ways to use the technology of their enemy to their benefit. Brave (and some say, insane) scavengers and aviki creep into keza-drak encampments, stealing what they can of these new devices so that the forces of light might study them in hopes of finding ways to reverse-engineer the strange designs or develop new machines and ascendant technologies to counter the weapons of the horde.

THE DEFENSE OF SPIRE REACH PASS

The keza-drak had established a major strong point with the fall of Thelstaad Keep, but a larger task lay ahead of them; the journey through Spire-Reach Pass. The majority of the defenders of Thelstaad Keep pulled back into the pass to link up with the Thorongrar dwarves manning the numerous strongholds and outposts dotting the 250 mile stretch through the Shield Wall Mountains. As the Keza-Drak began their march through Spire-reach pass, they came under attack from all sides of the winding canyon as the defenders began the defense of the pass.

For nearly two thousand years, the great mountain citadels of the Thorongrar dwarves stood in defense of the pass to protect travelers making their way to Ardrennen falls and beyond. The dwarves knew every nook and cranny of these mountains, and they used that knowledge to wage guerrilla warfare against their enemy.

Dwarven sappers wreaked havoc on the horde, planting mines in their path, sending tons of rock down the mountains in treacherous landslides, anything to slow the progress of the hated invaders. Mountaineers rained tûrgash bombs down on the keza-drak from lofty outcroppings. Thusparri griffon riders constantly harried the enemy, dropping more bombs and heavy loads of rock upon the heads of the keza-drak. Before the keza-drak had crossed even a quarter of the distance through the pass, they had lost thousands of lives, victims of the fierce Thorongrar defense.

They just kept coming.

After weeks of enduring relentless attacks, the keza-drak slowed their advance and established base camps, using them as staging grounds for concentrated attacks on the formidable Thorongrar defenders. Their advance slowed, true, but rather than blindly rushing through the canyons, the keza-drak armies began a focused assault, spending necessary time taking out enemy fortresses one at a time, rooting out insurgents and healing their wounded. In this way, the keza-drak advance progressed at a steady rate. By the time authel yielded to the heat of valaen, the keza-drak had pushed nearly halfway through the pass. Just when the forces of light seemed about to break, something happened that nobody expected.

The keza-drak splintered into multiple factions and civil war erupted all across Simarra.

THE FORCES OF LIGHT

The initial invasion of the keza-drak, coupled with the wild rumors that Agärazôn had betrayed them all, and the return of the dreaded morargrim; those combined events very nearly broke the backs of the people of Simarra. Agärazôn and his minions hijacked the stone gates right from the very beginning, preventing easy travel away from the major cities of Simarra.

Forced to flee for their lives the people had to use methods that were more mundane. Consequently, the major roads were flooded with dispossessed masses, searching for shelter from the storm of war that raged all around them. During this time of turmoil –called the lost years by many, or simply the Age of Blood- a number of organizations have risen out of the ash and darkness to fight back against the might of the keza-drak.

The following factions are just a few of the groups that have come to play major roles in the Age of Blood.

THE SKULL HAMMER SQUADRON

Agärazôn's forces hit the once-noble half-giants of Kotarra extremely hard. keza-drak attacked

THE SURGE

For centuries the fallen goddess Enâra languished in her prison, wandering the corrupted, blighted Threshold Realm; a prisoner for her betrayal and bound to the very essence of the twisted realm.

As her madness became worse, Enâra subconsciously projected the phantoms of her tortured mind out into the threshold realm, where they became sentient creatures. Exposure to the tainted realm corrupted them further, twisting the maddening horrors into things capable of wreaking havoc upon all life.

When Agärazôn opened the gates, he inadvertently loosed these horrific fiends upon the people of Simarra. The longer the stone gates remained open and keyed to the threshold realm, the more of these creatures came through to plague the world, staining it with their presence. Then, the surge began.

It started with brief instances of exposure to the taint and tainted creatures that originated in the threshold realm. Teleportation spells and other similar means of arcane travel suddenly become risky for some as of yet unknown reason. People who attempted them sometimes became crazed lunatics or developed grisly mutations. Many people died horrible, painful deaths from the attempts, but the ones who lived... Well theirs was a far worse fate.

Arcanus magi everywhere started to become sick with each spell they cast. It was as if the training they had undergone in the days of their youth to remove the curse of being born with the ability to work magic – the headaches and sickness that had killed so many of them before they learned to master it and become full-fledged magi – had never happened. Indeed, mages everywhere across Simarra, regardless of their level of mastery in the ancient craft or particular specialization, had fallen prey to the surge of taint from the Threshold Realm.

them on multiple fronts, completely overrunning the fearsome warriors and their kin. Thousands of keza-drak flooded through three stone gates that

connected the largest cities of the Kotarrans – remote mountain holdings accessible only via steep, winding switchbacks leading deep into the highlands and valleys of Kotarra.

Agärazôn recognized the threat of Kotarra, being in such close proximity to Thel-Kaza. He could not afford to risk letting the half-giants sweep down out of Kotarra to engage the keza-drak inside the cradle of life. Indeed, Agärazôn was not satisfied until nearly all of the half-giants had been slain or enslaved and confined to the slave pits of Thel-Kaza. Females in particular were killed wherever they were found to be hiding. Not that many hid. Kotarran women are notorious for their ferocity in battle just like their male counterparts.

By the time the campaign of genocide had ended in Kotarra, the keza-drak were firmly in control of the mountain passes and valleys the half-giants had once called home, and it was estimated that barely twenty thousand of the Kotarrans had escaped. These proud warriors and magi turned their grief into rage however. Instead of hiding, they fought back, slaying the invaders wherever they found them.

A people without a homeland, many Kotarrans formed a collective of mercenary companies out of the chaos, selling their services to the highest bidders in order to finance their on-going war against the minions of Agärazôn. Known as the Skull-Hammer Squadron, they grew to be legends in their own time.

Renowned for their ferocity against the keza-drakian legions, the Skull-Hammer mercenary companies were largely responsible for the emergence of a resistance against Agärazôn's hordes. Their example gave people hope in those chaotic, bleak days. When the rest of the world fled before the might of the keza-drak, the heroic Skull-Hammer Squadron fought on.

THE SKAULD DRAGONS

The rugged volcanic peninsula of droghedia had long been the ancestral homeland to a race of dwarves known as the volagar. These mysterious folk had long kept to themselves. For most cultures of Simarra, the Age of Plenty was a time of expansion and trade, when great alliances were forged out of the chaos of the ascendant war. This was not so with the Volagar.

The fire dwarves of droghedia had played a vital role in the defeat of Thûrak's forces at the end of the Age of Steel. Their mothers and fathers had given the lives of their sons and daughters to the cause of peace on Simarra, just as did many others across the world. Yet, in the aftermath of the war, many people treated these honorable dwarves as if they were practitioners of vile sorceries, for they alone knew the secrets of making the black powder, called Tûrgash by the sages and

smiths of the clan.

Even their own distant kin – The Thorongrar dwarves of the Shield Wall Mountains – distanced themselves from these infidels. Gand Hammerfist, the great king of the Thorongrar, banished the volagar from the ancient city of Moran-Gûr, naming them traitors to the elder god Torrodoth for choosing to worship a new “ascendant” god; Galburak – the *Lord of Flame*. Nevertheless, clan Volagar refused to relent to such open hostility from the other cultures of Simarra.

They knew what cause they served. Their mighty warhammers, rifles and other weapons made with the Tûrgash powder had slain just as many of the minions of Thûrak as did the swords and axes of the other people who fought. If the people of Simarra could not, or would not see that, then so be it. The Volagar would survive on their own, with Galburak's blessings. The Volagar swore oaths of blood and flame to never again deal with those who did not first seek them out. For much of the Age of Plenty, things were thus.

When the keza-drak invaded the volcanic Droghedian peninsula, they were not prepared for the stout resistance of the Volagar, who had become masters at the craft of making weapons known as “gruushkáz”, or firearms in the common tongue. The dwarves harried the keza-drak at every turn, rarely fighting them in open warfare on the jagged obsidian wastes of the peninsula.

The Volagar attacked from outposts overlooking mountain passes. They ambushed the camps of



the invaders while they slept, making daring night raids on the backs of batúk-gecka – giant lizards the dwarves have domesticated and use as beasts of burden. When open war came, the keza-drak broke upon the walls of the dwarven volcanic citadels, victims of the heavy cannon and fiery blasts of magna and steam coming from the heart of the volcano itself. Unfortunately, for all their success against the mighty keza-drak, the stubborn chieftains of clan Volagar refused to commit their forces to the war beyond the borders of their homeland.

Centuries of relative seclusion from the rest of the world had hardened the resolve of the Volagar chieftains who had grown into adulthood learning the philosophies and teachings of the elders. The wise ones remembered well the days when their kind were persecuted and reviled by those who did not understand the ways of the Volagar. They had very little compassion for the suffering of the world.

Still, the fire of discovery and adventure burned within the hearts and minds of the younger generation of warriors and would-be heroes of clan Volagar. As the war raged on the mainland, refugees seeking solace from the storms of war braved the harsh, unforgiving lands of Droghedia in hopes that they might be able to survive the holocaust that had devoured their homes. As time passed, the younger members of clan Volagar encountered more and more of these exiles eking out a fragile existence in the wastes.

Those who wanted to help the dispossessed masses began to argue against the teachings of the elders and openly question the laws of the chieftains. A great many hotheaded youths left the volcanic citadels of their ancestors, determined to find their glory on the battlefield and bring respect to the Volagar in the eyes of the people they helped. Thus, the Skauld Dragoons were formed.

Ever since their inception, the Skauld Dragoons have been instrumental in developing and maintaining supply routes through the Ash Mountains of Droghedia. The myriad humanoid settlements cropped up since the war began have benefited greatly from the assistance of the Skauld Dragoons. The army's ranks have swelled to over fifty thousand strong, with a good many of the new recruits coming from the very communities they helped establish.

THE WIND LORDS OF THUSPARR

Often referred to as the Wind Lords of Thusparr, the people living in the rugged, mountainous region of central-western Simarra were forced to flee the Orellegron Aerie; the capital city of their homeland in the face of an all out invasion by the keza-drak.

The creatures came through the stone gate near the

THE ELARIAN CORSAIRS

The vile pirates who once terrorized the waters off the Black Coast of Vaskraall during the Age of Plenty benefited greatly from the use of Tûrgash weapons. At the dawn of the Age of Blood, they repaid the generosity of the Skauld Dragoons by turning from their wicked ways. The corsairs began focusing their efforts on fighting the naval forces of the keza-drak instead of plundering honest merchant ships. Their effectiveness when raiding keza-drakian outposts with heavy man-of-wars and attacking the sea-vessels of the invaders with their smaller, faster corvettes doubled through use of the explosive weapons of the Volagar.

When not engaged in attacks on keza-drakian outposts and sailing vessels, the Elarian Corsairs transport supplies and refugees to various freeholds along the coast and in the many islands on the seas. They also take people who are committed to the resistance to regions where they will be of best use.

capital and sacked Orellegron in a single night.

The majority of Orellegron's citizens fled the city on the backs of great eagles and dire hawks. Foot soldiers and mountain guides braved narrow passes as they guided stragglers out of the ancient city. They cut and burned bridges behind them to prevent any keza-drak from pursuing them deeper into the mist-shrouded Kaerlon Mountains. Thus, in one night, the mountain campaign against the Thusparri had temporarily ground to a halt as the keza-drak found themselves cutoff from the rest of the aeries of the mountain elves.

While the force commanders sent messengers back into the Threshold Realm to call for aid from the sky reavers, the enraged Thusparri immediately counter-attacked. Multitudes of Thusparri warriors flew in on their avian companions, determined to re-take their beloved city or die trying.

Many died on both sides as the battle for Orellegron raged on through the night. By dawn, thousands of Thusparri warriors lay scattered across the wreck of Orellegron, their bodies mingled with those of their beloved eagles and fallen keza-drak. In the end, the horde had been too powerful, too many for the valiant wind lords to defeat. Those who did survive had flown back to the other mountain aeries to mourn the loss of their comrades and prepare for the long war to come.

Ever since the fall of the Orellegron Aerie, the

Thusparri Wind Lords have become a force to be reckoned with. Not content to limit their activities to the war for their homeland, they sent detachments of war hawks and great eagles to bolster remaining pockets of resistance in the Western lands of Simarra. Because of the efforts of the Thusparri, they established additional freeholds on remote peaks throughout the mountains of Simarra in hopes of attracting as many survivors as possible.

THE SHODON WARLORDS

When word reached the shodonai who had stayed behind in the Azruun badlands that their leader - Togrun Ael-Shodai - had been slain and there was fighting in Megath-Tor, there were many who wanted to march north immediately and exact vengeance upon the vile wizards of the Arcanus League. Others argued that a new leader had to be chosen first in accordance with the ways of their people, or the people were forsaken and no longer whole.

They held a great assembly to determine the fate of the shodonai. Leaders from each of the tribes came forth and presented the views of the people to the remaining members of the circle of five - the highest order of the nekarim priesthood. In the end, the circle of five agreed that, until a new leader of the tribes was revealed, the shodonai were indeed forsaken, shattered like pieces of a broken glass. First, they must choose a leader. Only this new leader could determine the next course of action for the shodonai.

Over half of the tribal leaders stormed out of the council, determined to go north and do what they felt must be done to preserve the honor of their people. They meant to reclaim the ancient city of their ancestors and gain vengeance upon the people of Megath-Tor for killing their brothers and sisters. Twelve different tribes numbering over ten thousand people left their kinsmen in the Azruun badlands and traveled north, only to find that the keza-drak had sacked the city and driven off or enslaved its inhabitants.

The leaders of the twelve tribes decided that it would be futile to engage the "demons from beyond the stone gates" in open warfare. They would fight these keza-drak, but on their terms. The leaders proclaimed themselves warlords and divided the tribes into a myriad of groups of warriors capable of traveling fast and light. They would nibble at the heels of the great beast until they had brought it down.

Those who stayed behind in the Azruun badlands remain as mysterious as ever. Most live in the winding canyons and in long forgotten caves, guarding the ancient secrets of the nekarim, the enigmatic gods of the shodonai. Every now and again, war

bands of shodonai can be seen attacking keza-drak supply caravans as they move from oasis to oasis. Immediately after the battle is over, the shodonai loot the caravans and then disappear back into the shifting sands of the Vaskraall wastes.





CHAPTER ONE: THE FREE PEOPLE OF SIMARRA

The sons and daughters of Simarra are as culturally diverse and enigmatic as the world they inhabit. Most elves, dwarves, humans, and half giants have lived in Simarra ever since the forging of the world, known collectively as the elder races of Simarra. Other races were born later, when the ascendant gods stole down into the world to hide from Enâra.

These ascendant (some say aberrant) races – lionmen, gnomes, goblins, hags, orcs, ogres, mountain trolls and a multitude of others – were created by the ascendant gods during their time in isolation from the elder gods. The ascendant gods wanted to create beings who would revere them just as the elder races worshipped their creators. Scholars contend the creation of the ascendant races was a ploy to establish some sort of legitimacy on the part of the ascendant gods, who have always been regarded as inferior beings in the eyes of the elder gods who created them.

Some of the ascendant races have found ways to live with their distant cousins - the elder races. Gnomes, orcs and, to a lesser extent, the hags and serpent kin of Talmosa have found a place in the world around them, but the majority of the ascendant races have felt nothing but scorn throughout the history of their existence. Indeed, many would have it no other way. The dreaded ashoi-notkah, cannibal shek-tar gnomes, wicked ungchuk goblins, gretchclaw and ghaskrii raiders in particular have been a plague upon peace-loving people ever since their creation.

-Elohan Salaistrien

This chapter takes an expanded look at the races of the Blood Throne campaign setting, providing extended information on races introduced in Green Ronin's True20 Worlds of Adventure© book in addition to new races and subraces that inhabit this war-ravaged world.

VIRTUES AND VICES

Every character begins play with at least one virtue and one vice. They may begin with more depending on their background, but never less. Virtue and vice combine together to create the character's Nature. Below are some virtues and vices that are especially suitable for a Blood Throne campaign.

VIRTUES

The following are suitable virtues for Blood Throne heroes.

Calm

A Calm character retains his composure in nearly any situation. He does not become overly excited by anything.

Decisive

A Decisive character does not hesitate in making firm decisions. He does not second-guess himself.

Independent

An Independent character looks out for number one. He does not rely on others and prefers to walk his own path.

Just

A Just character is guided by truth, reason, justice, and fairness. Rare qualities in the Age of Blood.

Merciful

A Merciful character allows his enemies to live to fight another day; knowing they may return to plague him again. Sometimes though showing mercy is the only way to turn an enemy into a friend.

Optimistic

An Optimistic character sees and expects the best in all situations.

Resourceful

A Resourceful character is able to deal quickly and effectively with new situations using the resources on hand.

Resolute

A Resolute character stands firm despite opposition and criticism.

VICES

The following virtues are suitable for Blood Throne heroes (and villains).

Aggressive

An Aggressive character is inclined to give into his passions especially when aggravated and often reacts with hostility and makes unprovoked attacks.

Deceitful

A Deceitful character is given to misleading others and misrepresenting the truth of any situation.

Immoral

An Immoral Character violates accepted and established principles of right and wrong, good and evil.

Nosy

Often seen as meddling, a Nosy character is one that unduly pries into the affairs of others.

Obsessive

Thoughts and feelings of a particular idea, image, or desire dominate an Obsessive character.

Ruthless

A Ruthless character is without compassion or pity.

Sadistic

A Sadistic character gains pleasure by inflicting pain and suffering on others.

Savage

A Savage character is wild and untamed, merciless and often violent.

COMMON FEATS

Sometimes a set of feats are very common amongst the members of a background, but neither universal enough to be bonus feats nor mechanically viable as favored feats. Known as common feats, these feats are common to beings of a given background.



TABLE A: COMMON FEATS

NAME	COMMON FEATS
Aradi	Dedicated, Favored Opponent, Widen Power
Aearthgrar	Canny Dodge, Dedicated, Weapons Training
Thorongrar	Blind Fight, Skill Focus (Craft [blacksmith]), Weapons Training
Volagar	Endurance, Skill Focus (Knowledge Theology and Philosophy)
Daelian Elves	Dedicated, Eidetic Memory, Master Plan, Set Up
Thusparri	Dedicated, Move By Action, Vehicular Combat, Weapons Training
Volsparran	Dedicated, Favored Opponent, Smite Opponent, Trackless
Seguire	Light Sleeper, Run, Trackless
Shek-Tar	Challenge, Improved Critical, Second Chance (save against poison)
Elarian	Benefit, Firearms Training, Vehicular Combat
Kotarran	Attack Focus, Dedicated, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Smite Opponent
Baldarrans	Contacts, Connected, Trackless
Daelians	Dedicated, Eidetic Memory, Master Plan, Set Up
Dassurri	Dedicated, Endurance, Firearms Training, Tireless
Narballans	DEDICATED, ENDURANCE, TAUNT, TRAILBLAZER
Narmrothans	Improved Speed, Track, Trailblazer, Vehicular Combat
Horse Lords	Dedicated, Overrun, Track, Trackless, Vehicular Combat
Sargolians	Canny Dodge, Improved Strike, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot
Sudejans	Talented (Diplomacy, Sense Motive), Track, Trailblazer, Trackless
Talmosans	Endurance, Light Sleeper, Night Vision, Tireless, Track, Trailblazer
Saran-Ghori	All-out Attack, Endurance, Light Sleeper, Startle
Shodonai	Dedicated, Iron Will, Vehicular Combat

FRAGMENTS: THE BREAKING OF THE ELDER RACES

Summer faded into autumn, and autumn into winter as darkness came to Simarra for the first time. Above in the Asha-Tor, the gods battled for the right to be Enâra's consort. In the world below, it was as if a veil had been lifted from the eyes of my ancestors. They did not know it, but the Threshold Realm separated the people of Simarra from their gods who had seemingly abandoned them.

Death and old age came to my people for the first time since the dawn of the world. The wailing of the men, women, and children, who did not, could not understand broke the silence of the night, rending its once-peaceful stillness with mournful wails and howls of anguish that, some say, can still be heard to this day. Then, just as things seemed to be at their worst, Thûrak sent the dreaded morargrim into their midst.

My ancient kin fell prey to quarreling and bickering amongst themselves as Thûrak's abominations moved in secret amongst them, sowing hate and discord everywhere they went. Races of men, elves, dwarves and all the rest forgot the peaceful times of the past and segregated, forsaking True Speak in favor of sounds and writings of their own making. Each vernacular increased the tension, setting the whole of the world at odds, even as war broke upon Simarra like thunderous waves on rocky shores. The races began to split and move out of the great cities of the cradle of life, which, because of the outbreak of fighting between the various peoples, had become sprawling fields of battle. Into the wilds of the world they went, each race staking claims over various regions of the land. The Age of Steel had begun.

In the beginning of the Age of Steel, a multitude of people began to move away from the great cities of Western Simarra, a large region that historians and scholars in the age of plenty would refer to as "The Cradle of Life."

Many humans and elves began to cross the Shield Wall Mountains into the untamed lands of Eastern Simarra, seeking a simple life. Many would attempt to settle in the lush, primordial wild lands, only to be driven off, killed and in some cases even enslaved by the shek-tar gnomes or slaughtered at the hands the monstrous serpent kin called groa'khan and the fiercely territorial wyldlings; ferocious rat-like humanoids with a love for combat.

Nations such as the Aradi Heartlands, the swamp-infested kingdom of Talmosa, the reclusive nation behind the Sargolian Wall and the fabled dwarven kingdom of Moran-Gûr came into being during this time of upheaval. Others moved into the withering, frigid desolation of the Northern Reaches, forming the foundation of the great northern barbarian tribes. The nomadic Narmrothan horse clans would settle in Numaràth, only to be driven from the land centuries later by undead hordes.

Even more people moved south into the sea of dust, testing their mettle on the burning sands of the Vaskaall Wastes where legends say a race of beings known only as the nekarim held sway. Overall, it was a time of great danger for the elder races, who contended with bands of renegades, primordial tribal cultures and the villainous Sundaari blood lords as they moved out of the cradle of life, slowly evolving into the great nations which would come to dominate the Age of Plenty.

-Elohan Salaistrien

ARADI LIONMEN

The lionmen of the Aradi Heartlands are an ascendant race created by the god Aradon; Lord of the Hunt. Aradon blessed these half lion - half men, proclaiming they were to be masters of the great plains between the Broken Bone Hills to the north and the kingdom of Numaràth to the south. The lord of the hunt warned that, in time, his people would see other strange people migrate into this region.

Not an evil being, the god commanded his progeny to be firm, but fair in all dealings with these newcomers. Fiercely loyal to their creator-god, the Aradi pledged to obey his decree. A few years later, the first humans entered the region as Aradon had predicted.

Calling themselves Narmrothans, these nomadic people were, at first, terrified of the creatures who challenged their entry into the Aradi Heartlands.

Minor skirmishes broke out resulting in deaths

TABLE B: BACKGROUNDS

NAME	ABILITIES	BONUS FEATS	FAVORED FEATS // POWERS
DWARVES			
Aeurthergrar	+1 Con, +1 Wis, -1 Dex, -1 Cha	Talented, Trailblazer	Diehard, Tough
Thorongrar	+1 Con, -1 Cha	Great Fortitude, Nightvision	Diehard, Favored Opponent
Volagar	+1 Str, +1 Con, -1 dex, -1 Cha	Firearms Trianing, Nightvision	Elemental resistance(fire), Tough
ELVES			
Daelian Elves	+1 Int, -1 Str	Night Vision, Talented	Jack of All Trades, Suggestion
Thusparri Elves	+1 Dex, -1 Con	Animal Empathy, Nightvision	Any one Adept Feat or Power
Volsparran Elves	+1 Dex, -1 Con	Night Vision, Talented	Any one Adept Feat or Power
GNOMES			
Seguire Gnomes	+1 Con, -1 Str	Night Vision, Trail Blazer	Use Mana Shard and Use Ascendant Technology or Nature Reading
Shek-tar Gnomes	+1 Dex, +1 Con, -1 Wis, -1 Cha	Night Vision, Trailblazer	Fascinate and Favored Opponent or Summon Spirit
HALF ELVES			
Elarians	+1 Cha, -1 Int	Light Sleeper, Weapon Training	Favored Opponent (keza-drak), Smite Opponent
HALF GIANTS			
Kotarrans	+2 Str, +1 Con, -1 Int, -1 Wis, -1 Cha	All-out Attack, Weapon Training	Favored Opponent, Rage
HUMANS			
Baldarrans	None	Any One	Jack of all Trades, Sneak Attack
Daelians	None	Any One	Jack of all Trades, Suggestion
Dassuri	None	Any One	Inspire, Jack of all Trades
Korduc	None	Any One	Favored Opponent (keza-drak),
Narballans	None	Any One	Diehard, Elusive Target
Grey Men	None	Any One	Two of: Favored Opponent (Undead), Critical Strike, Smite Opponent
Horse Lords	None	Any One	Hide In Plain Sight, Spirited Charge
Sargolians	None	Any One	Supernatural Strike or Supernatural Weapon
Sudejans	None	Any One	Favored Opponent, Rage
Talmosians	None	Any One	Two of: Evasion, Seize Initiative, Sneak Attack
Tharans	None	Any One	Two of: Hide in Plain Sight, Sneak Attack, Well Informed or Crippling strike.
LION MEN			
Aradi	+1 Str, +1 Dex, -1 Wis, -1 Cha	Night Vision, Talented	Choose two of Attack Specialization, Dedicated, Spirited Charge or Widen Power
ORCS			
Saran-Ghori	+2 Str, +1 Con, -1 Int, -2 Cha	Night Vision, Weapon Training	Two of: Cleave, Favored Opponent, Rage
OTHER			
Shodonai	+1 Con, +1 Wis, -1 Str, -1 Cha	Lightning Reflexes, Night Vision	Resonance Crystal

on both sides. Yet, in spite of the violence, the people struggled to understand each other and in time, became friends and allies. The Narmrothans eventually moved south through the vast savannah and tribal villages of the Aradi to settle in the rugged lowlands of Numaràth. Both races maintained solid relationships, trading with each other often and celebrating holidays. Later years would see other races and cultures (primarily elves, Sargolians and Sudejans) pass through the Aradi Heartlands as well.

The first times of trouble for the Aradi began centuries later, midway during the Age of Steel, when the embattled Narmrothans were forced to flee Numaràth. The Dead Lands spat out hordes of unliving fiends into the world to plague the mortal races. The kingdom of Numaràth fell to a trio of death lords, as they are known by mortals. The armies of these hideous undead fiends ravaged Numaràth, forcing all to flee or die and be raised as undead slaves of the death lords.

Led by Temak Proudmane, the noble Aradi joined forces with Narmrothan refugees to combat the invading horde, constructing a great Bulwark along the width of the Numaràn Gap, the valley leading into Numaràth. It was there that the fiercest fighting happened as the horselords and lion men fought the savage horde in defense of the Aradi Heartlands. After months of hard fighting, the undead horde began to recede south into the gloom of fallen Numaràth, apparently giving up their fight against the Aradi and roughly two thousand brave Narmrothans who chose to stay and fight rather than journey westward with the rest of their defeated kin.

The Age of Plenty brought with it many people who wanted to try to settle in the Aradi Heartlands to farm and hunt. The Aradi held a great moot to determine the course of the future for their people. Also included were the lords of the remaining Narmrothans who stayed behind to help defend the lionmen from the undead during the Age of Steel. Now considered part of the tribe, they had earned the never-ending trust and respect of the Aradi lion men. They would also have a say in the course of the future.

Surprisingly, it was the

younger members of the various tribes who argued against allowing settlement in the Aradi Heartland. They warned that overpopulation and development of farms and cities would eat up the savannah, severely diminishing their lands, lands protected furiously in the past for new generations of Aradi so that they might preserve the cultural identity of the people.

How would this affect the yearly migration to perform the rites of passage at the Raven Bluff stone gate if the Aradi had to ask for permission first to cross each farm and town in their path? Moreover, what of the great hunt? Could the Aradi trust newcomers to be frugal and respectful when hunting, or would these humans and dwarves and all the rest mindlessly slaughter every beast they encountered? Lastly and perhaps most importantly, what of their god Aradon, would he continue to bless his children if they violated the ancient edicts proclaiming the heartland their domain and no others?

The elders countered that Aradon had not decreed the Aradi should isolate themselves from settlers, but rather they should tolerate outsiders, being firm, but fair in their dealings with other races. The elders acknowledged the wisdom in the cubs concerns.

These fears had merit, and they knew they must make any settlers in the heartland accept the existing



cultures. They must learn to live in balance with the savannah, not destroy it with their technologies, and not mindlessly hunt the wildlife until there was nothing left. In the end, they decided that they would allow settlers in the boundaries of the Aradi Heartlands. They would make treaties to establish laws, trade agreements, and the protection of natural resources. They made it clear that they would not tolerate the rape of their nation. They would purge those people who could not live in harmony with the savannah and its inhabitants the heartlands as one would cut a tumor from the body.

Aradan, the first major city in the Aradi heartlands was built on the shores of Faran Bay, named for Faran Thealdron, the first mariner to sail around the horn of swamp-infested Talmosa into its clear blue waters. The people (a mixture of humans and half-elves of Dassurri and Volsparran stock), wanting nothing more than to live in peace, agreed to the demands of the Aradi lion men. They signed treaties pledging to protect the Aradi heartlands, not to despoil the savannah or hunt its wild life to extinction. They would honor the existing cultures and not attempt to subvert the rites and ceremonies of the Aradi people. In return, the lion men pledged to ensure all people living in the region dwelled in peace and harmony. These alliances held strong for the majority of the Age of Plenty.

Then the Baldarrans migrated south out of the Baldarak Highlands.

These shifty, gruff Northerners petitioned to sign agreements with the Aradi, allowing them to settle the frontier towns of South Fork and Millhaven. The Aradi found these Baldarrans to be an unsavory lot, given to drinking and raucous behavior. Against their better judgment, the Aradi consented to the treaties that had worked out so well with previous settlers. For a short while, things seemed as though they would work out. Then the Baldarrans found gold in the Broken Bone Hills and Raven Bluff.

Consumed by greed, the Baldarrans ignored the fact that the hills were sacred grounds for the Aradi and began strip-mining the entire region, uprooting the graves of the Aradi's ancestors in their quest to find gold. They slaughtered thousands of spike-nosed bison, leathery-skinned horned baboons and majestic savannah lions for their pelts and bones, selling them back west to furriers and the shek-tar bone shamans of the wild lands in order to finance their mining operations. These desecrations sent the Aradi into a rage.

War ignited across the Northern savannah as the Aradi tribes united against the despoilment of their sacred lands and slaughter of the wild life. The Baldarrans fought fiercely to protect their operations,

going so far as to mount their own offensive against the closest Aradi villages, burning and looting everywhere they went. They used explosives and firearms purchased (or stolen) from the Shield Wall dwarves to tip the balance in their favor. The people of Aradan and the remnants of the Narmrothan horse clans honored centuries-old vows and joined forces with the Aradi people, driving the wicked Baldarrans out of the region, restoring peace to the Aradi Heartlands. Sadly, this would not last. Even as the last of the Baldarran people fled to the north, promising vengeance, Agărăzôn betrayed the world and the Age of Blood began.

THE ARADI IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The Aradi Heartland is one of those places where, if anything at all could go wrong, it did. The invasion of the keza-drak took place at their most spiritual site; the stone gate at Raven Bluff. Thousands of keza-drak flooded into the region, attacking the already war-weary Aradi people who fled the fiendish invaders, believing them to be sent from their god Aradon as punishment for allowing the Baldarrans to ravage and despoil their homeland.

The keza-drak established the city of Charr in the Broken Bone Hills. From there, they began campaigns both North and South to root out all potential resistance. To make matters worse, Numarath exploded with activity as hordes of undead overran the Bulwark and invaded the lower-Heartlands, fighting both keza-drak and Aradi alike in their quest to slay all life.

The Aradi who have managed to survive eek out a miserable existence in the freehold of Aradan, roam the plains as insurgents, or fight alongside the Volsparran elves. The majority of the Narmrothan remnants have focused on the fight against the horde from the Dead Lands, living in remote camps high in the lower arm of the Sargolian Wall and the recently re-taken Bulwark.

BACKGROUND

Aradi are a proud race of centaur-like beings, standing roughly 6 ft. tall and have the body of a lion and upper torso of a human. Their skin is a golden brown in hue, and most have thick manes of hair which they either braid or grow shaggy.

The Aradi have grace which belies their primal form, and are masters of the use of weapons such as the lance, long bow, sword and axe. Their allegiance with the Narmrothans has proven beneficial in that the blacksmiths have crafted steel armor the Aradi wear into battle.

Aradi lionmen have keen night vision, excellent

climbing skills, and can perform great leaps.

They can also call on the fury of their god in combat, blessing all around them. The Aradi believe the Age of Blood is a curse upon their people. If they are to survive, they must prove themselves worthy of survival in the eyes of their god.

Traits: Aradi have the following traits:

Abilities: +1 Str, +1 Dex, -1 Wis, -1 Cha

Size: Medium

Bonus Feats: Night Vision, Talented (Climb and Jump)

Aradon's Blessing: Once per day an Aradi Adept may bless those around her, providing a +1 to all attack and toughness checks.

Favored Feats: Choose two of Attack Specialization,

DWARVES

The dwarves of Simarra are a proud people who have taken to living in the hills, mountains and deep places of the world. It was not always this way, however. During the primordial age, all of the elder races lived together in the cradle of life, basking in their immortality, blissfully ignorant of concepts such as death or sorrow. This period would eventually end with the creation of the Threshold Realm and the loss of immortality for all the elder races.

Called the "Great Breaking," this chaotic period of time saw a multitude of people from all races leave the cradle of life in search of lands to claim as their own. With the exception of a few clans who remained in the Hadrannath Hills and others who ventured south, the vast majority of dwarves left the cradle of life, the largest of the fledgling clans that formed in the chaotic years - the Thorongrar dwarves - following a young dwarf by the name of Gand Hammerfist. The elder god Torrodoth is said to have come to Gand, showing him a vision of the splendors awaiting all dwarves with the courage to seek out the deep places of the world.

As the legend goes, Torrodoth appeared in physical form before Gand one last time before going into the Threshold Realm with the rest of the elder gods. As Gand knelt before his beloved deity, the elder god burned a map into a stone tablet, directions to a place deep in the bowels of the earth: the location of Moran-gûr. Gand led thousands upon thousands of dwarves (the bulk of which would comprise the mighty Thorongrar nation) north into the Shield Wall Mountains to a great, gaping cavern leading down into the earth. It was at this cave that the Thorongrar met the first test of their unity as a clan.

The journey north had been arduous. Numerous aberrant races had staked their own territory in the rugged lands north of the cradle of life and brooked no trespassers upon their domains. Many dwarves were wounded and some died on the journey.

A surprising number of dwarves balked at the prospect of abandoning the sunlit world to venture deep into a realm of perpetual night and unnamed horrors, despite the fact that this journey appeared to be a holy quest set forth by Torrodoth. Tempers flared. Sides were chosen. Fighting erupted in the camps at the base of the cave. When all was said and done, four thousand dwarves had died and many thousands more were wounded in the first real conflict of the Age of steel.

A new clan emerged from the fighting - the Aeurthgrar, or frostwind dwarves as they are known in the common tongue. The Aeurthgrar broke from the Thorongrar dwarves that day, leaving Gand Hammerfist and those who remained loyal to him to seek out Moran-gûr on their own. The frostwind dwarves headed north to seek out their own destiny in the wilds of Simarra.

The following section explores each of the dwarven races as they exist in the Age of Blood, providing background information and game statistics where relevant.

AEURTHGRAR: FROSTWIND DWARVES

Brief History:

After leaving the Thorongrar, the frostwind dwarves moved north into the rugged wilderness of Simarra; a place untamed and populated by numerous creatures created during the primordial age at the whim of ascendant gods. The Aeurthgrar would repeatedly establish footholds in the northern arm of the Shield Wall Mountains only to be supplanted by mountain trolls and other aberrant races living in the region.

Nearly broken from years of struggle and harassment from various aberrant races, the Aeurthgrar finally came to a fertile hinterland at the northern tip of the continent; a three hundred mile stretch of deep-forested lands nestled between the mountains and the Whitecap Sea. It was in this untamed region that the frostwind dwarves made their home, building strongholds of timber and stone to guard against the myriad creatures that inevitably came to contest their place in this land.

After enduring more years of hardship and the loss of friends and loved ones, the frostwind dwarves finally established their dominion of the region in the early part of the Age of Steel, naming the area Aeurthgrar, which roughly translates to the Frost lands in the common tongue. The Aeurthgrar named the venerable Delg Hearthforge as their first king. Delg named the coastal settlement of Frostwind Hold as the capital of his realm.

Around this time, three ascendant goddesses chose

to reveal themselves to the Aeurthgrar.

Calling themselves Sirens, they began appearing to Aeurthgrar females throughout the frost lands, imparting blessings of wisdom and power upon the dwarf maidens. In return, the maidens -now considered oracles of the sirens- began to cultivate groves across Aeurthgran and commenced teaching the rites of the Sirens to other women who showed an interest in the burgeoning faith. Male Aeurthgrar showing the requisite strength, wisdom and desire became protectors of the oracles.

While the Aeurthgrar thrived throughout the Ages of Steel and Plenty, they remained largely xenophobic, maintaining limited relations with the other cultures of Simarra, strictly regulating trade with other nations.

The Aeurthgrar took great pride in living off the land, using only natural resources to maintain their way of life. The Aeurthgrar shunned technology. The oracles taught that the machines and inventions of the southern kingdoms defiled the land, making people weak in body and spirit. Outsiders wanting to settle in the Frost Lands had to prove themselves worthy of living among the Aeurthgrar with their holistic way of life.

Few people, having tasted the luxuries of the more "civilized" lands of the south, could adapt to the rough lifestyle of the Aeurthgrar. Even fewer would abandon their reverence of other deities in favor of the Sirens - another mandate that potential settlers must abide by, should they wish to settle in Aeurthgran. The Frostwind dwarves believed that the Sirens blessed their people in return for steadfast faith and these blessings would only continue so long as the people remained unified in their beliefs.

FROSTWIND DWARVES IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

Unlike the majority of the people of Simarra, the invasion of the keza-drak did not come as a surprise

to the Aeurthgrar. The oracles of the Sirens began receiving visions in the weeks preceding the opening of the stone gates foretelling of an impending doom that would befall the people of the world. While other nations rejected the words of their prophets (Some people even going so far as to persecute them as was the case with the shodonai), the frostwind dwarves took these omens seriously and prepared for them.



The Frost lands had always been rich in Taer' las Brennath. A myriad of lesser nexus points lay scattered through the land, not to mention the massive nexus at the southern edge of Aeurthgran. This was the site of Aeurthalgraras: the main grove of the oracles and the spiritual capital in the Frost Lands. Cities grew around these groves as the oracles and their families moved to be closer to their places of worship.

When the Sirens first came to the oracles during the Age of Steel they taught their priestesses about Taer' las Brennath and nexuses, proclaiming them holy places where the devout should come to worship the Sirens and draw power from the world around them.

The oracles acted accordingly, building their groves around nexus points. They learned to tap mana wells - not to harness the energy of the world as a resource like the aviki - but rather to become one with its energy so they might commune with their goddesses and nurture the world around them.

When the keza-drak attempted to invade Aeurthgran through the gate at Aeurthalgraras, the alien horde found an army of frostwind warriors and adepts waiting for them. The battle for Aeurthalgraras (known in the common tongue as the Frostwind Grove) was a bloody contest, lasting for three days and nights. Countless Aeurthgrar gave their lives in the battle, but eventually threw back the invaders.

The next ten years would see numerous battles fought as the headstrong keza-drak continued to challenge the dominion of the Aeurthgrar, seeking to take control of the only major stone gate in the region.

THE FLOOD OF REFUGEES

Other problems directly relating to the war began to present themselves as the years wore on. The war for Simarra displaced countless thousands of people. Many of them, seeking shelter from the storm of war turned north, coming into the frost lands in hopes of finding sanctuary. At first, the Aeurthgrar denied these people entry, blaming them and their shattered nations for the holocaust.

Yet, as time wore on and the threat of Agärazôn's legions came more perilous, the king of the Aeurthgrar - Dealegan Hearthforge - issued a decree, granting shelter to the various people of Simarra on condition that they contribute to the war effort. No migrant would simply sit and let the people of Aeurthgran do the fighting for them.

All males became conscripts in the army to fight alongside the fierce warriors or act as scouts. Females served the war effort in many ways, learning healing arts and crafts. Even children and the elderly worked to preserve their freedom, acting as messengers or laborers. Dealegan Hearthforge chose a council representing the displaced races to act as stewards and liaisons. The stewards were responsible for maintaining communication between the people they represented and the leaders of the Aeurthgrar as well as ensuring the refugees continued to contribute to the war effort.

THE SURGE

Aeurthgran and its people endured the surge as much as the rest of the world. Adepts - including the oracles of the sirens - began to feel backlash from too much use of power. Arcane and divine energy has become tainted and dangerous to use. Becoming wholly corrupted, some people have broken away from the rest of the Aeurthgrar to embrace the maddening horrors that have engulfed them.

They have formed cults deep in the woods and mountains protecting the Frost lands. These cults work vile magicks that siphon the corrupting essence of the Threshold Realm, enabling these aeurthagrak (shadowspawn) to summon tainted creatures to serve their dark designs.

Not just limited to the people of the Frost Lands, the taint has also begun to corrupt some of the groves, severely limiting the magical resources of the oracles and other adepts. This corrupting force has also marred animals such as birds, wolves and bears.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Aeurthgrar are a simple, yet dignified people with a strong love of nature. That said, the frostwind dwarves wage an internal struggle to adapt to the changing world around them. Centuries of relative isolation from the world has colored their views on other races.

Aeurthgrar tend to view the other people of the world as selfish, ignorant people who rely too much on technology. Indeed, in the minds of most Aeurthgrar, the abuse of ascendant technology is what led to the corruption of Agärazôn, the release of the morargrim and the consequent invasion of the keza-drak.

Now, as the elder races scramble to survive the consequences of their actions, they bring peril to every place they go. The elder races have devolved into embittered, splintered factions. This is most visible in the refugee camps, where people tend to segregate, fighting amongst each other for what little resources they can acquire. Yet, as they are forced to interact with the multitudes of people who come to their lands seeking refuge, the Aeurthgrar find that, to maintain peace and a sense of unity, they have to alter their preconceived notions about the people of the world. This struggle is a slow process and does not always go smoothly. Arguments occasionally happen, some of them ending in bloodshed. Racism is rife among the more traditional Aeurthgrar, who have started to separate themselves from the rest of their kin. There are rumors this new sect plots to depose King Dealegan Hearthforge and return to the old ways.

Traits: Frostwind dwarves have the following traits:

Abilities: +1 Con, +1 Wis, -1 Dex, -1 Cha

Size: Medium

Cone of Frost: Once per day a Frostwind dwarf can release a cone of frost in a 5-foot arc. This power can be used once per day for three rounds. Every six additional total levels allows the power to extend an additional 5 feet, to a maximum of 20 feet (15ft + the base 5ft) at level 18. Cone of Frost does damage equal to the total level of the character divided by 2 (minimum of +1). Characters can make a reflex save for half damage.

Bonus Feats: Dedicated, Talented (Craft (leatherworking), Survival)

Favored Feats: Trailblazer, Tough

THORONGRAR SHIELD WALL DWARVES

Brief History:

Led by the High Thane Gand Hammerfist, the Thorongrar dwarves descended into the deep earth in the days following their conflict with the Aeurthgrar (See above).

The journey of the Thorongrar through the twisting

maze of tunnels and caverns was unlike anything they had faced on the surface world. Great chasms would open up, blocking progress. Swift underground rivers needed to be crossed. Cave-ins sent tons of rock down on the heads of unwary dwarves, further testing their resolve to find the city of their god. Along the way, the prudent dwarves built temporary outposts to mark their path so that they might come back one day and lay claim to more territory.

Cloaked in never-ending darkness, the dwarves trudged deep and deeper into the earth following their beloved leader. Goblins, gretchclaw, mountain trolls and other un-named monsters rose up out of the gloom to plague their every step, viewing the brave dwarves as a new and plentiful food source. Still, the dwarves trudged onward, their unyielding faith in Gand Hammerfist and their god Torrodoth pushing them forward. After what seemed like months the dwarves finally reached their goal; a great cavern heated by airflows rising from the molten core of the earth. Hot springs dotted the cavern, at the center

of which lay a ringed city of unsurpassed beauty - Moran-gûr - heart's home in the common tongue, the new capital of the Thorongrar. Their journey complete, the Thorongrar focused on the task of establishing their kingdom.

Gand Hammerfist established a council of nine elders to oversee various tasks including exploration of the subterranean world, the construction of outposts, finding food sources, expanding of the city proper, building up the defense of territories, and the utilization of natural resources. The threats of this wild, vast, subterranean world were also a consideration. A myriad of fell beasts preyed on the Thorongrar, attacking outposts and even massing in large numbers to attack Moran-Gûr itself. Ever faithful to their leader and their god, the shield wall dwarves met these and other challenges to their way of life with a song in their heart.

The centuries passed marked by a steady expansion of their kingdom including the founding of strongholds on the surface to facilitate trade with other

aces. Alliances were forged, especially with human settlements such as the frontier-city of Ardrennen falls. Ubrathil Keep and Thelstaad Keep were built to aid in the protection of key trade routes through the wilderness. The Thusparran elves, too benefited from treaties with the Thorongrar, establishing cities high in the Shield Wall Mountains to facilitate trade and foster peace between the two races.

The Age of Steel saw the Thorongrar develop various new technologies such as steam-powered vehicles, piping systems, aqueducts and drainage systems. The entry into the wild lands was also made possible with the construction of the Magdân Stair - a series of roads carved into the foreboding cliffs ringing the wild lands - named for the dwarf who designed it.

THE THORONGRAR IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The Shield Wall dwarves have been the targets of extended campaigns by Agärazôn's forces. Wanting to establish a foothold in the deep earth, Agärazôn has sent thousands of keza-drak into the bowels of the earth to destroy the mighty citadels of the Thorongrar.

Led by the direct descendant of the first king of the Thorongrar, Delgan Hammerfist, the dwarves have proven to be tougher to defeat than Agärazôn had thought.

The keza-drak pay dearly for each outpost they conquer, counting their losses in thousands, while the cunning dwarves suffer only marginal



losses. They lure their enemies into tunnels rigged with devastating traps that bring the entire passage down on the unsuspecting invaders. The dwarves establish kill-zones that take advantage of ranged weapons such as crossbows and rifles. Reinforced walls allow for use of light explosives which rip their enemies apart.

While the bulk of their forces are deep underground defending their homeland, many Thorongrar have dedicated themselves to the surface war, honoring their commitments to safeguard mountain passes. The ongoing struggle for control of Spire-reach pass is one example, though other, lesser known passes throughout the mountains are a source of conflict as well.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

One of the original elder races, Shield Wall dwarves are the most common dwarf to be found on the continent of Simarra. Although they live primarily in the mountain range that is their namesake, Shield Wall dwarves can be found everywhere in war-

torn Simarra.

Their capital, the fabled city of Moran-gûr, is rumored to be under siege by keza-drak and their Ungchuk goblin slaves deep in the heart of the Shield Wall Mountains. One of the few remaining surface outposts of the Shield Wall dwarves, Ubrathil Keep, fell to the keza-drak in recent years. Scouts from the free city of Ardrennen Falls claim the invaders are using the keep as a staging point for underground operations.

Shield wall dwarves are good hearted by nature but also set in their ways. They are master artisans, especially when it comes to stonework, armor and weapon smithing. Shield wall dwarves created the fabled Magdân Stair, which winds ten thousand feet down into the treacherous Wild Lands.

Traits: Shield Wall dwarves have the following traits:

Abilities: +1 Constitution, -1 Charisma.

Size: Medium

Bonus Feats: Great Fortitude, Night Vision, Talented (Craft and Search, only involving stonework)

Favored Feats: Diehard, Favored Opponent (mountain ogres or gretchclaw)

FIRE DWARVES

Gredlin Flame Heart wove his way through the maze of hallways to a lofty balcony where General Dunkan Two-Hammers watched the advance of the enemy forces across the barren plains of ash and jagged rock towards citadel Gundrog-Magul. Gredlin glanced at the general, who watched the advancing forces with obvious worry. His soot-stained face, usually a stoic mask that hid the noble dwarf's emotions, seemed cracked with worry lines. Dunkan paced back and forth looking out across the plain, pausing only momentarily to bark a few orders a nearby runner who turned and ran back down the hallway from which Gredlin had just came.

"You called, General?" Gredlin asked. Dunkan turned and nodded.

"Aye, Fire Priest." Dunkan motioned for Gredlin to move closer to the balcony's edge.

"Tell me, Gredlin Flame Heart, priest of Galburak, what does your fire god say of the coming battle?" Stone-grey eyes bored into Gredlin as the General waited for the priest's answer.

Gredlin nodded. It was no secret that Dunkan Two-Hammers didn't follow Galburak or any other god for that matter. The general trusted in things he could see, the strength of his arm and the artisanship of the hammers he wielded in combat. In fact, this was the first time the general called for a fire priest before a battle. Gredlin looked out at the approaching army.

Multitudes of creatures were arrayed before the gates of citadel Gundrog-Magul. Row after row of devilish ungchuk goblins mingled with mountain ogres, comprising the first wave of shock troops to test the fiery defenses of the volcanic citadel. The fire giants were re-thinking their strategy it seemed. Past assaults saw the hated enemy of the Volagar in the front, screaming and dying alongside their goblinoid slaves, but not this time. Gredlin could barely make out crude siege engines on the blackened horizon lumbering their way towards the gates alongside catapults pulled by heavily armored fire giants. They meant to pound the fortress from a distance while their slaves did the knife work up close, fighting and dying under a hail of stone, molten lava, and wicked dwarven war axes.

Gredlin gritted his teeth and turned to Dunkan. "Galburak has granted his blessings to his children. He stands with us in this conflict. You will see general." He said.

Dunkan spat and turned to look out at the approaching army. "I'd feel better if the fire god would pick up a hammer and fight alongside my kinsmen, fire priest. I know I do not have Galburak's blessings Gredlin, but you and your brethren do. Go down and see to it that my warriors fight with what protection your God will give them."

Gredlin nodded once more, then turned and headed down to the front lines, intending to do precisely that. Gredlin moved down the main hallway towards the front gates, not bothering to pause in reverence and look at the elaborately carved images of his ancestors as he had always done when entering the Hall of Ghothmargash. If the kings of old were offended, they didn't mention it. Nevertheless, even though his attention was fixed upon the coming battle, Gredlin got the same old spine-tingling feeling that these ornate statues were watching him, watching over everyone on this black day.

The dwarf emerged from the hallway and fell in step with a group of warriors crossing the great bridge that spanned a moat of lava, the last barrier between an attacking army and the inner citadel. Priests were spread out along the causeway behind him, kneeling and shouting prayers to Galburak. In answer, great fiery beings sprung forth from the lava and stood there waiting orders.

Gredlin nodded in satisfaction and looked over at the warriors, who joked and laughed as if they were going to a party. Gredlin couldn't help but laugh himself as one of the warriors commented on the mating habits of fire giants and orcs. The dwarves' easy-going attitude was infectious. They all knew that death and doom waited for them beyond the great steel doors, which loomed on the other side of the bridge, and yet they walked briskly towards them without a care in the world.

Clan Volagar's history stretches back all the way to the early days of the Age of Steel. Long ago, the Volagar, led by their founder, Durrigan Flameheart, left the fabled dwarven city of Moran-Gûr.

They broke from the Thorongrar when King Gand Hammerfist denied Durrigan (at the time, an acolyte of an obscure ascendant god known as Galburak "The lord of flame") permission to build a temple to Galburak—a god which Gand believed to be inferior to the chief deity of all dwarves; Torrodoth.

Durrigan vowed never to return to the mighty city of his kin until Galburak was granted the respect that Durrigan felt the ascendant god deserved. It is said that Gand Hammerfist personally sealed the passage that Durrigan and his followers used to leave Moran-Gûr, and then ordered the clan Volagar to be stricken from the Wall of Names; a massive marble slab upon which were carved the names of every dwarven clan in Simarra.

Durrigan, following the signs his god set before him, led his people deep into the bowels of the world to a large cavern, where they created the mythic city of Gûndûm-Zog, which is known in the common tongue as "Firebrick Keep." Durrigan built the first temple to Galburak in the center of Gûndûm-Zog with his own hands. It is said that Galburak himself appeared before Durrigan as he finished uttering the words to consecrate the temple to his god, bestowing upon the Thane of clan Volagar - indeed all of his kin - fire-related abilities that sundered any remaining ties to their thorongrar ancestry.

Ever since that day (which is known to all Volagar as "the nuzchak," or "the soul forging") clan Volagar has prospered deep in their fiery home, even to the point of expanding their domain upward to the surface of the world, where the dwarves have established holdfasts in the blasted realm of Droghedia. In doing so, clan Volagar has brought their mastery of metal

I followed the high thane Durrigan Flame heart when he led our people into the wild black of the deep earth.

He stood by our side and fought the gretchclaws who hunted our kind during the rootless days, when we had no home save for what meager holes and caves we found during our travels.

I looked on, a wretched slave to the mountain goblins when Durrigan (a captive himself) rose up and slew king Blackmaw; severing the hated ungchuk goblin's head with a sharpened leg bone.

I stood at his side when the fire god's messenger seared a map showing the way to the great cavern into my thane's cold flesh.

I watched in awe as he raised Gûndûm-Zog from a single flaming brick,

knelt in reverence as the fire god descended and blessed our people,

And I am here now, watching as his soul rises to the fire god's embrace.

-Requiem for Durrigan Flame Heart

smithing as well as vast quantities of mithril and adamantite (which is only found near molten rock, where extreme temperatures temper the mineral and make it nearly indestructible) to the people of Simarra.

FIRE DWARVES IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

Agärazôn has taken a keen interest in clan Volagar, sending the bulk of his forces stationed in Naeth-Kügraz into the Ash Mountains of Droghedia to deal with these wild cards in the war for Simarra. The Skauld Dragoons represent the bulk of the fighting

forces in Droghedia, though recent attacks on citadels Gundrog-Sargash and Gundrog-Magul have prompted the thanes of clan Volagar to re-think their role in the war. The Elarian Corsairs have proven to be a valuable ally in the war, helping the fire dwarves defend against an invasion by keza-drak naval forces in the Gulf of Rana. In return, the Volagar have taught the - mostly -reformed pirates to craft their own black powder, even going so far as to forge cannons that can be mounted on their corvettes and war galleys.

BACKGROUND

A precious few races of dwarves are as enigmatic as the Volagar; fire dwarves as other dwarves in the deep strongholds and holdfasts of the world refer to them. Cast out of the fabled dwarven kingdom of Moran-Gûr for choosing to worship Galburak instead of the patron deity of the deep dwarves of Moran-Gûr, the Volagar roamed the deep places of the world as outcasts, following the leadership of the first priest of Galburak, Durrigan Flame Heart, who eventually led them to an enormous cavern deep in the world. It was in this place that the fabled city of Gûndûm-Zog, home of the fire dwarves, was built.

The Volagar have prospered since they left Moran-Gûr. There are over fifty separate clans of the fire dwarves scattered throughout the subterranean world far below even the most remote holdfasts of their distant kin, the deep dwarves. From these citadels, the Volagar send out heavily armed caravans to all corners of Simarra to trade with the various peoples of the world.

Mithril is a common export, as are gold and other precious minerals, but the main staple of the Volagar's economy is and always will be adamantine, which they mine deep in the core of the world or along the roots of ancient volcanoes, and then forge into weapons and armor of the finest craftsmanship or sell the raw ore outright.

The Volagar have a secret method for extracting and molding the ore, which they will not reveal, even to other dwarves. The process involves funneling the liquid metal into heated vats that do not allow the metal to cool off until the precious ore has been transported to the foundries and poured into a variety of molds, which are fashioned for whatever type of product the dwarves wish to create. Once this is done, the metal is slowly cooled until it becomes malleable enough for the smiths to hammer.

The Volagar are undisputed masters of the creation of black powder weapons. Galburak passed the secret of making tûrgash (black) powder down to the Volagar weapon smiths, who combined this knowledge with existing technologies to make explosive weapons such as rockets and bombs.



They also developed hand held weapons; musket rifles and flint lock pistols. These weapons are highly prized. People representing all races brave the arduous journey through enemy territory to the blasted lands of Droghedia in hopes of procuring these weapons so that they may fight the keza-drak.

Volagar clans are highly religious. As a rule, thanes of individual clans are chosen from the ranks of the galburakian priesthood. This is to ensure that all clans are following the will of the fire god. Although in recent days there have been a number of clans who have chosen their leaders from outside of the priesthood, a development which has led to some of these clans actually breaking from the Volagar and striking off into the darkness of the deep earth. Some clans such as the hated Volugrash have even promised vengeance upon their brethren for perceived injustices.

The Volagar are typical of most dwarven cultures in that their society values hard work. They have a love for finely wrought metal, as do other dwarves, and their thirst for fine ale is unquenchable. While the Thorongrar seem uptight and easily offended, the Volagar are jovial, light-hearted people who have a strong sense of kinship and zest for living. Indeed, they are often-times quick to befriend a stranger or help those who others might turn away. That said, once a fire dwarf does actually become offended violence is not far off.

Like their distant kin, the Volagar are not quick to forget (or forgive) a harsh word. They hold grudges longer than any other race on Simarra.

The Volagar enjoy sporting activities that allow them to show off their strength and endurance, such as wrestling, and games, which test their wisdom and intelligence. They love riddles and are experts at puzzle craft. Many of the defenses of their holdfasts and surface citadels are built with magical puzzles and riddles that are deadly to those who fail to get the correct answer.

Initiation rituals, rites of passage and other tests of manhood are very important in Volagar society. Scarification, fire-branding, and ritual tattooing are all common elements used in the rituals and religious ceremonies of the fire dwarves.

Traits: Dwarves from clan Volagar have the following traits:

Abilities: +1 Strength, +1 Constitution, -1 Dexterity, -1 Charisma.

Size: Medium.

Bonus Feats: Aspect of Flame, Night Vision.

Aspect of Flame: All fire dwarves have the power to wreath their hands (or weapons) in flame, increasing the attack's damage by one. This can be used once per day for 3 rounds. Every 3 additional total levels allows the power to be used for an additional round, to a maximum of 9 rounds at level 18.

Favored Feats: Elemental Resistance (Fire).

ELVES

At the end of the Primeval Age, the Elves of Simarra -known at that time as Volsparrans - went through a period of strife known as the Halladarak (the sundering in the common tongue). The loss of immortality broached philosophical and moral questions regarding the future of their people in this new age of mortality and death that they suddenly found themselves living.

Some felt that to better understand their own mortality they should recede into the deep woods of the world, venture into the wild places where they might study nature and contemplate this new existence in relative seclusion. In a never-ending communion with the natural world, the Volsparrans felt they might somehow regain what they had lost. These elves kept the name that Gimbureth - their goddess - gave them; claiming only they had the right to call themselves Volsparrans.

The elves that would come to be known as Thusparrans adopted a slightly different philosophy. The call of nature pulled on their hearts as much as the Volsparrans. The Thusparri sought the rugged beauty of the mountains and primordial forests of the western continent, yet the wisest of their people argued that to alienate other races would only foster resentment.

The Thusparran elves ultimately chose to stay where they were, much to the vexation of the king of the Volsparran elves - Taladin Valanas - who arrogantly insisted that the elven people remain unified as a race.

This decree infuriated many elves, Thusparri and Volsparri alike. Thusparran elves immediately began migrating westward out of the cradle of life into the Kaerlon Mountains and the region which would eventually become known as the Thusparri

Lowlands; a heavily forested land inhabited by great eagles, hawks and falcons and other creatures. Other elves broke away from the haughty Volsparran elves, moving south into the Daelian wood.

These elves - known as Daelians for the forest they inhabited - would eventually become a highly respected people, known for their devotion to the recording of history and tolerance of other races.

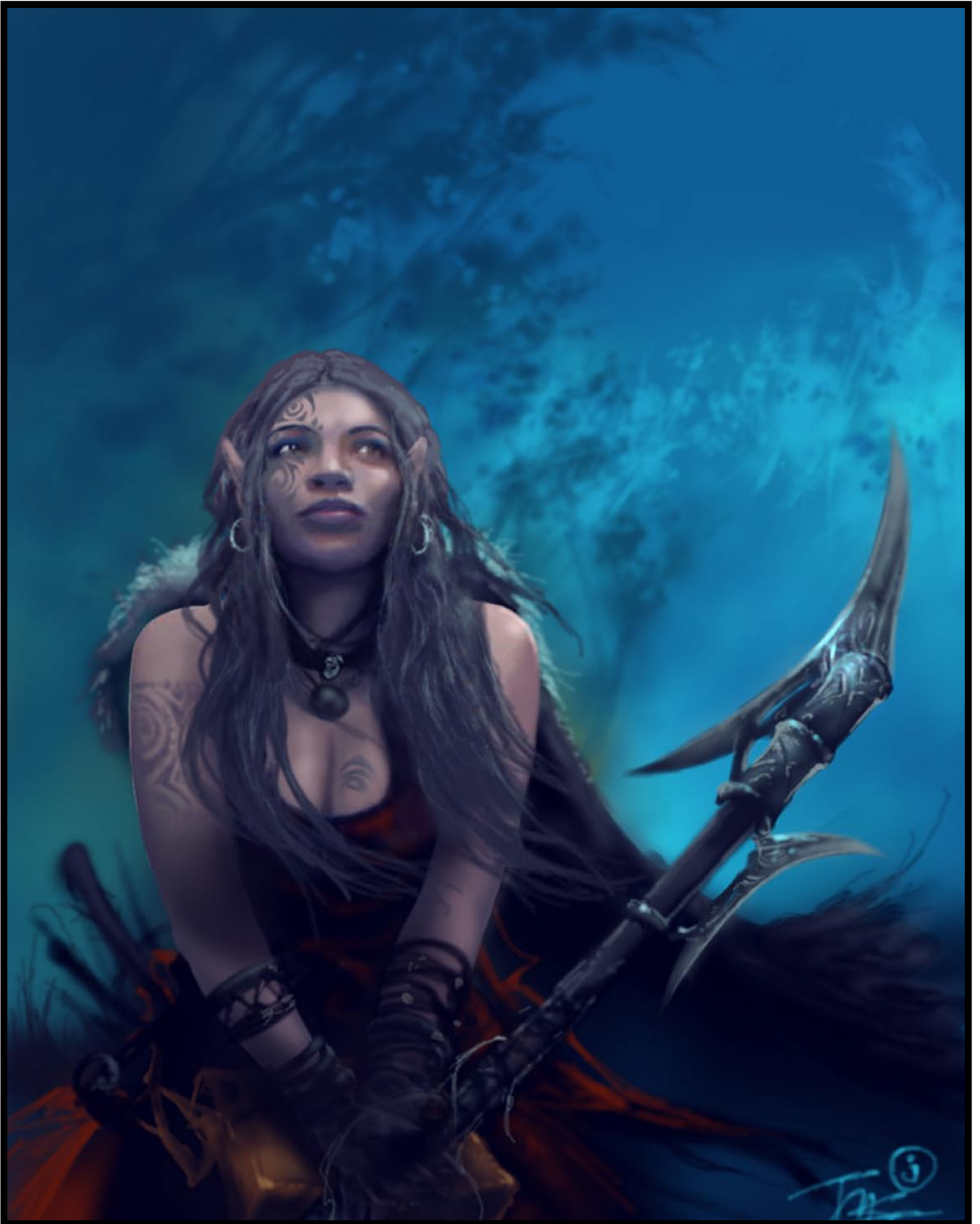
Indeed, the Daelian sages welcomed all who came to the vast Daelian wood in search of peace and knowledge. Those people who settled in the Daelian Wood were embraced as brethren in memory of the primordial age when all the elder races lived together in harmony. Unlike other elves who retained their own cultural distinctiveness, the Daelians extended their namesake to all people, regardless of race.

DAELIAN ELVES

Daelian elves are one of the few races who stayed relatively close to the cradle of life at the onset of the Age of Steel. While their brethren bickered over the future of the elven race, Daelians traveled south through the plains of lorduun, settling in the fertile grasslands as well as the vast primordial forest which was their namesake.

The Age of Steel saw many conflicts for the people of Simarra. The largest threat to the Daelian elves came at the hands of the Sundaari blood lords who were once sages living in the Daelian wood but turned from that path.

Beguiled by the morargrim, the Sundaari migrated south into the Sundanar Peninsula. There, the Sundaari began learning vile, ritualistic blood magicks from the morargrim. They pledged allegiance to the dark god Thûrak, who commanded them to wage war



on the people of Simarra.

During the first invasion of the Cradle of Life waves of Sundaari flooded into the Daelian wood, subjugating the peaceful scholars and historians, visiting untold horrors upon them. The atrocities committed during the three hundred year holocaust served as a heartbreaking lesson to the Daelian elves; peace must be maintained through vigilance and, if necessary, military force.

In the aftermath of the occupation of their homeland, the Daelian elves dedicated themselves to building a military force capable of defending their ravaged homeland. Later years would see another Sundaari invasion of the Cradle of Life. This time, the Daelian elves were able to defend against the armies of their enemy. History would see the Sundaari repeat their conquest of the Cradle of Life, sacking Megath-Tor a second time. Despite this fact, the blood lords were never able to fully conquer the Daelian Wood, largely because of the vigilance of its people.

Daelians prospered throughout the majority of the Age of Plenty, making great strides in the chronicling of the ages, cataloguing the knowledge of every possible subject from blacksmithing to rites of power and (especially) ascendant technology. Memory shards allowed the sages to store vast amounts of knowledge, precluding the time-consuming process of translating language and scribing the information onto parchment (Though in some cases the sages did translate information onto parchment). By the end of the Age of Plenty, the memory vaults of the Daelian sages had become legendary.

THE DAELIAN ELVES IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The Daelian people have found themselves pushed to

the brink of extinction. The invasion of the keza-drak and the return of the Sundaari have placed the people of the devastated Daelian wood squarely between the proverbial hammer and the anvil. Life for these people is a daily struggle to survive. They have been pushed to the very rim of their homeland and are forced to hide in caves that dot the Dragonspine Mountains. Many of the ragged survivors have joined up with the shodon warlords to fight against the armies of Thel-Kaza. Others safeguard precious memory shards, knowing that if this war ever ends, the people of the world will need the knowledge to rebuild Simarra. Others have left the region entirely, traveling to freeholds where they might find some safety from the chaos and destruction.

BACKGROUND

Daelians are a noble breed of scholars who have always lived close to the Cradle of Life. They are known for their legendary memory vaults: giant mana shards philosophers and sages use to store vast amounts of knowledge. With these shards, it is no wonder the Daelians remember more than anyone else. This knowledge has become invaluable in the Age of Blood and many Daelians guard it with their very lives.

Daelians view all people of Simarra as kin in memory of the Primordial Age when all races lived together. In these dark times, the unity of the Daelians is the only thing that keeps the keza-drak from completely wiping them out. Daelians are a fair people, with light hair and blue or green eyes. The Daelians, once an open and welcoming people, have lost much of their optimism and warmth. Most tend to be guarded and slow to trust others.

DAELIAN HUMANS

Daelians are a noble breed of scholars who have always lived close to the Cradle of Life. They are known for their great memory vaults: giant mana shards philosophers and sages use to store vast amounts of knowledge. With these shards, it is no wonder the Daelians remember more than anyone else. They live in the great Daelian Wood, building their beautiful cities near the rivers. Their brethren the Daelian elves live among these humans, and both peoples benefit from this friendship. In these dark times, the close relationship with their cousins is the only thing that keeps the keza-drak from their borders.

Daelians are a fair people, with light hair and blue or green eyes. The Daelians are open and welcoming, happily mingling with members of the other human tribes and other races.

Daelian humans:

Favored Feats: Dedicated, Eidetic Memory

Note: A human Hero belongs to one of several diverse cultures, often referred to as tribes among the elder races. Humans have the same traits given for the human background in **Chapter One: Hero Creation of True20 Adventure Roleplaying©**.

DAELIAN ELVES

Traits: Daelian elves have the following traits:

Abilities: +1 Int, -1 Str

Size: Medium

Bonus Feats: Night Vision, Talented (Notice and Search), Weapon Training

Favored Feats: Dedicated, Eidetic Memory



FRAGMENTS

THE FIRST SUNDAARI INVASION OF THE CRADLE OF LIFE

The earliest days of the Age of Steel were fraught with chaos and warfare. Of all the myriad bandits and renegades who vied for control of the cradle of life during this era, none were more ruthless, more vile and loathsome than the Sundaari blood lords. The largest of the human tribes of Simarra, the Sundaari were a vicious people who had fallen prey to the lure of power, promised to them by the morargrim seductress Siatha Baelstron.

In return for their undying loyalty to Thûrak, Siatha - a devotee of the vile ascendant goddess Mordureth - taught the Sundaari the secrets of blood magic, of powerful ritual magic and the power that flowed from the screams of the blood sacrifice. In so doing, the malevolent sorceress granted them a powerful edge over the rest of the people of Simarra, which the Sundaari gladly used to subjugate all who stood before them.

They swept through the cradle of life, using wicked sorcery and blood rituals to sack Megath-Tor and all of the other cities in the region. The Sundaari fell like vultures upon the non-violent Daelian elves and the equally peaceful shodonai, enslaving the self-styled caretakers of Megath-Tor as they struggled to protect their beloved city. The leader of the shodonai - Datukhan Ael-Shodai - was publicly disemboweled and left screaming on their altar, blood magicks keeping him alive for days. Those who managed to escape Megath-Tor were hunted and killed by the dreaded Zôrùn-Ahmrê, *The Brethren of the Flesh*. Most shodonai who managed to escape the clutches of the Zôrùn-Ahmrê were rumored to have fled the continent.

Sundaari domination of the cradle of Life lasted for three centuries. During this time, they became incomparable masters of ritual blood magic. They used the Sedrin Henge as their primary altar, staining the bloody, flesh-encrusted Sathaen stones day after day with their diabolic devotions to both Mordureth and Thûrak. The Kotarran horde eventually drove the Sundaari from the Cradle of Life. These fierce half-giants swept down out of the mountain kingdom of Kotarra in response to the assassination of their king, Hidairin Kovek III, by a Zôrùn-Ahmrê cabal.

THUSPARRI ELVES

The Thusparri elves split from the Volspar nation at the onset of the Age of Steel over philosophical differences, choosing to travel west into the Kaerlon Mountains. There, the Thusparri elves built majestic cities deep in the forests and high in the snow-capped mountains. True to their original philosophies, the Thusparri elves maintained good relations with those people who remained in the Cradle of Life.

Their love of nature helped foster ties of friendship between the Thusparri and the animals who shared the region with them. As their kinship with the creatures of the forests and mountains grew, the Thusparrian

elves forged bonds of friendship with the mighty winged creatures of the Kaerlon Mountains as well as other animals including forest bears, timber wolves and great mountain lions.

These relationships - especially with the eagles they rode - with the animals of their homeland earned the Thusparri elves the nickname wind lords. Indeed, many Thusparri were so taken with these majestic creatures that they built strongholds in the most remote regions of the Kaerlon Mountains to be near these kindred spirits.

The Thusparri found themselves embroiled in many of the conflicts that came to define the Age of Steel.

They sheltered refugees in both Sundaari

occupations of the cradle of life. Thusparri warriors fought against the dragon tribes during the Hunting Times (though they later repented their role in that holocaust) and sided with the forces of light at the final battle of the ascendant wars on the plains of lorduun when the elder goddess Enâra intervened, sacrificing herself to end the bloody conflict. Repeatedly, these noble people proved themselves valuable and trusted allies for the cause of good.

During the Age of Plenty, the Thusparri extended their holdings, establishing aeries in all major mountain ranges of the western continent. Using technologies learned from the Shield Wall dwarves, the elves built magnificent airships held aloft by air that was heated and funneled into reinforced canvas balloons. The Thusparri used these vessels to facilitate travel between aeries and strongholds not near stone gates. They negotiated agreements with the enigmatic trade lords to bring goods to the most remote, inaccessible regions of Simarra. This era of expansion is what brought the wicked ghaskrii thundering down upon them.

The ghaskrii wind raiders had always been mysterious creatures, living on floating landmasses that moved with the air currents. Some say they came from some other as-of-yet undiscovered region of the world, perhaps another continent beyond the great seas. Regardless of their origins, the leathery-winged ghaskrii took the Thusparri's rise into the skies as a challenge to their domain. Toward the latter part of the Age of Plenty, the Thusparri found themselves engaged in numerous conflicts with the ghaskrii, who mercilessly attacked Thusparri trade routes, raiding aeries and trade outposts all along the western continent as they followed the trade winds south out of the frigid north. By the time the Age of Plenty ended, the ghaskrii had enjoyed considerable victories in the northlands, sacking a number of the Thusparri aeries. However, the invasion of the keza-drak changed everything.

THE THUSPARRI ELVES IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

In the first chaotic days of the invasion the Thusparri found themselves reeling against an overwhelming tide of invaders who, without warning, came flooding through the stone gates in the largest of their mountain and forest strongholds. City after city fell to the horde.

The keza-drak pushed the Thusparri deeper and deeper into the mountains, forcing them to abandon their homes and cut off any overland routes leading to the most remote of their aeries. Thousands of Thusparri died defending the retreat of their friends and families, but perhaps the most tragic consequence of the invasion was the wholesale slaughter of the

Thusparri's beloved eagles, griffins and falcons. The keza-drak burned every nest they could find, hacking eggs and hatchlings apart, using the dead as food.

These atrocities infuriated the Thusparri, who vowed vengeance against these soulless monsters. The years following the invasion have seen the wind lords slowly establish new aeries and freeholds. The Thusparri have fully immersed themselves in the war, battling their hated enemy wherever they are found.

The elves also engage in salvage, rescue and other humanitarian operations, providing what relief and shelter they can to the other refugees of Simarra.



FRAGMENTS: THE EMERGENCE OF THE TRADE LORDS

Many answers to questions concerning the Trade Lords to this day go unanswered. Scholars of these dark times often speculate that the trade lords were in fact a surface-based organization of dragonkind, and domination of trade in the world was their own way of furthering the growth of a world they still loved as well as increasing their wealth.

Others believe that the existence of the trade lords was a joint-initiative, conceived by both the dragons and the othrännän. However, much knowledge of these people has disappeared in the ten years since the invasion of the keza-drak. Consequently, most of these hypotheses remain as such and nothing more.

-Elohan Salaistrien

The Age of Plenty saw a myriad of cultures - most born out of the chaos of war- develop into thriving communities in all regions of Simarra. Yet, as prosperous as each nation was, they were virtually cut off from each other by thousands of miles of wilderness and ocean.

Travel between the various kingdoms was fraught with danger. The end of the Age of Steel served to unite the common people in oaths of friendship. Alliances were born as a sign of goodwill between the races of Simarra. Treaties of non-violence were struck between representatives of all lands, but lack of travel between the many nations muted those oaths, withering the alliances between the people like fruit rotting on the vine. So long as the roads between nations remained fraught with danger, left unattended and in dire need of repair, none but the bravest of people dared travel them.

Strange merchants claiming to be representatives of individuals known only as trade lords first appeared in the port city of Kuspala on the edge of the Sundering Sea late in the 76th year of plenty, just as the first freezing winds came howling out of the Dragonspine mountains. An entry in log of the morning watch mentions a peculiar group of people arrived at the city gates in a large caravan with wagons and garb of the likes of which had not been seen before.

They began selling their exotic wares in small market areas, where they attracted a large number of onlookers. Simple folk, not used to seeing such an organized bunch, began asking questions about the nature of their strange goods, where they came from, and more importantly, how they managed to cross the wilderness with their cargo intact. The representatives of the trade lords claimed to have knowledge of the quickest routes through the mountains and around the dangerous wild lands. They traveled in well-armed caravans and were able to fight off any brigands and

BACKGROUND

Known as the wind lords, Thusparri elves historically live in mountain strongholds (called aeries) or deep in the forests, to be near the great eagles, griffons and falcons they have domesticated and use as mounts. With the dawn of the Age of Blood and the loss of many of their greatest aeries, the Thusparri have taken advantage of their kinship with these majestic creatures as well as their knowledge of the construction of airships to aid in the war effort, vowing vengeance against the keza-drak for atrocities the fiends committed against their people. Thusparri wind riders regularly raid keza-drak supply lines and enemy encampments in the Korduc Barrens and the Thusparran lowlands.

The Thusparri are quiet and brooding elves, given to scarification in remembrance of the horrors visited upon their people. Thusparri elves are tall, stocky folk. Most have dark hair, varying from deep brown to jet-black. Blue and violet-hued eyes are common, though Thusparri elves' eyes tend to shift color according to their moods.

Thusparri elves have the following traits:

Abilities: +1 Dexterity, -1 Constitution

Size: Medium.

Bonus Feats: Animal Empathy, Night Vision, Talented (Notice and Search)

Favored Feats: Any one adept feat

beasts that might cause them problems.

Indeed, the organization impressed farmers, craftsmen and others who had long sought ways to sell their merchandise in other towns across Simarra. The envoys of the trade lords claimed that they could open trade to other cities and increase the profits of everyone involved if the merchants would agree to consolidate their resources under the banner of the trade lords. In return, the organization would ensure everyone involved became wealthy beyond his or her wildest dreams. They negotiated agreements with the Thusparri in order to take advantage of the great airships of the wind lords.

Three years later, the wares of the trade lords were being sold in every city in the western continent. Within ten years, the trade lords had established overland and shipping routes that stretched across the known world, bridging cultural and geographical gaps, and bringing the people of Simarra closer together than ever before. Everyone benefited from the influence of the enigmatic trade lords, who seemed to orchestrate the spectacle of organization from behind a thickening veil of representatives and council members.

VOLSPARRAN ELVES

The eastward migration of the Volsparran elves is a tale tinged with horror, loss and betrayal. Led by the arrogant Taladin Valanas, over thirty thousand Volsparran elves began their journey eastward, moving through the Tarn Gap into the Dassurri Basin. There they encountered the first Dassurians, humans who began to settle in the area at the end of the Primordial Age. These simple farmers and fishermen welcomed the Volsparrans into their lands, offering friendship, food and shelter to the weary pilgrims.

The elves, realizing that they needed to learn to build ships in order to cross the sundering sea, tarried in those lands for a short span of time. They learned what they could from these people (who the majority of elves came to regard as lesser beings).

It soon became apparent to the Dassurians that the Volsparrans were simply using them to replenish supplies and capitalize on the knowledge of their shipwrights. Moreover, some of the more bigoted Volsparrans had begun to bully townsfolk, taking what they wanted at the tip of spear and sword. Some Dassurri women claimed to have been raped by these elitist elves.

Infuriated and hurt by this treachery, king Mythan Gregon sent an emissary of elders to the arrogant Taladin Valanas and his council and demanded justice. Instead of receiving justice, they were thrown into their own stockades. Taladin slew Mythan Gregon and ordered his soldiers to take control of the port city of Ghandakarr as well as other hamlets in the region to suppress any potential revolts. The elf then ordered the shipwrights to build vessels capable of transporting his people across the sundering sea. Fearing more violence, the shipwrights did as they were told.

The Volsparran occupation of the Dassurri basin last three years during this period of strife the elves brutalized the Dassurri people, treating them like slaves. Not all Volsparrans felt the same way about the Dassurians, however. Indeed, a large number elves fiercely objected to the actions of their brethren and demanded the brutality, rape and slavery cease. Taladin call for a halt to the protests of this minority, even going so far as to throw dissenters into jail with the people they seemed to love so much. By the time the ships were ready, over five thousand Volsparrans chose to stay with the Dassuri and help to ease their pain and suffering. Some had even taken lovers.

THE DESCENT INTO THE WILD LANDS

When they reached the Eastern shores of the Sundering Sea (named for the insurrection of the elves in the Dassurri Basin) Taladin ordered the ships



burned to prevent any more of his people from going back. The next leg of their journey brought the elves to the edge of a great chasm descending thousands of feet down into swirling mists and stretching out as far as the eye could see.

Intrigued, Taladin ordered scouts to find a way down into this isolated realm, hoping that after such a long journey he had finally found a home for his people. After months of searching, scouts reported finding a series of caves to the south in some hills. The caves, they said, were treacherous and filled with horrific beasts, but did descend deep into the earth and eventually opened out into these "Wild Lands."

Wanting to ensure the security of his people, Taladin ordered two thousand troops to go into the caves and prepare the way for the rest of the Volsparrans. Unsure of what might be waiting for them in the wild lands, Taladin also ordered the construction of a fort. Months later, all was ready.

The Volsparrans made the journey down into the southern portion of the lush Wild Lands and began to settle the region, building cities and temples of amazing beauty. For nearly one hundred years the Volsparran elves had lived in this region, carving out a niche in the Wild Lands they could call their own.



During that time the elves encountered a wide range of creatures, some good, others wholly evil and fiercely territorial.

Wicked, half-dead ashoi-notkah, Shek-Tar gnomes, fierce, cannibalistic wyldling pygmies and the monstrous half-serpent/half man groa'khan were chief among the creatures who challenged the entry of this hideous elder race into their domain. Conflicts happened from time to time as explorers and hunters would inadvertently cross into the territory of another race, provoking backlash and raids on Volsparran settlements, but they generally they left each other alone... Until the needs of a growing population demanded expansion of territory into regions treacherously close to the domains of the aberrant races.

The shek-tar and groa'khan rose up in force, attacking and burning every settlement they found, determined to wipe out the Volsparran elves or drive them from the Wild Lands forever. Thousands of Volsparran elves died in the war. In the end Taladin led his people back up the caves and out of the region.

The Volsparran elves were once again homeless. They pushed on, striking out southeast around the southern rim of the wild lands through the region that would one day be known as Talmosa and into the Aradi heartland, named for the tribal Aradi; a race of beings with the upper torso of a man and the lower torso of a lion. The Volsparrans, not wishing a

fight, petitioned to pass through the lands of the noble Aradi. The high chieftain of the lion men – Temak Proudmane – grudgingly allowed these strange people to pass through his lands.

More traveling, more encounters with strange creatures who challenged the elves' right to live in their lands. Then one day, weary from their rootless meandering, the Volsparran peoples came to a great forest nestled against mountains possessing such rugged beauty as the elves had never seen before. An enormous lake with water so clear it could be a mirror lay in the midst of the great expanse of trees. Taladin instantly knew. This place would be their home. Therefore, it was that after many years, the nation of Volspar was formed. There in the forest at the base of the mountain range that would one day be known as the Sargolian Wall.

The years following the settlement of Volspar saw more struggles for its people. Humans began moving through the Volspar in large numbers. Some tried to settle, which led to bloodshed as the highborn elves, like other races that lived in this region, sought to protect their domains. Others humans simply wanted to move through and onto other regions. After much debate, the Volsparrans decided that they could not deny other races (however inferior they might be) the right to lay claim to lands beyond the boundaries of Volspar.

A road skirting the edges of Volspar was built. Settlers and explorers who approached the domain of the highborn were escorted to this road and told that if they wished to travel in this region, they must stick to the road before them, or suffer the penalty of trespassing in the realm of the highborn. Most people obeyed this decree. Others foolishly tested the patience of the elves and paid for it with their lives.

OF THE BLOOD WARS

Each year at mid-summer the council of the elder highborn would meet in the grand forum at Vol-spareth; the capital city of Volspar located on the shores of Mirror Lake. There, they would discuss the affairs of the nation of Volspar and make decisions about the course of the future. Such discussions invariably led to philosophical debates about the nature of life and mortality.

One year the sister of Taladin Valanas - Salena Valanas – came to the forum, a newly initiated elder of the Volsparran people. Salena listened to the ageless argument and offered up her own opinions. She believed (as did a growing number of elves) that the true nature of living was not about growth and beauty, but rather about decay. Indeed, Salena argued that true beauty was found in the atrophy and decay born out of the death of life.

All things inevitably found death, decomposing into a great blight wherein true immortality and unending rest from the mortal coil might be found, she said. Outraged by these deviant beliefs, the other council members proclaimed them blasphemous heresies committed against their mother goddess, Gimbureth. Salena laughed as she was dragged from the forum, asking where their so-called goddess had gone, if not the sweet embrace of death?

The end of the Primordial Age had also meant a loss of contact with the elder gods, who seemed to have abandoned the people of Simarra. In their absence the black god Thûrak created the evil morargrim, fiendish shape-shifting creatures devoted to furthering the cause of their master. Thûrak commanded the morargrim to venture the world and sew discontent and malice in the hearts of the elder races. One of them had come to Salena, whispering lies about her people, offering to teach the troubled elf maiden a new path of unimaginable power, of true beauty; the path of the blighted ones.

Beguiled by the morargrim, Salena began to preach the path of the blighted ones to others, swaying them to the belief that life inexorably spiraled into oblivion, and that the true path of the Volsparran elves coiled around the perpetuation of that cycle. By the time she was thrown out of the grand forum in the 105th year of steel (Commonly known as the year of mists) Salena's "Church of the Blight" had over three thousand converts. Taladin Valanas confronted his sister and demanded she publicly renounce her disgusting beliefs and call for a return to the teachings of Gimbureth.

Salena refused, and Taladin banished her for it, proclaiming the religion an abomination. The Church of the Blight was proclaimed illegal. Anyone found to be adhering to its tenets would be imprisoned. The blighted ones - as they began calling themselves - left Volspar on the heels of their banished high priestess, promising retribution.

Years passed with no word from Salena or her followers. Initially, some of the elders joked that they would come crawling back out of the untamed wilderness within a year seeking penance for their perceived transgressions. However, after years of not even a sighting of the blighted ones, the elders began to believe they had perished.

Then the Blood War began.

The Blood War was a long, drawn out conflict which saw the deaths of tens of thousands Volsparran elves, including Taladin Valanas, who was slain at the hands of his sister, Salena Valanas. Using foul blight-magicks, Salena literally sucked the life out of Taladin at the battle of the sunken vale, withering the high lord of the Volsparran people until only his dried husk remained.

After the battle of the sunken vale the blight elves - as they called themselves - mysteriously withdrew north into the sarangak forest, ceasing all hostilities.

The Volsparrans chose a new leader - Dalenas Starhawk - who ordered the construction of a great wall blocking the pass between the Meregost Mountains and the Griffin Peaks. The Northwatch, as it became known acted as a first line of defense against any future aggression. All Volsparrans were conscripted into the Volsparran legion for a period of five years; half of that time was to be spent manning the Northwatch garrison.

VOLSPARRANS IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The fate of the Volsparran elves is a dark one. The flood of keza-drak through the stone gate into the capital city of Vol-spareth and the Northern city of Thulassan was a catastrophic blow to the Volsparran people.

With the bulk of their soldiers located on border posts such as the northwatch garrison, the citizens of Vol-spareth could only muster a meager defense against the keza-drak.

The losses were unimaginable.

Women, children and the elderly were cut down as they fled for their lives. Vol-spareth and Thulassan were razed to the ground inside twenty-four hours.

Those few who managed to escape fled north into the Griffin peaks seeking refuge in Volsparran strongholds. Tarien Keldaras, the high lord of the Volsparran legion ordered a full march south to engage the keza-drak at Thulassan, leaving only a token defense to man the northwatch. The tactic proved disastrous, for the blight elves roared out of the Sarangak forest, marching south to overwhelm the meager northwatch defense.

Faced with the prospect of fighting a two front war, Tarien wisely chose to split his army. He marched one force into the Griffin Peaks. The other force as sent Northeast into Volsparran strongholds in the Meregost Mountains. This meant conceding nearly the entire nation of Volspar to the keza-drak and its northern territory to the blight elves, but Tarien saw no other choice. Open war was suicide.

In the years following the invasion the Volsparran peoples have managed to increase their fighting force, forging alliances with other indigenous races of the eastern continent. Aradi lionmen, Sargolian refugees and Sudejans have linked up with the Volsparrans to wage a guerrilla war against the forces of darkness arrayed against them.

BACKGROUND

Once a highly prejudiced people, Volsparrans have

had to adjust their views of other races in the Age of Blood. No longer could these fiercely proud, arrogant people stand alone and maintain their reclusive way of life, much less survive. To continue to exist, they had to learn to live with other races. Caught between the fury of the blight elves to the North and the kezadrak to the east, the Volsparran elves find themselves clinging tenuously to survival. Every day more and more of their kin flee westward or die in clashes with their enemies. The fate of these people, indeed, all of

the people on the eastern continent, is in serious doubt.

Volsparran elves have the following traits:

Abilities: +1 Dexterity, -1 Constitution

Size: Medium.

Bonus Feats: Night Vision, Talented (Notice and Search), Weapon Training

Favored Feats: Any one adept feat

GNOMES

Created by the ascendant gods, the gnomes of Simarra have never been fully accepted by the elder races. Comparatively few gnomes have left the cavernous Wild Lands, so the other races of Simarra know precious little about these strange folk. The gnomes are split into two different tribes, the peaceful seguire and the vicious shek-tar.

The ascendant god Seguirion shaped all gnomes in the wild lands during the primordial age, wanting to create a race of beings not tainted by the politics and attitudes of the rest of the world. Seguirion taught some of the gnomes the basics of astronomy and invested within them an innate understanding of the movements of planetary bodies, such as the moons and the sun. These gnomes would come to call themselves the Seguire in reverence of their god. The others became bitter and spiteful, jealous of their brethren's knowledge. They moved away into the deep south of the wild lands. It was in these primal jungles that they encountered a spirit-god by the name of Shetek-garak.

A sworn enemy of Seguirion, the spirit-god taught these gnomes the secrets of herbs and potion making, of poisons that struck their victims with all manner of afflictions. Shetek-garak also taught the most devout of the Shek-Tar - as they began to call themselves - the secrets of summoning the dead, of creating fetishes made from the bones of the fallen and binding the essence of the unliving into them. In return, the Shek-Tar pledged undying loyalty to Shetek-garak, making war against the Seguire gnomes, the children of their god's hated enemy, Seguirion.

SEQUIRE GNOMES

For the Seguire, much of the Age of Steel was spent in relative peace and seclusion from the other, more violent races of the wild lands. Apart from their ongoing conflict with the cannibalistic Shek-Tar and ashoi-notkah spirit-binders, the Seguire spent their existence seeking to live in balance with nature. Over the years the Seguire expanded their territory to encompass the entire Northern portion of the wild lands. The first leader of the Seguire - High Chief Selgaran - established a council of tribal elders comprised of representatives of the over fifty villages in the region who met regularly at the capital of Glitterstem; a great city nestled against the northern cliffs of the wild lands by Boggan lake, named for the first gnome to discover it.

The coming of humans and other strange races into the wild lands marked a time of upheaval for the Seguire gnomes. Their strange customs and ways of separating themselves from the land in which they lived tended to offend many gnomes. However, high chief Belegrun Seguire was more open-minded and eventually



negotiated a compact with these strangers establishing trade agreements and the promise of peace.

Time would see the elder races ignore the treaties, expanding into lands long dominated by the evil Shek-Tar and ashoi-notkah. Desecration of their holy places prompted a war in the wild lands. The Seguire chose neutrality in this conflict, hoping that the Shek-Tar would not come North seeking to punish them for their fraternization with these strange people from the "sky-lands."

They were wrong.

Once they pushed the elder races out of the wild lands, the Shek-Tar came north in force, burning villages and enslaving the peaceful Seguire, who fought bravely against their enemies. Wyldling slaves tore many gnomish men women and children apart, eating them as they screamed, begging for merciful death. Spirits summoned by the wicked Ashoi-Notkah ravaged the Seguire tribesmen. The Seguire relied on their expertise in the construction of mechanical devices and ascendant technology to aid them in repelling the armies of their fiendish cousins.

Rudimentary knowledge of explosives gained from the dwarves who once lived in the wild lands allowed the Seguire to craft grenade-like weapons, firearms and rockets. Coupled with other fields of knowledge, the industrious gnomes crafted solid shells, explosive rounds, spear-tips and arrowheads. Complex catapults and even rudimentary flying machines were built, allowing the gnomes to bomb their enemies.

After years of fighting, the Shek-Tar withdrew from the furthestmost Northern region of the wild lands, though they maintained constant watch over their brethren from their greatly expanded territory that included Harken Keep. The Seguire were quick to revert to their peaceful ways, but the lesson of vigilance had been learned. Outposts were constructed close to Shek-Tar territory so that the Seguire gnomes could keep an eye on their enemies.

SEGUIRE IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

Like many of the races in the wild lands, the war for Simarra has had a negligible effect on the Seguire gnomes. The entire region has only one Taer' las Brennath nexus powerful enough to connect with the Threshold realm, but it has never been used. Indeed, few people even know of it. It is rumored that Thengrin Tarelion (the founder of the order of the avikus) may have known. The order of the avikus did enter the wild lands during the time the elder races settled there, but if the stone gate was found, there are no records of it. Some keza-drak are rumored to have entered the wild lands by way of the eastern stair, however. There are also rumors of a stronghold being built, but nobody knows for sure.

Some Seguire gnomes have settled in Ardrennen Falls and are instrumental in maintaining the city's defenses. These clever gnomes live almost exclusively in their own section of the city, called the gnome quarter.

BACKGROUND

The Seguire gnomes revere nature and seek to live in harmony with all plants and animals. They alter very little of any location and stress that any settlement affects the surrounding wilderness as little as possible. The wisest of their kind are mystics who follow the patterns of the moons and the sun in keeping with the doctrines of the star god Seguirion. Seguire gnomes are craftsmen and gadgeteers without peer. Their cunning and ingenuity have led to the development of many strange and wondrous devices, expanding on developments the Shield Wall dwarves have made in steam-powered technology. The Seguire have also made headway in the use of enigmatic ascendant technology.

Traits: All Seguire gnomes have the following traits.

Abilities: +1 Constitution, -1 Strength

Size: Small

Bonus Feats: Night Vision, Trailblazer

Favored Feats: Use Mana Shard and Use Ascendant Technology or Nature Reading Power

FRAGMENTS: SETTLING THE WILD LANDS

As the races fled the war-ravaged Cradle of Life, moving into other regions of Simarra, those who travelled east through the Shield Wall Mountains eventually came to a great rift in the earth which would come to be known as the Wild Lands. However, simply calling it a rift in the earth is somewhat misleading.

The great chasm, which marks the boundaries of the wild lands, plummets some ten thousand feet down into the earth. The bottom is shrouded in a perpetual veil of swirling mists, broken in places by the tip of a mountain rising from the valley floor. The wild lands run some two thousand miles north to south and half as many from east to west, covering a wide array of terrain. From deep emerald forests of fir and spruce in the Northern hilly regions and open grassy plains along the eastern borders to a sprawling jungle encompassing most of the Western wild lands and all of the southern lands in the vast canyon. The entirety of the wild lands is split down the middle by a mountain range that runs in a lazy

crooked line from north to south. One can only imagine what those ancient pioneers must have thought as they stood at the edge of the great chasm and gazed in awe at the journey that lay before them. Many, overwhelmed by the enormity of the task of simply finding a way down into the wild lands, stopped right there along the banks of the mighty Ardrennen River. These simple folk, awed by the rugged beauty of the region, founded the settlement known as Ardrennen Falls.

ARDRENNEN FALLS

The hamlet of Ardrennen Falls became a base of operations for people seeking to find a viable route across or possibly even around the massive chasm. The settlement blossomed into a bustling township with a population upwards of ten thousand souls of mixed heritage as more people came through Spire-Reach pass looking to find a new life then. seeing challenge that lay before them, decided to abandon their journey.

Many of the citizens of Ardrennen falls made their living as guides or plied a trade of some sort, catering to the constant influx of travelers headed east. Blacksmiths, bowyer and fletchers, armorers, leather workers; all trades were represented in Ardrennen Falls. Weary travelers were assured of finding a warm bed and stout ale at any number of inns and taverns.

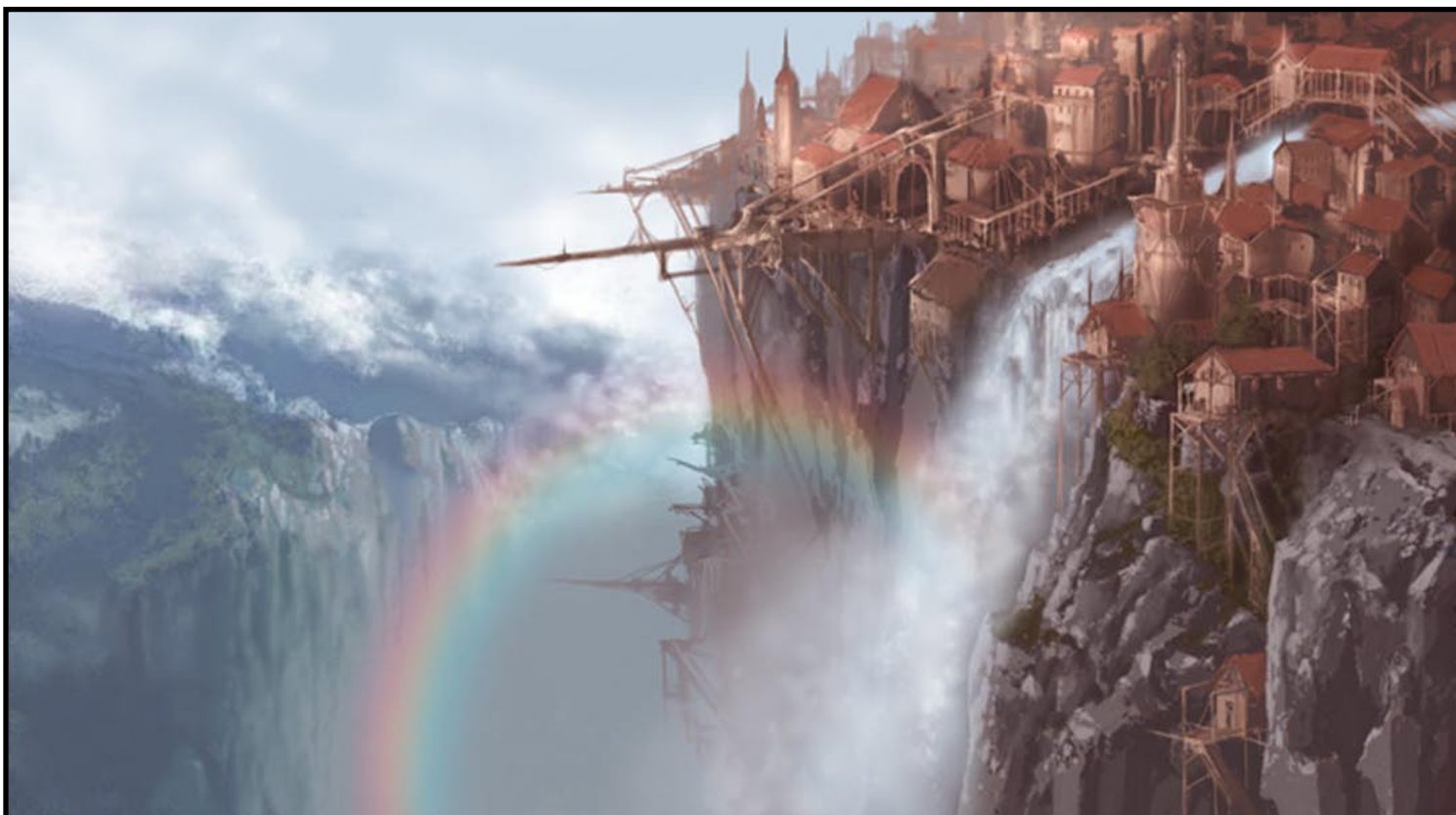
A council of six guild masters and one sheriff govern Ardrennen Falls. The officials are elected by the populace to establish fair trade policies and keep peace in the bustling frontier town. To this end, a local volunteer militia was organized to protect Ardrennen Falls from creatures that would occasionally come down out of the rugged Shield Wall Mountains and prey upon the hearty, peace-loving citizens of the town.

THE GREAT STAIR

For every one person or family who decided to plant roots in Ardrennen Falls, five others trudged onward, paying guides to take them into the Northern wilderness, through Elk-Horn Pass and down into the mysterious frontier lands of the Far East.

At the time, there was not a passage directly across the wild lands. People could either choose taking the quicker route through Elk-Horn Pass, or the much longer Southern route along the western rim of the wild lands.

Most people chose Elk-Horn Pass, but the problem was that the route was plagued with all manner of troubles, from monstrous creatures to bandit lords who long ago forsook the journey eastward in favor of a life of preying upon unwary travelers. Weather was also a concern, as the Northern passage was covered with snow seven moon cycles out of



the year, making an already dangerous trek even worse.

The Southern road along the western rim took people directly through the swamp-ridden territory of the Crone of Talmosa. It was rumored that the elf witch preyed on travelers, casting vile magicks to ensure entire caravans became hopelessly lost in the monster-infested swamps of the Southern lands. No, the Southern route was not much of an option either. People talked of finding a route down into the great chasm to make possible a faster trip east. However, the notion of somehow finding a way to the valley floor nearly ten thousand feet below seemed daunting to even the most skilled guides; that is, all but one.

Magdân Aglador, a sour-faced, ill-tempered dwarf hailing from Ubrathil Keep (a fledgling Dwarven holdfast to the north) said it could be done, but the way would have to be carved out of the rock itself. Most people scoffed at the notion of this "Great Staircase," but Magdân insisted that it could be accomplished with the right people doing the work--dwarven people doing the work.

The dwarf vowed that with one hundred of his kinfolk lending their hammers, picks and shovels to the effort, Magdân would build a road leading all the way to the base of the cliff and then back up again on the other side, but it would cost the city of Ardrennen Falls dearly.

The head of Ardrennen Fall's ruling council said that if Magdân and his kin could do this thing, then Ardrennen Falls would gladly pay the cost, rationalizing that the city could levy a toll on anyone wishing to use the stair. Magdân left, heading back to Ubrathil Keep to seek the aid of his brethren.

Three moon cycles later the dwarf returned with his kin and work began in earnest. It took nearly two years, but Magdân and the dwarves of Ubrathil Keep did not disappoint. The great stair had been completed on both sides of the massive chasm that marked the border to the wild lands. Magdân split the men up into two teams that worked simultaneously on both passages in order to lessen the time it took to complete the work.

Six thousand feet down the side of the Magdân stair, a spectacular city had been built into the side of the mountain, well underneath the perpetual cloud cover that nearly always seemed to enshroud the Wild Lands. Travelers heading down into the region were able to rest from the arduous journey down the side of the cliff in the fabled "Hanging city of Agribanâth." There, they could buy supplies

for the long journey ahead, rest their animals, and take in the splendors the view afforded them while they sojourned in one of the many lavishly decorated inns and taverns lining the ornately carved promenades.

For those who traveled lightly, the dwarves had created an impressive lift system composed of giant baskets, levers, pulleys and multiple sets of massive counter-weights to help control the speed at which the baskets raised and lowered. Both the magdân stair and the hanging city of Agribanâth were true wonders of the known world. The sophisticated design of the road and elegant artisanship which went into the detail of the buildings almost made travelers forget where they were heading--the Wild Lands.

THE PASSAGE OF BONES

At the bottom of the magdân stair lay a solitary outpost known as Harken Keep. Travelers could equip themselves at this last bastion of civilization before the arduous thousand-mile trek through a lush, primordial world that was not so barren of life as once thought.

In the weeks following the completion of the magdân stair, newcomers to the region began to believe that the world they had been seeking to the east lay sprawled out before them at the bottom of the great canyon. Truly, it was as if they had stumbled on another world. Rolling hills blanketed by verdant fields of tall grass swept down away from the canyon wall into fertile plains.

Deep emerald forests framed a majestic mountain range which lumbered its way south for as far as the eye could see. People began to settle in the immediate area around Harken Keep. Despite the rugged beauty of the wild lands, the council of Ardrennen Falls was quick to remind all settlers that a task had to be accomplished. A route to the other stair had to be carved out through the wilderness.

The council announced that it was hiring teams of adventurers to map the thousand-mile route across the wild lands and take note of potential sites for strongholds and way stations. The council also noted that it was important to ascertain the location of any potential threats. To facilitate the acquisition of this information, other teams would be contracted to map out the north and south regions. All parties would be well paid for any information brought back to the council.

A large number of people responded to the council's call. Some went North into dense woods

and hills. Some headed East along the Ardrennen River as it wound its way towards the mountains, and others ventured South into low-lying plains along the base of the canyon wall. The ones who sought to map the Eastern route across the Wild Lands got as far as the foothills of the mountains when they began to encounter strange markings; Totem poles built from the bones of various animals and humanoid creatures.

Having already mapped out a good two hundred miles of the Eastern trek and marked three possible locations for settlements, the seasoned adventurers decided to halt their forward advancement and send word back to Ardrennen Falls about this new development. Of the twelve-member group, three were chosen to head back and seek the advice of the council while the others waited for their return.

The three adventurers hastily made their way back, eventually coming to the outpost at the base of the cliff two short weeks after they left the main group. Upon informing the council members of the obvious signs of life, the council held a meeting to confer about this new development. Wise men and lore masters were consulted concerning this new development, and they all agreed that these lands should not be populated at all.

The three were told to proceed with extreme caution through the region, but continue plodding steadily forward. Too much had been done to facilitate this new passage to the East and there would be no turning back now. The council sent a representative of Ardrennen Falls with the three adventurers in the off chance they would be able to meet with these strange collectors of bones and negotiate some sort of deal in which travelers could pass through tribal lands.

However, when they returned to the place where the main group was supposed to be waiting, they found the nine men and women of the adventuring group dead and hanging from poles; their brutally hacked, mutilated bodies charred and blackened as if they had been burned alive. Another way had to be found. The group marked the spot on their map, calling it the passage of bones, and turned back, knowing that to continue the eastern route across the wild lands would only lead to more deaths.

CONTACT WITH THE SEGUIRE GNOMES

The brave adventurers sent the council representative back to Harken Keep to inform the people of what happened. They also told the elf to inform the council that they would continue onward towards the eastern stair despite the tragedy that befell the rest of the group.

The group backtracked for three days before fording the Ardrennen River and turning North. After two weeks of wandering North by Northeast through forests and hilly terrain, they moved cautiously into a mist-laden valley, keeping their eyes on lines of smoke rising above the tree line on the valley floor.

As the group moved through some dense overgrowth, the three adventurers stumbled onto a path winding its way down into the valley towards the lines of smoke. Suddenly three short creatures appeared around the bend, heading up the trail towards the startled group. Both parties stood there in stunned silence for a few tense seconds, and then the tiny creatures bolted back in the direction from which they came.

Unsure of what would happen if they let the little creatures get away, the group gave chase, only to be captured as they ran headlong into a trap. Unbeknownst to the party, the gnomes had been tracking them for three days. They let the adventurers get close to their sacred valley before deciding it was time to find out just what their business was. Twenty of the gnome warriors surrounded the stunned adventurers and led them down into the village at spear-point. Once there, they were placed in stockades.

After weeks upon weeks of interrogation in broken True Speak, the Seguire gnomes finally managed to gather enough information about the adventurers to make a determination of their fate. Chief Belegrun Seguire decided that the outlanders were to be released and a delegation would be sent to the great wall to speak with the leaders of the outlanders.

NEGOTIATING A ROUTE THROUGH SEGUIRE TERRITORY

Three months after the adventurers turned North, they returned to the Magdân stair with five chieftains - representatives of the five Seguire Tribes in tow. The council of Ardrennen Falls met with the gnomes at Harken Keep. The gnomes refused to ascend the great wall into the sky-the supposed home of their god, believing it was sacrilegious to do so.

The chieftains of the Seguire gnomes claimed their gods would punish them by sending wyldlings, Shek-Tar and ashoi-notkah to their valley. Many would die. The gnomes warned the council that the people of Ardrennen Falls, indeed everyone who ventured into the lands near the great falls were in danger of feeling the wrath of the Shek-tar and their wyldling slaves.

The council said that what was done could not, would not be undone. A way had to be found to

live in peace with the Seguire, the ashoi-notkah and the Shek-tar. The chieftains all laughed and said the people from the sky had not yet seen the spirit walkers, they had not felt the wrath of the wild ones, but if they stayed in this place for much longer, they would.

The council asked the gnomes to wait for them at the outpost while they went back up to Agribanâth to discuss the situation. The council argued and debated the problem for four days, and finally came back down to speak with the gnome chieftains. They asked the Seguire gnomes if it might be possible to find a route to the Eastern cliffs that led through Seguire Gnome tribal lands instead of the territory of the ashoi-notkah.

The chieftains returned to Seguire lands to discuss it among their people. One the following new moon, the chieftains returned. The gnomes said that they too were hunted by the Shek-tar and the wild ones. If the people from the sky wished to make a treaty with the Seguire, then they would be able to travel through the lands of their ancestors to the Eastern wall. The Seguire would guide them to ensure nobody wandered onto sacred lands. In exchange, the council agreed to help the Seguire gnomes defend themselves against the threat of the Shek-Tar and the wild ones.

THE WILD LANDS COMPACT

For over two centuries, life was good for the people of Ardrennen Falls and the hanging city of Agribanâth. The people who volunteered to go explore the Southern region never did return to the outpost. Seguire tribesmen who stayed in mud huts on the outskirts of Harken Keep told the council to forget about those lost ones, who had their souls stolen by the Shek-Tar and their heads fed to the wild ones.

With the route east through Seguire territory clearly marked, many more people started coming down into the great chasm. Harken Keep eventually became a bustling town and then, as years passed by, a large city. Ardrennen's falls grew as well into a magnificent walled city. Agribanâth also expanded, adding multiple levels to the already wondrous metropolis.

More and more people decided to abandon their journey to the far East. They settled in the hills and plains of the wild lands, creating new towns that came dangerously close to infringing on established borders to the south and east, borders that had been set up to keep people safe. Throughout these times, none of the enigmatic ashoi-notkah or Shek-Tar

ever came closer West than the passage of bones, but on numerous occasions settlers who ventured too far South would disappear, never to be seen again. In response to the disappearances, the council issued an order banning the founding of any further settlements in the highly fertile southern plains.

People complained to the council that they should be allowed to settle in the outlying areas farther east along the Ardrennen River, further North in the hills, and especially to the South where farming communities could take advantage of the highly fertile soil. It was the council's responsibility to protect them. After all, they saw fit to tax the people, those monies should be used to build outposts and hire militia to protect them from the savages who threatened their safety.

The greedy council was not prepared to spend the extra coin to build outposts. Moreover, the Seguire chieftains advised the council not to do anything rash that might be seen as an act of hostility, warning the council that they had not seen the true strength of the wild ones and the Ashoi-Notkah. In response, settlers began to ignore council policy.

Homesteads cropped up in all banned regions in direct violation of the council's decree. Settlers built their own defenses and forged their own weapons and armor. If the council would not protect them, so be it. The people stopped paying taxes and elected their own administrators. For a short while, things looked like they were going to work out.

The "Wild Lands Compact" as the myriad cluster of towns and hamlets began calling themselves managed to negotiate deals with the Seguire Gnomes involving limited trade agreements and northern expansion into Seguire tribal lands. Some more adventurous gnomes even began to venture up into the city of the humans. Sadly, this state of affairs was not meant to last.

Another five years passed with relative peace. Conflicts with the Shek-Tar and other strange races in the South happened with increasing frequency. Expansion progressed and tiny farming communities grabbed more and more land along the Southern canyon wall. They moved deep into the Southern territory they had been warned to leave alone.

Greedy dwarves began mining the mountains against all warnings by the Seguire gnomes. Those mountains were sacred to the Shek-Tar. To desecrate them as the dwarves were doing was a death sentence for these outsiders. Not wanting to be tied to the sacrilegious deeds of the dwarves, the Seguire cut all ties with the settlers knowing nothing could be done to stop the bloodshed to come.

WAR IN THE WILD LANDS

One fateful morning, a large band of fearsome looking gnomes appeared on the outskirts of the town surrounding Harken Keep, materializing out of the thick mist as if by magic.

The mysterious little folk were bedecked in armor made from the skulls and bones of unidentified creatures. Their faces painted with blue paste and black coal dust to accentuate their pale, angular features, and an assortment of macabre designs consisting of eerie, with arcane symbols drawn on their sunken cheeks and forehead with blue and orange pigments.

Bone jewelry, including various piercings adorned their bodies. Even their wicked daggers, spears and long knives were made from the bones of some creature. However, what was most unsettling about the savage-looking gnomes were the creatures they had collared and kneeling on the ground before them.

Even though they knelt before their captors, one could tell that the creatures were much smaller than the gnomes were. The wild-eyed, naked rat-like

humanoids showed no signs of intelligence. They yanked and pulled at the ropes and gnawed on the bone collars to which the ropes were attached, growling and snarling at the comparatively gigantic elves and humans who had clustered around this motley crew.

The gnomes silenced the creatures by sending a wave of energy streaking down the cord. When the force reached the wyldlings, the creatures howled in pain and, much like a dog, whimpered, nuzzling against the legs of their gnome masters. Then the gnomes patted them on their mangy hair for a few moments as they sat there, worriedly clicking their tongues against the roof of their mouths while baring cracked ashen lips to display rotten black fangs. The wyldlings moved away from the gnomes, apparently satisfied their masters were no longer angry. The crazed humanoids sat contentedly a few feet away, picking at fleas in each other's hair and chewing on dirt while they cast their feral gaze on the citizens of Harken Keep.

Then one of the gnomes, a tall, scrawny elder with sagging, wrinkled skin flapping under his jaw and arms pulled a large brown gourd out of



his knapsack. He stepped towards the enthralled onlookers, shaking the gourd. "Ahast Dueacklaa nowegiona!" He shouted, throwing the gourd down at the foot of one of the city guards. The container smashed and a white powdery substance flew everywhere. The air seemed to grow thick with the scent of brimstone. The shocked spectators began to scream as the powder ate into their flesh like some live thing, craving blood and aching to cause pain.

The screams became contagious. Soon everyone was shouting. Cries of alarm spread throughout the keep. Guards drew blades and hesitantly advanced upon the Shek-Tar. The medicine men spread out and unleashed their pets upon the inexperienced soldiers. The men hacked at the wyldlings as the creatures leapt towards them but the weapons seemed to have no effect. Horns and spikes magically ripped out of their dirt-stained flesh as the creatures landed on the soldiers, knocking them down to the ground. The soldiers died screaming under a hail of bites and vicious claws that rent their armor as if it were cheap linen.

More of the strange gourds were broken. The strange white dust blew through Harken Keep, borne on a vicious, hissing arcane wind that rained slow, agonizing death down upon all in its wake. Chaos erupted in the Keep as more and more people fell to the ground. Archers rained arrows down on the gnomes, but the shafts broke against an invisible barrier. The Shek-Tar laughed wickedly and formed a circle around one of the writhing bodies, chanting in their guttural language while the leader sprinkled pale green powder on the poor elf that could do nothing but scream in anguish. Meanwhile, the wyldlings went on a rampage, attacking anything that moved, only pausing in their onslaught to rip chunks of flesh out of the people they killed with their teeth. The people of Harken keep who had fallen prey to the white dust died horribly, only to rise again as servants of the gnome witch doctors. The evil creatures moved from victim to victim, sprinkling more of the insidious green powder on their wracked bodies, and each time the dead rose to do their bidding.

A scant twelve gnomes and their wyldling slaves had come to Harken Keep. In the span of an hour, they had tripled their number. The survivors of the attack were forced to flee the keep, heading back up the Magdân Stair or across the Ardrennen River into Seguire tribal lands. Those who went into the lands of the Seguire were turned away at spear point. The Seguire had repeatedly warned the people of Ardrennen Falls and Harken Keep about the folly of

their ways, but were ignored. The people from the sky would have to suffer for their ignorance.

In the end, the elder races suffered devastating losses in the wild lands and were forced to abandon all of their holdings in the great chasm. The Shek-tar were not satisfied with simply driving them from tribal lands however. They sent spirits up the Magdân Stair as far as the hanging city of Agribanâth. There, the creatures commanded their charges to guard the entrance and kill anyone who tried to come down into the valley.

Some whisper that in the years the people of Ardrennen Falls held control of the Magdân Stair, they built other entrances into the Wild Lands, secret entrances that could be found by exploring the vast ruin that is the hanging city of Agribanâth, but first, one has to get past the guardians of the gate. The people of Ardrennen Falls still live in the city overlooking the wild lands, but none go down for fear of inviting the wrath of the guardians and their masters, the vile Shek-Tar.

SHEK TAR GNOMES

The Shek-Tar gnomes broke from their Seguire cousins early in the Age of Steel, jealous of the blessings bestowed upon them by the ascendant god Seguirion. Bitter and full of hate, the Shek-Tar migrated south into the jungles and mountains, forming their own nation.

They awoke a spirit-god deep in those mysterious jungles. Calling itself Shetek-garak, the spirit-god made itself known to the wisest, most cunning and cruel of the Shek-Tar, promising to teach them a myriad of deadly delights in exchange for undying loyalty.

The Shek-Tar swore fealty to this ascendant god, pledging their very lives so that they might learn from it and bring some measure of vengeance to their hated cousins, the Seguire. True to its word, Shetek-garak instructed the Shek-Tar on a wide range of subjects including summoning and binding the dead, zombification rituals, herbology, potion making, poisoncraft and much more. Eager to learn, the bone shamans –as the Shek-Tar holy men began calling themselves – began offering ritual sacrifices to please their god, so that it might teach them more.

Armed with their newfound knowledge, the Shek-Tar made war upon the Seguire, killing warriors and snatching away women and children, taking them back to their bone cities to either be sacrificed and eaten in accordance with the tenets of their religion, or enslaved. When not warring with the Seguire, the Shek-Tar explored the dangerous southern lands.

They found a number of strange, savage creatures; feral rat-like pygmies known as wyldlings, the half-serpent half-humanoid groa'khan, and a myriad other fell beasts challenged the entry of the Shek-Tar into their domains.

The Shek-Tar managed to maintain relative peace with some of the more vicious creatures such as the groa'khan. Others (primarily wyldlings) they enslaved, using as shock troopers in their battles against the Seguire and the elder races.

For centuries, this was the way of things, but then strange beings came into the wild lands. First were the elves; loathsome creatures the spirit-god said were elder races created by the first gods of Simarra. History would eventually see the migration of dwarves and humans into the lands of the Shek-Tar. Each entry into the wild lands by the elder races ended in warfare. Each time, the wicked gnomes rained destruction upon the heads of the mysterious interlopers who dared trespass upon sacred grounds long held by the Shek-Tar.

SHEK TAR GNOMES IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The Shek-Tar have renewed their war against the Seguire during these dark days in accordance with the will of the spirit-god. Shetek-garak has also forged an uneasy alliance with Zashtazzra, serpent goddess of the Talmosan people. These two ascendant gods plot against the elder gods who have come to Simarra in an effort to hide themselves from Urkog-Drall. Shetek-garak has sent ashoi-notkah bone shamans and other undead spirits to serve the priests and priestesses of Talmosa in their efforts to remain free in this war. In return, Zashtazzra has committed the groa'khan to the cause of the Shek-Tar gnomes.

BACKGROUND

The Shek-Tar gnomes are domineering and known to keep slaves, mostly Wyldlings, though sometimes Seguire gnomes or humans. They care little for nature and follow one of the aberrant gods, a lesser god of trickery and domination and death. They sacrifice all manner of creatures to honor Shetek-garak, their spirit-god, building blood stained monuments in his glory. They are master herbalists, potion crafters and shamans.

Traits: Shek-Tar Gnomes have the following traits.

Abilities: +1 Dexterity, +1 Constitution, -1 Wisdom, -1 Charisma.

Size: Small

Bonus Feats: Night Vision, Trailblazer, Weapon Training

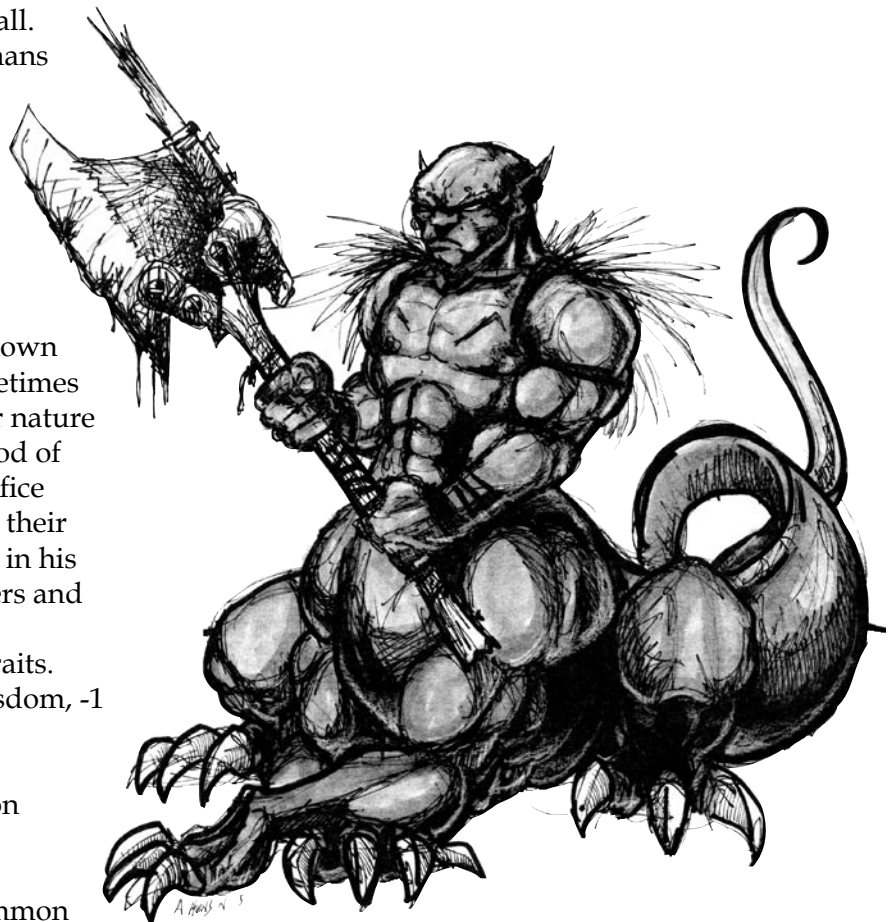
Favored Feats: Fascinate, Favored Opponent (Wyldlings or Seguire Gnomes) or Power (Summon

FRAGMENTS: SPIRIT WALKERS

During the shoug-nokt, as the Shek-Tar shamans and wyldling tribes refer to the times when the dead walked the earth, there existed people in the wild lands who could compel the restless spirits to do their bidding.

Called ashoi-notkah or "spirit walkers," these mysterious individuals possessed knowledge of a type of magic that worked differently than the more conventional forms that manifested on Simarra during the Age of Steel.

The ashoi-notkah are said to possess knowledge of talismanic magic empowered by capturing the essence of the dead and binding it into an appropriate vessel, such as a crystal, or, in most cases, bones taken from certain animals, even humans. The ashoi-notkah used these bound spirits to create weapons, protective charms, and even infused certain spirits into potions and other ingestible substances for a variety of purposes, including the creation of zombie-like beings who serve the witch doctors. In addition, the average ashoi-notkah is practiced in the art of hexing or cursing people who, for whatever reason, drew the shaman's ire.



To say the ashoi-notkah are mysterious creatures would be a gross understatement.

Very few individuals who have encountered these spirit walkers have lived to speak of the experience. The shamans live in remote sections of the Wild lands and refuse to deal peacefully with anyone, especially since the dawn of the Age of Blood. Legends abound about the ashoi-notkah and their relationship with the death lords. Some go so far as to claim that the ashoi-notkah make pacts with the vile rulers of the nether-region in return for even more control over the spirit world, and when they die, they are taken into the Dead Lands to become servants of the death lords. Some say they are not living at all, but undead beings who have found a way to stay in the mortal realm after they die.

ELARIAN HALF ELVES

The Elarian half elves were originally Dassurians, products of the rape of the Dassurri people at the hands of the Volsparran elves. Thousands of half elves grew up enduring the most of the anger of the Dassurians.

They were treated as lesser people; taunted by their peers and even denied education by schoolmasters. Many were disowned and abused by their human families, even beaten by the populace and jailed for crimes they did not commit. Segregation was commonplace all across the Dassurri Basin. Many “half-breeds” were not allowed to gather in numbers or even enter public places deemed “human only.”

As the first few generations of half elves grew into adulthood, smoldering resentment of the way they had been treated exploded into open revolt. The Dassurri half elves marched to the capital city of Ghandakarr and demanded reparations for the wrongs committed against them.

They were laughed at by the council of lords, told to go back to their homes or be thrown in prison for violation of decrees forbidding public gathering and inciting sedition. Furious at the Dassurians prejudice, a half elf by the name of Gathranas Hicks (named for his mother’s elven heritage and given his Dassurri father’s surname) called for all Elarians (half-born in the common tongue) – as they began calling themselves – to rise up in against the bigoted populace and take the respect they craved at the end of a sword.



Fighting broke out all across the Dassurri Basin. The Dassurri militia (formed in the aftermath of the Volsparan occupation) began rounding up every half elf they could find regardless of whether they followed Gathranas and his half-born renegades. Gathranas and his followers fought back, killing people and burning outlying farms, vineyards and villages, using hit and run tactics against the larger, well-armed and supplied militia.

This conflict would not last much longer, however, for the Dassurri lords sent envoys to Kotarra asking King Hidairin Kovek to send five thousand of his warriors to aid the embattled country in suppressing the revolt. The half-giant king, seeking to develop trade relations with the Dassurri nation, agreed.

However, when Gathranas heard the news that the fearsome Kotarrans were marching out of the highlands, he and his followers raided a fishing village. They stole eight fishing vessels and sailed north to Ghandakarr where the swift corvettes and formidable galleons of the Dassurri navy were anchored. In a daring night raid, Gathranas and five hundred men boarded the faster corvettes and set sail, scuttling the stolen fishing boats to setup a blockade of the harbor to prevent any pursuit.

The ships sailed south, filled with half-elven refugees looking for a new home, stopping at numerous free ports to resupply and in some cases offload Elarians who had grown tired of life on a ship. Time would see the Elarians who stayed with Gathranas turn to pirating as a way of financing their life at sea.

Indeed, by the time the Age of Plenty dawned, the Elarian Corsairs (as they became known to sea-going folk) had become widely feared for their brutality. Sea captains shuddered at the sight of the Black sails of the Elarian corvettes rising on the horizon. Their long cannons allowed the Elarians and other pirates to establish their dominance of the ocean.

The Age of Plenty saw much of the same activity from the Elarian Corsairs. The pirates established many free ports throughout the island chains in the Sea of Storms. These lawless cities provided safe haven for the corsairs and other pirates who preyed upon the shipping lanes, seeking a wild life of thievery and adventure on the high seas.

THE ELARIAN CORSAIRS DURING THE AGE OF BLOOD

The invasion of the keza-drak changed everything for the Elarians. This conflict threatened all people of Simarra, threatened their wild, free way of life just as it did everyone else. Under the guidance of Asma Gūbrain - Pirate King of the Corsairs - the Elarians turned from their thievery and began fighting the keza-drak wherever they found them. Indeed, the Elarian corsairs use their frigates, corvettes and mighty

war galleons to provide a means of escape for the countless refugees of the Age of Blood, taking them to relatively safe havens in the islands dotting the Black Coast, the Sea of Storms and a myriad other places in Simarra.

BACKGROUND

A mix of Human and Elven parentage, half-elves are most likely to be found living in the island chains in the Great Southern Ocean and adventuring with the Elarian Corsairs. That said, half elves can be found anywhere on Simarra. Most have a mean streak and tend to be adventurers or thieves. This lifestyle has been bred into them over the years. They have varying hair and eye color and are stocky. While generally not as intelligent as other races, half-elves excel at navigating the high seas.

Traits: All half-elves have the following traits.

Abilities: -1 Intelligence, -1 Wisdom, +1 Charisma.

Size: Medium

Bonus Feats: Favored Opponent (keza-drak), Weapon Training

Bonus Skill: Half-elves have Navigation (sea) (This balances out the penalty they receive due to lower natural Intelligence score).

Favored Feats: Choose Two of Vehicular Combat (Sea vessels), Firearms Training, Benefit, or Use Technological Device

KOTARRAN HALF GIANTS

Originally, the giants of Simarra were created by the elder god Vathrim, who wanted a warrior-race to stand as protectors of the world. The giants migrated out of the cradle of life (as did all the other elder races), moving into the highlands at the Eastern edge of the cradle of life.

There, they quickly multiplied, spreading north and south along the mountain range that came to be known as the Kotarran Highlands. During their migrations, the Kotarrans came upon an entity known as Lothoron. An ascendant god originally spawned by Vathrim himself, Lothoron felt betrayed by his creator, who abandoned the ascendant god during the Primordial Age.

Lothoron decided that he would gain vengeance against Vathrim by enticing his beloved race to forsake the elder god. Lothoron approached the Kotarrans, promising blessings of power and victory in battle if they would only swear fealty to him. Foolishly thinking that they could better serve Vathrim by swearing fealty in exchange for the gifts Lothoron promised, the Kotarrans agreed and built temples in Lothoron's name.

When Vathrim realized what the giants had done, the proud elder god cursed the Kotarrans, claiming that until their kin learned the values of honor and loyalty, they would be half their former stature.

Lothoron, having achieved his goals, abandoned the Kotarrans as well. The ascendant god laughed when the priests knelt in their temples, imploring him not to turn his back on them. He chastised the half-giants for being so easily swayed away from their creator. This period of strife came to be known as the Time of Judgment.

So began the Kotarran's quest for redemption. Lothoron continued to plague the Kotarrans, reveling in bringing misfortune into their lives. He created fearsome mountain ogres to infest the Highlands and make war on the half-giants wherever they found them.

Lothoron also created giant bloodworms and commanded them to nest under their villages where they might their crops and infect their livestock.

These and many other conflicts plagued the fiercely independent, somewhat reclusive Kotarrans during the Age of Steel.

But there were also great victories, not the least of which was the first invasion of the cradle of life by the Sundaari. The Kotarrans challenged the would-be usurpers, driving them from the cradle of life after centuries of brutal domination. The Sundaari vowed to gain their vengeance against the half giants, and centuries later, they did just that.

In the aftermath of the first Sundaari invasion, the Kotarrans annexed the Cradle of Life, styling themselves as the stewards of the ancient kingdom. Under the rule of the Kotarran kings, the people of Megath-Tor enjoyed a period of relative peace and prosperity lasting over four hundred years. Sadly, this was not meant to last.

Under the guidance of the morargrim known as Siatha Baelstron, the Sundaari expanded their influence to include dominance of fell races such as unghchuk goblins, gretchclaws, and monstrous

mountain trolls.

They forged alliances with dragons loyal to Thûrak in their quest to build an army capable of conquering the whole of Simarra.

Their mastery of the arcane arts expanded as well during this period. Siatha taught the blood magi to corrupt mana stones and make them vessels capable of holding blood obtained through ritual sacrifice rather than the reviled mana, which originated from the Spirit of Enâra.

Called hematic shards, these corrupted rocks enabled the wicked blood magi to bind previously performed rituals to a stone for activation when needed, greatly increasing the scope of their vile powers. Armed with their new alliances and increased mastery of ritual blood magic, the Sundaari once again descended on the unsuspecting inhabitants of the cradle of life.

The Kotarrans fought bravely, but the Sundaari and their minions were just too powerful. The second time the Sundaari invaded the cradle of life, they prepared for the fearsome half-giant warriors, using vile blood magicks to

literally boil their enemies' blood or wither away their strength. Ritual magicks and blood sacrifices further decimated the Kotarrans.

The Sundaari enslaved the noble half-giants who defended the borders of the cradle of life, subjecting them to hideous experiments which produced the Urrumâz, a monstrous bloodline fanatically loyal to their creators. However, Sundaari control of the Cradle of Life was but a precursor to an even larger goal, conquest of the whole of Simarra. This eventually led to the last of the ascendant wars, which ended the Age of Steel at the battle of the plains of lorduun.

The Kotarrans set about rebuilding their shattered lives at the onset of the Age of Plenty.



During the Age of Steel, the Kotarrans lived in relative isolation from the rest of the world, keeping to themselves and dealing with their own problems internally rather than asking others for help. The othrännän advisor to the half-giants taught the proud people that they needed to be more open in their dealings with other races.

The half-giant kings did their best to follow the advice of the god spawn, negotiating alliances and trade agreements with other kingdoms. Some of the half-giants learned to use mana stones and tapped the mana wells in the Kotarran Highlands to facilitate speedy travel from nation to nation. By the time the Age of Plenty ended, the Kotarran people were well respected by many cultures throughout the world.

KOTARRANS IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The age of blood has been nothing short of a holocaust for the half-giants of Kotarra. The decision to tap the mana wells throughout the Kotarran Highlands proved to be disastrous for the Kotarran people, just as it was for every other nation in Simarra. The ancient enemies of the half-giants -the Sundaari blood lords - emerged to brutalize the Kotarrans once again. However, this time there would be no reprieve from the horror. The Sundaari had the backing of the lord Agärazôn and enjoyed his alliance with the keza-drak. The Kotarran highlands burned as city after city fell to the invaders. Agärazôn's secret police - The Sundaari Magi known as Zôrùn-Ahmrê - began hunting their hated enemy in earnest, capturing

Kotarran women and children, bringing them back to Thel-Kaza to undergo various arcane mutations fuel the sacrificial fires.

BACKGROUND

Those Kotarrans who have managed to avoid capture are scattered throughout the western continent, eking out a miserable existence in free holds and mercenary camps. The fire of vengeance burns in their hearts, however. Many half-giants choose to become mercenaries as a way of financing their crusade against the keza-drak and the minions of Thûrak. One such mercenary company is the renowned Skull-hammer Squadron. Half-giants are large, but not slow or clumsy. All half-giants are fierce, strong, with slightly tanned skin, predominantly black hair, and dark eyes. Many Kotarrans have taken to wearing blood masks; visors with images of a horrific face. Wearing a blood mask signifies a grieving period for a Half-giant. Until that period has ended, the Kotarran will not remove the mask. Many half giants have been wearing their blood masks for nearly a decade.

Traits: All half-giants have the following traits.

Abilities: +2 Strength, +1 Constitution, -1 Intelligence, -1 Wisdom, -1 Charisma.

Size: Large

Bonus Feats: Favored Opponent (Sundaari), Weapon Training

Bonus Skill: Half-giants have one bonus skill, balancing out the one they lose for low intelligence.

Favored Feats: All-out Attack, Rage

FRAGMENTS: THE ASCENDANT WARS

Thûrak took great pleasure in guiding the developments on Simarra in what would prove to be the final years of the Age of Steel. His wicked agents-the morargrim- revealed themselves to the world so that all would know their true power and despair. They took control of the armies of Thûrak and began an inexorable march across the western continent, sending riders ahead of the armies with a single message to all kingdoms and all races: Surrender all lands and swear fealty to Thûrak, or face total annihilation.

The smaller kingdoms of the lands directly north, east, and west of the Cradle of Life had no choice. They could either join with Thûrak's legions or be decimated. The noble people of the vast Daelian Wood resisted the onslaught of the black armies for a short space of time, but in the end even, they succumbed to the might of the morargrim.

Northern tribes and nations fared better against

the onslaught of the morargrim and their minions. It was from these folk that the fiercest resistance came. The barbarians of the Northern reaches and the Horse clans of the Trachan Steppes harried Thûrak's armies relentlessly as they pushed north of the Talyibira River. The Volagar of the volcanic Droghedian Peninsula fought admirably, blasting their hated enemies with mighty weapons made from a mysterious substance known as black powder, but even those thunder weapons did little good against the might of Thûrak's armies.

Despite of the valiant efforts of the northern peoples the legions of Thûrak marched on taking town after town. More and more people began to flee the morargrim Horde and the sacrificial altars of the Sundaari. All roads leading from the Cradle of Life seemed filled with endless lines of refugees. The cries and lamentations of the dispossessed masses rent the still of the night. Little did they know the flame of hope would soon be rekindled...

THE COMING OF THE GODDESS

Enâra watched all of these things happen with great melancholy in her heart, knowing that if she stood idly the minions of Thûrak would destroy her beloved world. Nevertheless, she had made a pact with her pantheon to do nothing until they chose a consort. Meanwhile, the gods vented their fury at each other in the Threshold Realm. The gods ravaged the once-pure domain with all manner of horrid beasts, each calling upon ancient, primordial powers in an effort to gain an advantage in the contest. Yet no clear victor thus far had emerged. Enâra grew impatient.

The First Mother decided to take matters into her own hands. Was she not the mother of all creation? Did she not create the Threshold realm? She sent avatars into the Threshold Realm, calling for a halt to the hostilities. Enâra had made her decision. There would be no consort. Instead, the first mother did something much unexpected; she allowed herself to be born into the war-ravaged world so that she might create the othrännän in secret, thus bringing hope and true magic back to the world. Scholars and holy men would later call this moment the Trevailation.

THE BIRTH OF THE GOD SPAWN

Since the Trevailation, Enâra yearned for her eyes to look upon Megath-Tor, to drink in the beauty of the valley, to set her feet upon winding stair as it wrapped it's way around the Sedrin Henge, to smell the apple wood cook fires in the evening as the myriad scents wafted up on the mid-summer breeze. She craved the taste of the cool, clear Brandabel River as it wound its way through the city. Nevertheless, these simple indulgences were not to be.

War raged across the western world. The first city- Megath-Tor -had become a spawning ground for evil, corrupted for the second time by the dread Sundaari, servants of the evil god Thûrak; a god Enâra had created. The goddess had chosen to be born into Simarra, so that she might put an end to the slaughter and usher in an era of peace, a new age.

She had let her progeny-the very aspects of her own self- wage a maddening war inside the Threshold Realm, and all for nothing. In her dreams, she saw what they planned to do to her once her task was completed. She heard her own voiceless screams echoing repeatedly in her mind. Yes, her torment would be unending, but she would gladly pay their price.

Enâra grew much faster than regular children did. Adelia - Enâra's birth mother - did her best to raise Enâra into womanhood with grace and reverence befitting a godchild and with the discipline and love that no growing children should be without. The woman raised the godchild away from the troubles of the world, living in a humble dwelling deep within the Feycrag Woods, far to the North, in the shadow of the Sundered Stone Peaks.

By the time she reached puberty, she had begun to manifest the powers which had been stripped from her during birth. The emergence of magic within the godchild became the outward manifestation of the first mother's new covenant with the people of Simarra.

Magic would be born into the world anew. Within the seeds of each generation, a few would be born with the gift, the ability to work the magicks of old. The first generation of wizards would be represented in the othrännän, her chosen ones.

They would guide the races back from the edge of oblivion. They would be her agents on Simarra. They would continue her work and set things right again. The time had come. Enâra gave birth to each of the god spawn in a single night. She watched as they grew into adulthood through their first winter; teaching them of her love, of the world around them, of the things they were to do, and of the power they held. By spring, they were ready.

THE GATHERING TIDE

The othrännän separated, leaving Enâra and moving in secret throughout the world in groups of two or three, careful never to reveal their true strength to agents of the enemy. They went to the camps of those who were still free, told them of their creation and of Enâra's wish that the world fight back against the evil with threatened to engulf the world.

The othrännän revealed their true natures to the dwarves, humans, elves, half-giants and other free peoples of Simarra. They were the othrännän, god spawn, Enâra's living agents and guides, created by the first mother to bring peace to the world.

Slowly but surely the othrännän gathered an army large enough to challenge the forces of darkness which raged across the land. The remaining Kotarran half-giants came down from their holdings in the Kotarran Highlands to join the cause. The few remaining good dragons also hesitantly joined the armies of the god spawn, choosing to come out of hiding and risk death at the hands of the elder races, all for the for the good of the world.

Elven wind lords from the mountain kingdom of

Thusparr committed legions of war eagles to the *Army of the Goddess*, as it had come to be known. The barbarian hordes of the Northern Reaches united under the banner of the god spawn. Narmrothan horse clans joined the armies, and even the reclusive Volagar came down from the Droghedian Peninsula to commit their axes and muskets to the cause.

THE BATTLE ON THE PLAINS OF LORDUUN

The Ascendant war lasted for five bloody years. The forces for good and evil clashed repeatedly, fighting for every square inch of the western continent.

The army of the goddess harried Thûrak's legions at every turn, nipping at the great beast's heels, whittling its numbers down. In contrast, the forces for good swelled in number with every reclaimed town, every freed slave and every reunited family.

Multitudes of cities were razed as Thûrak's forces initiated a campaign of genocide in the final days of the war. Seeing their forces diminishing, the vile morargrim began to burn town after town; killing innocents as the armies of Thûrak withdrew in the face of the army of the goddess. The morargrim consolidated their power, massing all their armies on the Plains of Lorduun.

The morargrim challenged the god spawn and their armies to meet them for one last clash to decide the fate of Simarra. They secretly had been preparing for this battle, working vile magicks, offering up sacrifices for the dark god's favor. They brought with them many machines created with ascendant technology, war machines that until now had been used only for the hunting of dragons. Now, the dreaded o'rak-dra would be unleashed against the forces of light.

The blood magi had also prepared some special surprises for the coming battle. They keyed completed summoning rituals into countless blood stones. When the proper command word was spoken, the latent power held within the bloodstone would be unleashed. Multitudes of demons and undead from the Thugash-Tor would heed the call of the magic and come howling into the world to wreak havoc on the god spawn and their pathetic lackeys. The dawn of a new age - the age of Thûrak - approached.

A cold, rainy morning saw the two armies clash in the growing fog on the Plains of Lorduun. Lightning flashed overhead and thunder rolled across the battlefield as both sides hurled spell after spell at each other. O'rak-dra slammed into the lines of dwarven axmen and Kotarran swordsmen. Narmrothan cavalry wheeled around the right flank

of the embattled armies, long spears and pale swords hacking down upon unghchuk goblins and mountain ogres as their mighty warhorses overran the hastily formed lines.

The gritty smell of sulfur mingled with the reek of blood and sweat as dwarven musketeers fired their thunderous weapons at the hordes. Eagle riders swept across the battlefield, raining death down upon the hated enemy as dwarf passengers dropped tûrgash orbs - bombs made from hollowed out stone - into the enemy lines. Evil dragons plunged down out of the clouds to incinerate the noble eagles even as the tûrgash orbs exploded in a lethal hail of rock and explosive fire, rending armor and bone into bloodstained pieces.

The battle raged on throughout the day, with casualties mounting on both sides. Just as the battle seemed to be turning in the favor of the army of the goddess, the Sundaari unleashed the power of the bloodstones. Demons, compelled by blood magic, answered the call, surging onto the war-swept



plains. Their lust for killing and hatred for all things good drove the bloodthirsty fiends into the ranks of the forces of light where they wrought havoc on the stunned warriors.

The morargrim and othrännän sought each other on the battlefield. They left matters of tactics to their respective generals, each hurling eldritch spells against the other in a deadly arcane struggle. Both morargrim and god spawn alike were killed in the initial clashes, but as the war progressed, more and more othrännän began to fall at the hands of the inhuman morargrim. The forces of light, disheartened at seeing so many of their leaders fall, turned and ran as sergeants and generals alike called for a hasty retreat.

The tide had finally turned in favor of the forces of Thûrak.

The black army swept down upon the retreating soldiers, hacking and clawing into the demoralized army of the goddess. The howls of pain and screams of anguish rose into the night air, along with the acrid stench of the fallen and the smoky haze of combat, to linger over the battlefield like some malicious entity who fed on the chaos and death.

To the wonder and horror of all, Enâra appeared amidst the carnage, tears streaming down her face as the goddess waded through the wreck of the battle. Her luxurious crimson hair hung ragged and frazzled down to her waist. Tattered white robes, now soiled black and streaked with the blood of a thousand hands that had pressed against her, pleading for penance before their souls passed from the world. She moved to stand on a bloody knoll, littered with the bodies of friend and foe alike. Enâra cast her despondent gaze at the slaughter. Such butchery had happened because of her actions so long ago.

"This must end..." Enâra's words seemed as a whisper in the minds of every living being on the battlefield. Soldiers, horsemen, magi; indeed, all creatures simply stood there, gaping at the staggering majesty of the goddess. She gathered herself, drawing her power from everywhere and everything, all at once. It seemed to those who in later times dared try and remember the events of the day, that all else faded into swirling black on the periphery, save for a glowing white light which shot into the blackened sky as Enâra raised her hands and cried out.

The world seemed to explode in a pain-filled miasma. The words echoed in the head of every living thing on the field like a clarion call, bringing

them to their knees. Enâra's neck snapped backwards with the force of the release. The ground shook, and Enâra's almond eyes rolled back into her head as pale bluish-white light erupted from her broken body in a cacophonous blast. A brilliant sphere of energy shot out in every direction, leveling all who stood on the bloodstained plains.

"It is done..."

The words hung there on the windswept battlefield, lingering for an achingly long moment, like the memory of a dream upon waking. The first mother had disappeared. Only her tattered garments and jewelry remained- evidence that the people had been in the presence of divinity, if only for a short while.

THE GREAT MOOT

In the aftermath of the explosion, it was as if the fight had gone from both sides. The forces of



darkness wandered aimlessly across the Plains of Lorduun, many men dropping their weapons and sitting on the ground, totally spent from the battle, trying to comprehend what it was they had just witnessed. Mountain Ogres, ungchuk goblins and other creatures fled into the east, towards the Shield Wall Mountains. The morargrim were nowhere to be seen.

Under the guidance of the remaining othrännän the lords of the army of the goddess set their men to the task of disarming the remnants of Thûrak's army. With the bulk of the dark god's forces destroyed or wandering the wilds of Simarra, the task of clearing the roots of evil from the cities they had conquered proved to be an easy chore.

The god spawn left the generals to their work, focusing instead on rebuilding Simarra. The sacrifice they had witnessed their mother-creator make only fueled their desire to bring her wishes to reality. The better part of a year was spent traveling throughout the war-ravaged lands, speaking with leaders of the myriad clans, tribes and kingdoms of Simarra. A moot was to be held, they said, and representatives of the varied peoples of Simarra were asked to come. The time of war was over. A new age of peace was to begin.

The great moot was held at Megath-Tor. The othrännän revealed their true nature to the elder races, telling all that they had been sent by the first mother, Enâra to guide the people of Simarra in the days and years to come. They were not to be sent as rulers, but as advisors and friends to all who would seek to live in peace. The hunting times were to end, they said. The vile practice of blood magic was to be outlawed, and the remnants of the Sundaari were to be banished forever from the Cradle of Life.



The use of ascendant technology to create machines of war was an affront to the goddess. This too, must stop if the people of the world hoped to become an enlightened civilization. The technology of the mana-smiths did have its uses however. Like any tool, it could be used to harm or to do benevolent things.

The god spawn challenged the people of Simarra to seek to do well always, to throw down the weapons of war they had created with the essence of the world, and seek to find ways in which ascendant technology might improve their lives and those of their children. In the end, the races chose to seek peace. Many accords were struck during the great Moot. Oaths were taken and alliances forged. The people of the world went back to their homes with a newfound purpose.

HUMANS

Note: A human Hero belongs to one of many diverse cultures, often referred to as tribes among the elder races. Humans have the same traits given for the human background in Chapter One: Hero Creation of True20 Adventure Roleplaying.

The end of the Primordial Age was especially hard on the myriad human cultures of Simarra. Multitudes of people struck out in all directions, many wandering aimlessly throughout the untamed world in search of a place they might call home. A number of tribes emerged out of the chaos of the great Breaking of the elder races, the Baldarrans, Daelians, Dassurians, Korduc Plainsmen, Narballans, Narmrothans, Sargolians, Sudejans, Sundaari, Talmosans and Tharans. It is widely speculated that the mysterious shodonai are a lost human tribe, but history has seen these people become changed to such an extent that they are no longer considered human.

BALDARRANS

The people who would come to be known as Baldarrans moved north out of the cradle of life, following a man by the name of Baldar Thragan. Baldar - once a devout follower of the elder gods - became disillusioned by their disappearance from the world. Initially, Baldar began speaking in the forums and taverns of Megath-Tor, condemning the elder gods to anyone who would listen. Over time, the man began to attract a following. It seemed that a great many people were as disheartened by the state of the world.

Humans are, undoubtedly, the most varied (and most common) race of people to inhabit this war-torn world. Humans are not bound by stereotypes common to other races. Philosophical and religious beliefs, politics, morality; these concepts vary in importance from person to person. Humans are unpredictable (to say the least), capable of great compassion and unspeakable horrors. They create bonds of friendship and family ties stronger than steel, yet they war with each other more than any other race, having a long history of bloodshed. Humans are largely responsible for many of the atrocities committed during the Age of Steel, such as the Hunting Times and the Ascendant Wars.

Humans tend to embrace their passions. Indeed one could say they are captive to their emotions more than any other race. Perhaps it is because they tend to have shorter life spans than the other elder races that they feel with such range and depth of emotion. I have seen noble men become champions, driven to protect their people from the encroaching darkness. I have seen murderers and thieves, driven by greed, rage and madness do unspeakable things to their own people. I have seen couples so in love that they appear oblivious to the world around them, and I have seen that love turn to bleak despair when they are ripped apart, as many people are in these dark times.

I envy and pity humans, they have so much to lose.

-Elohan Salaistrien

Lacking any direction or any real commonality with the other cultures that formed and moved out of the Cradle of life, these people began to despair. Baldar's passionate speeches struck a cord with the masses that had begun to look to him for guidance. They began calling themselves Baldarrans in honor of the man who restored a sense of purpose in their lives.

Baldar urged the people to become resourceful, to forsake the rules and principles of the elder gods; to live as if there was no tomorrow, for death came to everyone.

Baldar promoted the idea that the world and everything in it belonged to no single man or woman.

Indeed, if any creed of the elder gods held true in these dark, uncertain times, it was the notion that

this world was theirs, bequeathed to them by gods who no longer seemed to care about their children.

Baldar pointed out that the other cultures and races of Simarra had already begun to embrace this philosophy, after a fashion. The myriad people of the world had begun to strike out into the wilds, laying claim to vast stretches of land, protecting their borders vigilantly against any who would seek to take what

was rightfully theirs. These people called themselves nobles, donned crowns and became lords, dukes, kings and queens. They proclaimed their *divine* right to lord over the masses and built great castles as a testament to their pseudo-nobility.

These kings and queens of various kingdoms raised armies dedicated to preserving the status-quo, defying anyone who would seek to supplant them. Baldar

condemned this distorted vision of the world, claiming that no man, no dwarf, no elf had the right to claim ownership of land, of people. None could claim divine ancestry was theirs and theirs alone, for all races were created by the gods, and the gods had abandoned them.

Baldar called for all people of like-mind to move

away from the cradle of life, to see the world, live in it as free men and women not bound by borders or rules, not bowing to any crown or throne.

The Baldarrans rallied around this philosophy, many following Baldar north others separated, moving off in different directions, following their own desires. Baldar held them no ill will. His philosophy embraced exactly the kind of freedom these people were seeking. They followed their hearts, kindled their



own adventurous spirits. In the end, that was all that mattered.

Life for these free-roaming people was hard. Traveling through nations claimed by other cultures was always dangerous business. Many people began to look upon these vagabonds as thieves and con artists. Indeed, Baldar's concept of freedom included the possessions of other cultures, regardless of whether or not they agreed. Theft of livestock, tools and other valuable commodities (including money) was commonplace; even encouraged. Other cultures simply did not understand the moral ambiguity of Baldar's philosophy.

Consequently, Baldarrans found themselves persecuted in many towns and cities they visited, oftentimes being thrown in jails without having ever committed a crime. Lynch mobs would hang Baldarrans caught stealing, hunting in lands reserved for noble-born people and even camping on so-called private property.

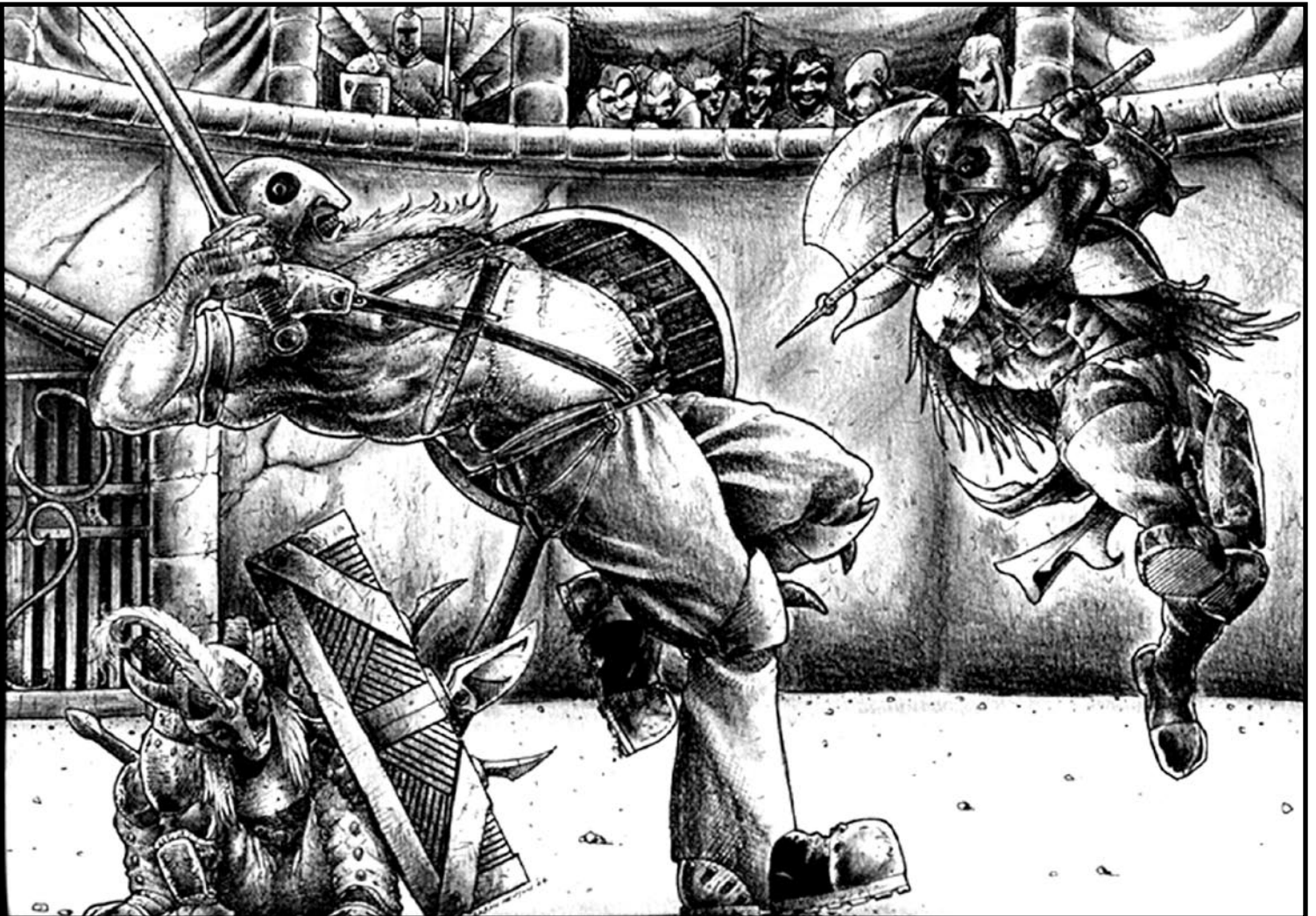
When Baldar died many years later, the people who had followed him so faithfully began to unravel. Incessant persecution in the various kingdoms of Simarra drove many Baldarrans to thievery. Indeed,

the philosophies of these people underwent a fundamental change in the wake of Baldar's death. While many Baldarrans still held to the nomadic, carefree lifestyle that defined their culture, frontier towns such as Ardrennen Falls, Greystol, Snowhaven, Fairhaven, White Castle Harbor and Aden's ford were populated by Baldarrans.

Most of these settlements would become lawless towns in keeping with the ideas of free living, while others adopted loose systems of government that varied from city to city. Some towns even became havens for gangs of bandits who preyed upon travelers in mountain passes and trade routes on the edge of the wild lands, returning to these lawless cities to pawn their stolen booty. Blood sports also became popular with Baldarrans, who appreciated the life and death struggles that took place in the arenas. Slave gangs often kidnapped travelers, selling them to the owners of some arenas to fight and die at the hands of veteran gladiators.

BALDARRANS IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

In general, Baldarrans have kept to themselves in the wake of the keza-drak invasion, preferring to profit



of the bloodshed and chaos by selling vital supplies at outrageously high prices. Medicines, food, clean drinking water, weapons and other valuable items fetch a high price, and more often than not, the rag-tag refugees of the world have no choice but to deal with these villains or go without. Many of the freeholds of Eastern Simarra, especially those ringing the wild lands, are controlled by Baldarran syndicates.

That said, there are a good number of Baldarrans who have seen the truth of the war for Simarra; this war is a struggle to avoid extermination. These rare few have joined the struggle, serving as scouts and spies, taking advantage of their skills as thieves and brigands to raid keza-drak camps or free slaves. Some infiltrate keza-drak strongholds to gather information and bring it back to those who can use it to gain an advantage over their enemies.

Favored Feats: Scavenger*, Sneak Attack

* **New Feat:** See the feat section for more information

DASSURRI

The Dassurri people migrated into the verdant lowlands on the western edge of the Sundering Sea early in the Age of Steel. Under the direction of first king of the Dassurri - Mythan Gregon - the people prospered in the region that would come to be known as the Dassurri Basin. Primarily farmers and fishermen, they farmed the fertile region and built great ships sailed the nameless waters off their coast, fishing the impossibly blue waters that would one day be known as the Sundering Seas. They planted vast orchards and vineyards for which they quickly became famous. Dassurian Plumb Wine was their major export throughout the Age of Plenty along with smoked salmon, spiced white fish and aged cheddar cheese.

In the interest of maintaining order in the Dassurri Basin, King Mythan Gregon organized a council of elders to govern the daily affairs of the people. Eventually this rudimentary class system would evolve into a feudal society, but only after the Dassurri struggled through the three-year occupation of the Volsparan elves. The death of the venerable king Mythan Gregon and the elder caste left a void in Dassurri society. People began to band together, pledging allegiance to various men and women of good standing, raising them up above the common folk as Lords and Ladies to govern the masses and provide direction for the future of the Dassurri people. The House of Lords brought order back to the people of the Dassurri Basin.

The next challenge for the Dassurri people would come years later when the half elves born out of the chaos of the Volsparan occupation rose up, demanding rights for past wrongs committed against their people. Led by Gathranas Hicks, the Elarians

attacked Dassurri militia wherever they found them. Enraged, the House of Lords and the Dassurri militia fought back. However, the lords soon found that they were ill equipped to handle open revolt. The vast majority of the militiamen were farmers and fisherman, not trained warriors.

The Lords sent out envoys to Kotarra asking for aid in putting down the revolt and were granted this boon. King Hidairin Kovek sent a thousand battle-hardened half-giant warriors into the Dassurri basin to help put down the rebellion. Yet, by the time the half-giant army reached Ghandakarr, Gathranas Hicks and his followers had already stolen a number of light warships and fled the country, sacking coastal villages as he went.

What was the lesson learned? Do not rely on others to police your nation.

The House of Lords negotiated an extended agreement with Kotarra whereby the Kotarran army already in the Dassurri basin would train the militia in exchange for an alliance and favored trade status, allowing half-giant merchants to buy and sell goods from Dassurians at much better prices than other nations. Therefore, after two years of training -both in the Dassurri basin and in Kotarra fighting the fiendish minions of the ascendant god Lothoron - the legendary Knights of the Wolf Brigade were born.

The next thousand years would see the Dassurri nation rise to become one of the most powerful and influential human cultures on the western continent, holding seats on the grand council at Megath-Tor, the Merchant's Guild and some say, the Trade Lords. The Dassurri navy became a powerhouse on the seas and oceans of Simarra, facilitating trade with remote islands and other countries on the eastern continent - coastal cities that had no stone gates and could not afford the exorbitant prices of overland trade conglomerates like the enigmatic Trade Lords.

THE DASSURRI IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The fate of the Dassurri people is closely tied to the fate of Kotarra. The Kotarran highlands acted as a buffer zone between the war in the Cradle of Life and the Dassurri Basin, with only Tarn Gap providing a direct route into the land of the Dassurri people. When Kotarra fell to the keza-drak, that buffer zone was effectively erased. Thousands of Kotarrans fled the horde, swarming down into the Dassurri Basin to regroup and link up with the famed Wolf Brigade, who were fighting a life and death struggle for control of the Tarn Gap.

Their defenses bolstered by the fearsome half-giants, the Dassurri people were able to hold off the keza-drak for a time, giving civilians a chance to flee smaller towns, making for larger cities such as Ghandakarr

and Alkamarr. Time would eventually see the glorious port city of Alkamarr fall to the keza-drak, its people slaughtered or enslaved and brought back to Thel-Kaza.

The sack of Alkamarr gave the keza-drak a firm foothold in the southern region of the Dassurri basin, which they used as a base of operations to cut the nation in half. The only thing stopping the keza-drak from conquering the whole of the Dassurri basin in those early years were the valiant efforts of a myriad of private organizations, groups such as Briggs' Wall Busters, Cutter Black's Ridge Runners, the Knights of the Wolf Brigade and the famed Kotarran Skull Hammer squadron the (latter of which formed in the aftermath of the destruction of their beloved kingdom).

Favored Feats: Choose two of the following: Dedicated, Firearms Training, Inspire, Jack of all Trades, Survival.

KORDUC PLAINSMEN

In the early days of the Age of Steel the people who would come to be known as the Korduc plainsmen migrated north into a hostile land that would come to be known for their namesake; the Korduc barrens.

The plainsmen split into a number of different tribes in those early years; the shattered bone clan, the weeping dog, the laughing jackal and a plethora of other peoples who, while retaining their cultural identity, choose to split because of fundamental differences in thinking.

Many of these differences would lead to war with other tribes. Indeed, many would-be warriors were required to raid rival tribes as a test of manhood, bringing back trophies symbolizing the warrior's honor and standing within the tribe. By the time the ascendant wars began, the combined population of the various tribes of the Korduc Barrens had swollen to nearly a million people who had earned the reputation of being fierce warriors and expert horsemen, taming the fierce, spotted ponies of the barrens to ride into war.

Witches and shamans, commonly known as Maj-karan (spirit dancers in the common tongue) began to grow in numbers, exerting a great deal of influence among the highly superstitious peoples of the Korduc barrens. Their ability to commune with the ancestors of the tribe held great weight with tribal leaders who sought to maintain a close connection with the past while simultaneously embracing many new advances seen during the age of steel. By the time the age of plenty dawned however, the Maj-karan had usurped the tribal elder's traditional role in the tribe, assuming

roles of leadership in many of the largest tribes of the Korduc barrens.

This fundamental shift in the balance of power proved vital to retaining the cultural identity of the Korduc plainsmen in an age that would see other, larger nations becoming progressively more "civilized" and technologically advanced in comparison to these people, generally perceived as backwards savages in the eyes of other races. Yet, with the dawn of the Age of Blood, this strict adherence to the old ways proved to be a salvation and a curse.

KORDUC PLAINSMEN IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The keza-drak who moved north through the Korduc barrens on their way to other regions of the north began to hunt the tribes of the region. Korduc plainsmen became a prized commodity as a slave, valued for their strength and endurance.

Many tribes vanished from the Korduc barrens in the early days of the war, hunted to extinction or enslaved. Those that remain are few in numbers. They hide in various places, raiding keza-drak supply trains and settlements whenever possible.

Korduc Plainsmen are very tall, easily a head taller than other humans. Some believe that the blood of half-giants runs in their veins that would go a long way towards explaining the ferocity, endurance and amazing strength of these people. They are masters of the bow and fearsome swordsmen.

Favored Feats: Choose two of Favored Enemy (keza-drak), Attack Specialization (Bow or Sword), Rage, or Tough.

NARBALLANS

The Narballans have inhabited the primordial hinterlands near the Feycrag Woods ever since the first tribes migrated from the Cradle of Life. Hunters and miners, these proud people made their homes in the rugged Sundered Stone Peaks where they could hunt and trap great mountain cats and other creatures of the wild.

They delved deep into the mountains, mining iron, copper and other precious metals. The Narballans learned use the ore to forge mighty weapons from the giants of old; Shields, swords, axes and spears of a quality no human or dwarf could surpass during those dark days.

The Narballans built their capital around the famous Narballan henge and began practicing old magicks based on sacred rites and sigils they learned from dragons during the primordial age -deep magic as their elders called it - that incorporated runes of flame and shadow, ice and stone, water and wind. They tattooed runes on their bodies, painted them

their clothes and engraved them into their weapons to invoke eldritch powers long thought lost to man. They formed covens, using the henges that dotted the Northern Reaches as sacred sites where they practiced their most potent rites. In addition, they prospered in this rugged, unforgiving land.

Many clans spread out across the vastness of the Northern Reaches and down into the high plains at the northern end of the Tarud Mesa. There, they built the city of Twin Rivers between the mighty Baelon and Andrin Rivers. It was this during these years of exploration and expansion that the peaceful Narballans encountered the Saran-Ghori orcs living along the eastern shores of Upper Stillmire Lake.

Fiercely territorial, the battle chiefs of the Saran-Ghori tribes led their warriors against these humans, these pathetic, weak elder races who dared intrude upon their domain. The Saran-Ghori and Narballans warred against each other for much of the Age of Steel, fighting for control of the Tarud Mesa and the surrounding territory. The Ascendant Wars only served to fuel the fires of this conflict.

Thousands died on both sides as the war for Simarra raged on. The Narmrothan horse clans were also drawn into the war as the fighting spilled down into the Trachan Steppes. Not overly, fond of Narballans or the Saran-Ghori, the horse lords unwittingly played into the hands of the wicked morargrim by killing both human and orc alike as they struggled to preserve their own freedom. Consequently, the Narballan people have never fully trusted the nomads of the Trachan Steppes or the Saran-Ghori, no matter how much they have changed during the Age of Plenty.

NARBALLANS IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

With the coming of the morargrim and the keza-drak, these once-peaceful, hardy folk have found themselves embracing war and barbarism in order to survive. Narballans are constantly living under the dark shadow of the keza-drak, who raid their remote villages for slaves to mine the ore used to fuel the keza-drakian war machine.

The capital city of Narballa has long been overrun by keza-drak who use the city as a base of operations for their campaigns in the Northern Reaches. This development has pushed the Northmen deep into the Sundered Stone Peaks to survive in tiny holdfasts and mines.

While most Narballans fight the encroachment of the keza-drak horde upon their lands, some have turned their backs on their brethren and joined the enemy. These blood-traitors submit to unimaginable horrors and are assimilated into Agärazôn's army. Some whisper they are changed into something else entirely, having become walking nightmares who incessantly

hunt their once-kinsmen, serving as hounds for the keza-drak.

Favored Feats: Endurance, Taunt

NARMROTHANS

Known as the horse lords, these nomadic people were once native to the kingdom of Numaràth. With the weakening of the veil and the emergence of ravaging undead nearly two thousand years ago, the Narmrothans were forced to leave their ancestral home. Three beings of unspeakable power rose up in Numaràth, exerting their will over the restless undead that stalked the lands.

These three fiends, known as death lords to mortals, galvanized their minions into an inhuman mass that swept across the rugged plains and dense forests of Numaràth, slaying all who stood in their way. Those poor souls who fell to the minions of the death lords rose up and joined the infernal ranks, seeking the flesh and blood of the people who they once named kin. The proud Narmrothans fought back the horde, but there were just too many. Village after village fell to the undead armies of the death lords, leaving thousands of people without food or shelter.

The Narmrothan refugees traveled north through the Numaràn Gap, crossing into the domain of the Aradi lionmen. Many of the refugees would continue to move north around the edge of the Wild Lands, crossing Spire-reach pass in the Shield Wall Mountains until they finally found a land that suited their lifestyle: The Trachan Steppes. Others would not so easily abandon their homeland. Consequently, the Narmrothan people have split into two cultures, the grey men and the horse lords.

THE GREY MEN

Known as grey men, these people are a tight-knit culture who live in settlements dotting the lower arm of the Sargolian Wall. The grey men are a hard, unforgiving people, tempered by years of warfare.

Led by Hannis Bregon, the grey men chose to stay and fight the minions of the death lords. They petitioned the Aradi to stay on their lands. Temak Proudmane granted the remnants of the Narmrothan people solace in the vast savannah of the Aradi Heartlands. Together, the Narmrothans and Aradi built the great bulwark at the Numaràn Gap in an effort to stem the flood of undead into the Aradi Heartlands.

Years of struggle would eventually see the undead fall back into Numaràth. Yet, when the seasons changed and cold swept across the lands, the undead invariably came creeping north out of the gloom of fallen Numaràth to prey upon the living. The

Narmrothans and their stout allies, the Aradi lionmen faithfully man the great bulwark, their vigilance keeping lands safe from the occasional encroachment of the evil minions of the death lords. During the Age of Plenty, the Grey Men built a considerable number of strongholds high in the mountains to watch the remote passes. Undead slayers would often venture down into Numaràth to scout the lands and kill as many fiends as they could during these relatively peaceful times.

The grey men began to adopt some of the technologies of other nations, learning to use firearms and explosives against the fiends of their homeland. Steam powered engines were developed and used to build war machines and mighty ballista to defend the great bulwark and other strongholds in the Sargolian Wall. In addition they purchased gnomish flying machines created with enigmatic ascendant technology and hired aviki to power them. The flying machines were used to carry supplies to the most remote strongholds, ensuring that no keep need suffer a loss of manpower.



GREY MEN DURING THE AGE OF BLOOD

The keza-drak invasion of the Aradi Heartland has put the grey men between the proverbial hammer and the anvil.

Efforts to contain the undead (who have mysteriously become more active in these dark times) have faltered as more and more grey men travel north to honor their alliance with the Aradi lionmen. The keza-drak civil war has slowed their conquest of the Aradi heartlands, but this is of little comfort to the Aradi and the grey men who endure raids on their free holds by keza-drak free companies bent on carving out their own territory.

The port city of Aradon - while isolated from the rest of the heartlands - remains a bastion of freedom for the free people of Simarra. Many grey men have committed themselves to the defense of Aradon, further depleting the ranks of those who keep vigil against the nameless evil that is rumored to be rising in the south.

Favored Feats: Choose two of the following: Favored Enemy (Undead), Vehicular combat (Ride), Track, Survival

FRAGMENTS: THE CREATION OF THE DEADLANDS

Where then will you go upon your dying day?

To the Dead Lands so dark,

To the Dead Lands, so grey,

Who then will you serve beyond your dying day?

To the death lords I go,

To the death lords I pray...

-- Excerpt from the Lay of the Dead Lands

So it happened that the Elder races grew old and in due time or through the actions of others, passed from the world of the living. Yet the war of the Threshold Realm raged on. The way to the Asha-Tor was closed to the dead. Indeed, while the elder gods fought for the right to be Enàra's consort, none, living or dead, could find peace, for the restless dead had returned to Simarra.

They walked the land as ghosts, phantoms, wraiths and other malignant spirits. For centuries, the world was thus, the living and the dead inhabiting the same dimension. Some took back their mortal forms and rose from the cold earth as ghouls, mummies and zombies: monstrosities that craved the flesh of the living.

The most powerful of these ancient spirits retained much of their earthly wisdom, knowledge and arcane strength. The "death lords," craving a realm of their own, prayed and sacrificed souls to the dread god Azagog, who heard their calls and created a place where they might rest from the world.

The Dead Lands, as they came to be known, were made by channeling some of the essence of the Threshold Realm into a new sub-plane; a mirror of the waking world, only dark save for pale-grey shifting forms which vaguely resembled mountains, trees, valleys, fields, and even vast cities, which the dead took up as their own. The very instant the Dead Lands winked into existence, all of the souls that had previously been held in limbo because of the war in the Threshold Realm suddenly phased out of Simarra into this new realm.

Gone were the wailing moans of the restless dead and the horrors they had visited upon the world for years and years, as rest, after a fashion, had apparently come to the dead. Yet, the dead had still not found the peace they craved. The Dead Lands were a separate realm ruled by the death lords,

creatures who, in dying and pledging fealty to Azagog became infinitely more powerful than they were in life. The death lords shed any sense of compassion or morality in favor of the pursuit of unbounded knowledge and mastery over the mysteries of the cosmos, at any price.

Great citadels were constructed in the Dead Lands, bastions of hate and malice from which the death lords ruled over the realm they created. The dead were made to kneel before the death lords. Those who refused were blasted out of existence, their very essence cast into a black pit to be devoured by an insidious construct of the death lords, the Soul-Ravager. Therefore, even though the dead had found a home away from the world they were born into, they still lacked the peace of the Asha-Tor. Although many of the unliving found that, they no longer wished to complete the journey to the Asha-Tor. The Dead Lands had become their home. Moreover, it was a home in a constant state of turmoil.

The death lords held no love for each other. The quest for eternal power is a lonely one, and none of the death lords would suffer the others to exist. Each knew the others stayed in their baleful towers hoarding ancient talismans, spells, artifacts; looking for secret wisdom from bygone ages, knowledge that eventually drove every one of them insane with spiteful lust and hatred. War came to the dead lands as each of the death lords sought to claim dominion over the whole of the realm. Untold numbers of spirits and other malevolent creatures threw themselves into a maelstrom of hate and battle, fighting an interminable struggle for dominance in servitude of their masters.

As time passed, the dead found that they once again longed for the realm of the living. They too yearned to hunt and feed off the rotting carcasses of those they slew, to revel in the terror they incited in those who still bore souls. Some of the death lords created portals to the land of the living and sent their vile minions to walk the lands, this time with a purpose, a desire to conquer



and slaughter. The Elder gods, being more powerful than Azagog intervened, closing the gates.

However, Azagog's creator - the dread god Thûrak - came to them and invoked old laws forbidding their intervention of the affairs of the ascendant gods. The elder six conceded, yielding to the old laws on condition that the gates would only be open for a short span of time each year, when the Fire of Valaen yields to the autumn nights of Forlaen. Then, they said, the veil would lift and give the dead leave to walk the lands until Authel dawned again.

THE HORSE LORDS

The migration back to the western continent was a grueling yearlong trek filled with new discoveries and many dangers. The Narmrothans first traveled west into Talmosa. When they had originally passed that way on their migration east, Talmosa was fertile lowland, its people peaceful and friendly to travelers. However, the Talmosa they encountered on the return journey was a very different place; a vast swamp filled with all manner of vile creatures, most notably hags and trolls serving the infamous Crone of Talmosa, and humans who had somehow been mutated into creatures with the body of a gigantic serpent.

These hideous beasts called themselves the kithanni, claiming to dominate the whole of Talmosa, their capital the city of Tadar-kesh where the ascendant goddess Zashtazzra dwelled. The pure blood humans the Horse Lords encountered lived in stilted huts and traveled the great swamp of sorrows on flat bottom boats, living in seclusion, away from the dreaded kithanni who hunted them for food and used them as slaves.

Many Narmrothans, seeing their distant kin (to be sure, both cultures were elder races created by Enâra) struggling under the yoke of these abominations, pleaded with their lord Liram Tharathon to tarry a while in Talmosa to fight against these beasts and free the people. Liram - a cold man still brooding over the undead conquest of Numarâth - said that he would not halt the migration until his people found a new home. However, he grudgingly granted those knights who wanted to fight leave to help the Talmosans in their quest for freedom. Leaving Talmosa proved to be problematic at best.

The kithanni hearing of the Horse Lords' incursion into their domain, harassed Liram Tharathon and his brethren every step of the way, stealing horses, women, and even children whenever the Narmrothans made camp. Their sorcerers cast vile magicks to confound the travelers, obscuring trails through the mist-laden swamp so that the Horse Lords traveled in circles or fell into deep bogs of quicksand. Kithanni war bands ambushed the Horse lords, attacking with poisonous weapons that caused victims to die in horrible pain.

Many Narmrothans lost their lives on the "death march" as it is referred to by their historians, but eventually they found their way out. After more trials and tribulations, the Horse Lords finally settled in a vast region of rugged beauty to the North of the Salmarin River, the Trachan steppes.

Time saw the Narmrothan people branch off into a number of clans who wandered the lands living free. These clans would grow and flourish many building small settlements to stay during the long winter months of Saeoethel- the long bitter night - when the freezing winds swept down out of the Northern reaches and the dead walked the land again.

Liram Tharathon built Stormwatch keep on the shores of Lower Stillmire Lake. The keep stood as a place of refuge for his kin and the seat of his power, though he often grew tired of life seated on a throne and spent his summers roaming the Steppes with his clansmen. He took concubines often, as was common among the Horse Lords and as consequence, fathered many bastard sons. The venerable line of Tharathon lasted throughout much of the age of plenty. Even though the descendants of Liram were well respected by the clans, they had their fair share of enemies. Tharan assassins hired by Amon "whoreson" Creed - the bastard son of Arduron Tharathon - killed his family as they wintered in Storm watch keep.

The assassination sparked a long, internal struggle as the various clans contested for the right to claim Arduron's throne. In the end, the clan of Vageron "wolfheart" Horgrim won the right to sit at Stormwatch Keep. Amon Creed and his people, shunned by the other Narmrothan clans, fled west into the Sundering Stone peaks, vowing revenge. Three months later Agärâzôn plunged the world into darkness.

THE HORSE LORDS IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The invasion of the keza-drak has brought war to the Trachan Steppes, and the proud Narmrothans have decided to stop running and face their enemies.

The Narmrothans excel at hit and run tactics and guerrilla warfare against the keza-drak, using their mobility as an advantage against the plodding troops of their enemy. Stormwatch keep has become a destination for many refugees of the war and to their credit; the noble Horse Lords have not turned any away.

These dark times have also forced unlikely alliances. The Saran-Ghori orcs have thrown in with the Horse Lords in an effort to halt the northern advance of the keza-drak. The heaviest fighting is along the Salmarin and Sarach rivers as well as the southwestern region where the bulk of the northern keza-drak forces are stationed at Naeth-Kügraz. The port city is a massive staging ground for naval and ground operations.

Many slaves of the northern campaign are brought to Naeth-Kügraz to be sold by keza-drakian merchants from their home world, or transferred to other strongholds and cities. The horse lords focus a great deal of their efforts on halting supply trains and freeing slaves when possible.

Narmrothans are dark-skinned and have curly brown and black hair. Their eyes are mostly brown, and the men rarely keep beards. There is a rare equality between the Narmrothan men and women; women fight and hunt just as often as men rear children and take care of other domestic duties that other cultures might categorize as being "woman's work."

Favored Feats: Track, Vehicular Combat (Ride)

SARGOLIANS

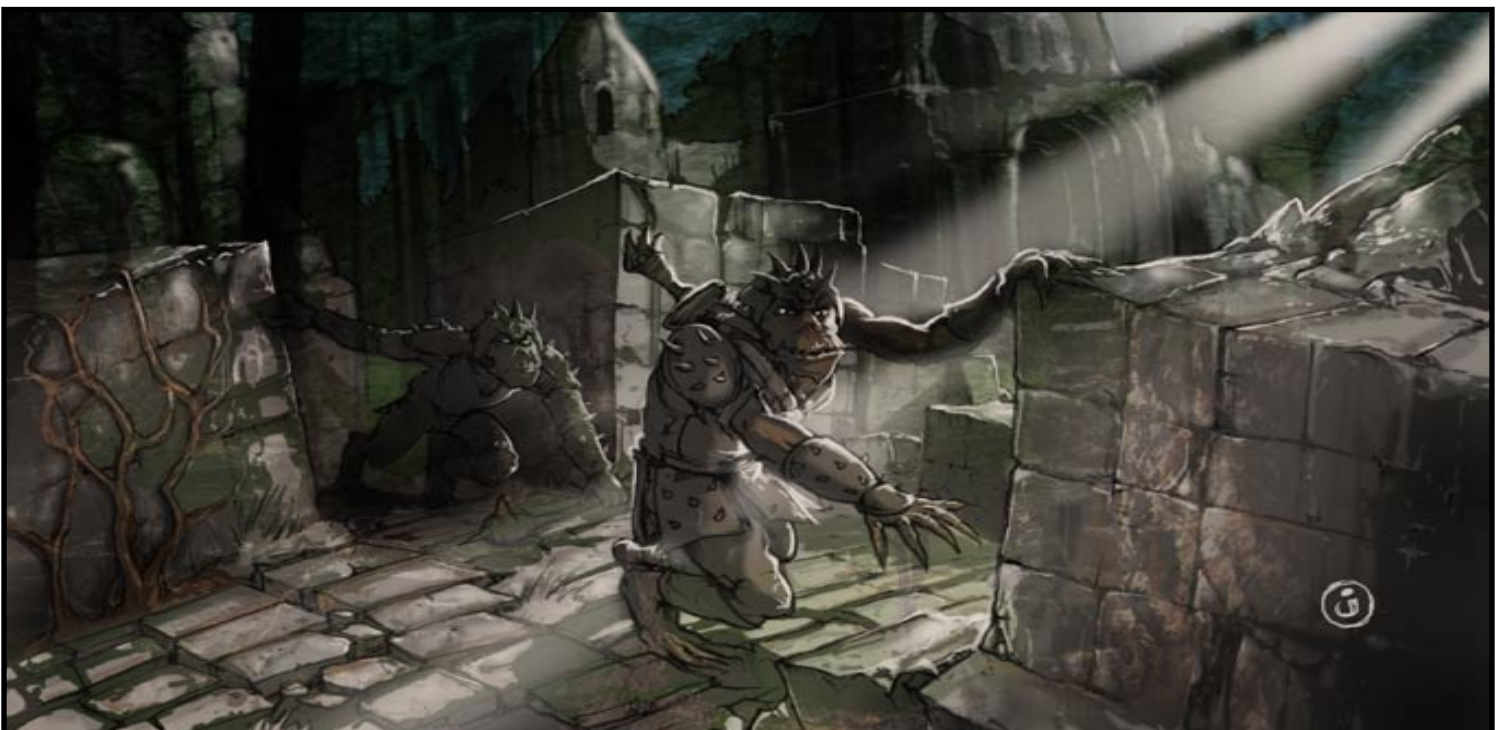
East of the formidable mist-laden range of mountains known only as the Sargolian Wall live a people shrouded in mystery. Named for the mountains that mark the boundaries of their lands, the Sargolians closed their borders to the outside world midway during the Age of Steel when other cultures began to migrate across the Sargolian wall. The Sargolians reluctantly allowed these immigrants to settle in the lush lowlands of Sargolia.

Many of the outsiders built strongholds in the region now known as Bloodfang Vale. These people seemed not to care for the lands around them. They selfishly used up many of the natural resources, hunting and fishing until the streams and rivers became barren of life and the animals had left their dens and warrens to seek survival in other parts of Sargolia.

They carelessly hacked down trees with no thought of re-seeding. They built large cities and polluted the waters with raw sewage, oil and other by-products of the strange technologies they brought with them. Consequently, the Bloodfang Vale soon became a barren stretch of land, a tainted pox on the region that has never fully recovered. The despoliation of the lands infuriated the Sargolians who rose up against these people and drove them from the region.

After they had driven the ravagers from the lands – a bitter conflict known as the purging – the Sargolians militarized their nation, erecting great citadels along the mountain passes and gigantic walls to prevent any more migration into their realm. The next millennia would see the Sargolian people become extremely xenophobic.

The various Sargolian noble houses - commonly



known as quojjin - held to a strict mantra; "The outside world will destroy our way of life."

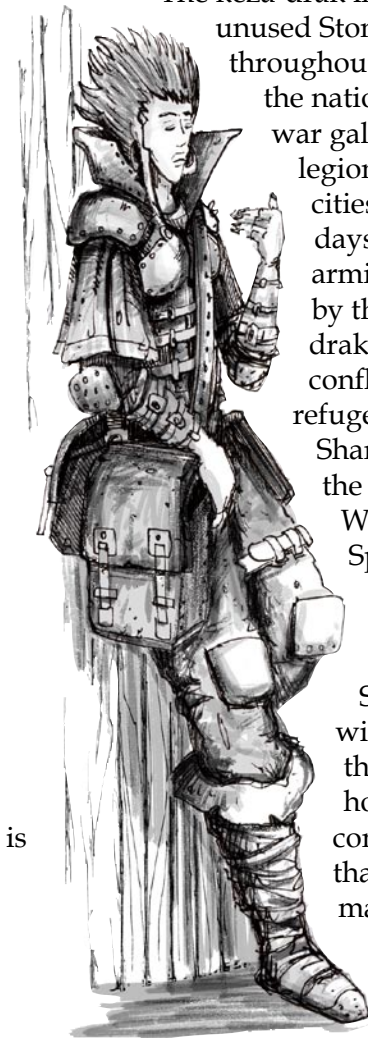
The quojjin taught the people (both Highborn and Lowborn alike) living on their lands that the outside world was filled with demons and vicious beasts. The people of the outside world lived in degradation, shaming themselves and the memory of their ancestors with their desecration of the natural world.

The quojjin taught that these ravagers of the world waged war after war against each other in a never-ending struggle for domination of the world. The responsibility of all Sargolians -they claimed - was to live apart from that world of horrors, maintaining a strict policy of segregation while embracing a philosophy of personal improvement of the mind and body, seeking a simple life in communion with nature. The Sargolians erected great temples in the cities and wild places of the kingdom. Magi studied mana and other elements of the world at these temples. Warriors would come to train, expanding their knowledge of hand-to-hand combat, sages and philosophers to teach the unenlightened.

SARGOLIANS IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The keza-drak invaded Sargolia through unused Stone Gates scattered throughout the vast realm. All along the nation's coastline, keza-drak war galleons spewed legion upon legion of soldiers into Sargolia's cities. In less than a handful of days, the relatively untested armies of Sargolia were routed by the battle-hardened keza-drak. The survivors of the short conflict, known to the Sargolian refugees as the Four Days of Shame, fled in droves across the treacherous Sargolian Wall into the ominous Spiderhaunt forest and the war-ravaged elven kingdom of Volspar.

Sargolians, like most Simarrans, are a people without a home. However, the shock of losing the only home they have ever known compounded by the fact that, with few exceptions, the majority of Sargolians knew nothing about the world beyond the Sargolian Wall.



is

A great number of refugees have been taken in by the benevolent Volsparri elves. Those who did not trust the hospitality and unfamiliar appearance of the elves have scattered like leaves in the wind since then, many seeking to explore the strange world around them.

Those who stayed with the Volsparri elves fight overwhelming odds to reclaim their homeland.

Sargolians have light-tanned skin and thin, dark hair of varying lengths and styles. Their almond-shaped eyes vary in coloration from blue to a deep emerald green.

Favored Feats: Improved Strike, Point Blank Shot

SUDEJANS

As the people who would come to be known as Sudejans made their way eastward across the continent of Simarra, they wisely built trade stations. In this way, the Sudejans marked their progress and created outposts from which they could establish trade relations with the other cultures beginning to inhabit the eastern frontier. Some of these outposts would become integrated into larger cities such as Beldarra, Berengrand, Haven, Rock Ridge, Thelstaad Keep, White Castle Harbor and Ardrennen Falls.

The Sudejan people eventually made their way high up into the Raanath Mountains, so named for the first Sudejan to lay eyes upon them; Raanath Longstrider. There they settled on the shores of Heart's Home Lake, founding the legendary city of Ghak-Thron, otherwise known as the city of shards. They built the city around mana shards, which, at the time had no known purpose.

Mana had not been discovered at the time of the settling of Sudeja, so the people who built Ghak-Thron - not understanding the potential wealth of the region - harvested the shards and made exquisite pieces of jewelry, selling them to people all across the continent. The wealth of the region was not just in mana shards, however. Miners found gold, silver and other precious ores. Hunters brought back a variety of pelts from a myriad creatures; silver back beaver, shadow cat pelts that shimmered at night, fox, cougar and wildfang bears.

The Age of Steel saw a myriad of cultures - most born out of the chaos of war - develop into thriving communities in all regions of Simarra. Yet, as prosperous as each nation was, they were virtually cutoff from each other by thousands of miles of wilderness and ocean.

Travel between the various kingdoms was fraught with danger. The end of the Age of Steel was a chaotic period in the history of Simarra. Even so, shaky Alliances were born as a sign of goodwill between the races of Simarra. Treaties of non-violence were

struck between representatives of the various regions lands, but lack of travel between the many nations muted those oaths, withering the alliances between the people like fruit rotting on the vine. So long as the roads between nations remained fraught with danger, left unattended and in dire need of repair, none but the bravest of people dared travel them.

Strange merchants claiming to be representatives of individuals known only as Trade Lords first appeared in the port city of Kuspala on the edge of the Sundering Sea, late in the 507th year of Steel, just as the first freezing winds came howling out of the Dragonspine mountains. An entry in log of the morning watch notes that a peculiar group of people arrived at the city gates in a large caravan with wagons and garb of the likes of which had not been seen before.

They began selling their exotic wares in small market areas where they attracted a large number of onlookers. Simple folk, not used to seeing such an organized bunch began asking questions about the nature of their strange goods, where they came from, and more importantly, how they managed to cross the wilderness with their cargo intact. The representatives of the Trade Lords claimed to have knowledge of the quickest routes through the mountains and around the dangerous Wild Lands. They traveled in well-armed caravans and were able to fight off any brigands and



POPULAR MYTHS JUST WHO ARE THE TRADE LORDS

Many answers to questions concerning the trade lords to this day go unanswered. Scholars of these dark times often speculate that the Trade Lords were in fact a surface-based organization of dragonkind and the domination of trade in the world was their own way of furthering the growth of a world they still loved and increasing their wealth while retaining a measure of secrecy in fear that the Hunting Times would begin all over again.

-Elohan Salaistriem

beasts that might cause them problems.

Indeed, the organization impressed farmers, craftsmen and others who had long sought ways to sell their merchandise in other towns across Simarra. The envoys of the Trade Lords claimed that they could open trade to other cities and increase the profits of everyone involved if the merchants would agree to consolidate their resources under the banner of the Trade Lords. In return, the Trade Lords would ensure everyone involved became wealthy beyond their wildest dreams.

Three years later, the wares of the Trade Lords were being sold in every city in the western continent. Within ten years, the Trade Lords had established overland and shipping routes that stretched across the known world, bridging cultural and geographical gaps, and bringing the people of Simarra closer together than ever before. Everyone benefited from the influence of the enigmatic Trade Lords, who seemed to orchestrate the spectacle of organization from behind a thickening veil of representatives and council members. The Trade Lords preferred this anonymity to ensure protection from the assassins of competitors who chose not to sign the agreements.

Life in Sudeja was not without conflict, however. The Sarangak forest was home to the dreaded blight elves, which rose in force against the Volsparan elves during the age of Steel. During this chaotic time, many Sudejans were drawn into the conflict, protecting their homeland against attacks on frontier settlements by these wicked creatures. Mountain trolls and other fell beasts that inhabited the Raanath Mountains preyed upon settlements and travelers. Organizations such as the Brotherhood of the Arrow, the Shadow Watch and Ebon's Rangers formed during these dark times

to protect both the people of Sudeja and the caravans moving through the region.

Heroes such as Dregor "One eye" who held the west gate at Beggars Pass against a company of blight elves for three days until reinforcements could arrive during the Thungee offensive (named for the foul Blight elf general Balthak Thungee) and the mighty ranger Harad Troll killer, bane of the Blood Maggot tribe. The arch magus Cynus Tûr "The darkened wind," who once conjured a shadow gale to sweep a horde of goblins off a cliff before they could ambush a caravan. These and other heroes inspired generations of Sudejans to serve their nation by protecting its people from the myriad horrors that stalked the lands.

SUDEJANS IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

Sudeja and its people have been cut off from the rest of the world since the beginning of the Age of Blood. It is whispered that dreaded blight elves took advantage of the invasion and fell upon the peaceful nation of fur traders, guides and woodsmen in payment for past wrongdoings.

No one has traveled into Sudeja and returned since the war began. Very few Sudejans can be found west of the Griffon Peaks in these dark days. Those who do show up at a freehold or one of the myriad refugee camps are marked by their rugged facial features, sandy brown hair and stocky girth. Sudejans have very little to say of their homeland, and have a tendency of growing very angry if the subject is broached in conversation. They are shrewd negotiators and expert trackers.

Favored Feats: Talented (Diplomacy and Sense Motive), Track



TALMOSANS

On the world below, the elder races had begun to clash with one-another. Great cities where all races lived in peace were abandoned or burned to the ground as various tribes that formed from the chaos fought to enforce their perceived rights to the land.

The great covens had begun to splinter or dissolve outright as members fought to see who would lead. Other members disillusioned and not understanding why the Gods had disappeared from the world left the great orders of old. Many abandoned the ancient wisdom altogether while others went out into the wilderness to worship by themselves.

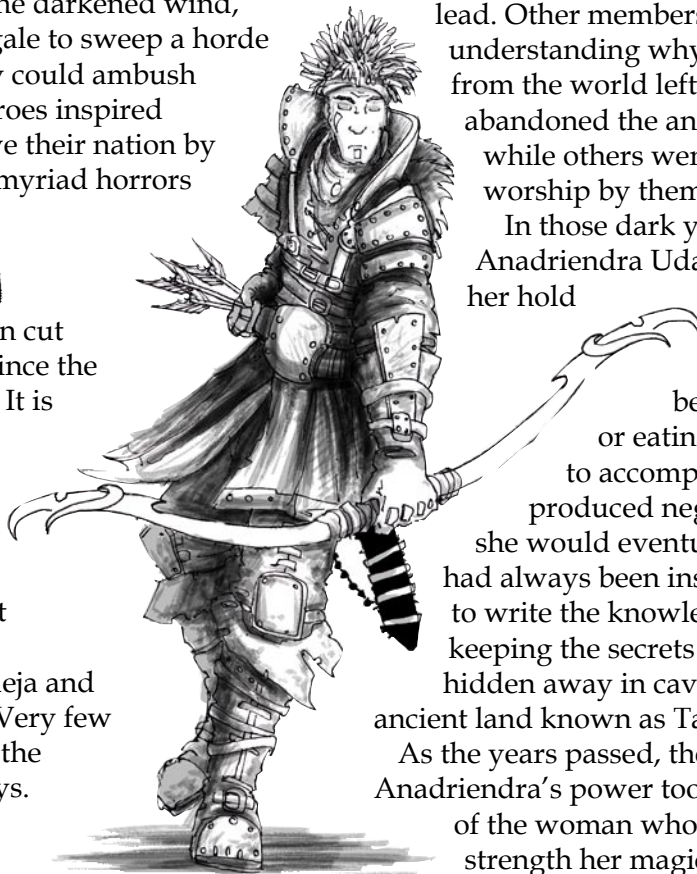
In those dark years, an elf maiden named Anadriendra Udalanarae struggled to maintain her hold

on the fading magic of Simarra. Rituals and arcane gestures that had always been as simple to do as walking or eating suddenly took great effort to accomplish and more often than not produced negligible results. Fearing that she would eventually forget knowledge that had always been instinctive, Anadriendra began to write the knowledge of the old ways down, keeping the secrets of the covens and magic hidden away in caverns below her tower in an ancient land known as Talmosa.

As the years passed, the diminishing of Anadriendra's power took a heavy toll on the psyche of the woman who had come to rely on the strength her magic gave her. Prior to the creation of the Threshold Realm, Anadriendra was the strongest druid of the old covens, stronger than even some of the dragons that walked the earth. She had worked long and hard to maintain her status as head of the ancient orders, only to see it crumble away along with her immortality, and the realization of her loss was enough to drive her insane with grief.

Many of the druids and witches, finding their powers failing them as well, blamed Anadriendra and left the coven. Other members fell prey to despair and took their own lives, staining the great wood with the taint of their untimely demise. In the span of a single season, the once-great coven of the stout oak had completely dissolved. Only Anadriendra and her Imradrán (Bodyguards) remained to tend to the once-beautiful groves and perform the rituals on top of the sacred Tor.

Despite her loneliness, day after day, year after year, Anadriendra faithfully worked her rituals, giving praise to her beloved elder gods, who would not, could not answer the elf Maiden's heartfelt pleas



for a respite from the chaos that swept across the lands; begging for some sign that her people were not forsaken. Receiving nothing but silence in return, Anadriendra lapsed into a deep depression lasting years. Oftentimes the elf maiden would only leave the Tower of the Moon when it became necessary to get supplies from the hamlet of Aden's Ford.

ADEN'S FORD

The town of Aden's Ford lay nestled along the great southern trade route on the edge of the vast Oak Thorn woods. The mighty Taernan river, normally a raging, impassable torrent of rapids and waterfalls, drifts lazily along the hamlet's southern gate as if gathering strength before it's plunge ten thousand feet down into the untamed, mysterious Wild Lands, providing the only spot where travelers seeking to go into the deep southern lands of Talmosa might cross.

The people of Aden's Ford, a simple folk who had lived in the small village long before the dawn of the Age of Steel, made their living primarily as hunters, trappers, woodsmen, farmers and guides, catering to the needs of travelers making their way through the rugged country on their way to southern Talmosa.

In addition, the town served a larger purpose, providing the coven of the stout oak, based deep within the nearby forest, with necessary supplies, food and equipment. Indeed, a large number of the coven's members had families in Aden's Ford. Consequently, the town became an extended home for many of the people living in the abbeys circling the sacred Tor at the heart of Oak Thorn Forest. Yet, with the dawn of the Age of Steel and the breaking of the elder races, many forces for evil swept across the land, corrupting the hearts of people throughout Simarra. It was no different for the druids and witches of the coven of the stout oak or the people of Aden's Ford.

Darkness settled on the town one day as a large band of marauders led by a particularly vicious elf known as Kendrin Drog rode into Aden's Ford, imposing their will on the peace-loving community. The brigands took over the town, killing or enslaving its inhabitants. Many fled into the Oak Thorn forest, seeking the solace of the Tower of the Moon, but Anadriendra could not help the villagers beyond offering shelter from the men who hunted them. The elf maiden's powers had all but disappeared as the rift between the gods and their children grew. Kendrin Drog knew this as well, being a Sundaari elf and a member of the Zôrùn-Ahmrê - Brethren of the Flesh - at the time, a highly secretive sect of Sundaari blood magi, given the knowledge of blood magic by one of the morargrim in exchange for their undying loyalty to Thûrak.

Kendrin Drog's men stormed the ancient Tor and desecrated the sacred groves. They would have

brought the standing stones on top of the Tor down, but the massive henge was been protected with ancient spells of warding, fueled by the power of a mana-well connected to no less than five Taer' las Brennath. The servants of the blood lord laid siege to the Tower of the Moon, and all the while, Anadriendra prayed for the strength to hold back the assault. Her Imradrán fought admirably, killing many of Kendrin Drog's warriors, but there were just too many.

As the defenders prepared to steal away from the Tower of the Moon through the caverns deep below the citadel, something curious and altogether miraculous happened. Anadriendra noticed a child sitting in one of the myriad alcoves honeycombing the tower, playing with a crystalline shard about the size of a grown man's fist. At first, she did not take much notice, but then the blue shard began to glow with a soft white light, rising into the air as Anadriendra approached.

"Where did you get the shard, child," Anadriendra asked, unable to pry her eyes away from the luminescent rock.

"In the grove, mother Anadriendra." The child said simply, calling the elf maiden by her formal title.

"I have more, if you would like to play with one," The little girl reached inside a knapsack at her side and pulled out more shards of different shapes, sizes and colors, all of which began to glow brightly as Anadriendra reached down to pick one up.

A few different colored shards even shot away from each other, skittering across the marble floor as if some force conspired to keep them apart. Others fused together with a soft hum, seeming to wait expectantly for some action on Anadriendra's part. As Anadriendra picked up a smooth red shard, an old familiar tingle shot up her arm, bathing the stunned elf in warmth she had not felt since before magic faded from the world... since magic left...

The abrupt realization of what she held in her hands came like a blow to her stomach. Suddenly, all of the spells and rituals that had been so elusive in these dark years burned like white-hot fire in Anadriendra's mind and her body swelled with the heady rush of power to the point where the elf began to fear she might burst. Her prayers had been answered. Praise be to Enâra, finally her prayers were answered!

"Child, I must borrow these for a short while," Anadriendra said, not waiting for the child's response. Her own voice seemed distant inside her mind as she swiftly stooped and scooped up the shards into the knapsack, turned and rushed off towards a balcony overlooking the courtyard where Kendrin Drog's men prepared for the final assault.

Anadriendra gleefully rained fire and lightning down on the heads of the stunned warriors, reveling

in the euphoric waves of ecstasy coursing through her body as she channeled the mana into a force for destruction. Men screamed in agony, rolling around on the ground. The witch further demonstrated her mastery of magic, commanding tangle vines and tree roots to snake out and envelop Kendrin Drog's henchman, holding them fast.

The men screamed in terror, not accustomed to being on the receiving end of witchcraft and sorcerous spells. Kendrin Drog eyed the witch from his vantage point at the entrance to the courtyard. He had not prepared for this eventuality. That a witch possessed the power to work magic in these dark years was unthinkable. Nevertheless, Anadriendra clearly wielded formidable magicks and, as if reading the elf's thoughts, Anadriendra conjured up bolts of energy that raced unerringly towards Kendrin Drog, slamming against his chest and knocking him back a few steps.

His men, seeing their vaunted leader fleeing into the forest, shouted curses at his back as the blood mage turned and sprinted out of the courtyard. Some of the men, battered and broken by the magic Anadriendra leveled against them, began to plea for their lives, crying out to Anadriendra to show mercy. The bandits claimed Kendrin Drog deceived them and begged forgiveness for all they had done.

They pledged to serve the people of Aden's Ford and the lady of the Oak Thorn Woods for as long as it took to right the wrongs they had committed. The witch commanded the men to give oaths of blood, swearing allegiance to Anadriendra and the people they had harmed by their actions. After they had done so, Anadriendra released her hold on the men.

What transpired on that fateful day has been pondered over and debated well into the Age of Blood. The finding of the mana shards in a time where True Magic was thought to have vanished from Simarra turned out to be a blessing and a curse for the people of the world. For Anadriendra, the return of her powers changed the elf maiden into something vile and malicious. Anadriendra's forgiveness of those men was viewed as a blessing at first; a sign that things would return to the way they once were. Alas, this was not to be.

Believing that the mana shards were the true source of her power, Anadriendra forsook the elder gods she once loved and began hoarding mana shards, placing them above even Enâra in significance. When she realized that the power of the shards faded with time and use, Anadriendra sent her servants out into the world in search of more, oftentimes-exacting terrible punishments on those who failed to return with the coveted shards. Eventually Anadriendra began to fear the outside world. Maddeningly paranoid, she hated

the notion that anyone might try to wrest her power from her.

In a stunning display of power, Anadriendra transformed the whole of Talmosa into a quagmire; a menacing swamp filled with fiendish creatures who served as guardians of her realm. The people of Aden's Ford eventually left the tiny village, fearing the wrath of Anadriendra, who came to be known far and wide as the "Crone of Talmosa."

THE FATE OF TALMOSA

In those days, Talmosa was a small but rapidly growing nation. The roughly 40,000 people who lived in the scattered rural communities of the hilly region were a simple folk of various racial backgrounds. A quarter of the total population of Talmosa called the capital city of Tadar-kesh home. A sprawling city ringed by five small hills, Tadar-kesh served as a central marketplace where merchants from all across Talmosa could come and sell their goods.

When Anadriendra transformed the realm into a vast swamp, everyone suffered. Entire crops were ruined by the stinking bogs. Animals were forced to flee as their ecosystem was radically altered. Entire villages (including Tadar-kesh) disappeared, swallowed whole by the marshland. Travel in Talmosa ground to a halt as the Taernan River magically flooded the entire region. Thousands of people lost their lives because of Anadriendra's selfish, irrational need to protect what was hers.

When people sought out the crone to gain vengeance for the destruction of their way of life, they became hopelessly lost in the maze of bogs and trails that more often than not led in circles or simply vanished into the murky water. Strange and hideous creatures came to live in the swamp, preying on those who strayed too far into the gloom that always seemed to lurk just beyond the lamp light.

Year after dark, dreary year passed. Those who were not killed or leave in the aftermath of the transformation of their homeland eventually learned to find harmony within the festering stench of the swamplands. They built flat bottom boats and carved out their own trails through the ever-present fog.

They built new cities on top of the old ones, some on stilts, rising above the mud and green, brackish-foam, others on floats or in patches of dry land. These hardy folk learned what would grow in the bogs and cultivated it. They altered their diets to suit the new species of animal and plants that thrived in the swamp. In short, these people survived.

In time, they built a new nation out of the old, trading with neighboring kingdoms for what could not be found or grown in the swamplands. The Talmosans



discovered an array of exotic spices, roots and herbs that could be used to make remedies as well as sensory-altering substances and even deadly poisons. The Talmosans refined these materials and revitalized the economy of Talmosa through their sale.

Then the kithanni came.

Deep in the marsh - in a remote, evil place known as the desolate fen - an ascendant goddess stirred, rising out the blackened bog, *Zashtazzra*, the serpent queen. *Zashtazzra* called out to the people of Talmosa, whispering malevolent seductions to those who could hear her baleful call. One by one, they came to the desolate fen, falling to their knees before the serpent queen. However, when *Zashtazzra* looked upon the humans who knelt before her she was displeased.

"Such frail bodies," she hissed. "Thou are not worthy of my love, yet. I shall fashion thee into forms more suiting so that you may go forth and punish those who have not heeded my call."

Therefore, *Zashtazzra* created a new race of creatures with the bodies of snakes and the upper torso of humans, calling them kithanni. She sent her newly reborn children out into the swamp to hunt those humans who had resisted the call of the goddess. The kithanni fell on the unsuspecting people of Talmosa, enslaving or driving off the terrified inhabitants of the swamp kingdom. Tadar-kesh was overrun by the kithanni. The serpent men sacked the bog-mired city and rebuilt it, constructing massive stone temples dedicated to *Zashtazzra*. Slaves (working under the direction of kithanni artisans) created exquisite jade sculptures of the goddess and kithanni leaders. Elaborate friezes lined the exterior of the temples

depicted the sack of Tadar-kesh. Auction houses had similar works of art showing humans being sold into bondage.

Kithanni emissaries visited other kingdoms in the name of the serpent goddess, seeking to establish trade relations, offering spices, drugs, and poisons, jade and even slaves in return for things that the nation of Talmosa required. The goddess blessed the fork-tongued diplomats, and they were able to negotiate agreements with many nations, especially the *Sundaari*, who bought slaves by the boat load to use as sacrifices to their own black god; *Thûrak*. For over three hundred years, life in Talmosa was thus. Then the *Narmrothan Horse Lords* began their migration through the swamp-kingdom.

Lord *Norian Hope Bringer* and his company begged leave of *Liram Tharathon* to stay in Talmosa and free the people from the yoke of slavery. *Liram* grudgingly consented, and Lord *Norian* led four hundred men and women, known thereafter as the *Nothrôn Kai* - The chain breakers - into the swamp. After years of waging a bitter war of insurgency against the kithanni, the Talmosan people won the respect of the fickle ascendant goddess and, consequently, their freedom.

History would see the humans who had once been slaves to the kithanni rise up and take seats of power in the growing nation, even becoming kings and queens, ruling Talmosa throughout much of the *Agas of Steel and Plenty*. The most notorious human ruler was *Japira Xutlu* - the jade queen - who died at the hands of *Zashtazzra* herself after denouncing the validity of the prophecies brought forth in the 333rd year of the *Age of Plenty*.

TALMOSANS IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

The nation of Talmosa has been occupied by the keza-drak for nearly a decade. Agärazôn's army invaded through two stone gates and by sea, sailing up the delta to land their troops outside Tadar-kesh.

The kithanni - following advice from the snake priests who had received visions from the serpent goddess - immediately sued for peace, aligning themselves with the invaders. The kithanni had long resented the emancipation of humans during the Age of Steel and saw the invasion as a chance to re-establish their dominance over their inferior cousins. The kithanni knew the keza-drak would need guides through the swamp and used that to save themselves, serving the minions of Agärazôn by helping to root out pockets of humanity who fled the invaders.

For the humans who live in this region, life has proven an uncompromising test of their will to survive. These people live in constant fear of the keza-drak slave barges that patrol the swamps and kithanni scouting parties who seek out their holdfasts. Many Talmosans find themselves enslaved and brought back to cities such as Tadar-kesh to serve the kithanni. Others are sent to work in mines and slave away on keza-drak war galleys.

Those who have not yet been caught constantly seek out new havens to hide from those who hunt them. Some have even begun to seek out the crone, but that has proven more difficult than would be expected. Some say that her tower shifts from place to place and only those who have been there before can hope to know how to find it. Others claim that the crone no longer resides on Simarra, having shifted her demesne to a new dimension. Many swamp trolls and hags roam the lands. Once her minions, they may know the truth of Anadriendra's whereabouts. Some Talmosans have even begun seeking a route down into the treacherous wild lands. Many of the hills that dot the region have caves that have not been fully explored. Some may reveal a way down into that mysterious region.

Favored Feats: Choose two of the following: Light Sleeper, Night Vision, Survival, Tireless, Track, Trailblazer

THARANS

A haven for assassins, thieves, and brigands the nation of Thara has always been a thorn in the side of Megath-Tor. Tharans were the most vocal supporters of the decision to begin hunting dragons during the age of steel.

This stemmed largely from the fact that the city of Belaspran - the capital of Thara - was destroyed by dragons at the beginning of that bloody period of history. The hunting times only served to quench the people's thirst for violence and bloodshed.



Blood sports became very popular in cities and towns across the Tharan flats. Gladiator arenas cropped up everywhere. Many towns funded teams of individuals who would compete against the teams of other cities in Thara, the winners gaining glory and riches, while the losers were sent to their graves.

The Age of Plenty saw Thara become a wicked kingdom ruled by a string of dictators who kept their positions of power through brutal tactics including assassination and coercion of would-be rivals. Indeed, the most influential organizations in Thara during the

age of plenty employed full-time assassins to ensure their continued success.

THARANS IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

When the keza-drak invaded, Agärazôn sent morargrim emissaries to the current ruler of Thara, a particularly vicious dictator by the name of Miriel Coldstone, known by most Tharans as *Miriel the cannibal* or *Miriel the unclean*.

The morargrim encouraged Miriel to join with

Agärazôn, promising limitless wealth if she would swear fealty to the lord of the world and act as Agärazôn's governor of the region, ruling in his name. Miriel, seeing her impending destruction should she decline the offer, accepted surrendering Thara without so much as a single skirmish. Indeed, most Tharans, viewing other cultures as being self-noble hypocrites, welcomed the chance to join in the bloodshed that would follow.

Favored Feats: Choose two of Hide in Plain Site, Sneak Attack, Well Informed, or Crippling strike.

ORCS

"Fierce enemies in battle, yet they possess a gentle wisdom which comes from nearly two thousand years of history. The orc cleaves tightly to the memory of their ancestors. They honor them in deeds and ritual, passing down tales through each generation so that their kin will remember..."

*A study of the orcs of the Tarud Mesa
-Elohan Salastrien*

SARAN GHORI ORCS

The Tarud Mesa and the vast Northern Reaches are the ancestral homeland of the Saran-Ghori orcs. For much of the Age of Steel, the orcs were spread throughout the region, living segregated in tribes, fighting each other as much as the elder races. When the Morargrim came and recruited them for the Ascendant Wars, the tribes united against their hated enemies - the elder races.

After the wars, the Saran-Ghori remained united under the guidance of Dundran'Kal, a benevolent othrännän. Dundran'Kal taught the Saran-Ghori to live in relative peace and challenged them to forsake many of the old ways. The orcs grudgingly did as Dundran'Kal suggested and evolved into a culture based on that of the elven and human races, flourishing in the Age of Plenty.

THE SARAN GHORI IN THE AGE OF BLOOD

Nearly a thousand years later, the betrayal of Agärazôn and the invasion of the keza-drak sparked a civil war within the ranks of the Saran-Ghori orcs. Numerous disenchanting orcs cried out for a return to the old ways.

The leader of the Saran-Ghori, Battlemaster Ghûchok Seven Tongues, rejected the pleas of his people

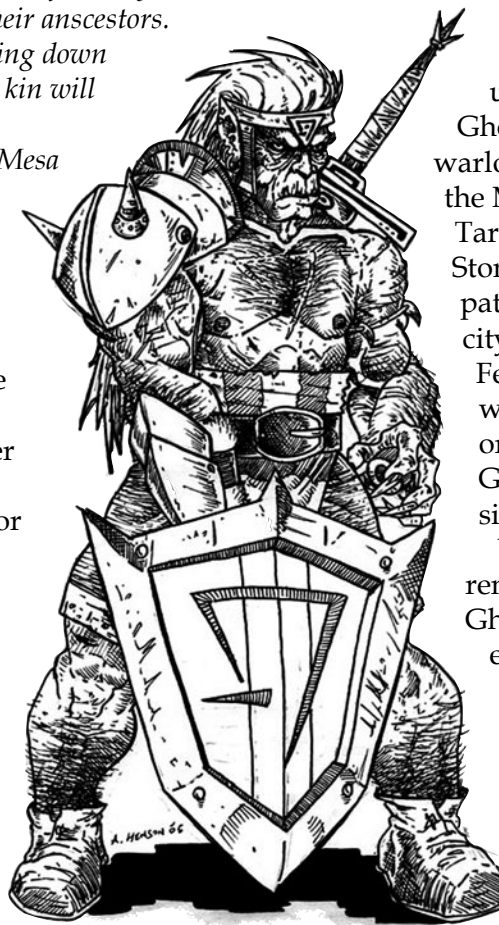
and declared martial law. Furthermore, he had one thousand dissenters beheaded as a lesson to those who would oppose his rule. It did not have the effect that Ghûchok had hoped.

Thousands of orcs broke from the Saran-Ghori nation and formed their own alliance of loosely aligned tribes under one banner - The Morash-Ghóran. Led by a brutal, domineering warlord by the name of Drogon Felslayer, the Morash-Ghóran swept across the Tarud Mesa and into the Sundered Stone Peaks, killing everyone in their path. There, the clans founded the city of Blackstone Hearth. Drogon Felslayer allied his fledgling nation with Agärazôn and the keza-drak. The orcs of the Saran-Ghori and Morash-Ghóran tribes have been at war ever since.

When they are not fighting the renegade Morash-Ghóran, Saran-Ghori orcs can be found aiding the embattled Narmrothan horse clans in their fight against the keza-drak. The Narmrothans and Saran-Ghori are unlikely allies, maintaining a tenuous alliance with each other.

Numerous fights have broken out between the two peoples, and the number of casualties from these exchanges grows daily. Despite the infighting, the two groups

continue to hold together for mutual survival.



BACKGROUND

Saran-Ghori orcs are a proud people, respecting strength and the memory of their ancestors. The thousand years that have passed since the Age of Steel have done much to temper the fiery spirit of these orcs.

Still, the Saran-Ghori orcs are fierce warriors and capable magi. Their adepts have always practiced the old ways of shamanism, a custom that Dundran'Kal was never able to convince them to abandon, often talking to the bones and wearing fetishes from the bound spirits of their enemies.

Traits: All Saran-Ghori orcs have the following traits.

Abilities: +2 Strength, +1 Constitution, -1 Intelligence, -2 Charisma.

Size: Medium

Bonus Feats: Night Vision, Weapon Training

Bonus Skill: Orcs have one bonus skill, balancing out the one they lose for low intelligence.

Favored Feats: Choose two of the following: Cleave, Favored Opponent, or Rage

OTHERS

SHODONAI

*"When the mind priests return to their ancient role as protectors of the first city
those who pay heed to these words shall know the time draws nigh,
the thirteenth tribe, once driven into the ancient wastes shall come again to the first city
seeking to take their rightful place among the elders of old,
and with them, comes death..."*

-The Talmosan Revelations



In the 758th year of plenty, a vast multitude of people came out of the Azruun badlands, a treacherous tangle of steep cliffs and deep, winding canyons in the center of the Vaskraall wastes. The region- long believed to be the home of the mythic nekarim - had always been thought to be otherwise barren of life. However, most people living near the blasted region believed in an ancient prediction of the coming of the children of the nekarim, scions sent to prepare the way for the return of their enigmatic gods.

The bizarre people were unlike anything the nomadic tribes of the Vaskraall wastes had ever seen before. They were of an average height with deep olive-colored skin that had the faintest blue tint. Their pointed ears hinted at elven ancestry, but to label these shodonai as elves would be wrong.

Striking almond shaped eyes that bore no pupils - just ever shifting hues of blue, brown or green - stared out at their surroundings with a burning intensity. After gazing into those eyes, most folk absently reached for a weapon in case the strangers lashed out at them. However, the strangest features were the crystalline orbs that seemed to grow out of their skin in various places on their bodies. The most prominent stones were located on their foreheads.

Many of the shodonai decorated themselves with henna tattoos, especially around the stones on their arms and foreheads. Their garb was equally strange. They wove a rubbery substance into their shirts, hair ties and armbands. They dyed their clothing in varying hues of black, yellow, red, blue or white. Both men and women wore loose-fitting long pants with cargo pockets. They tucked the pants into black leather boots that were also coated with the same rubber used on their clothes.

A great many of the shodonai stayed on the outskirts of the Azruun badlands. They claimed rights to the region in the name of the nekarim while the rest of their brethren, some five thousand strong, traveled north towards Megath-Tor. Word of the shodonai's approach to the ancient city flew ahead of them. As they crossed the Dragonspine Mountains, the shodonai were met on the outskirts

of the Daelian Wood by an entourage of othrännän and representatives of the Arcanus League.

The emissaries of the Cradle of Life were met by the leader of the shodonai- a tall, lean man with leathery skin and chiseled facial features known as Togrun Ael-Shodai, descendant of Datukhan Ael-Shodai. A large smoky quartz crystal was embedded into the center of Togrun's forehead. Other smaller stones of varying hues branched away over each eyebrow and down along his nose.

Five men in similar garb and a lone female accompanied Togrun. The woman wore an ornately engraved obsidian-colored steel headdress with gold inlay. Four prongs rose above her bald head, one at each point of the headdress. Two intricately carved prongs snaked to frame each side of her face. The woman's eyes were hidden by two plates branching off another prong running down the bridge of her nose. Her lower lip was pierced by a thick, black metal ring and she wore an iron collar around her neck. She was otherwise plainly clothed, wearing a simple black dress and sandals.

Togrun told the othrännän and their associates that his people were the descendants of Datukhan Ael-Shodai, come back to protect Megath-Tor once again as the forces of darkness prepared to descend on Simarra. The members of the Arcanus League scoffed at Togrun's words, calling him a liar and would-be usurper. The order of magi had long held the Talmosan Revelations in contempt, claiming they were nothing but the ramblings of a madwoman.

One of the magi stepped forward. His disgust was evident on his long face as he looked around to the strange people, finally leveling his gaze at Togrun.

"I am Tharyn Gaelgamar, magi of the first order, and leader of the Arcanus League," he paused to let the lofty title sink in. "Megath-Tor has the protection of the Arcanus League and the people's militia," he said. "We need no panderers of ambiguous texts to come and beguile us as if we were babes suckling at the teat. Go elsewhere and prey on those with lesser minds."

The woman sitting next to Togrun hissed. "Be silent with your insolence! You are speaking to the master of the ways, wearer of the golruun-pahk, walker between worlds, high priest of the nekarim, leader of the circle of five and the direct descendant of Datukhan Ael-Shodai. For your words, we should open your belly and bleed you dry while zalgrach worms suck out your eyes."

The five men behind Togrun drew blades and things might have degenerated into an all out melee had one of the othrännän not stepped in. Alessandra Si'draen, advisor to the Daelian sages, strode into the middle of the circle. Not a diplomat for nothing, Alessandra was able to calm both sides down and negotiate a

compromise between the two groups.

The Arcanus League would allow the shodonai to come in peace to the Cradle of Life and live there side by side with the other people of Simarra as citizens. They would be allowed to bear arms, however they were not allowed to meddle in the politics of the city. Nor could the shodonai preach any of their interpretations of the Talmosan Revelations to other people.

The Arcanus League had not worked for hundreds of years to wipe the stain of prophesy from the minds of the people only to see all their hard work be destroyed by heathens from the wastes. Togrun would be given respect due his station as leader of his people, but until such a time that their claims to be descendants of ancient protectors of the city could be verified by external sources, the shodonai were to accept the judgment of the current rulers of the Cradle of Life.

Both sides grudgingly agreed to the terms. The representatives of the Arcanus League held these strangers in contempt. Their odd dress, gruff mannerisms, theological beliefs, and obvious racial dissimilarities put the magi on edge. There was something else about these strange beings that seemed... different somehow. These shodonai possessed a mystical quality about them, the precise nature of which eluded the frustrated magi. Indeed, something was definitely out of sorts with these folk, but the Arcanus League would find out what it was.

THE SHODON INQUISITION

Years later, rumors began to circulate, claiming the dreaded morargrim (commonly known as the Bound Ones) had escaped their prisons spread across Simarra like wildfire. When the news about the bound ones reached Megath-Tor, the Arcanus League immediately blamed the shodonai for the spread of what they believed to be obvious lies. The magi had worked long and hard to promote the belief that these so-called "bound ones" were simply myths born out of an age of war and terror; the Age of Steel. These strange shodonai would pay for their subversive teachings and use of strange magicks of the mind, which flew in the face of everything the Arcanus League, had come to believe about sorcery.

In Agärazôn's absence, the Arcanus league had launched an inquisition of the shodonai. Togrun Ael-Shodai was taken prisoner, interrogated by Tharyn Gaelgamar himself while multitudes of shodonai were taken off the streets, and brought to the dungeons deep below the Needle of the Light - the base of power for the Arcanus League in Megath-Tor.

The high magus ordered the captive shodonai tortured in an effort to gain knowledge about their enigmatic mental powers. Tharyn refused to believe the power of the shodonai was anything other than a product of having dealings with vile minions of the underworld. But when his prisoners didn't give him the information he was looking for, Tharyn had them publicly executed as a message to the rest of the heathens, as he liked to call them. The first person to have his head put on the block was Togrun.

The executions sparked city-wide riots. Enraged shodonai lashed out at the Arcanus League and the people's militia for their crimes. Hundreds of innocent people were killed as all out war erupted in the streets. Tharyn ordered all shodonai to be hunted down and exterminated like the dogs he believed they were. He called to other chantries across Simarra, asking for aid from other members of the Arcanus League. The people's militia closed off Megath-Tor and began house-to-house searches aimed at rooting out any remaining shodonai in the city.

To the shock and surprise of all citizens of Megath-Tor, even non-shodonai sympathizers were also rounded up and executed. Tharyn Gaelgamar was committed to rooting out all perceived subversive elements within Megath-Tor. Most people thought the man had lost his mind however, and in spite of the vicious tactics of the Arcanus League and their militia puppets more and more people became swayed to the cause of the shodonai.

When word reached the shodonai in the Azruun Badlands that their leader, Togrun Ael-Shodai, had been slain and there was fighting in Megath-Tor, a great assembly was held to determine the fate of the shodonai. Leaders from each of the clans came forth and presented the views of their respective peoples to the remaining members of the circle of five - the highest order of the nekarim priesthood. In the end, the circle of five agreed that, until a new leader of the tribes was revealed, the shodonai were indeed forsaken, shattered like pieces of a broken glass. Only once a new leader was chosen could he determine the next course of action for the shodonai.

Over half of the clan leaders stormed out of the council, determined to go north and do what they felt must be done to preserve the honor of their people. Twelve different clans, numbering over ten thousand people, left their kinsmen in the Azruun Badlands and traveled north, only to find that the vile keza-drak had sacked the city and driven off or enslaved its inhabitants. A new king now reigned in the ancient city - Agärazôn.

The leaders of the twelve clans decided that it would be futile to engage the "demons from beyond the stone gates" in open warfare. They would fight these keza-drak, but on their terms. The warlords divided the clans into packs of warriors and nekarim priests capable of traveling fast and light. They would nip at the heels of the great beast until they had brought it down.

BACKGROUND

Shodonai have fine features, much like the elves. Their bodies are lithe, with tanned skin that takes on a bluish tint. This tint varies in hue according to how much water they have in their bodies. Shodonai ride kapurra beasts, which are native to the Vaskraall Wastes. Most of the shodonai have strange shards growing out of their bodies in various places. These shards are resonance crystals that manifest on their bodies when they mature psychically.

Traits: All shodonai have the following traits.

Abilities: +1 Constitution, +1 Wisdom, -1 Strength, -1 Charisma.

Size: Medium.

Bonus Feats: Lightning Reflexes, Night Vision, Resonance Crystal

Favored Feats: Supernatural Focus

Resonance Crystal: See the Feats section.





HEROIC PATHS

The majority of the survivors of the Age of Blood live in remote freeholds across the continent, scratching out a miserable existence filled with the pervading fear that the minions of Agärazôn might find them.

That said there are those who have found the courage to venture out into the chaos of the world. These heroes seek to contribute to the war against the forces of evil in many different ways, whether it is battling the keza-drak on various fronts, or engaging in insurrectionary campaigns designed to destabilize Agärazôn's empire, or even simply providing much needed supplies for the refugees of the world.

When a Hero walks the path that others have before him, he can take advantage of their experience and teaching. Many of the Heroic Paths presented in this book represent membership to certain fraternal organizations. Belonging to one of these can confer many benefits and rewards a player for constructing their character to fit a specific mold.

Each of the Heroic Path Masteries works similarly to a feat but has much more stringent requirements in order to attain. Unlike feats, most have a minimum role level requirement and they do not actually take up a feat slot, either you qualify for them and thus gain the benefit or you do not. You do however mark them on your character sheet just as you would a regular feat.

In all instances, each Path Mastery requires the Character to be in good standing with the organization in question. Characters no longer belonging to an organization do not lose the benefit of the training learned, but neither can they gain additional Mastery until they somehow come back into the good graces of the organization.

In some rare cases (at the discretion of the Narrator), a character may learn of one of these masteries from an existing master however the organizations in questions shun this practice. Indeed such groups like the Arcanus League will hunt down non-members who exhibit this special knowledge; Knowledge is power after all.

Note that not all Heroic paths have masteries.

Heroic Paths and their Masteries are presented in the following format:

Heroic Path: The name of the path.

Primary Skills: These skills that are typical of the average member, many characters will want to put ranks in some or all of these skills. Additionally members in good standing can usually find an Narrator Character sage with ranks in these skills to aid them, and at a considerable discount.

Primary Feats: These feats are typical of the average member obviously lower level Narrator Characters

in the organization will not have access to them all. Likewise, mundane characters will never have feats that require the expenditure of conviction to use.

Primary Powers: If the organization contains adepts these powers will be atypical of those members.

Mastery Level: Often there will be more than one benefit from extended membership in the organization these are listed with roman numerals. In every case in order to gain a given Mastery, the Character must fulfill all requirements of previous levels of Mastery.

Prerequisites: The skill ranks, feats, and powers required to take the Mastery.

Benefit: The benefit gained by this Mastery, in many cases this benefit will be situational. All bonuses gained from benefits are unnamed.



TABLE C: PATH MASTERIES

PATH ARCANUS MAGE.

Arcanus Mastery I

Arcanus Mastery II

AVIKUS

Avikus Mastery I

Avikus Mastery II

BLOOD MAGE.

Blood Magic Mastery I

Blood Magic Mastery II

BONE SHAMAN

Shamanism Mastery I

Shamanism Mastery II

ENGINEER

Engineering Mastery I

Engineering Mastery II

HALF GIANT MERCENARY

Brutality Mastery I

Brutality Mastery II

KNIGHT OF THE WOLF BRIGADE.

Wolf Knight Mastery I

Wolf Knight Mastery II

STORM RIDER

Legion Auspex Heroic Path

Legion Scout Heroic Path

Legion Warrior heroic

UNDEAD SLAYER

Slaying Mastery I

Slaying Mastery II

WITCH HEROIC PATH

HEROIC PATH ARCANUS MAGE.

Adepts claiming membership to the Arcanus League follow this path. The Arcanus League formed early in the Age of Plenty in an effort to help those born with the ability to work magic control their powers before the raw essence of the world consumed them.

Arcanus magi have spent centuries studying magic and its affect on the world, cataloguing each new manifestation of power, scribing each new formula into rotes so that future generations might benefit from their research. By the dawn of the Age of Blood, the

BENEFIT

Heightened Arcane awareness: See Text.

Added Protection from other magi: See text

Bonuses to Skills: See Text

Fast Crafting: See Text

Blood Substitution: See Text

Potent Sacrifices: See Text

+2 bonus to his fatigue checks when using the Summon Spirit power. See Text.

Fatigue Restance: See Text.

Expert engineer: See Text

Artisan Engineer: See Text

Enhanced Aggression: See Text

Reckless Combat: See Text

Gains the Scent Trait

Pack Tactics, See Text.

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Resistance to attack forms: See Text

Track Incorporeal: See Text

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Arcanus League had ingrained themselves into nearly every civilized culture on the continent, acting as advisors to rulers and envoys.

Primary Skills: Concentration, Craft (alchemy), Escape Artist, Knowledge (history), Knowledge (supernatural), Knowledge (tactics), Language, Perform (oratory), Sleight of Hand.

Primary Feats: Familiar, Second Chance (Power Disruption), Empower, Great Fortitude, Shield Penetration, Subtle Power, Endurance, Diehard, Widen Power, Quicken Power.

Primary Powers: Ward, Second Sight.

ARCANUS MASTERY I

Prerequisites: Adept Level 6+, 9 Ranks in Concentration and Knowledge (supernatural).

Powers: Second Sight, Ward.

Feat: Second Chance (power disruption).

Benefit: Arcanus League magi are skilled at locking down the powers of rival casters especially heretics. You receive a +2 bonus to power checks with Second Sight to identify a practitioner of magic, if this adept is considered a heretic by the league; this bonus rises to +4.

ARCANUS MASTERY II

Prerequisites: Adept Level 12+, 15 Ranks in Concentration and Knowledge (supernatural).

Feats: Power Challenge (second sight: sense taint), Shield Penetration.

Benefit: When an Arcanus Magi furthers their training in combating rival adepts and their heretical magic, they gain an uncanny understanding of the workings of magic. You receive a +2 bonus to power checks with Ward to disrupt the powers of a rival adept, if this adept is considered a heretic by the league; this bonus rises to +4.

THE HOUNDS OF THE LEAGUE

Rumors exist of an organization within the Arcanus League, trackers and huntsmen whose prey are not beast but man. These skilled warrior mages hunt down heretics and betrayers of the league and capture or kill them at the elders of the league's behest. They are called the hounds.



AVIKUS HEROIC PATH

The avikus is a student of the magical force commonly known as mana. She combines this mystical energy with various forms technology to create weapons, armor and wondrous devices to aid in the war against the minions of Agärazôn. The avikus spends much of her career learning to charge mana shards with powers to fuel her creations and crafting rites so that others might benefit from her discoveries.

Primary Skills: Concentration, Craft (any), Disable Device, Gather Information, Knowledge (ascendant technology), Knowledge (physical sciences), Knowledge (supernatural), Knowledge (technology), Notice, Search.

Primary Feats: Attune Mana Shard, Imbue Item, Improved Use Ascendant Technology, Rotecraft, Store Power, Use Ascendant Technology, Use Mana Shard, Use Technological Device.

Primary Powers: None, the aviki have a varied array of powers, the most gifted of which use conviction to place a myriad of useful powers in the pieces of ascendant technology that they create, often having many useful tools for any given situation making them truly Jack-Of-All-Trades.

AVIKUS MASTERY I

Prerequisites: Adept Level 3+, Expert Level 3+, 9 Ranks in Knowledge (ascendant technology, physical sciences, supernatural), 9 Ranks in Craft (ascendant technology).

Feats: Attune Mana Shard, Imbue Item, Use Ascendant Technology.

Benefit: With intense study and practice in the creation of the fabled ascendant technology, the aviki develop a keen understanding of their workings and the creation of those marvels almost paralleling the ancients who first created them. An avikus with this level of mastery gains a +2 bonus on all Craft (ascendant technology) and Knowledge (ascendant technology) checks. Furthermore, when he creates a piece of ascendant technology he gains a+2 bonus to the wealth check to assemble the requisite raw materials.

AVIKUS MASTERY II

Prerequisites: Adept Level 6+, Expert Level 6+, 15 Ranks in Knowledge (ascendant technology, physical sciences, supernatural), 15 Ranks in Craft (ascendant technology).

Feats: Avikus Mastery I, Improved Use Ascendant Technology, Rotecraft, Store Power;

Special: The avikus must have researched and created a new piece of ascendant technology.

Benefit: So complete is his mastery of his craft that the avikus can repair, recharge, and create new pieces of

ascendant technology with unequaled adroitness. The avikus can attempt the "Fast Task" challenge to create and repair ascendant technology. In addition, if the avikus already possesses the Fast Task feat for Craft (ascendant technology) he may quarter the crafting time without the usual +10 penalty to the difficulty

HEROIC PATH BLOOD MAGE

Blood mages practice arts as ancient as they are perverse. These practitioners were hunted for centuries, forced to live in the shadows like rats. Now they are able to walk in the light, living in the byzantine, bloodstained spires of Thel-Kaza and practicing their vile arts in newly erected temples to their dark god and even in the holy Sedrin Henge itself.

Primary Skills: Concentration, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Knowledge (supernatural, theology/philosophy), Medicine Notice.

Primary Feats: Armor Training (Light), Blood Sacrifice, Blood Scent, Imbue Blood, Quicken Power, Supernatural Focus, Supernatural Talent, Talented

Primary Powers: Body Control, Boil Blood,

Elemental Blood, Heart Shaping, Mind Over Body, Thin Blood.

BLOOD MAGIC MASTERY I

Prerequisites: Adept Level 6+.

Skills: 9 Ranks in Knowledge (supernatural, theology/philosophy), 9 Ranks in Medicine;

Feats: Blood Sacrifice, Supernatural Focus (any two blood magic powers).

Powers: Any two blood magic powers; **Special:** Must have participated in at least one Blood Sacrifice with a victim of level six or more.

Benefit: Many blood magi becomes accustomed to the power one wields after a sacrifice of blood. An experienced blood magus learns to better substitute offerings of his own blood to power his rituals. With this level of mastery a blood mage no longer risks pulling to much blood when a Toughness save of 1 is rolled.

BLOOD MAGIC MASTERY II

Prerequisites: Adept Level 12+

Skills: 15 Ranks in Knowledge (supernatural, theology/philosophy), 15 Ranks in Medicine.

Feats: Blood Scent, Imbue Blood.

Special: Must have participated in at least one blood sacrifice with a victim of 12th level or higher.

Benefit: At this level of mastery, the blood magus knows how to get the most out of their sacrifices, indeed they themselves become infused with this power. When the blood mage sacrifices a victim he need not immediately use the bonus on his next power check, he must use it within thirty minutes per +1 bonus gained on the blood bonus progression chart. Furthermore, he may break it up any way he chooses on multiple power checks. Any unused bonus at the end of this time is lost.

HEROIC PATH BONE SHAMAN

The bone shaman is an adept who seeks to master the secrets of life and death, forcing his will upon those who have died and gone from this world. Bone shamans routinely summon spirits into this world and bind them into fetishes made from the remains of the dead.

These fetishes serve to amplify the bone shaman's power, fueling charms that are used to facilitate various functions such as protecting the wearer, enhancing abilities, allowing travel between the realm of the living and the dead and other equally mysterious powers. Most bone shamans tend to be Shek-Tar gnomes or orcs, though in recent years other races of Simarra have been learning this mysterious



power, especially the Aradi lionmen, the blight elves of the eastern continent and kithanni serpent folk.

Primary Skills: Bluff, Craft, Concentration, Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Knowledge (life sciences), Knowledge (supernatural), Medicine, Notice, Sense Motive, Survival.

Primary Feats: Craft Fetish, Sense Spirits, Undead Familiar.

Primary Powers: Bind Spirit, Cure, Ghost Touch, Imbue Life, Imbue Unlife, Summon Spirit.

SHAMANISM MASTERY I

Prerequisites: Adept Level 5+, Expert Level 1+

Skills: 9 Ranks in Concentration, 9 Ranks in Knowledge (life sciences and supernatural), 9 Ranks in Medicine.

Feats: Craft Fetish, Evasion.

Powers: Bind Spirit, Ghost Touch, Summon Spirit

Benefit: The bone shaman of this level is on his way to becoming a true artist, his medium being bone, flesh, and spirit alike. He gains a +2 bonus to his fatigue checks when using the Summon Spirit power. He also reduces the level of any spirit needed in crafting an item with the Craft Fetish feat by 1. For example, if the shaman wanted to create a fetish with a power rank of 4 he would need the remains of a creature or character of 3rd level.

SHAMANISM MASTERY II

Prerequisites: Adept Level 11+, Expert Level 1+

Skills: 15 Ranks in Concentration, 15 Ranks in Knowledge (life sciences and supernatural), 15 Ranks in Medicine.

Feats: Undead Familiar.

Powers: Object Reading, Second Sight, Visions

Benefit: The bone shaman develops a strong bond to his undead familiar, he gains an effective +3 Adept levels (thus negating the penalty from the Undead Familiar Feat) when consulting the chart for familiars to determine level based abilities.

HEROIC PATH ENGINEER

The engineer studies the mysterious ways of sciences almost lost to the people of Simarra. Unlike the avikus, the engineer does not attempt to meld science with magic. Rather, he seeks to understand the forces of the natural world independent of magic.

Primary Skills: Computers, Craft (Any), Disable Device, Drive, Knowledge (earth sciences, physical sciences, and technology), Pilot.

Primary Feats: Firearms Training, Improvised Tools, Jack-of-all-trades, Use Technological Device.

Primary Powers: None.

ENGINEERING MASTERY I

Prerequisites: Expert Level 6+

Skills: 9 Ranks in Craft (Any Two) 9 Ranks in Disable Device, 9 Ranks in Knowledge (physical science and technology).

Feats: Improvised Tools, Jack-of-all-trades, Use Technological Device

Benefit: Having tested their mettle on the field of battle as well as in smoke-filled workshops, the Engineer knows his stuff. He gains several new uses of his skills:

Knowledge (technology): Any time an Engineer encounters a new piece of technology be it normal or ascendant he makes Knowledge (technology) check with a difficulty equal to the Cost of the item plus five.

If he succeeds, he learns the most basic and obvious function or power of the item, for every 5 he beats this Difficulty he learns about a new ability or power (if any). If he fails this check, he cannot again make a check for that item until he earns another character level. Simple devices (single function weapons for example) can be picked up and handled as a full round action, more complicated devices may require more extensive study, usually between one and ten minutes.

Disable Device: An Engineer can make a disable device check in lieu of a craft check to repair a broken item as a full round action, the item will then function as normal for one scene, if the item is a weapon it breaks when a natural 1 is rolled on an attack roll.

After the scene, the item ceases to function and all craft checks to repair it are at +5 difficulty. (An engineer can use the Fast Task Challenge with this Disable Device check.)

ENGINEERING MASTERY II

Prerequisites: Expert Level 7+, Warrior Level 5+.

Skills: 15 Ranks in Craft (any two) 15 Ranks in Disable Device, 15 Ranks in Knowledge (physical science and technology).

Feats: Improved Use Ascendant Technology, Use Ascendant Technology, Vehicular Combat (Drive or Pilot).

Benefit: When an engineer reaches this level of mastery, his knowledge of the physical sciences is unparalleled; he begins to delve into the realms of ascendant technology putting his own spin on the workings of those devices.

Craft: An engineer can use any relevant craft skills to repair ascendant tech without any of the normal penalties for working on items of this nature without the Craft (ascendant technology) skill. He cannot however recharge depleted energy shards, make any modifications to the function of the device, or make a piece of ascendant technology from scratch.

Disable Device: An engineer can use his knack with all things mechanical to squeeze one last use out of a piece of ascendant technology. He may activate any power from an expended item with a Disable Device check equal to 20 plus the rank of the power. Regardless of success or failure attempting to activate an item in this manner renders the energy shard of the item inert (can never be recharged).

HEROIC PATH HALF GIANT MERCENARY

Half-giant mercenaries are warriors dedicated to the fight against the keza-drak, who conquered Kotarra in the first year of their invasion of Simarra. These fearsome warriors have formed numerous free companies bent on fighting the minions of Agärazôn wherever they are found, the most famous of which is the Skull Hammer squadron, led by Halfarad Bloodmaul.

Primary Skills: Climb, Intimidate, Jump, Notice, Swim, Survival.

Primary Feats: Armor Training (Light), Attack Focus, Attack Specialization, All-out Attack, Cleave, Favored Enemy (Sundaari), Great Cleave, Greater Attack Focus, Greater Attack Specialization, Improved Speed, Move-by Action, Rage, Tough, Weapon Training.

Primary Powers: None.

BRUTALITY MASTERY I

Prerequisites:

Race: Half Giant; Warrior Level 6+

Skills: 9 Ranks in Intimidate, 9 Ranks in Jump.

Feats: All-out Attack, Cleave, Rage, Skill Focus: Intimidate.

Special: Must have defeated an equally matched foe in single combat.

Benefit: The half-giant mercenary's aggression is legendary, during the first round of combat if the merc makes use of both his Rage and All-out Attack feats he can use the Intimidate skill to demoralize his opponent(s) as a free action.

He may choose to apply any Challenges to this use that he wishes. Lastly, heroic mercenaries may spend a point of conviction while using the Rage feat during the duration of which all critical hits are automatically confirmed.

BRUTALITY MASTERY II

Prerequisites:

Race: Half-Giant; Warrior Level 12+;

Skills: 15 Ranks in Intimidate, 15 Ranks in Jump.

Feats: Great Cleave, Improved Speed, Move-by Action

Benefit: Masters of a high-energy reckless combat style, the half-giant Mercenary continues to hone his lethality and punishes anyone who stands against him.

When he hits a foe using the Move-by Action while raging he may choose any other foe that is adjacent to his current target. That foe makes a Toughness save equal to that of the original hit for non-lethal collateral damage as the mighty blow sends the two crashing into each other.

HEROIC PATH THE KNIGHT OF THE WOLF BRIGADE

The Knights of the Wolf Brigade were once an order of traditional knights. After the conflict with the Elarian half-elves, the King of Dassurri persuaded the Kotarran half-giants to stay and train his troops. These knights were trained in the arts of war by the Kotarrans.

During their training in the Dassurri Basin and in Kotarra fighting the fiendish minions of the ascendant god Lothoron, the Dassurri Knights changed, becoming one with the wilderness learning its secrets while maintaining their knightly vows – thus the Knights of the Wolf Brigade were born.

The Knights of the Wolf Brigade blend Kotarran tactics with unmatched skills of scouting and survival. They have also adapted some of the tactics and strategies employed by wolf packs, such as attacking in mass to bring down a single powerful opponent.

This blend of tactics and styles has served the Wolf Brigade well. In the chaos that is the Age of Blood, The famed Wolf Brigade is scattered and dispersed all over Simarra leaving in its wake packs of Wolf Knights who continue to nip at the heels of the keza-drak and pass on the noble legacy of the Wolf Brigade.

The wolf is a sacred symbol to the Knights of the Wolf Brigade and shapes everything from their heraldry and chivalric vows to their orders of battle.

Some Wolf Knights have wolves as companions; these animals are seen as living breathing symbols of the Wolf Brigade and are accorded great respect. No Wolf Knight willingly or wantonly kills a wolf brother. Culling of the weak from the pack is sometimes seen as necessary for the survival of the pack.

Wolf Brigade Knights favor freedom of movement and stealth over defense, using the cover of nature to shield them from their enemies. They strike quickly and retreat into the woods just as quickly. Many Wolf Knights favor light or one-handed weapons and prefer fighting close up. Ranged weapons are for the most part seen as the weapons of a coward.

Wolf Brigades are organized into packs. Packs may contain as few as two members to twenty or more; usually they contain about 5-6 members. The highest-ranking knight of each pack is referred to as the Pack Lord, with the highest-ranking knight over all the packs referred to as the Alpha Lord. Because of events of the Age of Blood, there currently is no Alpha Lord.

In many cases, a particularly inspiring or talented Pack Lord is seen to be the Alpha Lord (as in the case of Edward Brinhold). In order to choose a true Alpha Lord, all of the scattered packs would have to come together and the Pack Lords either choose one among them for the position or if there are more than two contenders, then they would have to battle for right of rulership.

Edward Brinhold, Wolf Knight and High Commander of the forces of Ardrennen Falls, is a Pack Lord. He leads a pack of nearly 50 individuals though he also commands the City Guard of Ardrennen Falls, but only in matters of defense. Many of his pack consider him the Alpha Lord. It is thanks in part to the presence of his pack of Wolf Knights that has allowed Ardrennen Falls to remain free. This pack has managed to pick off several high-ranking keza-drak leaders and may be one the reasons the keza-drak forces have pulled back.

WOLF KNIGHT HEROIC PATH

Primary Skills: Climb, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Jump, Medicine, Notice, Search, Sense Motive, Stealth, Survival, Swim.

Primary Feats: Armor Training (Light), Improved Grab, Improved Speed, Improved Trip, Light Sleeper, Talented (Notice and Survival), Tough, Track, Weapon Training.

Primary Powers: None

WOLF KNIGHT MASTERY I

Prerequisites: Warrior Level 6+.

Skills: 9 ranks in Notice, 9 ranks in Stealth, 9 ranks in Survival.

Feats: Talented (notice and survival), Track.

Benefit: The senses of the Wolf Knight sharpen allowing the Wolf Knight to detect approaching friends and enemies, discover hidden foes, and track by scent alone. The Wolf Knight gains the "Scent" trait.

WOLF KNIGHT MASTERY II

Prerequisites: Warrior Level 12+.

Skills: 15 ranks in Notice, 15 ranks in Knowledge (tactics), 15 ranks in Stealth, 15 ranks in Survival.

Feats: Challenge: Fast Task (aid), Leadership.

Benefit: At this level, the Wolf Knight has mastered pack tactics and can instruct his pack mates to gain the most benefit from a coordinated attack. Whenever the Wolf Knight leads a combined attack the bonus for each attack that hits is +4 rather than the normal +2 for a combined attack. This pack tactic is deadly and can easily bring down even opponents far above the level of any single member of the pack including the leader.

CHIVALRIC CODE OF THE WOLF BRIGADE

- Never abandon a pack mate.
- Repay honor with honor.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses as well as those of your pack mates.
- Be ever vigilant.
- Defend the weak and helpless.
- Honor your elders.
- Any "wolf" may challenge for leadership of the pack in fair combat.

STORM RIDER LEGIONNAIRES

The Storm Rider legion is an ancient and honorable profession among the Thusparran elves. Since time immemorial, they have shared a bond with the eagles and griffons that shared their territory. This bond unites the Storm Riders with their mounts. Storm Rider Legionnaires are not made, they are born.

Only about one elf in every 1000 has the natural inclination and ability to join with the giant eagles or griffons. Near the end of the Age of Plenty the Storm Riders numbered in the tens of thousands. In the Age of Blood, it is believed that only a thousand or so remain.

The time of the Storm Rider may be drawing to a close, but they are determined that they will take as many of the keza-drak with them as possible.

The invasion of the keza-drak all but destroyed the greatest aeries of the Thusparran elves, leaving many without homes. Consequently, they became nomads, soaring over the world on the backs of their winged companions striking at the keza-drak whenever and wherever possible. A large number of Thusparran elves wound up in Ardrennen Falls. They merged into a cohesive unit forming the Storm Rider legion.

Storm Rider Legionnaires might be found in the world for various reasons. They might be scouting keza-drak positions to prepare for a counter offensive. They might be a "lone eagle" separated from their unit, trying to get back home. No matter their reasons, all Storm Rider Legionnaires have a deep and abiding hatred of the keza-drak and what they have done to Simarra.

STORM RIDER LEGION AUSPEX HEROIC PATH

Storm Rider Auspexi are the magical arm of the Storm Rider Legion. They wield mighty powers over wind and creatures of the air. They are the spiritual heart of the Storm Riders and function as support units, medics, lorekeepers, and seers.

Though the time of the Storm Rider is drawing to a close, the Storm Rider Auspexi are insistent on keeping accurate records and ensuring the place of the Storm Riders in the annuals of history.

Primary Skills: Concentration (Wis), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Earth Sciences), Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Supernatural), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy), Language, Medicine (Wis), and Ride (Dex).

Primary Feats: Armor Training (light), Empower, Familiar (eagle), Favored Opponent (Keza-drak), Firearms Training, Navigation, Supernatural Focus, Talented (Handle Animal and Ride), Vehicular Combat, and Weapon Training.

Primary Powers: Beast Link (only with creatures of the air), Wind Shaping, Summon Beasts (only creatures of the air).

STORM RIDER LEGION SCOUT HEROIC PATH

Storm Rider Scouts are the daring individuals that stick their necks out and see what is going on, so the other Storm Riders do not fly blindly into battle. They are masters at getting into and out of secure areas, gathering intelligence and performing hit and run attacks on enemy outposts and supply lines.

Primary Skills: Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Current Events) (Int), Knowledge (Earth Sciences) (Int), Knowledge (Streetwise) (Int), Notice (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), and Stealth (Dex).

Primary Feats: Armor Training (Light), Familiar (eagle), Fascinate, Favored Opponent (Keza-drak), Firearms Training, Inspire, Navigation, Skill Focus, Skill Mastery, Sneak Attack, Talented (Handle Animal and Ride), Vehicular Combat, Weapon Training, and Well Informed.

STORM RIDER LEGION WARRIOR HEROIC PATH

Storm Rider Warriors make up the bulk of the Legion's forces. They outnumber scouts by 10:1 and magi by 25:1. Storm Riders are the frontline combatants and are often the first wave in any attack. Many of the older Storm Rider Warriors favor the lance, feeling that it is a more civilized weapon; however, many of the younger warriors favor firearms.

Primary Skills: Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Earth Sciences), Ride (Dex), and Survival (Wis)

Primary Feats: Armor Training (Light), Armor

Training (Heavy), Attack Focus, Attack Specialization, Cleave, Familiar (Eagle), Favored Opponent (Keza-drak), Firearms Training, Great Cleave, Greater Attack Focus, Greater Attack Specialization, Navigation, Shield Training, Smite Opponent, Spirited Charge, Talented (Handle Animal and Ride), Tough, Vehicular Combat, and Weapon Training.

HEROIC PATH UNDEAD SLAYER

The continent of Simarra is filled with many dangers, not all of which are directly related to the invasion of the keza-drak. The dawn of the Age of Blood saw the return of the fiendish denizens of the Dead Lands to the realm of the living.

Rot ghouls, mummies, wights, zombies, vampires and the infernal death lords began creeping out of the haunted kingdom of Numarath and a myriad other corrupted locales across the continent. Hellish wights came howling out of mysterious, corrupted Fey Hold in the Northern Reaches. Rot ghouls began to inhabit the twisted and scarred Blood Wood.

Vampires have been encountered wandering the dangerous roads of Simarra, preying on unwary travelers. Ancient mummies rose up out of ruins in the sea of dust to plague the nomadic tribes of the Vaskraall wastes.

Many heroes have come forth out of the darkness to answer this new and terrible threat. Collectively known as undead slayers, these men and women travel the continent, hunting and slaying undead wherever they are found.

The grey men of the southern Aradi Heartlands are the most famous of these undead slayers and many would-be slayers brave the trek south across the war-torn Aradi Heartlands to learn from these death dealers.

Primary Skills: Craft (Alchemy), Concentration, Intimidate, Knowledge (Life Sciences, Supernatural, Theology and Philosophy), Medicine, Notice, Sense Motive, Survival.

Primary Feats: Critical Strike, Dedicated, Favored Opponent (Undead), Mind over Body, Smite Opponent, Weapon Training.

Primary Powers: Cure, Ghost Touch, Light Shaping, Ward.

SLAYING MASTERY I

Prerequisites: Adept Level 4+, Warrior Level 2+.
Skills: 9 Ranks of Knowledge (supernatural, theology and Philosophy), 9 Ranks of Notice.

Feats: Dedicated, Mind over Body.

Powers: Cure.

Benefit: Many undead employ forms of draining

attacks or disease. By way of unswerving faith and conviction, the slayer gains unnatural resistance to these special attack forms.

If a slayer should fail a saving throw against one of these effects, she may immediately reroll that save. Only one such reroll is allowed per attack. If the attack does not normally grant a save (like the Blood Draining ability of Vampires) the slayer gets to make a Fortitude save to ignore the effect completely. The Difficulty of this save is equal to 10+ 1/2 the creature's level and Charisma score (if positive) combined.

SLAYING MASTERY II

Prerequisites: Adept Level 7+, Warrior Level 5+.

Skills: 15 Ranks of Knowledge (supernatural, theology and philosophy), 15 Ranks of Notice.

Feats: Favored Enemy (Undead), Smite.

Powers: Ghost Touch.

Benefit: Even incorporeal undead fear the slayer. So complete is his understanding of his prey that he can track them anywhere despite their lack of physical bodies.

This ability functions in all ways like the Track feat except that it is a Notice check rather than Survival and the base difficulty is always 10 (since the type of ground is irrelevant) but is modified by the other conditions such as age of the trail, or size of creature. Even rain and snow affect the effort as they serve to

dilute the spectral trail left by the undead.

HEROIC PATH WITCH

Like the blood mage, the witch practices a form of magic once considered taboo. In the dark times of the Age of Blood, such dark arts have become increasingly common both as a form of self-protection or as a way to prey on others.

Primary Skills: Animal Handling, Bluff, Craft (charms, poisons), Diplomacy, Gather Information, Sense Motive.

Primary Feats: Familiar, Imbue Item, Lucky, Night Vision, Trackless.

Primary Powers: Beast Link, Body Control, Dominate, Mind Touch, Mind Probe, Mind Shaping, Pain, Scrying, Self Shaping, Sleep, Suggestion, Teleport, Water Shaping, Weather Shaping, Wind Shaping.

Witches tend to be outcasts and loners, honing their skills in solitude or at the most under the tutelage of a single reclusive master.

As such, they are as varied as the leaves on a tree. Instead of Path Masteries, they get a small boon from their chosen sub-path as described under Power Paths in **Chapter Two: Feats**.



NEW SKILLS

The following skills are designed for use in the Blood Throne Campaign setting.

CRAFT ASCENDANT TECHNOLOGY

Intelligence, Trained only, Requires Specialization, Requires Tools

Ascendant technology comes in various forms. The Order of the Avikus pioneered the construction and use of ascendant technology, paving the way for all sorts of wondrous devices including vessels for rites. In the Age of Blood, many of these devices were lost or destroyed. Only those who have been properly trained can hope to comprehend how these enigmatic pieces of machinery work.

Note: This skill works exactly like the Craft skill.

See Chapter 3: The Magic of Simarra for the rules on creating Ascendant Items.

CRAFT DEMOLITIONS

Intelligence, Trained only, Requires Specialization, Requires Tools

You are skilled at creating and planting explosive devices.

Check: You can make a successful demolitions check (Difficulty 5) to construct, safely plant or activate a simple explosive device. Simple explosive devices include fuse-ignited bombs, fragmentation orbs or sticks of dynamite.

You can also make a Demolitions check (difficulty 10) to construct, safely plant or activate complex explosive devices. Complex devices make use of timers, have exotic substances, and are sometimes even magical in nature.

Some examples are tûrgash orbs (stone bombs filled with a corrosive substance that does both acid and explosive damage to anyone caught in the bomb's 30ft blast radius) and Droghedian heavy munitions. You can also construct Delayed timers (difficulty 10) and standard fuses (difficulty 5) with the Craft: (demolitions) skill.

Try again: Yes

Action: Constructing a simple explosive device takes a base 30 minutes with proper materials. Divide the base number by the character's rank in demolitions and you have the actual time it takes to craft a simple explosive device. Constructing a complex device can take much longer.

The base time is 24 hours with the proper materials. Divide the base by the character's rank in demolitions and you have the actual time it takes to construct a complex explosive device.

Planting and activating simple explosive device is a standard action. Planting and activating a complex explosive device is a full-round action.





CHAPTER TWO: FEATS

A number of the following feats deal with mature themes, such as blood sacrifice. Narrators who are running a traditional heroic game may not wish to allow heroes to have these feats. Blood magic is a common element in the Blood Throne setting.

It reflects the horrors that have manifested in the years following the keza-drak's invasion of Simarra. Indeed, the near-total dominance of evil (in its various incarnations) is a major theme for this setting, and one we invite you to explore in the stories you tell. Not all characters in this setting are heroic in the traditional "good vs. evil" sense of the word. The anti-hero plays a major role in Simarra as well.

His is a reflection of the horrors of war, of the stain it leaves on the psyche and the depths to which a person can sink before they begin walking the long road back out of darkness. His is a more personal, tragic role, one of loss, betrayal and possibly even redemption.

Attune Mana Shard (Adept)

Prerequisite: Use Mana Shard

You are able to attune an unfocused mana shard. Attuning an unfocused mana shard changes its characteristics into that of an amplification shard, an energy shard, a focus shard, a memory shard or a power shard.

To attune a shard, you must make a power check with a Difficulty equal to 15 plus the Base attunement rating (AR) of the new shard, and spend a number of Conviction points equal to the intended rank of the shard. Adding ranks to a mana shard beyond the base AR adds a +1 difficulty to the power check for every additional rank. Failure on the power check indicates the mana shard remains unfocused. The character loses all Conviction points previously spent on the shard but may try again.

Mana Shard Base Attunement Ratings:

- Amplification Shard: Attunement Rating (AR) 5
- Energy Shard: Attunement Rating (AR) 3
- Focus Shard: Attunement Rating (AR) 5
- Memory Shard: Attunement Rating (AR) 1
- Power Shard: Attunement Rating (AR) 3

Alchemical Lore (General)

You have access to three supernatural powers for purpose of imbuing them into alchemical items using the Craft (alchemy) skill.

An Alchemical Lore slot can also be used on supernatural feats, which affect alchemical powers

only. Alchemical powers have a rank equal to one's Craft (alchemy) skill (Bonuses from Talented and Skill Focus do not apply, but bonuses from alchemical Supernatural Talent and Supernatural Focus do.).

Charms containing a single power are Moderate complexity items (Typically, a charm lasts for a single round; if that makes the charm useless or nearly so, let it last for a scene or one round per rank if a specific time limit is desired.). Charms containing more than one power, or that benefit from Supernatural feats (other than Supernatural Talent or Supernatural Focus), are Complex complexity items. Charms that last a whole scene (As opposed to just a round) are also Complex.

Longer-lasting items are at the discretion of the Narrator, and are of advanced complexity if they are possible at all. In any case, alchemists are not generally capable of producing permanently supernatural arms and armor (Though they can produce a charm that will give Supernatural Weapon for a single round or scene.).

In some campaigns, it may be appropriate for there to be alchemical "shortcuts" for some types of Imbued Items, though. Successful Craft (alchemy) checks would make the process faster and cheaper; such "recipes" should probably require Alchemical Lore slots.

Especially limited charms (Cure Disease that only affects a single disease, for example), may be treated as Simple complexity at the Narrator's discretion, and are cheaper to make. (At least -2 to cost.)

Alchemy can also be used to produce poisons and acid. Specific kinds of poison are bought using Alchemical Lore slots. Most kinds of poison are Moderate complexity, but some may be simpler or more complex to make. Acid can be made by anyone who has Craft (alchemy) as a Simple complexity process; one does not need an Alchemical Lore slot for it. This feat may be taken more than once. Each time, you get three more slots.

Blood Frenzy Warrior)

Prerequisite: Rage

When raging against bleeding opponents (and bleeding opponents only), you gain all the benefits of your Rage feat as well as an additional +2 Strength and +2 to your Fortitude and Will saves.

You also suffer an additional -2 penalty to Defense, and are fatigued for an additional round. You may enter a blood frenzy as many times as you have the ability to rage (as per the Rage feat), but only if there is a bleeding target present. A bleeding target is either someone who has suffered a wounded condition from

a slashing or piercing weapon, or someone who is under the effects of the Thin Blood power.

You may take this feat multiple times, allowing you to either increase the benefits or the duration as described in the Rage feat description.

Blood Sacrifice (Adept)

You know how to perform blood sacrifices to gain great power.

Prerequisites: 3rd-level Adept or higher, Blood Magic, Trained in Knowledge (supernatural) and Knowledge (theology/philosophy).

You can perform a ritual of a blood sacrifice, which takes one minute to perform. For the ritual you need a helpless or willing creature (hereafter referred to as the "subject") and various materials requiring a Wealth Check Difficulty equal to the subject's blood bonus (see below).

When performing the sacrifice, you make a coup-de-grace against the subject. If the subject makes a successful Toughness save against your coup-de-grace attempt, you do not get the benefit of this feat, i.e. the blood bonus. Even if the subject successfully saves against the coup-de-grace attempt, they are considered dying.

The blood bonus is based on the subject's type and their level, as indicated on the table below. Those with one level or more of the heroic roles (adept, expert, warrior) have an additional +1 bonus, plus +1 per five levels (+2 at 5th-level, +3 at 10th-level, etc). This bonus can be used to the next power check. The maximum blood bonus cannot exceed double your total level.

Special: When a mishap happens during a blood sacrifice (see above), the effect is slightly different from normal.

The uncontrolled power instantly kills the blood sacrifice (which gets no save) but it also causes a backlash against the adept. This backlash calls for a Fatigue save with the same difficulty as noted above.

Special: Performing a blood sacrifice calls for a Taint save with a difficulty equal to 20 plus the subject's Blood Bonus.

Time: Performing a blood sacrifice takes a one minute to perform. The blood bonus can be used to the next power check or ritual check.

To gain the extra Blood Bonuses, each assistant must make an Aid check (versus a difficulty of 15). For each successful check made, you gain half the normal Blood Bonus of that assistant's subject, rounded down. So sacrificing four successful 1st-level humans (minimum of +1 each), you gain a +5 blood bonus (2+1+1+1=5). If they were all 1st-level heroes, the bonus would be +6 (3+1.5+1.5+1.5=6.5, or 6).

Great: Outsider. Note: *If the Narrator does not want this progression, the Outsider then is considered 'Good'.*

Good: Dragon, Fey.

Average: Aberration, Humanoid, Monstrous Humanoid, Supernatural Beast.

Poor: Animal, Vermin.

None: Since these types are not alive or have no blood in them, they cannot be used in a Blood Sacrifice.

These types are; Construct, Elemental, Ooze, Plant, and Undead.

Note: Multiple Blood Sacrifices

You can make multiple Blood Sacrifices as long as you have enough assistants (who must also be 1st-level adepts or higher, and have the Blood Magic Power Path). You may only have a number of assistants equal to your Wisdom bonus. Each additional sacrifice beyond the first gives an additional blood bonus equal to half of normal. So sacrificing three 1st-level humans, you gain a +2 blood bonus (1+0.5+0.5=2). The maximum blood bonus cannot exceed the amount noted in the table below.

BLOOD BONUS PROGRESSION CHART

Level	Poor	Average	Good	Great
1-3	1	2	2	4
4-6	2	3	4	6
7-9	3	4	6	8
10-12	4	5	8	10
13-15	5	6	10	12
16-18	6	7	12	14
19-20	7	8	14	16

Blood Scent (General)

You can track a target by scent provided the person you are tracking has bled within a nearby distance. You must either have been present when the target's blood was spilled or have a (liquid) sample of the blood on hand when you begin tracking the person or creature, and you must be within reasonable proximity of the trail (usually 30 feet).

Unlike normal tracking, blood scent uses the Notice skill and has a base difficulty of 15, +1 per twelve hours since the target bled. This is generally unmodified by environment, though extreme conditions such as overpowering smells, strong winds or extreme temperature shifts may increase the difficulty at the Narrator's discretion.

Craft Fetish (Adept)

Prerequisite: Shamanism Power Path

This feat functions in all ways as the Imbue Item feat presented in the **True20 Adventure Roleplaying Game** save that it does not require wealth to use. Instead, the bone shaman must use materials gathered

GENERAL FEATS

Alchemical Lore	You can duplicate a few Supernatural Powers using the Alchemy skill.
Blood Scent	Gain the benefits of the Scent trait to track a bleeding target.
Desert Dweller	You get a +4 to resist the effects of heat, dehydration, or starvation.
Exotic Weapon Training (Black Powder Weapons)	You're trained with black powder weapons.
Favored by the Dust Cloaks	You get a +2 Wealth bonus when dealing with the Dust Cloaks.
Guild-Friend	You gain a +2 reputation bonus when dealing with a chosen guild.
Improved Use Ascendant Technology	You have a higher understanding of ascendant technology.
Kapurra Rider	You gain a +2 bonus to Handle Animal and Ride checks when dealing with kapurra beasts.
Power Challenge	Perform a particular power challenge with no modifier.
Reputable	You add +4 to reputation checks before making a barter check.
Shrewd Trader	You add +2 to all Diplomacy based barter checks.
Speed Loader	You can reload black powder weapons as a reaction rather than a standard action.
Use Ascendant Technology	You understand ascendant technology and can operate it with some skill.
Use Technological Device	You operate complicated technological devices without penalty.

SUMMARY

ADEPT FEATS

Attune Mana Shard	You can attune unfocused mana shards.
Blood Sacrifice	You gain a bonus to Supernatural Power Checks by sacrificing the living.
Craft Fetish	You created supernatural items powered by flesh, bone, and spirits of the dead.
Imbue Blood	You can create supernatural items powered by the blood of the living.
Magical Hydration	When you use the Water Shaping power, you remove the effects of dehydration.
Tainted Spellcaster	You have learned to embrace your Taint, mitigating some its negative effects.
Undead Familiar	You gain a familiar with the undead creature type.

SUMMARY

WARRIOR FEATS	SUMMARY
Blood Frenzy	Your rage improves significantly against bleeding opponents.
SUPERNATURAL FEATS	SUMMARY
Resonance Crystal	You gain an Adept power by virtue of your shodonai heritage.
Rotecraft	You can create supernatural Rotes.
Store Power	You can Imbue mana shards.
Supernatural Resistance	You gain unparalleled resistance to a power you know.
Use Mana Shard	You are trained in using mana shards.
EXPERT FEATS	SUMMARY
Mirage Movement	You gain a +4 bonus to Hide checks when attempting to hide in open desert.
Ruin Seeker	You gain a +4 bonus to Notice checks when attempting to discover ruins unearthed by a sandstorm.
Sapper	You excel at creating and detonating explosives.
Scavenger	You are skilled at uncovering hidden treasures amongst ruins.



from corpses and bind the spirits of the dead to these grim objects. Bits of hair, bone, sinew, & flesh are bound into items like weapons, armor, and charms.

Special: Crafting bone fetishes certainly has its drawbacks. The social ramifications of grave robbing, let alone imprisoning the spirits of the deceased is harsh indeed across most of Simarra. Still there are those who would accept what the shaman has to offer, wagering the value of their own souls against the cheaper items the bone shaman creates.

See the equipment section for new Bone Fetish items and their creation.

Desert Dweller (General)

You gain a +4 bonus to any save made to resist the effects of heat, dehydration, or starvation.

Exotic Weapon Training (Black Powder Weapons) (General)

Ranged weapons that make use of black powder, including flintlock pistols and muskets, each have a separate exotic weapon training feat. Simple explosive devices, such as sticks of dynamite and fragmentation orbs, also need specific training. Characters lacking the appropriate feat suffer a -4 on attack rolls with these types of weapons.

Favored by the Dust Cloaks (General)

You gain a +2 wealth bonus for purposes of purchasing the support of the Dust Cloaks.

Guild-friend (General)

Choose a guild. You gain a +2 reputation bonus when dealing with members of that guild.

Imbue Blood (Adept)

Prerequisite: Blood Sacrifice

This allows the adept to prepare an item for unholy blood rites. It is used to create an altar suitable for the Blood Sacrifice feat (see above) and is used for the creation of Hematic Shards.

Improved Use Ascendant Technology (General)

Prerequisite: Use Ascendant Technology

You have not only learned the fundamentals of ascendant technology operation, but have developed an advanced understanding of the use of ascendant technology. As well as not incurring the -10 penalty when attempting to operate ascendant technology, you add +2 to your Operation Difficulty check.

Kapurra Rider (General)

You gain a +2 bonus to Handle Animal and Ride checks when dealing with a Kapurra beast. This feat

stacks with the benefits gained from the Talented feat.

Magical Hydration [Adept]

Prerequisite: Supernatural Focus (Water Shaping).

Whenever you successfully use a water shaping power, any effects of dehydration you are suffering are removed.

Mirage Movement (Expert)

You gain a +4 bonus to Hide checks when attempting to hide in open desert.

Power Challenge (General)

This feat functions in all ways to the Challenge feat located in **Chapter two of the True20 Adventure Role Playing Game** but is used with powers that allow challenges instead of feats.

Reputable (General)

This is an optional reputation-based feat; you may only take it if your Narrator allows the reputation rules in their game.

You are well known for your fair dealings in trade. You add +4 to reputation checks before making a barter check. However, you lose the benefits of this feat when dealing with anyone who you have ever successfully intimidated.

Resonance Crystal (Supernatural)

Prerequisite: Shodonai

As a shodonai, you have inherited a psychic legacy that has been handed down to you by your gods - the nekarim. This feat may be taken multiple times. Each time you choose this feat, pick a power from the supernatural powers list. You can use this power as if your total level were an adept level.

Rotecraft (Supernatural)

Prerequisite: Minimum of two Powers, Use Mana shard, Imbue Item

You are able to create a rote taking on the aspects of powers that you know. Creating a rote takes 1 hour per Adept level + an hour for each power you are using to fashion the rote.

Rotes can be bound into a mana shard of sufficient rank or channeled into an item.

Ruin Seeker: (Expert)

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to Notice checks when attempting to discover buried ruins unearthed by a sandstorm.

Sapper (Expert)

Prerequisite: Knowledge (Engineering) 5 ranks, Craft (alchemy) 5 ranks

You are an expert at the creation and use of explosive devices. You gain a +2 to craft checks when creating simple explosive devices and a +1 to craft checks when creating complex explosive devices. You also gain a +2 competency bonus to demolitions checks when placing these devices.

Scavenger (Expert)

You have a knack for finding items of worth. When scavenging through ruins or other areas where there is a chance you might find items of value, you gain a +2 to Search and Notice checks. When you search, the Narrator secretly rolls on the following table to determine what items (if any) you find. You may only use this feat once in a 100' x 100' square area.

DIFFICULTY	ITEMS FOUND	WEALTH BONUS
10-14	1 item of worth	1
15-19	2 items of worth	2
20 -24	3 items of worth	3
25 -29	1 item of considerable worth	4
30 +	1 magic item	-

Note: Narrators should feel free to adjust the amount of items the character is likely to find as appropriate for the game and the current situation the hero finds himself in.

For example, it is not appropriate to use this feat in a crowded marketplace. On a battlefield, the chance of finding weapons and armor that are valuable is much greater than, say, in a dense jungle with no apparent signs of habitation.

Sense Spirits (Adept)

You can sense and observe objects and beings in the spirit world by using your normal senses. You can make Notice checks with regard to things that exist in the dead lands, including the spirits themselves. This feat does not allow you to manipulate features of the spirit world, nor does it give you the ability to communicate with spirits.

Shrewd Trader (General)

You gain a +2 to all diplomacy checks made to barter so long as the person you are trading with is at least indifferent to you.

Speed Loader (General)

Prerequisite: +2 dexterity bonus, appropriate exotic weapon training

Due to your experience with these types of weapons, you are exceptionally skilled at loading your black powder weapons under pressure. You can reload as a reaction rather than a standard action.

Store Power (Supernatural)

Prerequisite: Power, Use Mana shard

With this feat, you are able to channel a power into a mana shard. The power is only useable a finite number of times. The number of times that you can use the power stored in the mana shard is determined by your adept level + the rank of the shard.

So, a 3rd level Adept using stored power in a rank 1 mana shard can only use that power 4 times before the stone is drained of mana and needs to be recharged. The power rank of any supernatural power stored in a mana shard is equal to the level of the adept +3 or the level of the shard +3, whichever is lower. *See Chapter 3: The Magic of Simarra for more information on mana shards and powers.*

Supernatural Resistance (Supernatural)

Prerequisite: The character must have the affected power

Choose a power you are trained in using. You have a +10 bonus on all saving throws against harm from that power and suffer only non-lethal damage from it so long as you are conscious.

You may acquire this feat multiple times. Each time, it affects a different power.

Tainted Spellcaster (Adept)

You do not accrue taint from using supernatural powers while infused with Taint. You still gain one for rolling a natural 1 however. Your Taint score can never drop below 1, but you do not have to make Fortitude saves against negative effects when your score is only one.

Undead Familiar (Adept)

This feat allows a character to gain the benefits of a familiar as with the Familiar feat on page 46 of the **True20 Adventure Roleplaying Game** with the addition of undead traits (darkvision 60' and immunities). An adept's total level is considered three less when consulting the chart to determine Abilities, Tricks, and Specials to a minimum of level 1.

Use Ascendant Technology (General)

Prerequisite: Knowledge (Ascendant Technology) 5 ranks.

You know how to use various types of Ascendant Technology with an effective skill rank equal to your character level +3. This feat gives you the basic understanding of various types of Ascendant Technology, but does not allow you to repair or recharge the item once it runs out of power.

You can take this feat multiple times. Each time you take this feat, you must specify a new type of Ascendant Technology. *See Chapter 4: Ascendant Technology for more information on the types of ascendant technology that are available for use.*

Use Mana shard (Supernatural)

You are able to use a mana shard with an effective skill rank equal to your adept level +3. *See The Magic of Simarra for more information on mana shards and their use.*

Use Technological Device (General)

You have gained a modicum of expertise in the utilization and operation of mundane technology. This feat allows you to operate various technological devices without incurring the normal -10 penalty.

PATHS OF POWER

The Arcanus Magi of Simarra have spent a millennium studying magic. Throughout the course of history, these dedicated sorcerers and wizards have developed a number of schools of magic, which they refer to as paths of power.

Each path of power is being a separate form of spell casting. Each power path has a set of powers that make up the foundation of its particular view on magic. These core powers are known by virtually all the practitioners of a single power path. These core powers only compromise the base level of a power path, it does not mean that these are the only available powers, nor are they “free” at character creation, they are gained in the normal manner.

Along with a power path, there are both advantages and disadvantages. First, each power path provides a new use for spending a Conviction point, a possible bonus to a few skills, or some other benefit. Second, all power paths have some form of restriction like forbidden powers, a code of conduct, or some other limiting factor which balances out the path.

BLOOD MAGIC POWER PATH

You have learned how to draw out and harness the power in the lifeblood of living beings.

Prerequisite: 1st-level Adept or higher.

Key Ability: Wisdom. Blood Magic requires a great degree of willpower to control the dangerous forces found in this tradition.

Benefit: You can gain extra power by drawing the life-blood through bloodletting.

Bloodletting: You can gain a blood bonus to your power checks by inflicting lethal damage to yourself, as a free action. The bonus equals the severity of the damage inflicted, up to half your adept level (rounded

NEW FEAT CATEGORY POWER PATH FEATS

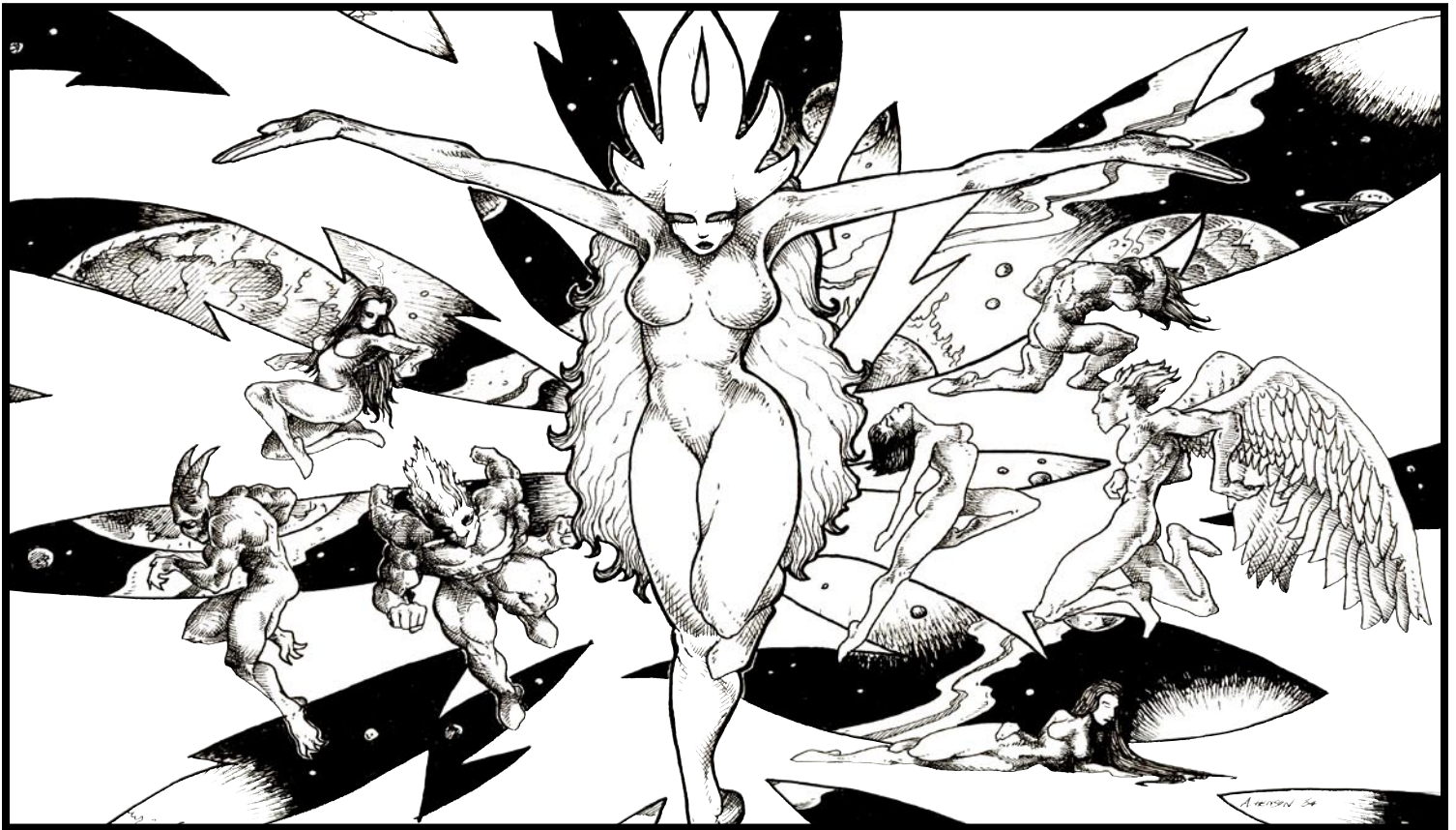
This new category of feats is only available to Adepts. Every adept in the Blood Throne setting must choose a single power path at 1st level. The Adept gains this feat for free. This represents the adept’s chosen form of magic. The training of the Arcanus mage is very rigid but, at the Narrator’s discretion, they may gain another power path at character levels 4, 11 and 20.

down). For example, a 4th-level adept can gain up to a +2 blood bonus (to be applied to her next power check) by inflicting +2 lethal damage upon herself.

Special: The damage inflicted through bloodletting can only be healed through normal rest or by using the Medicine skill (add +5 to the Difficulty).

Special: Blood magic is dangerous and there is a small chance that the magic gets out of control. If you roll a natural 1 on any Toughness check while bloodletting, make a Fortitude save against a Difficulty equal to 15 plus the amount of the blood bonus.

Failure means the magic has pulled more blood than normal, causing a single point of temporary Constitution damage. This ability damage can only be healed through natural means. If the save is successful though, the character suffers one level of Fatigue instead.



DISCIPLE: POWER PATH

You are a disciple, a chosen of a divine patron.

Prerequisite: Adept level 1+.

Benefit: As a disciple, you gain the ability to become a divine vessel. By spending a Conviction point, you can imbue yourself with a portion of your divine patron's power. As a divine vessel, you gain the following benefits:

- Damage Reduction equal to +3 plus +1 per five adept levels, maximum of +8. This damage reduction is bypassed by supernatural attacks and weapons.
- Supernatural Resistance equal to 10 + your adept level.
- +1 to all saving throws, excluding Toughness saves.
- +1 per five adept levels to attack rolls and damage, minimum of +1 and maximum of +4.

These benefits last for a total of one minute (10 rounds) per four adept levels.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to Knowledge (theology and philosophy) skill checks and with one other skill as determined by your Divine Patron.

Key Ability: Your key ability is Wisdom.

Special: You have a power that must be taken at 1st-level, as per your divine patron.

Special: You have a code of conduct or other similar restriction. Failure to follow the tenets of the faith penalizes your power checks by -2. A second transgression is a -2 penalty to all checks, and the

third is a complete stripping of your powers. All transgressions are cumulative. The specifics to atone are different based on the divine patron and the circumstances of the transgressions.

DIVINE PATRONS

Each adept of this power path must choose one divine patron to follow. Each divine patron is representative of a set of ideals and concepts. The selection of this patron dictates the required power of the adept and the second bonus skill.

You will find that in most cases the gods are listed more than once, some even three times. This is because not every person worships the same god for the same reason. One adept might venerate Vathrim for his honor while another might love the god for his keen strategy.

ELEMENTALISM: POWER PATH

You are trained in the power path of elementalism, granting you powers over the five elements of earth, fire, water, wind, and wood.

Prerequisite: Adept level 1+.

Benefit: As an elemental, you gain an elemental focus. You gain a +1 on all power checks when using powers relating to your element.

The following powers listed all benefit from elemental focus: Earth Shaping, Elemental Aura, Elemental Blast, Elemental Resistance, Elemental

DIVINE PATRON	REPRESENTS	REQUIRED POWER	PATRON SKILL
Enâra	Passion, Creativity, Light, Purifying fire	Fire shaping	Perform or Craft
Gimbureth	Healing, Life	Cure	Medicine
Vathrim	Chivalry, Honor, War	Combat sense	Diplomacy
Vathrim	War, Strategy	Combat sense	Knowledge (tactics)
Torrodoth	Storms, Thunder and lightning, War	Energy control	Intimidate
Iragreth	Rains, Flowing water	Water shaping	Swim
The Sirens	Seer of the Gods, Prophecy, Magic	Visions	Knowledge (supernatural)
Uzgora	Dragons, Strength	Enhance ability	Intimidate
Iragreth	Hunting, Animals, Archery	Beast link	Survival
Iragreth	Untamed nature	Plant shaping	Survival
Vathrim	Ferocious beasts, Primal instincts	Beast link*	Survival
Uzgora	the Night, the Moon, Magic	Sleep	Knowledge (supernatural)
Galburak	Fire, War	Fire shaping	Intimidate
Torrodoth	the Earth, Mountains, Stone	Earth shaping	Climb
Kel-Zedon	the Winds, the Cold, Winter	Cold shaping	Survival
The Sirens	the Seas, Aquatic creatures	Water shaping	Swim
Enâra	Community, Family, Children, Childbirth	Heart reading	Diplomacy
Gimbureth	the Arts, Music, Beauty	Heart shaping	Perform or Craft
Enâra	Truth, Order, Law	Truth-reading	Sense Motive
Thûrak	Mischief, Chaos, Trickery	Illusion	Disguise
Azagog	the Inevitability of death	Drain vitality	Stealth
Azagog	the Underworld, Death	Pain	Stealth
Azagog	the Afterlife, the Dead, Travel	Phase	Stealth
Kel-Zedon	Agriculture, the Common folk	Plant shaping	Medicine
Kel-Zedon	Blacksmiths, Metalwork, War	Enhance ability	Craft
Thûrak	Darkness, Despair, Destruction	Heart shaping**	Stealth
Thûrak	Pestilence, Famine, Vermin	Beast link***	Stealth
Kel-Zedon	Trade, Wealth, Greed	Suggestion	Bluff

* Predatory animals only.

** Negative emotions only.

*** Vermin and insects only.

Weapon, Fire Shaping, Water Shaping, Wind Shaping, and Wind Walk.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to two skill checks determined by your elemental focus. Earth (Climb and Jump), Fire (Intimidate and Perform), Water (Escape artist and Swim), and Wind (Acrobatics and Sense motive).

Key Ability: Your key ability is Wisdom.

Special: You are considered to be at half your adept level when using powers of your opposing element. Wood is never an opposed element.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS

- Earth embodies stability, resilience and resolve, the body and its strength. This element controls the very ground underneath one's feet, using sheer might to overcome their foes. The Earth is a balanced element as it has both good offensive and defensive capabilities.

- Fire is aggressive, direct, destructive, and the element of all forms of energy. It is also the source of inspiration, creativity, and intelligence. This element can control fire and other pure forms of energy like electricity. This is a very offensive element with little in the way of defense and other abilities.

- Water is an element of change, constantly flowing as the situation dictates. This element is rather defensive, relying on using an opponent's force against them. Water is also seen as cleansing, healing, transformation, and the source of the cold.

- Wind is shares many traits with Water; wind is defensive in nature, conveying the concepts of freedom, mobility, pacifism, the mind, and illusion. This element controls the winds, can affect someone's speed, agility, and the mind, defense through evasion, and non-lethal offensive attacks.

- Wood is seen as being the combination of all four elements. This element controls all manner of plants and vegetation, powers duplicating the natural abilities of plants, like the curing of disease, and the power of transformation and nature reading.

ELEMENTAL OPPOSITION

Earth opposes Wind, Wind opposes Fire, Fire opposes Water, and Water opposes Earth. Wood is never considered an opposing element.

NECROMANCY POWER PATH

You are trained in the dark arts of necromancy, granting you power over the dead and perverting the life-energies of the living.

Prerequisite: Adept level 1+.

Benefit: As a necromancer, you have mastery over the undead. By spending a Conviction point you can try to gain control over any uncontrolled, mindless undead within 60 ft. Make an Imbue Unlife check against a check (1d20 + double undead's level) for each mindless undead within the area.



If successful, you gain control over those undead who failed their check, the closest and weakest first.

Benefit: You gain a +1 to Knowledge (life sciences) skill checks.

Key Ability: Your key ability is Intelligence.

Special: You are subject to Corruption.

Special: You are considered to be at half your normal adept level when using the following powers: Cure powers, Elemental powers, and Mind powers.

Special: You can never learn the following powers: Imbue life, Purifying light, and all Psychic powers.

SHAMANISM POWER PATH

You are trained in the mystic power path of shamanism, becoming a medium between this world and the Spirit World.

Prerequisite: Adept level 1+.

Benefit: As a shaman, you have the ability to exorcise spirits and banish them into the Spirit World. By spending a Conviction point, you can try to banish a spirit by making a check (1d20 + half adept level + Wisdom score) against the spirit's check (1d20 + half spirit's level + Wisdom score). If successful, the shaman banishes the spirit into the Spirit World. This can also be used on those under possession from spirits.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to Sense motive skill checks.

Key Ability: Your key ability is Wisdom.

Special: You can potentially anger the spirits. Any time a natural 1 is rolled during a power check, roll again and if that power check fails too, the shaman is possessed by a spirit for 10 minutes.

A shaman can make a Will save (difficulty = 10 + half the spirit's level + Charisma) each minute thereafter to regain control, or can spend a Conviction point to overcome this possession automatically. Either way the shaman is fatigued afterwards.

SORCERY POWER PATH

You are trained in the mystic power path of the dark art of sorcery, allowing you to draw directly from the infernal fury of the Thugash-Tor for the cost of your soul.

Prerequisite: Adept level 1+.

Benefit: As a sorcerer, you can call on the powers of the dreaded Thugash-Tor and rain hellfire down upon your foes. By spending a Conviction point, you can attack using a blast of hellfire.

Treat this as an Elemental Blast (Fire) with a power rank equal to half your adept level. Because this fire is supernatural in nature, the benefits of fire resistance and fire immunity are ignored. This ability does not use the Elemental Blast (Fire) power.

This ability calls for a Corruption save each time it is used.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to skill checks with one of the following skills: Bluff or Intimidate.

Key Ability: Your key ability is Charisma.

Special: You are subject to Corruption.

Special: You can never learn the powers of Imbue Life and Purifying light.

WITCHCRAFT POWER PATH

You are trained in the primordial arts of witchcraft, granting you powers over the heart, mind, and nature.

Prerequisite: Adept level 1+.

Benefit: As a witch, you can bestow a witches' curse. By spending a Conviction point, you can place a curse on a subject.

This curse must have a way of removing the curse and the recipient must be able to understand it. The curse lasts for one full year unless lifted. When placing a curse choose one of the following effects:

- Enfeeblement (-3 decrease to an ability score (minimum of -2))
- Bad luck (-4 penalty on attack rolls, saves, ability checks, and skill checks)
- Befuddlement (each turn, the target has a 50% chance to act normally; otherwise, it takes no action).

Other types of curses may also be created, but it should be no more powerful than those described above.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to Medicine skill checks and another skill as determined by your Witches' Path. Heart path (diplomacy), Spirit path (sense motive), and World path (handle animal).

Key Ability: Your key ability is Charisma.

Special: You are considered to be at half your normal adept level with all elemental powers.

WITCHES PATHS

Choose one of the following. This is your Witches Path.

Path of the Heart: This path revolves around the mind, emotions, and dreams. The skill associated with the path is Diplomacy.

Path of the Spirit: This path revolves around the powers of the soul. The skill associated with the path is Sense motive.

Path of the World: This path is one with power over the natural world. The skill associated with the path is Animal handling.



Illustration by Joseph J. Calkins



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CHAPTER THREE

THE MAGIC OF SIMARRA

The magic of Simarra takes on many forms and is perceived in different ways by those who work it. It ripples across the world along invisible Taer' las Brennath and physically manifests in the world as mana shards. These powerful ribbons of pure mana intermittently intersect at what are known as nexus points. At a number of nexus points are mana wells; alien, bulbous buildings constructed by the aviki for the purpose of harnessing mana and using it as a source of energy.

The arrogant magi of the Arcanus League view it as a series of formulae to be researched and quantified, while the bone shamans of the Saran-Ghori orcs and ashoi-notkah claim magic comes from the spirits of those who have passed from the world. Witches and druids who have recently rekindled the old ways believe magic comes from the world around them. Others perceive magic as a gift from the gods, asserting that the gift is within a chosen few. Aviki harness mana in its purest form, as mana shards and use it to fuel their creations. shodonai manifest powers in the form of resonance crystals, shards of mana that literally grow out of their body. The dread Sundaari blood magi tap into the power of the world through diabolical blood sacrifices, offered up as tribute to the evil god Thûrak.

This chapter explores the magic of Simarra in its myriad forms, expanding on information originally published in **True20 Worlds of Adventure**©.

ASCENDANT TECHNOLOGY

Ascendant technology gets its name from the Ascendant Wars, which occurred during the Age of Steel. This was a very chaotic period of time when the elder races of the world were coping with the sudden disappearance of their gods who were fighting a war against beings known as "Aberrant gods."

During this period of strife, a dwarf named Thengrin Tarelion discovered mana shards. Thengrin found if a person focused hard enough on a mana shard, that person could tap into the latent energy within the shard.

Upon further investigation, Thengrin made another discovery. These mana shards existed in areas of high Taer' las Brennath activity, places he came to identify as nexus points. At the nexuses of Taer' las Brennath, the dwarf applied what he had learned about mana

In the early days, the people of Simarra were immortal. Magic was as much a part of them as a hand or an eye. Magic, or Mana, flowed through the elder races into the world and many great and wondrous things were created. All of that changed with the creation of the Threshold Realm.

The gods disappeared from the world and the people, confused and coping with their newfound mortality, forgot how to work magic. Some of the remaining scholars of the present day assert it was because their faith in the gods waned. I would tend to agree with them, if it weren't for the presence of Taer' las Brennath and mana shards; the latter of which were discovered midway through the Age of Steel, long before magic was reborn in the hearts of men...

- A discourse of mana, by Elohan Salaistrien

shards and tapped the first ever mana well at a place known as the Sedrin Henge. These discoveries led to the development of gateways, allowing travel throughout Simarra.

Many years later, these gates would prove the undoing of the people of Simarra. The Ascendant Wars were a backdrop to this period of discovery, and consequently, many pieces of ascendant technology were created as weapons of war. Losing their war with the elder gods of Simarra, the aberrant gods resolved to trick many of the elder races, sending agents of evil known as morargrim into the cities of the world.

The morargrim were able to convince the myriad people of Simarra that dragons (a once-beloved race of creatures who once shared the cities of the world with the lesser humans, elves, dwarves and half giants) intended to destroy society as it existed and become the rulers of all humanoid races on Simarra. The hunting times began, and the most powerful ascendant technologies were created to tip the balance in favor of the elder races.

Great, mana-fueled war machines, known as o'rak-dra, were created to aid people in fighting the dragons. Flying machines and ground vehicles were constructed to facilitate travel across the immense continent. Mana shards fueled weapons from swords to energy batteries designed to unleash waves of pure

mana on their assailants. Mana shards were embedded into armor, creating energy fields to protect their wearers. Entire cities were protected, as mana-smiths, known as aviki, learned to harness the most potent shards and created massive energy fields that helped ward against the devastating effects of dragon breath. Unfortunately, these pieces of technology also helped the elder races hunt dragons to near-extinction, forcing the once noble creatures into hiding.

After the Ascendant Wars and the Hunting Times ended, the people of the world lost their taste for war and the Age of Plenty dawned on the world. Many of great ascendant machines were discarded or lost. The secrets of their making were forgotten, though some say they still exist.

USING MUNDANE AND ASCENDANT TECHNOLOGY

Every machine, ascendant device, engine, construct and so forth in Simarra has an Operation Difficulty that determines the complexity of the object's operation and function.

Simple, usually smaller devices are less difficult to figure out than larger, more complex machines, and the Operation Difficulty reflects this difference. Ultimately, the Operation Difficulty is determined by the Narrator. However, the scale of difficulty should loosely resemble this:

OPERATION DIFFICULTY SCALE	
Operation Difficulty 5	Effortless
Operation Difficulty 10	Easy
Operation Difficulty 15	Average
Operation Difficulty 20	Challenging
Operation Difficulty 25	Difficult
Operation Difficulty 30+	Very Difficult, etc.

To determine whether a hero is able to use a given technological device, the player needs to make an Intelligence check against the Operation Difficulty assigned by the Narrator. You cannot take 10 or take 20 on this check.

Note: Without any of the relevant feats (Use Technology or Use Ascendant Technology), characters suffer a -10 penalty to all checks when attempting to use technology.

ROTES

In Simarra, manasmiths have long studied the art of rote craft. The most famous of all manasmiths was Thengrin Tarelion, founder of the Order of the Avikus. He studied the Taer' las Brennath and mana shards, learning their secrets before anyone believed in their power.

Thengrin built the first mana wells and mapped the Taer' las Brennath nexuses of Simarra. He created the first rotes but, when he saw the destructive power of rotecraft during the Hunting Times, Thengrin begged the God spawn to hide the knowledge from

the world. Much of the most devastating lore was, and remains, hidden. However, over the centuries some of these antediluvian devices have been recovered. Agärazôn seeks the most powerful of the rotes so that he may create weapons of war to unleash on the people of Simarra.

Rotes combine multiple powers, items and other materials to achieve a specific effect. That effect might be any number of possible combinations of powers. One way to visualize a rote is to think of it as an arcane blueprint of an item that, when built, creates a piece of technology which is imbued with a specific, magical effect. The types of items that can be created with rotes are limited only by the imagination of the narrator and players.

With the ongoing war, many adepts -most notably the order of the avikus - have been using rotes to create weapons. Rotes can be made to look like anything - a child's toy, a comb, a music box, a mug, etc. Many keza-drak have died because they opened the wrong box or drank from a mug designed to drain their life.

One example of a rote would be an animated top that, when activated, spins of its own accord. While spinning, a small tornado emanates from the toy. It twists and turns with the top, utilizing a shape wind effect. Other types of rotes include music boxes that charm some people and cause pain to others or magical rings. Weapons and armor can also be created by using ascendant rotes, although this is less common. Known as eldritch rotes, these blueprints are very powerful. The location of eldritch rotes is the subject of much debate; their existence merely hinted at in memory shards and scrolls.



ROTE LORE

Much rote lore has been lost to the ravages of war or spirited away from the world to safeguard the potentially dangerous knowledge of the ancient mana smiths. A large trove of rotes is believed to exist in the mythic kingdom of dragons, which fled the world during the hunting times to escape persecution. Known in legends as Kiv' larast, this realm is hidden somewhere deep below the surface of Simarra, and, if rumors are true, has been destroyed by the keza-drak. As mentioned before, rotes are essentially blueprints for building various types of ascendant technology. However, other rotes exist in the world of Simarra. There are rotes for creating various items based on steam technology and advanced mechanics. In addition, other rotes exist to facilitate the creation of purely magical items such as talismans, staves, and wands, even armor and weapons. Examples of these types of rotes are provided in their relevant section.

ASCENDANT ROTES

The following section outlines the procedures for construction, storage and use of ascendant rotes.

CONSTRUCTING THE DEVICE

The rules for using the Craft (ascendant technology) skill identical to those presented in **Chapter 2: Skills of the True20 Adventure Roleplaying Game**©.

The Craft Difficulty is equal to 25 + the number of shards used, and the Wealth Difficulty for raw materials is equal to the base Rote Cost -5. Raw materials are still wasted upon failure but the rote and shards are not. Time for creation is 16 hours plus eight hours per shard used.

FUSING THE MANA SHARD

Ascendant rotes are arcane schematics that teach a character how to build ascendant technology. In all cases, the technology is powered by mana shards. Preparing a shard for use in a constructed rote takes one hour per rank of the mana shard, after which the adept spends a conviction point to set the triggering action and makes a single rotecrafter check at a Difficulty (15) plus the mana shard rank.

If the check succeeds, the shard is fused into the previously constructed item. If the check fails, the caster is fatigued the whole process must be restarted. An adept may not use a mana shard with a higher rank than his own adept level. In addition, all items and constructs created with rotes require an Operation Difficulty check to use. See the operation Difficulty Scale above for more information.

USING ROTES

Any item created using an ascendant rote requires a trigger to activate. This trigger must be a clearly defined condition – a key phrase, proximity, or even something as simple as being touched or read. If the trigger is vague, the rote will not function.

Rotes can be used a number of times equal to the

rank of the energy shard (or power shard, as the case may be) which powers them, at which point the shards must be recharged. See the duration of an ascendant rote for more information. A successful Object Read will detail the powers contained in a rote.

ASCENDANT ROTE DESCRIPTIONS

The following rotes are samples of the possibilities available to Narrators and Heroes. These rotes are divided into two categories, common rotes and uncommon rotes. Common rotes are easily obtainable and can be found in many areas of the world.

Uncommon rotes are, as the name implies, less common. Acquiring them generally requires heroes to venture into dangerous places; abandoned mana wells where the order of the avikus did their research and development of these items, ruins of cities or keza-drak held territory. The acquisition of eldritch rotes should be the subject of large-scale adventures that require much research and involve a large degree of danger (and luck). Feel free to create your own rotes using the guidelines above.

DESCRIPTORS

The following terms define a given rote.

Name: A short one-line description of the rote.

Minimum Shard Rank: This indicates the base rank the shard(s) used in the construction of the rote need to function properly.

Requisite Shards: The base number and categories of shards required to make the device work. At the discretion of the Narrator, more shards can be added to the design of a given piece of ascendant technology, allowing for customization of the design.

Base Rote Cost: The total cost of the rote is based on the following formula: 13+ the minimum shard rank + the number of shards used in the item's design. To determine the base sale price of the finished rote add five.

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: The required

powers needed to make the item work and the minimum ranks required for each power. Feats may also take the place of a power, at the Narrator's discretion.

COMMON ROTES

The following common rites are provided for use in the Blood Throne campaign setting. They can be found in most freeholds throughout Simarra where the order of the avikus has a base of operations. Other merchants such as the trade lords also have access to these items.

Arc Welder

Minimum Shard Rank: 3

Requisite Shards: 1 power shard, 1 energy shard, 1 amplification shard

Base Item Cost: 18

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Energy blast (fire) (1)

Bands of Deadly Strength

Minimum Shard Rank: 2

Requisite shards: 1 power Shard, 1 energy shard

Base Item Cost: 15

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Enhance Self (1), Harm (1)

Elemental Lantern

Minimum Shard Rank: 2

Requisite Shards: 1 Power shard, 1 Energy shard

Base Item Cost: 17

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Elemental Resistance (2)

Healing Patch

Minimum Shard Rank: 1

Requisite Shards: 1 power shard,

Base Item Cost: 14

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Cure (1)

Light Bomb

Minimum Shard Rank: 2

Requisite Shards: 1 power shard

Base Item Cost: 15

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Purifying Light (1), Widen Power*

Mana Sensor

Minimum Shard Rank: 2

Requisite Shards: 1 power shard, 1 energy shard

Base Item Cost: 17

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Sense Mana (1)

Purification Gourd

Minimum Shard Rank: 2

Requisite Shards: 1 power shard

Base Item Cost: 17

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Cure Poison (1), Cure Disease (1)

Rejuvenation Belt

Minimum Shard Rank: 3

Requisite Shards: 1 Power Shard,

Base Item Cost: 17

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Rejuvenate (1)

Well Trap

Minimum Shard Rank: 1

Requisite Shards: 1 Power shard

Base Item Cost: 14

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Infect (1)

UNCOMMON ROTES

The following rites are more difficult to acquire. They might be found among the wreck of past battles or in ruins of cities. Members of the order of the avikus might also have these rites, but in most cases, they are unwilling to part with them without good reason.

Archon Battlesaw

Minimum Shard Rank: 4

Requisite Shard: 1 power shard, 1 energy shard

Base Item Cost: 20

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Pain (1)

Anchoring Stones

Minimum Shard Rank: 5

Requisite Shards: 1 power shard

Base Item Cost: 19

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Teleport (1)

Dragonbreath Spear

Minimum Shard Rank: 5

Requisite Shard: 1 power shard,

Base Item Cost: 19

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Elemental Blast: fire (1)

Lesser Shield Matrix

Minimum Shard Rank: 5

Requisite Shards: 1 power shard, 1 energy shard, 1 memory shard

Base Item Cost: 21

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Mana Shaping (1)

Mechanical Limb

Minimum Shard Rank: 2

Requisite Shards: 1 power shard, 1 energy shard

Base Item Cost: 15

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Move Object (1)

Pulse Spear

Minimum Shard Rank: 6

Requisite Shards: 1 power shard

Base Item Cost: 17

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Mana Blast (1)

Torc of the Wolf

Minimum Shard Rank: 6

Requisite Shards: 1 power shard

Base Item Cost: 20

Powers and Minimum Power Ranks: Self Shaping (1)

TAER'LAS BRENNATH AND MANA WELLS

Taer' las Brennath are veins of mystic energy crossing Simarra, often connected with sacred sites. Places such as the Narballa Henge and the Sedrin Henge (both sites long held sacred by many different cultures) are massive nexus points for 12 and 14 Taer' las Brennath, respectively. These mystical nexuses – called mana wells – are a source of power for adepts.

Some of the most visionary mana-smiths created gigantic ships designed to float along the Taer' las Brennath and mechanical war-machines, the O' rak-dra, used to hunt dragons. These revolutionary breakthroughs helped found numerous cities and facilitated trade with many distant communities, such as the remote nation of Sudeja.

To bring about the Age of Blood, Agärazôn used this knowledge to open gateways into the Threshold Realm. The major mana wells, such as the Sedrin and Narballa Henges, are still held open by a mysterious sorcery. The keza-drak use them to move freely about Simarra, even to and from the Threshold Realm. Each major stone gate is heavily guarded. The same cannot be said for the lesser mana wells across Simarra. Many mana wells have yet to be found, even a thousand years since their discovery. Rumors also persist of secret gates, created by the God Spawn, which they used to travel in secret throughout Simarra.

USING MANA WELLS

Mana wells have a rank equal to the number of Taer' las Brennath which fuel them, still even lowest ranked mana well is a source of immense power. Any supernatural power checks or fatigue checks at a nexus point have their difficulty decreased by the rank of the well.

An adept can recharge a mana shard by making a power check (adept level + 3 + ability modifier)

versus a Difficulty of 10 + the shard rank. Each time a shard is recharged, its rank decreases by one. The rank of the mana well affects the difficulty of this roll.

MANA SHARDS

Thengrin Talerion, founder of the Order of the Avikus, first discovered mana shards during the Age of Steel. Thengrin found that by focusing on a mana shard, he could tap the energy contained within. Shards are found in areas of high Taer' las Brennath activity. All mana shards have a rank used to measure their magical potential, which is loosely based on the size of the shard.

USING MANA SHARDS

Mana shards are unfocused in their raw form. They can be attuned – a process of ridding the mana shard of any impurities – to perform a wide range of functions. The first mana shards were used as batteries, powering many of the anti-dragon weapons and mana shields during the hunting times. Since then, many devices have been developed, including the strange weapons of the Ascendant Wars.

Numerous inventions have been lost to the ravages of time, although the shards are still used today. Mana shards can only be manipulated if the adept's level is equal to or higher than the shard rating. Mana shards can be attuned in five different ways: as amplification shards, energy shards, focus shards, power shards, or memory shards.

AMPLIFICATION SHARDS

These mana shards allow an adept to increase his power level when using powers in exchange for an increase in fatigue. An adept adds half the shard's power rank, rounded down, to his power check. Any fatigue checks made adds the shard's full rank to the Difficulty.

If a power does not normally cause fatigue, a fatigue check is still made, adding only half of the shard's rank to the check. An adept can never utilize more of an amplification shard than his adept level.

Example: A 4th-level adept using a rank 4 amplification shard can temporarily add 2 levels to a power, effectively casting at 6th level. Any fatigue checks are made as if the power check was rank 8, however.

ENERGY SHARDS

These mana shards are bright yellow and laced with black lines. They act as mana batteries, powering various forms of ascendant technology. An energy shard will power a piece of ascendant technology and its effects for a number of rounds or days equal to the rank of the shard, after which it must be recharged.

Energy shards must be charged in a mana well periodically or they begin to wane. After each recharge, the energy shard must make a Toughness save (Difficulty 15) or lose a number of ranks equal to the difference of the check divided by 2, rounding down. The Toughness of a given energy shard is equal to the shard's current rank. When the energy shard reaches zero ranks, it turns black and becomes useless. Shards may never gain ranks because of this Toughness check.

FOCUS SHARDS

These mana shards allow an adept to maintain multiple powers with less concentration. Each rank in a focus shard allows the adept to maintain an additional power without increasing the difficulty of power checks and fatigue saves. An adept can never utilize more of a focus shard than his adept level. When utilizing a focus shard, all power and fatigue checks have their base difficulty increased by two.

Example: A 3rd-level adept utilizing a rank 5 focus shard can maintain three additional powers (four total) without any additional penalty. All of his difficulty checks are at +2, however.

MEMORY SHARDS

These are the most common of all attuned mana shards, and are primarily used to create rites and encode functions into complex pieces of ascendant technology. The Daelian sages use them to store vast amounts of knowledge, accessible by anyone capable of using a memory shard. The number of memories, pieces of information or commands that can be placed into a shard is twice the rank of the shard. Memory shards do not degrade over time. They exist only to store various forms of information that can be accessed an infinite number of times. However, memory shards can be drained of their information. Once

this happens, the shard becomes black and useless. Memory shards may never be recharged.

POWER SHARDS

Power shards are used to hold magical powers, and are accessed and used by focusing intently on the shard to activate it. They hold a number of rank 1 powers equal to the rank of the shard or one power at a rank equal to the rank of the power shard, or any combination of powers with a total number of ranks equal to the rank of the shard. Adepts may lower the rank of a given power to fit inside a power shard with a rank lower than the power in question. Power shards must be charged in a mana well periodically or they begin to wane. After each recharge, the shard must make a Toughness save at a Difficulty of 15 or lose a number of ranks equal to the difference of the check divided by 2, rounded down. The Toughness of a given power shard is equal to its current rank. When the shard reaches zero ranks, it turns black and becomes useless.

HEMATIC SHARDS

Hematic shards allow blood mages to increase their power by preparing a supernatural power in advance and storing it in the shard, ready to be used at a moment's notice. Hematic shards can only be prepared during a blood sacrifice and require the creator to possess both the Blood Sacrifice and Imbue Blood feats. The creator spills the blood of his sacrifice onto the Hematic shard that will absorb that blood, using it to power the spell later.

More than one creature may be sacrificed to create a more powerful shard but once the ritual to create a Hematic stone is begun, it must be completed in 24 hours. 24 hours after the ritual is begun, the stone is "finished" and is as powerful as it will ever be. The caster must know the supernatural power placed in the Hematic shard. The effective power rank of that power is equal to the total Toughness of the creatures sacrificed. This cannot be higher than the power rank of the stone's creator (for example if a character with power rank 12 Heart Shaping sacrificed 13 Toughness of creatures while creating a Hematic shard, the power modifier of the Hematic stone would be 12, not 13).

The Fatigue check is made when the stone is created, not when it is used.

If the power imbued in a hematic shard requires mental contact this must be provided by the user of the stone, it cannot be prepared in advance. If the power imbued in a hematic shard requires familiarity, the modifier is determined by the familiarity of the user of the stone, not its creator.

After one use, a Hematic shard cracks and is worthless.

SUPERNATURAL POWERS

While the continent of Simarra is home to many strange and wondrous cultures, it is also a realm where visceral horrors and atrocities born out of the war are a part of everyday life. All too many would-be heroes set out intending to do great deeds. Unfortunately, many succumb to the bittersweet lure of power and fall into darkness. Others, having seen too much horror, forsake the path they had chosen and embrace the madness around them as a way of dealing with it. Many of the powers you will find in this section reflect these choices.

EXPANDED POWERS

This work includes a plethora of new powers as well as modifications and additions to many of the powers that already appear in the True20 Adventure Roleplaying Game

POWER CHALLENGES

The Blood Throne Setting introduces a new mechanic to supernatural powers, the Power Challenge. Just as with Skills, a character can attempt difficult tasks with the powers they now by accepting a +5 penalty to the difficulty of the task. Likewise, they can alleviate these penalties by taking the appropriate Power Challenge Feat.

CURE

Healing Burst: You may use the Widen Power feat with Cure and you do not have to touch your allies. You may choose which targets within the radius are affected by this power.

CURE DISEASE/ POISON

Purify: This power challenge works just like a normal Cure Disease/Poison use but you can remove Disease or Poison (depending on which power you use) from food and drink. You affect up to 1 cubic foot of food or 1 gallon of water per Adept level.

ELEMENTAL / MANA BLAST

Linear Blast: You may affect all targets in a straight line from you to the target point of the power rather than a normal burst, you must have Line of Sight to the target. The Adept must first possess and use the Widen Power feat to use this challenge.

FLESH SHAPING

Graft: You can meld flesh, bone, and even metal to a willing or helpless victim. The base difficulty is 20 + 1

per pound of material you are grafting + an additional modifier based on the material used and the part of the body effected. Only corporeal creatures with a skeletal system can receive a graft or become a donor. The donor limb must be from a creature of the same size as the subject.

Unlike normal uses of Flesh Shaping, this process is invasive and excruciatingly painful, the subject of this power must make a Sanity Save with a Difficulty based on the final Difficulty of the power -10. (See the **Sanity Save** section in Chapter 4 of the True20 Companion®.)

This Save can be avoided if the subject is under the effect of pain relieving drugs or Supernatural Power providing a similar effect. Regardless of success or failure, this operation adds a level of fatigue to the subject. Because of the pain involved, you cannot use Graft on yourself.

Time: 1 hour

Rejection: After the procedure is finished, the subject makes a Fortitude Save with the same Difficulty as the Sanity Save above. Success means the targets body does not reject the graft and the change is permanent. Retries are possible but each retry imposes another level of fatigue.

MATERIAL USED OR BODY PART AFFECTED	MODIFIER
Living Flesh (removed from a donor within 1 minute)	+0
Cross-Species Graft (donor not same creature type as recipient)	+2
Living Plant Matter	+2
Necrotic Flesh	+4
Aluminum, Copper, Gold, or other soft metal	+4
Iron, Steel, Titanium, or other hard metal	+6
Adamantine, Mithril, or other super-hard metal	+8
Body Part: Hand or Foot	+0
Body Part: Whole Arm or Leg	+2
Body Part: Additional Appendage (wing, extra legs or arms, tail)	+4
Body Part: Standard Organ (kidney, lung, etc)	+6
Body Part: Non-Standard Organ (gills on a non-aquatic species)	+8

Note: This power does not grant any sort of locomotion to the grafted material. The material must already possess its own method of motion (such as an arm with living muscle matter or a mechanical arm made from ascendant technology) or it remains inert.

In some cases, this is fine, for example, a sword grafted on the end of one's arm functions normally but a solid gold finger without articulated joints would remain motionless and obviously for cosmetic use only.

Graft has several practical applications such as replacing lost limbs with proper application of the basic use of Flesh Shaping a prosthetic limb can be covered in real skin and completely undetectable. Of course, most survivors consider that a waste when mechanical arms make the perfect weapon mounts. *For more examples of grafted equipment, see Chapter Four: Equipment.*

SECOND SIGHT

Sense Path: With a successful Knowledge (supernatural) check you can identify the specific magical path that an adept follows (e.g. Blood Magic) in conjunction with a successful use of the Sense Powers ability of this power. The Difficulty of the Knowledge Check is the same as the difficulty to Sense Powers plus five.

Sense Taint: By adding five to the Difficulty of your Sense Powers check, you can sense the presence of Taint in an adept. If you also have the Object Read power, you can use this ability on objects and Supernatural Signatures.

NEW POWERS

ELEMENTAL BLOOD

Fatiguing, Concentration

Prerequisite: Blood Magic, one Elemental shaping (cold, energy, fire, or water)

You can infuse the target's life-blood with an elemental energy. You must make an initial touch attack against your target. Success means the target must make an immediate Fortitude saving throw against your power save Difficulty each round thereafter, with failure read as a result on the lethal damage track. Each round you maintain concentration, you deal additional lethal damage to the target.

The target gets a new Fortitude saving throw each round. Two successful saves in a row, or a single successful save of 10+, ends this power. The damage caused is dependant on the element being used; fire causes fire damage, cold causes cold damage, water

causes acid damage, and energy causes electricity damage.

Long Distance: You can use a power challenge to make this power work at a distance; it gains a range of 10 feet per adept level. This adds a +5 to the final Difficulty of the power check.

Range: Touch Attack

Special: This power only affects living targets that have blood; creatures like Constructs, Elementals, Oozes, Plants, Undead are immune.

Time: Activating Elemental Blood is a full-round action.

INFECT

Fatiguing, Maintenance

This power allows you to infect a person or creature with a toxin or disease by touch. This power requires a touch attack against the target.

The target makes a Fortitude saving throw against your power save Difficulty. A poison does initial ability damage equal to half your adept level and secondary ability damage equal to one-third your adept level, rounded down. A disease does initial ability damage equal to one-third your adept level, and secondary damage equal to one-fourth your adept level (also rounded down).

You choose the ability or abilities affected when you use the power. A disease or poison inflicted on a target with this power effects the subject normally and may be removed using the Cure Disease and Cure Poison powers. Infect only works on creatures affected by diseases and poisons.

Time: Infect is a standard action.

MANA BLAST

Fatiguing

Prerequisite: Mana Shaping

With this power, you unleash a blast of pure mana at your enemy. This attack requires a ranged touch attack against the target with a range increment of adept level x 10 feet and a maximum range of ten increments (adept level x 100 feet). So long as the ranged touch attack succeeds, the target takes damage equal to your Adept Level.

Time: Standard action

MANA SHAPING

Fatiguing

You have mastered control of the energy that flows within the Taer' las Brennath, Mana, or pure magic. You can use Mana Shaping in the following ways:

Tap Mana Well: You are able to charge a mana shard with the powers of the mana well. A mana shard loses



SUMMON SPIRIT

Fatiguing, Concentration

You can summon a spirit to aid or engage in combat for you. The spirit will remain with you for one round per rank in this power, until you stop maintaining the power, or until it is defeated or destroyed.

To summon a spirit, make a power check with a Difficulty of 10 + the level of the spirit. The summoning lasts a full round, at the end of which the spirit gets a Will save. The Difficulty is your result on the power check to summon the spirit. Failure indicates the spirit must appear. Success indicates the creature is not bound to appear, but can if it so chooses.

All spirits use the combat and saving throw progression for Warriors, have 6 points to distribute amongst their abilities and have the Improved Strike feat. A summoned spirit is immune to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease effects, mind-influencing effects (including Heart Reading, Heart Shaping and any supernatural powers requiring mental contact) and the Imbue Unlife supernatural power.

It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless it also works on objects or is harmless). It is not subject to critical hits, non-lethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue or exhaustion. It cannot be healed and is immediately destroyed when reduced to “dying” status on the damage track. A spirit with the fast healing quality still benefits from that quality. Time: Summon Spirit is a full action

SUMMONING A SPIRIT

When summoning a spirit, you can choose its abilities from a menu of choices. You can always substitute two choices from a lesser menu for one of its given abilities. Multiple selections of the same menu choice do not stack unless the ability specifically notes that stacking is allowed.

Some menu choices grant a spirit the ability to use supernatural powers. All such powers have a rank equal to your rank in this power, and use the same mental ability score you do. Because it is immune to fatigue, a spirit does not need to make a Fatigue save when using powers that normally require it. A spirit also does not need to meet the prerequisites for a feat granted by a menu choice.

SPIRIT MENU A

Spirits of level 1 to 7 have one trait from this menu.

- **Aggressive:** The spirit has the All-out Attack feat.
- **Cleave:** The spirit gains the Cleave feat.
- **Deflection:** The spirit gains a +1 bonus to Defense.
- **Fly:** The spirit can fly at a speed of 20 feet (average).
- **Improved Speed:** The spirit has the Improved Speed

one rank every time it is recharged. A mana shard used near a mana well will not require recharging. See Chapter 3: *The Magic of Simarra* for more information on mana wells and their use.

Use Mana Well: You are able to perform any function built into the mana well, such as teleporting to any mana well that is connected to the one you are using.

Mana Shield: With this power challenge, you create a shield of pure mana with a Difficulty 20 power check. The shield surrounds you or the target of your choice within 10 feet per adept level, providing a bonus to defense equal to half your adept level (round down) to a minimum of one. Each round you have the shield active, you must make a power check at a 15 Difficulty.

REJUVENATE

Fatiguing

Rejuvenate allows the adept to remove a level of fatigue from another person. The adept makes a power check (difficulty 20 + the fatigue level of the target). The adept must be touching the target. The subject makes a Fort save, the Difficulty is the adept’s score on the power check.

Failing the Fortitude save indicates the subject’s body is too fatigued to respond to the adept’s attempts to remove fatigue. Success indicates the body has responded, and, appropriately, loses one level of fatigue for every 5 points by which the adept succeeds on the power check.

feat.

- **Elemental Resistance:** Choose one of the following elements: Cold, Earth, Fire or Wind. The spirit has the Elemental Resistance power of that element.
- **Tough:** The spirit gains a +2 bonus to Toughness.
- **Trip:** If the spirit hits with its slam attack, it can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the spirit.

SPIRIT MENU B

Spirits of level 8 to 14 have one ability from this menu. Alternatively, the spirit can have two special abilities from Menu A. These are typically large creatures. If you choose to summon a medium sized spirit, you may additionally choose one power from Menu A.

- **Damage Reduction:** The spirit's skin forms a hard carapace and gains damage reduction of 3/supernatural.
- **Elemental Slam:** The spirit's fists are wreathed in a particular element. It does an additional +2 damage of an element you designate: Cold, Earth, Fire or Wind.
- **Fast Healing:** As long as the spirit remains conscious, it removes one bruised or hurt condition per round.
- **Heavy Deflection:** The spirit gains a +4 bonus to Defense.
- **Improved Critical:** The spirit gains the Improved Critical feat with its unarmed attacks.
- **Improved Fly:** The spirit flies at a speed of 40 feet (good).
- **Improved Grab:** The spirit has the Improved Grab feat.
- **Improved Toughness:** The spirit gains a +6 bonus to Toughness.
- **Infect:** The spirit has the Infect power.
- **Muscle:** The spirit gains a +2 bonus to its Strength score.
- **Poison Touch:** If the spirit hits with a melee attack, the target must make an initial Fortitude save (Difficulty 10 + half the spirit's level + the spirit's Constitution score) or take 1 point of Constitution damage. One minute later, the target must save again or take another point of Constitution damage.
- **Smite:** Once per day, the spirit can make one attack that increases its damage by half its level.
- **Trample:** As a standard action during its turn each round, the spirit can literally run over an opponent at least one size smaller than itself. It merely has to move over the opponent to deal bludgeoning damage equal its normal damage. The target can attempt a Reflex save (Difficulty 10 + half the spirit's level + the spirit's Strength score) to negate the damage.

SPIRIT MENU C

Spirits of level 15 and above have one special trait from this menu. Alternatively, the spirit can have two special traits from Menu B. (One or both of the Menu B choices can be swapped for two choices from Menu A.) These are typically large creatures. If you choose to summon a medium sized spirit, you may additionally choose one power from Menu B.

- **Blindsight:** The spirit has blindsight out to 60 feet.
- **Constrict:** The spirit has the Improved Grab feat. In addition, on a successful grapple check, the spirit automatically deals its normal damage.
- **Elemental Blast:** The spirit has the Elemental Blast power of the element you choose: Cold, Earth, Fire or Wind.
- **Extra Tough:** The spirit gains a +10 bonus to Toughness.
- **Extreme Damage Reduction:** The spirit's skin forms hard, armor-like plates and provides Damage Reduction 6/supernatural.
- **Extreme Deflection:** The spirit gains a +8 bonus to Defense.
- **Natural Invisibility:** The spirit is constantly invisible, even when attacking.
- **Mana Blast:** The spirit has the Mana Blast power.
- **On the Run:** The spirit has the Move-by Action feat.

Bind Spirit: You can attempt to bind a spirit (summoned or encountered) into a fetish you have prepared. You make a power check at a difficulty equal to 20 + the spirit's level (this is a Power Challenge so the Difficulty can be reduced by five with the Power Challenge feat).

The spirit gets a Will save with a difficulty equal to 15 + your power rank to avoid becoming bound. If the spirit succeeds, it may attack you or flee. The spirit will remain in the world for a number of days equal to your adept level. If the spirit fails its save, it becomes bound to your fetish. The binding is permanent or until the fetish is broken.

THIN BLOOD

Fatiguing

Prerequisite: Blood sacrifice

By thinning your target's blood you cause it to suffer additional damage from attacks, either from increased blood loss (for slashing and piercing attacks) or increased bruising and internal bleeding (for blunt attacks).

This effect requires a ranged touch attack against the target and lasts for one minute. For the purposes of the Blood Scent and Blood Frenzy feats, successfully damaging a target under the effects of this power with a slashing or piercing attack causes the target to

bleed. Make a power check using the chart below to determine the damage bonus. The target must make a Toughness save. The difficulty is your score on the power check.

Special: This power only affects living targets that have blood; creatures like Constructs, Elementals, Oozes, Plants, Undead are immune.

Time: Activating Thin Blood is a full-round action.

DIFFICULTY	DAMAGE BONUS
15	+1
20	+2
25	+3
30	+4
35	+5



WITHERING GRASP

Fatiguing

Prerequisite: Cure, Harm, Imbue Life rank 14, Imbue Unlife Rank 12, Infect

By making a successful touch attack against your target, you cause the victim to wither right in front of you. Make a power check on the table below. The results of the check indicate how much damage this rapid deterioration initially does to his body. The victim gets a Fortitude save to resist the effects of this power. The Difficulty is your score on the power check. Success indicates the victim suffers no ill effects. The effects last for 24 hours.

Special: This power only affects Animals, Humanoids and Monstrous Humanoids; creatures like Constructs, Elementals, Oozes and Undead are immune.

Special: Fey creatures gain a +2 to their fortitude saves to resist the effects of this power.

Time: Standard action

DIFF.	DAM. BONUS	CON DAM.	STR DAM.
20	1	-1	-1
25	2	-1	-1
30	3	-2	-2
35	4	-3	-3
40	5	-3	-3

THE TAIN

In the lands of Simarra, the corruption of the natural energies that the Goddess Enâra imparted into the earth results in an affliction known as The Taint. The Taint is a physical malady that affects the minds and bodies of many of Simarra's denizens. Even the haughty and proud Arcanus League Magi were unprepared to protect themselves from Enâra's exile imposed madness.

ACQUIRING TAIN

Any time someone fails a Power Check with a result of a natural 1 or manifests a power while currently corrupted with The Taint they must make a Will save with a Difficulty equal to 10+ the Rank of the power used. Failing this save earns them a single point of Taint, as Taint accrues it begins to manifest itself in the form of physical mutation and mental stigma.

In some cases simply being inadvertently exposed to areas of unnaturally high corruption, attacked by creatures infused with The Taint, or committing acts of particular depravity (Narrator's discretion) are enough

to earn a character a point of Taint. It is possible though rare to be inflicted with more than one point of Taint at a time.

REMOVING TAINT

Once per day (usually during rest) a hero makes a Fortitude Save with a difficulty equal to 15 plus the hero's Taint total.

Success means the character loses one point of Taint from their total. The character makes checks every day to remove taint. Particularly peaceful environments or situations can speed the rate of recovery up to 2 or even 3 points per day at the Narrator's discretion. Conversely, resting in an area of high Taint provides no chance of removing Taint.

THE EFFECTS OF TAINT

Once a hero accrues at least four points, he/she manifests a physical mutation. The hero gains another mutation for every 3 points of Taint thereafter all previous mutations are retained.

EFFECTS OF TAINT

Taint Score	Level of Taint	Interaction Penalty	Notice Difficulty
4-6	Slight	-2	25
7-9	Minor	-4	20
10-12	Moderate	-6	15
13-15	Severe	-8	10
15+	Horrible	-10	5

Interaction Penalty: Having taint warps the body and mind thus imposing a penalty on all interaction skills except Intimidate.

Notice Difficulty: This is how easy it is for the mutations to be noticed by others. The trained eye recognizes these afflictions as the manifestations of Taint.

SLIGHT PHYSICAL MUTATIONS

d20	Effect
1-4	Skin dries and cracks.
5-8	Eyes change to a yellowish color.
9-12	Canines elongate.
13-16	Voice deepens and has a hollow sounding quality.
17-20	A smell of rotten eggs follows the hero wherever they go.

MINOR PHYSICAL MUTATIONS

d20	Effect
1-4	Skin bleeds and oozes.
5-8	Eyes turn deeper yellow and gain slits.
9-12	Entire jaw disfigures to accommodate rows of sharp teeth.
13-16	Voice gains an unearthly quality, like that of a ghost.
17-20	Exudes a malignant odor of decay.

MODERATE PHYSICAL MUTATIONS

d20	Effect
1-4	Skin hardens granting a +1 natural armor, -1 Dexterity.
5-8	Eyes become totally animal-like, gain the Night Vision feat and Light Sensitivity trait.
9-12	Jaw muscles fully develop granting a +1 Natural Bite Attack.
13-16	Gain use of the Bliss power as an adept of your total level, -1 Charisma
17-20	Stench sickens others within 10 ft. who are not immune to poison (Fortitude Difficulty 13 + your Constitution Negates).

SEVER PHYSICAL MUTATIONS

d20	Effect
1-4	Skin becomes chitinous, +2 natural armor, -2 Dexterity.
5-8	Eyes glow with an eerie light, gain Darkvision 60 ft. and the Sensitivity (cold iron) traits. When you bite, you may feed on the blood that gives you an immediate recovery check. You must feed once a day, failure to feed leaves you fatigued, on the second day without feeding you are exhausted; at the end of the third day without feeding, you expire.
9-12	
13-16	Gain use of the Suggestion power as an adept of your total level, -2 Charisma. Stench sickens and nauseates others within 10 ft. who are not immune to poison (Fortitude Difficulty 15 + your Constitution Negates).
17-20	

HORRIBLE PHYSICAL MUTATIONS

d20	Effect
1-4	Skin has a lobster-like appearance, +3 natural armor, -3 Dexterity.
5-8	Your Night Vision and Dark Vision double in range, but you gain the Burned by Sunlight trait of a Crypt Wight.
9-12	You gain Fast Healing for five rounds after you feed, however the sight of blood drives you into a frenzy. You must make a DC 19 Will Save to avoid feeding on the nearest person.
13-16	Gain use of the Dominate power as an adept of your total level, -3 Charisma.
17-20	Your stench is so foul that those within 10 ft. of you who fail a Difficulty 21 Fortitude Save fall unconscious those who succeed are still sickened.

MENTAL EFFECTS

Taint takes its toll on the mind as well as the body, each time a person receives Taint they must make a Sanity Save with a fear level equal to their current Taint score. (**See the Sanity Save section in Chapter 4 of the True20 Companion**©.)

Many developments have been made over the ages. In the Age of Steel, the Thorongrar dwarves developed a marvel known as steam power. This technology allowed the dwarves to provide heating systems for the general populace. The dwarves eventually expanded on this development, creating machines which served a wide variety of purposes, most, typically, were used in the construction of war machines such as ballista, catapults and other wicked devices designed to rain death upon any foe.

The Seguire gnomes who left the wild lands further expanded on the inventions of the dwarves, tapping the power of lightning to create a phenomenon known as electricity. With this wonder, the gnomes brought the power of the sun into homes across Simarra. The dwarves combined electricity with steam power to create machines capable of limited flight and overland travel, expanding on the basic concept of the wheel with a substance known as rubber, which grew from trees found only in the Wild Lands.

aviki took these concepts even further, creating animate constructs known as O'rak-dra. Primarily used in the Hunting Times, the O'rak-dra served as protectors of cities and front line battle constructs in the war against dragons. The Age of Plenty would see the role of the O'rak-dra diminish greatly until they became useless relics of a past age of conflict. In the Age of Blood however, there are those who brave the horrors of the world to seek out rotes that contain the secrets of their construction in hopes of turning the tide against the minions of Agärazôn.

-Technology of Simarra: Elohan Salaistriën



CHAPTER FOUR: EQUIPMENT

Without access to the most basic necessities such as food, medical supplies, clean water and other various sundry items, survival would be much more difficult than it already is for the free people of Simarra.

The following chapter looks at the various types of equipment and supplies available to heroes in Simarra. In this war-ravaged world, equipment and supplies become paramount to the continued survival of those people who still live free of the yoke of slavery.

ACQUISITION OF GOODS

The people of Simarra have had to deal with many changes to their way of life. Before the invasion of the keza-drak, their world was stable, even opulent compared to the current standards of living.

Most people lived in cities where a hard-working person could obtain everything they needed to live comfortably. Food, shelter, clothing, medical supplies (including magical healing); all of these necessities were easily obtainable.

Indeed, the poverty level in Simarra was nearly non-existent. The dawn of the Age of Blood changed

all of that, sweeping away the comforts and luxuries the elder races had taken for granted in one massive stroke.

Forced to flee their burning cities with little more than the clothes on their backs, these refugees found themselves ill equipped to deal with the cruel realities of life in the wilderness. The first year saw thousands upon thousands of people starve or freeze to death when the biting wind and snows of Saeothel blew down out of the Northlands. Those that did survive the first winter came to envy the dead. For them, life became a daily, uncertain struggle to exist.

The passing years would see the survivors of the Age of Blood forge a precarious balance with the world around them. Gone were the days of excess. Gone are the times when even the smallest scrap of food or clothing could be discarded. Indeed, some freeholds have been known to banish people who are caught wasting resources.

In more civilized freeholds people caught stealing are hanged, their carcasses left in gibbets to rot as a reminder for others who think they can simply take what they want from others. Conversely, other freeholds are little more than havens for brigands and thieves who, lacking any real survival skills, have taken to theft and murder to get what they need to survive.

The acquisition of resources is critical to the continued survival of the people of Simarra.

Indeed, many adventures might revolve around acquiring food, medical supplies and other vital resources such as cloth, leather, mana shards, ore and a myriad other items critical to survival. The demand for resources goes beyond the basic needs of the general populace of a town however.

Armies need to be resupplied with weapons, food, armor and resources such as ammunition, medical supplies, clothing; the list goes on. If the supplies stop coming, armies will dissolve as people leave to find the things they need to survive.

THE ECONOMY

Gold and similar forms of currency are meaningless in most places in the world of Simarra, useless relics of a dead age. In these dark times, people place value on items in relation to how important they are for continued survival. A barter system has emerged as the dominant method for obtaining goods in the Age of Blood.

BARTER SYSTEM

Before trading can begin the two parties interested in trading have to come to agreement on terms by making a Barter Check. In order to do this, the player makes a check with either Diplomacy or Intimidate with a difficulty equal to 10 plus the purchase difficulty of the item.

Failure by five or less imposes a -1 penalty to the following Wealth check. Failure by more than five imposes an additional -1 penalty for each step of 5. For example failing by 14 would indicate a -3 penalty to the Wealth check.

Success by five or less grants a +1 bonus to the following Wealth check. Success by more than five grants an additional +1 bonus for each step of 5. For example succeeding by 16 would indicate a +4 bonus to the Wealth check.

The barter system is an abstract system, but it represents real goods that have weight, volume, and value. Each point of wealth a player character has represents an average of 10 lbs of trade goods with a volume of one cubic feet.

These items could be medicine, preserved food, fuel, or anything else that is generally portable and tradable but not something itemized on the character sheet. Feel free to alter these values based on the commodities carried. For example, you could grant a +3 wealth bonus to the players after liberating some diamonds from some enemies.

Diamonds are very valuable but take up virtually no weight or volume. Conversely, items like iron ore or silver are very heavy and would add more weight and volume.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource management, while important to the theme of this setting, may or may not be something players wish to engage in. It runs contrary to the general idea behind a simplified game system such as True20.

The wealth system was designed to deal with the acquisition of resources without the headaches involved in keeping track of everything a character might acquire in the game, especially money. With this in mind, we have developed a variation on the wealth system which addresses the difficulty involved in acquiring resources and equipment in a world where nothing is easily obtainable; the barter system.

If you do not wish to complicate things simply use the average volume presented above. If you do choose to itemize the trade goods the players are carrying consider deciding what goods a trader wants or needs, he may be willing to part with more in order to get what he wants, in that case feel free to give the characters a bonus to their Barter check. Of course, this means if they have nothing the trader wants they will be penalized.

Warning: Using Intimidate for a Barter Check can negatively influence an NPC's reaction towards the player over the long term. While they may accept the trade, they may harbor a grudge towards the character.

Conversely, continually using Diplomacy with a trader can establish the character as someone who is a reliable and fair trader. The narrator is free to assign bonuses or penalties based on the characters previous dealings with the NPC.



WEAPONS

The following weapons are available in the world of Simarra, in addition to those found in the True20 Core Rules and the True20 Companion.

MELEE WEAPONS

Triple Flail: You can use it to make trip attacks and to disarm opponents with a +2 bonus, like the Improved Trip and Improved Disarm feats (and its benefits stack if you already have those feats).

Body Scissor: This powerful spring powered weapon is a pair of reinforced scissor blades approximately three feet in length mounted to a large spring mounted bracket.

The wielder attacks by thrusting the blades out to surround an opponent, at that point, the spring is triggered and the blades swing shut against each other. The spring may be reset by taking a full round action to reset them using the turnkey. This weapon is too large to be used by a medium size creature, and is most often mounted to a suit of power armor.

Power Axe: A favored weapon of the keza-drak, this massive axe is designed to generate a tight energy field around the blade. Upon impact, the energy field creates a short, controlled burst, doing an additional +1 damage to the target. The axe is powered by an energy cell, which allows for 1 hour of continuous use, or 20 strikes. Once the cell is depleted, it must either be recharged or replaced.

Power sword: Another favorite weapon of the keza-drak, the power sword works exactly like the power axe (see above).

RANGED WEAPONS

A variety of ranged weapons are used in the Age of Blood, many of which are recent inventions as the free people look for new ways to combat the threat of the keza-drak and other horrors which plague the world. The following are examples of the types of weapons commonly found on battlefields across the continent.

Bola Cannon: This anti-infantry weapon fires a huge 20 ft long length of weighted chain in a horizontal

MELEE WEAPONS

Name	Damage	Critical	Damage Descriptor	Range Increment	Size	Cost
Triple Flail	3	20/+4	Bludgeoning	-	M	7
Body Scissor	6	20/+4	Slashing	-	L	17
Power Axe	+4 (+5)	20/+4(+7)	Slashing	-	L	10
Power Sword	+3 (+4)	19-20/+3(+5)	Slashing	-	L	10

They say necessity is the mother of invention. In the Age of Blood, the creative fire of our weaponsmiths and inventors is primarily focused on the construction of weapons which improve our chances of turning the tide against the threat of the keza-drak.

In a number of cases, we have managed to reverse-engineer some of the strange armaments of the keza-drak, using them on battlefields across the continent in the ongoing struggle for survival. In a number of cases, such as repeater rifles, the technology isn't so different from that of our own weapons. Other weapons (such as siege cannons) are much more advanced, requiring the development of new tools and machinery to facilitate the construction of these armaments. Many brave souls have died infiltrating the foundries of the enemy in an effort to capture the keza-drakian engines of war.

In examining the technology of our enemy, it is interesting to note that, though the keza-drak have brought new firearms, artillery and equipment to this world, the frontline soldiers and shock troops still use comparatively archaic weapons such as battle axes, swords and long knives, all of which are used with deadly proficiency.

"Weapons in the Age of Blood"
-Elohan Salaistrien

whirling motion. The bola cuts a swath twenty feet wide through the battlefield. The cannon is powered by steam, and it takes five rounds for it to build up enough steam to fire again. The bola cannon requires a crew of two to load and aim.

Bolt Thrower: A popular weapon with the grey men who combat undead in the broken kingdom

of Numaràth, the bolt thrower uses compressed air (a gnomish invention) canisters funneled through cylinders to fire steel projectiles at targets. The steel projectiles are typically much larger than a normal crossbow bolt, thus requiring the additional force compressed air provides.

The device has a cylinder that wraps around the forearm bracer that is worn on the character's arm, holding 10 bolts. Each time the weapon is fired, the cylinder rotates and auto loads the next bolt. Reloading the cylinder is a full round action.

The distance of a bolt thrower is half that of a normal crossbow, but the damage is higher due to the added force and size of the bolt.

Heavy Cannon: Heavy cannons are fixed weapons that fire large, 12 lbs. spheres. These weapons are used in the defense of heavily fortified strongholds and on heavy warships.

Light Cannon: Light cannons are typically mounted on faster corvettes such as those used by the Elarian corsairs.



In addition, they are mounted on wheels and used as mobile artillery weapons on various battlefields across Simarra. Light cannon fire 3lb. spheres. Many have explosive charges.

Liquid Glass Catapult: This invention of the Purifiers is a movement suppression weapon that flings huge pots of liquid glass onto the battlefield. The liquid glass causes intense burning where it lands, and may set flammable items on fire.

The liquid glass quickly cools encasing those struck by it in a shackle of glass. Anyone attempting to break free of the glass takes damage as the glass shards slash into their body. Once broken the glass shards remain on the battlefield acting as razor sharp caltrops. A person may move through the field of broken glass without injury if they move at half speed. The catapult takes three people to operate, reload, and aim.

Rocket Launcher: The rocket launcher was developed for use in the battle for Spire Reach pass, though recent years have seen the weapon utilized in other regions.

The crafty Shield Wall dwarves found they could attach compressed air canisters to thick iron cylinders, their activation creating a force that in turn would slam a firing pin against a small charge. The resultant explosion would propel explosive-tipped bolts at high velocities towards their target.

The rocket launcher is a single-use weapon. Once fired, the heat of the internal explosion warps the iron cylinder, rendering the casing useless. Using a rocket launcher is inherently dangerous and unreliable. The weapon has a -2 attack penalty, and on a natural 1, the weapon explodes in the cylinder, inflicting +10 explosive damage in a 20 ft. radius. The additional +3 damage is a result of the cylinder exploding in addition to the +7 damage caused by the explosive itself.

Wrist Needler: This spring powered wrist mounted launcher fires a multitude of ammunition housed in custom sabot rounds. The wrist needler may be reset by taking a standard action to use the turnkey. The most common ammunition is a sabot round filled with a dozen darts; assassins often poison these darts. Other rounds include smoke, poison gas, a large net, acid flasks, or flammable liquid. * Damage listed is for dart rounds.

EXPLOSIVES

Early in the Age of Steel, the ascendant god Galburak taught the fire dwarves of Clan Volagar the secret of making a substance commonly known as Tûrgash (black) powder. Initially the dwarves used the powder to build defenses for their mighty volcanic citadels on the surface of the Droghedian Peninsula.

RANGED WEAPONS

Name	Damage	Critical	Damage Descriptor	Range Increment	Size	Cost
Bola Cannon	5	20/+3	Slashing	30 ft.	L	21
Bolt Thrower	+4	19-20/+4	Piercing, Autofire	40 ft.	-	17
Heavy Cannon	+20	-	-	900 ft.	L	22
Light Cannon	+10	-	-	450 ft.	L	20
Liquid Glass Catapult	6	-	Slashing	110 ft.	L	21
Rocket Launcher	+7	-	Explosive	60 ft.	M	18
Wrist Needler	+2*	20/+3	Piercing	10 ft.	S	13

Centuries of development and refinement of the techniques for making explosives have led to a number of devices, many of which are common throughout the continent in the Age of Blood as more and more members of clan Volagar travel outside their homeland.

Alchemist's Fire: Originally created by the gnomish alchemists of Ardrennen Falls as a way of lighting the city, the volatile substance known as alchemists' fire first saw use when the keza-drak laid siege to the city.

The gnomes filled ceramic jars with the substance, tightly capping the containers, allowing them to be thrown as grenades, which burst on impact, wreaking havoc on the keza-drak infantry.

You can throw a flask of alchemist's fire as a splash weapon. Treat this attack as a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 10 feet.

A direct hit deals +2 fire damage. Every creature within 5 feet of the point where the flask hits takes +0 fire damage from the splash. On the round following a direct hit, the target must make a Difficulty 15 Reflex save or catch fire. (See *Catching Fire in Chapter Six of the True20 Adventure Roleplaying Game*©)

Droghedian Light munitions (Goblin Shredders):

Goblin shredders are popular weapons, prized for their ability to do considerable damage in a tightly focused area. Goblin shredders are used in all regions of Simarra.

Goblin shredders are orbs about the size of a fist with short fuses affixed to them, with a lighting mechanism composed of two tiny pieces of flint. A sharp downward flick of the thumb will create a spark that in turn lights the fuse.

On a natural 1, the fuse does not light and the goblin shredder fails to explode. The grenades spray tiny pellets and pieces of metal in all directions. They have a blast radius or 15ft.

Droghedian Medium Munitions (Thumpers):

Thumpers are concussive munitions designed to knock large groups of people down, in addition to doing explosive damage in a wide area, approximately 30 feet. They look like long sticks, and generally come equipped with long fuses.

TYPES OF FUSES

Three types of fuses are commonly used for grenades and bombs; alchemical fuses, long fuses, and short fuses.

Alchemical Fuse: An alchemic fuse consists of a fuse doused in a small amount of alchemist's fire underneath a small plate that is held in place by a pin. When the pin is pulled, the fuse lights, causing the short fuse to burn down and ignite the grenade.

Long Fuse: A long fuse is typically affixed to heavy explosives that are planted on stationary targets such as enemy weapon placements, bunkers and other buildings. Sappers use them to ensure they have a chance to get away before the massive explosives detonate. A long fuse takes five rounds to burn down.

Short Fuse: A short fuse is affixed to weapons commonly used on the battlefield such as dynamite and grenades. A short fuse takes one round to burn down, ensuring the weapon explodes on impact.

Droghedian Heavy munitions (Troll Scrapper): A troll scrapper works much like a goblin shredder, but with much larger force and an increased blast radius. Troll scrapers are filled with various metal shavings, nails and other jagged pieces of metal.

When detonated, deadly metal shards are sprayed over a wide area (60ft.) doing explosive damage to everyone in the blast radius.

EXPLOSIVES

Name	Effect	Radius	Reflex save	Size	Cost
Goblin Shredder	+5 Explosive	15 ft.	15	T	15
Thumper	+5 Explosive/ +5 Concussive	30 ft.	15	T	15
Troll Scrapper	+10 Explosive	60 ft.	20	S	20

FIREARMS

Firearms have been in existence ever since the Age of Steel, when the crafty dwarves of clan Volagar invented túrgash powder. The weapons were first used in the Hunting Times to combat dragons, and later in the Ascendant Wars. The most common firearms available to the people of Simarra are weapons such as flintlock pistols and muskets. However, the invasion of the keza-drak has seen firearms of designs much more sophisticated than the creations of the Shield wall dwarves and Clan Volagar.

The keza-drak, beings bred by Urkog-Drall to conquer entire worlds, have brought weapons taken from conquered races to use in the war for Simarra; lever action rifles and hand guns being the most common. As the people of Simarra became exposed to these strange weapons, they began to reverse-engineer them in an attempt to level the playing field, as it were.

What follows are some examples of common firearms as well as firearms that have been developed in the past five years. With the exception of the double and single barreled scatterguns, musket and pistol, these weapons are exceedingly rare. Perhaps one person in a hundred has seen (much less used) one. Because the technology has been reverse-engineered, it is far from perfect. The weapon will misfire on natural 1.

Droghedian Scattergun: Used throughout the continent, the Droghedian scattergun is a reliable weapon. The scattergun is capable of firing scattershot which provides a +2 to hit because the shot spreads out upon exiting the barrel. Alternately, the weapon can be loaded with solid slugs, which add a +1 to the weapon's damage for an effective +6, with no additional attack bonus

FIREARMS

Name	Damage	Critical	Damage Descriptor	Range Increment	Size	Cost
Scattergun	+5/+6	20/+3	Ballistic	40 ft.	L	15
Vulcan Flame	+6/+7	20/+4	Ballistic	40 ft.	L	16
Hand Cannon	+5	19-20/+3	Ballistic	40 ft.	M	20
Renegade	+5	19-20/+3	Ballistic	60 ft.	L	20
Musket	+5	20/+3	Ballistic	50 ft.	L	16
Pistol	+3	20/+3	Ballistic	30 ft.	M	15
Sniper Rifle	+5	19-20/+4	Ballistic	250 ft.	L	22

MEASUREMENT IN SIMARRA

The system for measuring distance in Simarra stems from a practical need to quantify the world. The ancients used their own bodies for comparison. In earlier ages the measurements varied from land to land, often being measured using the person's actual hands. King's began to hire large persons to buy their textiles for them to get a better deal, this was called the "King's Rule." Soon the merchant's began to standardize the lengths to avoid unfairness. The current system is called the "Merchant's Rule" because of this.

A Segment is roughly an inch in our measuring system and a Digit is one fifth of a Segment. A Hand is roughly seven Segments and a Haft is 5 hands or 35 segments. Finally, an Octare is the average distance a soldier could march in one hour, or about 5430 Hafts. The most common ammunition in Simarra is the one digit caliber round hence bullets are often referred to as "digits."

MERCHANT'S RULE	EARTH EQUIVALENT
1 Digit	.2 Inches
1 Segment	1 Inch
1 Hand	7 Inches
1 Haft	35 Inches
1 Octare	About 3 miles

Droghedian “Vulcan Flame” Double-barreled Scattergun: A favored weapon of the Skauld Dragoons, the Vulcan Flame is a powerful firearm, capable of using both solid slugs and scattershot.

Hand Cannon: A side arm found in outposts and strongholds across the Shield Wall Mountains where fighting with keza-drak is commonplace; this handgun holds six rounds.

The Horgrim Renegade: A masterwork hunting rifle engineered by the dwarf Horgrim Iron Hands, the renegade is a bolt-action hunting rifle fitted with a scope.

Musket: A staple of light infantry operating on various battlefronts across the continent, the musket is a reliable, if not dated, weapon compared to the strange firearms of the keza-drak.

Pistol: The counterpart to the musket, the pistol is a reliable hand-held firearm.

Tharan Sniper Rifle: Developed by Tharan assassins based on weapons stolen from Thel-Keza, this bolt-action sniper rifle is highly prized for its extended range and accuracy. Tharan sniper rifles come with magazines capable of holding eight rounds.

GRAFTED ITEMS

Some of the items presented in this chapter require an Adept with the Flesh Shaping power to graft the item to the Hero. Finding such an adept is not always no simple matter and can almost be an adventure in itself, after which negotiating a method of payment is no easy task either. Costs below only reflect the cost of the item, not the procedure to graft them.

There is often a social stigma regarding with those who toy with the flesh; many view it to be an abomination associated with the Sundaari blood lords or the Tharans who often employ beasts with heavy modification. When applicable the Narrator can penalize a Hero’s interaction skills anywhere from -2 to -6 depending on the severity of the grafts. In some cases, Narrator Characters may simply refuse to deal with an augmented hero.

Dermal Armor

By grafting plates of metal sized and shaped specifically to fit the subject’s body, they can gain great protection against physical attacks. This armor is also lighter than normal armor and highly concealable. The Hero gains a bonus to Toughness saves based on the table below, the armor comes in two types, half and full. Half covers only the most vital areas but provides maximum flexibility while full armor trades range of movement for increased durability.

Dermal armor is considered masterwork, the benefits of that quality and the material it is made from have already been factored into its Cost, Weight, and Armor Check Penalty on the table below. The Notice Difficulty is how hard it is for others to spot the plating underneath the skin, hero’s can increase the difficulty by +2 by wearing heavy clothing. Normal armor cannot be worn over the dermal armor but clothing can.

GRAFTED ITEM MATERIALS

Material Used	Toughness Bonus	Cost	Weight	Armor Check Penalty	Notice Difficulty
Bronze, Half	+1	15	5 lb.	+0	20
Bronze, Full	+2	16	10 lb.	+0	20
Iron, Half	+3	21	10 lb.	+1	19
Iron, Full	+4	22	20 lb.	+2	18
Mithril, Half	+3	24	5 lb.	+0	20
Mithril, Full	+4	25	10 lb.	+1	19
Adamantine, Half	+5	29	10 lb.	+3	17
Adamantine, Full	+6	32	20 lb.	+4	16

Grafted Weapon

Any melee weapon can be grafted to a subjects hand or arm, even if the person has not lost the limb in question the weapon can be mounted extending from the wrist or palm. Grafting a weapon however renders that limb useless for most delicate technical tasks (a -2 penalty on any delicate task that normally requires both hands). Because of the magical nature of the graft, the subject gains an intimate understanding of the weapon, if they do not have the proper training to wield it properly that act as if they do, but only when wielding the grafted weapon. If the subject already has the proper training, he gains a +1 bonus to hit with the weapon.

TRAITS

Donor, Limb	Cost	Traits
Humanoid, Arm or Leg	11	None
Kamodon, Pair of Arms	14	Double Strike feat
Leopard, Pair of Legs	15	Rake trait
Cheetah, Pair of Legs	15	Improved Speed feat
Darkmantle, Pair of Tentacles	13	Improved Grab feat
Darkmantle, Four Tentacles	17	Improved Grab feat and Constrict trait
Ghoul, Claw	12	Natural Attack, Paralysis (save Cha based)
Mechanical Limb	17	varies

Grafted Limb

The limb of another creature can be grafted onto a hero, replacing a missing limb or giving them an additional set of appendages. Market value for replacement limbs varies from place to place (and is often illegal) but the average cost is 10 + the donor creature's level (+2 to the base cost per additional limb of the same type). Grafted limbs often grant the subject one or more special abilities of the donor creature. The table below is but a sample of the limbs possible.

ASCENDANT ITEMS

The following pieces of ascendant technology have certain descriptors which explain various aspects of a given item. Use these guidelines when creating your own devices.

Base Item Cost: The total cost of the item is based on the following formula: Base Rote Cost +2. The rotes are found in See Chapter 3: The Magic of Simarra.

Trigger: The action or phrase that activates the device. Unless otherwise stated, a triggering action is a free action.

Fatiguing: Using a piece of ascendant technology is like directly tapping the blood of the mother goddess. The process invariably strains the user both mentally and physically depending on how powerful the item is and how long they use it. The longer the item is used, the greater the likelihood is the user will become fatigued. Not every item causes fatigue from prolonged use. Some items only require an immediate fatigue check each time the item is activated.

This entry indicates whether a rote causes immediate fatigue or fatigue through prolonged use, and provides the Will save difficulty and length of time between saves, e.g. immediate, or hourly. Fatigue save difficulties are a base 15 + the number of mana shards the rote contains.

For every additional hour the item has been used, add +1 to the Will save Difficulty.

Saving Throw: The required saving throw when a rote is triggered, if any.

Description: A detailed description of how the rote works, including any special mechanics key to the function of the device.

Duration: How long the rote will function in rounds (if in combat), hours, days or even weeks, depending on the rote in question.

WEAPONS

Archon Battlesaw

Cost: 22

Trigger: As part of a melee attack

Fatiguing: Yes/Immediate. Will save Difficulty: 19

Saving Throw: Yes, half

Description: The battlesaw is designed to dismember and incapacitate unarmored foes and monsters. Since the damage is done by the energy shard powered chain, you do not add your Strength bonus to a battlesaw's damage. The weapon requires one power shard (pain) and one energy shard.

Duration: The Archon Battlesaw holds a number of charges equal to the rank of the energy shard.

The pain power may be used once for each rank of

the power shard after which, the power shard must be recharged at a mana well or replaced with another power shard with the appropriate rank and power. The energy shard may be recharged at a mana well or replaced with another energy shard with the appropriate rank. The battlesaw deals damage equal to a normal chainsaw and may be used without using the pain power.

Dragonbreath Spear

Cost: 21

Trigger: Standard Action

Fatiguing: Yes/Immediate. Will save Difficulty: 16

Saving Throw: Yes, half

Description: The head of this spear bears the likeness of the red dragon with his mouth open. A single power shard fits comfortably into the open maw. The power shard contains the Elemental Blast (Fire) power.

A wielder that can attune themselves to the power shard may use this ability as a standard action. Rumor has it that dragonbreath spears of different color exist and that they allow the wielder to attack with different elemental blasts. The dragonbreath spear may also be used as a spear in melee.

Duration: The dragonbreath spear holds a number of charges equal to the rank of the power shard after which, the power shard must be recharged at a mana well or replaced with another power shard with the appropriate rank and power.

Light Bomb

Cost: 17 (+1 per additional shard rank)

Trigger: Container opened or broken

Fatiguing: Yes/immediate. Will Save Difficulty: 16 (minimum)

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Description: Activating this rote releases a blast of pure light within a 4 ft. radius (2x shard rank) of the vial. The light is a +1 attack (½ shard rank, rounded down) to all supernatural creatures of innate evil or darkness, like the keza-drak. More damaging versions of this item are common. The saving throw difficulty is 10 + the damage bonus.

**A supernatural feat can take the place of a power (See Powers and minimum ranks, above).*

Duration: The item is destroyed once used.

Pulse Spear

Cost: 19

Trigger: Spear handle turned counter clockwise

Fatiguing: Yes/Immediate. Will save Difficulty: 16

Saving Throw: The target makes a reflex save with a difficulty of 10 + half the power shard's rank (round down) + key ability for half damage.

Description: Activating this rote releases a Mana Blast

(as per the power) at the intended target. Use of this item is a standard action. If the wielder so desires, she can opt to strike with the spear and simultaneously release the mana blast.

Doing so requires a full round action and a successful Operation Difficulty 20 check. Success indicates the weapon does damage as a spear, damage for the Mana Blast power and knocks the opponent back 5 feet for every increment of 5 by which she failed the toughness check.

Duration: The Mana Blast aspect of the pulse spear can be used 6 times before the power shard is bled of energy. Until the shard is replaced or recharged, the pulse spear will be a normal weapon.

GEAR

Anchoring Stone

Cost: 21

Trigger: User holds the object containing the remote shard while focusing on the location of anchored shard for one minute (full round if in combat).

Fatiguing: Yes/Immediate. Will save Difficulty: 16

Saving Throw: None

Description: Anchoring stones allow for the user to teleport from one stone to another without risk of gaining fatigue or the need for a power check, as the anchor stones are considered intimately familiar to each other.

The maximum range of the anchor stones is 10 miles for every rank of the power shard. Therefore, a rank 5 mana shard allows for teleportation up to 50 miles, a rank 6 power shard will allow teleportation up to 60 miles, etc. Many adventurers use this device to teleport themselves back to a safe location, such as a freehold.

Duration: Anchoring stones may be used a number of times equal to their mana shard rank, after which the power shards turn black, becoming useless.

Arc Welder

Cost: 20

Trigger: Pressing down upon the power shard while focusing on it (Standard action if in combat).

Fatiguing: Yes/Immediate upon activation. Will save **Difficulty:** 18

Saving Throw: None

Description: An arc welder channels an Energy Blast contained in the power shard into a tightly focused beam of energy capable of fusing metal together or burning through barriers such as doors, portcullis and gates.

Arc welders are used by attacking objects using the attack objects rules found in the True20 Adventure Roleplaying Game published by Green Ronin™.

The arc welder is treated as a melee weapon when attacking an object, and does +5 damage. When the

object reaches a dying condition, the task (whether it be fusing to objects together, cutting through a barrier, etc.) has been accomplished. The arc welder is considered an improvised weapon for purposes of combat.

Duration: The arc welder will function for a number of days equal to the rank of the energy shard that powers it.

Bands of Deadly Strength

Cost: 17

Trigger: Armbands worn

Fatiguing: Yes/hourly. Will save Difficulty: 17

Saving Throw: None

Description: Wearing these ornate armbands confers a +1 strength bonus. In addition, any successful unarmed strike is treated as a lethal attack. If the wearer's unarmed attack is already considered lethal, the attack receives a +5 damage bonus.

Duration: Bands of deadly strength will last a number of days equal to the rank of the energy shard, after which time the energy shard must either be replaced or recharged at a mana well. If the wearer ever reaches an unconscious condition because of failed fatigue saves, the bands cease to function.

Elemental Lantern

Cost: 19

Trigger: Lighting the lantern's wick, conviction allocation

Fatiguing: Yes/hourly. Will save Difficulty: 17

Saving Throw: None

Description: Highly valued in remote freeholds across the continent, an elemental lantern provides resistance to the elements as per the Elemental Resistance power. The maximum effective range of an elemental lantern is equal to a 5 feet radius per rank of the power shard.

Duration: An elemental lantern will function for a number of days equal to the rank of the energy shard that powers it. Once the energy shard is drained of power, it must be recharged at a mana well or replaced.

Healing Patch

Cost: 16

Trigger: Application of patch on a wound

Fatiguing: Yes/Immediate. Will save Difficulty: 18

Saving Throw: As per the Cure power

Description: The healing patch is a common item found in freeholds across Simarra. Application of the patch will automatically stabilize a dying character and provides a bonus on recovery checks equal to 10 + the rank of the shard.

Healing Patches come in varying power levels depending on the adept who created them. No more

than one healing patch may be used on a person at one time. Adepts may not use the cure power on a person under the effects of a healing patch.

Duration: Healing patches can be used a number of times equal to the rank of the power shard. Once the power shard is drained, it must be recharged at a mana well or replaced.

Lesser Shield Matrix

Cost: 23

Trigger: Button pressed

Fatiguing: Yes/Immediate. Will save Difficulty: 18

Saving Throw: None

Description: A lesser shield matrix is an item typically used on doors or hallways to prevent access by intruders. Most shield matrices come in an ornate box (though you are free to alter the container to be anything you choose).

When the button on the box is pressed, a chain reaction begins. Fine cords spring out into a form encoded into the memory shard and a mana shield ripples into being, its energy constrained to the pattern of the cords.

The shield matrix is considered an immobile object with a bonus to defense equal to the rank of its power shard and resists attacks as per the Mana Shield function of the Mana Shaping power. Therefore, a lesser shield matrix in the form of a door (medium size) with a rank 5 power shard has a defense of 7 + the size modifier for a door. The lesser shield matrix also gets a toughness save with a bonus equal to the rank of the energy shard that fuels it.

Some modified forms of the lesser shield matrix include bucklers, round shields and tower shields. For these types of matrices, use the defense ratings for carried objects, or held or worn objects, depending on the situation.

Duration: The lesser shield matrix will last a number of rounds equal to the rank of the energy shard that powers it.

Mana Sensor

Cost: 19

Trigger: Item worn or carried

Fatiguing: Yes/hourly. Will save Difficulty: 17

Saving Throw: none

Description: Usually worn on a necklace, or wristband, a mana sensor is an item which can sense the presence of Taer' las Brennath or the lingering effects from the use of mana within a 10 mile radius for every rank the power shard has. The power shard will glow brighter as the wearer comes closer to the source of the mana.

Duration: Mana sensors last a number of days equal to the rank of the energy shard. Once the energy shard

is drained, it must be recharged at a mana well or replaced. If the wearer ever reaches an unconscious condition because of failed fatigue saves, the mana sensor ceases to function.

Mechanical Limb

Cost: 17

Trigger: Grafted

Fatiguing: Yes/by scene (see below). Will save

Difficulty: 17

Saving Throw: None

Description: This mechanical arm or leg gives grants a new limb to an amputee. Mechanical limbs grant the Improved Strike feat free, using that limb only. Furthermore, the limb serves as a mount to which other weapon systems can be mounted.

Arms fitted with wrist needlers and bolt launchers are common. In some rarer cases, other peaces of ascendant tech are mounted onto the limbs creating powerful weapons systems such as power shards containing Elemental Blast or Mana Blast powers, etc. **Duration:** Mechanical limbs will operate a number of days equal to the rank of the energy shard, after which time the energy shard must either be replaced or recharged at a mana well.

The limb functions normaly in every day activities, however after a scene involving strenuous activity (heafy living, forced march, or combat) the subject must make a Will save to avoid becoming fatigued. If the wearer ever reaches an unconscious condition because of failed fatigue saves, the limb ceases to function.

Special: A wearer can choose to expend an additional rank from the power shard to gain a +5 to any Strength based check with that limb, including skill checks such as Jump or Climb. Up to a +10 bonus can be gained by using two mechanical limbs (two arms for climb, two legs for Jump).

Note: Grafted mechanical limbs are viewed in an only slightly better light than grafted flesh.

Purification Gourd

Cost: 19

Trigger: Item or fluid placed in container.

Fatiguing: Yes/Immediate. Will Save Difficulty: 16

Saving Throw: none

Description: This item will purify and food or water, removing impurities such as disease or poison as if the creator of the rote had scored a 25 on his power check to remove Disease or Remove Poison.

Duration: This item can be used a number of times equal to the rank of the power shard. Once the power shard is drained, it must be recharged at a mana well or with a shard containing the appropriate powers at the requisite ranks.

Rejuvenation Belt

Cost: 19

Trigger: Application of the patch

Fatiguing: Yes/hourly. Will save Difficulty: 16

Saving Throw: None

Description: This belt helps the wearer resist the effects of fatigue, granting a +5 bonus to fatigue checks. No more than one rejuvenation belt may be used on a person at one time. Adepts may not use the Rejuvenate power on a person under the effects of a rejuvenation belt.

Duration: This item last for a number of days equal to the rank of the power shard. Once the power shard is drained, it must be recharged at a mana well or replaced.

Torc of the Wolf

Cost: 22

Trigger: Torc worn

Fatiguing: Yes/hourly. Will save Difficulty: 16

Saving Throw: None

Description: When worn, the torc allows the wearer to transform into the shape of a wolf as if he cast Self Shaping.

Duration: The torc will function for a number of days equal to the rank of the power shard after which, the power shard must be recharged at a mana well or replaced with another power shard with the appropriate rank and power. If the wearer ever reaches an unconscious condition because of failed fatigue saves, the torc ceases to function.

Note: Other version of this item are rumored to exist, such as torcs allowing wears to transform into bears, eagles or even dolphins.

Well Trap

Cost: 16

Trigger: Item submerged in liquid

Fatiguing: Yes/Immediate. Will save Difficulty: 16

Saving Throw: See text

Description: The well trap rote is commonly infused into a small mana shard or a marble. Once submerged in water, it dissolves, spreading a deadly poison throughout the water supply. Any person drinking from the tainted source must make a Fortitude save (difficulty 14) or become infected as per the Infect Power (See Chapter 5). The affects of this rote last for 24 hours.

Duration: This item is destroyed once activated.

BONE FETISHES

Bone shamans can use the Craft Fetish feat to make supernatural items. Like other supernatural items, most require some sort of word or action to activate or must be worn. These items are made of raw materials from a corpse equal in character level to the rank of the power to be imbued into the item. A set of artisan's tools are also required.

In addition to the raw materials, the bone shaman must find or summon a suitable spirit and make use of the Bind Spirit power. The spirit must be at least equal level to the highest ranked power of the item some more powerful items are very specific as to the type of spirit that must be bound.

Creating a bone fetish requires a save against Taint with Difficulty equal to 10+ the Spirit Rank of the item. Heroic Characters may expend a point of Conviction to avoid this save.

DESTROYING A BONE FETISH

When someone successfully destroys a bone fetish, either by sundering it or some other means the spirits contained therein are irrevocably destroyed.

This reason, denying a spirit of its eternal peace, is why the bone shaman is so universally loathed. At the Narrator's discretion, powerful spirits may be released from an item rather than being destroyed with it.

EXAMPLE BONE FETISH ITEMS

The following fetishes are just a few examples of the types of items bone shamans might create.

Bone Dirk of Katish

Power: Drain Vitality

Spirit Rank: Varies

Difficulty: Craft: Weapon 25

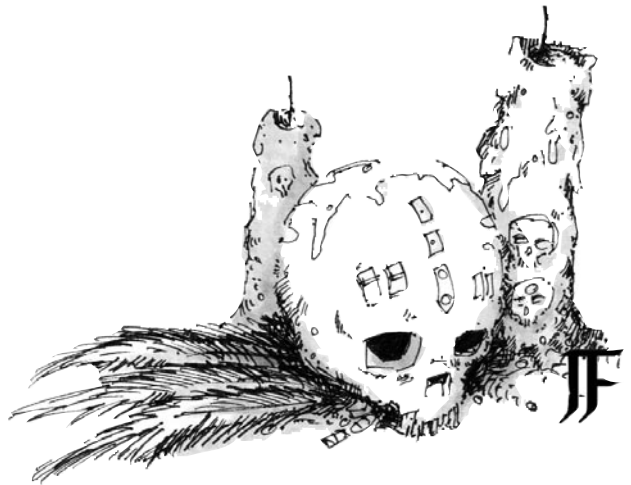
Construction Time: 12 Hours

Katish was a name that struck fear in the bravest of souls. Even among his own people it was uttered only in strangled whispers for it was said that his power was without end and second only to his hunger for flesh...

This wickedly serrated bone dagger is long and sharp and appears to be carved from a single slender bone and functions like a masterwork knife. Whenever this weapon hits it uses the Drain Vitality power on the target, restoring fatigue to the wielder.

The item has charges equal to the level of the spirit bound to it and uses a charge on each successful strike. Rolling a natural 1 on an attack has the opposite effect, draining fatigue from the wielder and restoring it to the person struck but still drains a charge.

Using this item requires a save against Taint the first time it successfully activates its power against a foe.



The item can be recharged with the Bind Spirit power by a bone shaman of equal or greater Adept Level of the original creator.

Grinning Imp Mask

Power: Heart Shaping

Spirit Rank: Varies

Difficulty: Craft: Armor 15

Construction Time: 24 Hours

The orc raised his great cleaver and I saw upon his countenance that of a smiling devil, a mask of sewn flesh. A lump grew in my throat and I felt my courage waning. As I stared upon that horrible face the mouth smirked but the eyes, the eyes spoke to me of torment and unimaginable pain beyond the grave.

This mask is made of flesh and resembles the smiling visage of a little demon. It allows the wearer to manifest the Fear aspect of the Heart Shaping power. It has charges equal to its spirit rank. When originally created the corpse materials used must be fresh and not burned by fire or acid.

Once worn, the mask cannot be removed until it has expended all charges or a successful Ward check is made against the creator, in either case the item crumbles to dust. Wearing this mask imposes a -4 penalty on all interaction skills except Intimidate.

Hag's Eye Ring

Power: Scrying

Spirit Rank: Varies

Difficulty: Craft: Jewelry 20

Construction Time: 12 Hours

I lay there dreaming by the campfire when I felt a prickle on my scalp; I opened my eyes and looked at my ring, to my surprise it was looking back.

This ornate ring looks like a large pearl, it is however, what is left of a hag's eye, and indeed must be constructed from materials and spirit from a witch. It grants the wearer a +1 bonus to any one saving throw of the creator's choice.

However, it conceals a second more devious power; the wearer is considered very familiar with the creator of this ring allowing them to use powers that require familiarity accordingly. The ring functions for a number of weeks equal to the spirit rank after which it becomes worthless.

There is one drawback to this link however, when you are manifesting a power through the link it creates the "eye" opens and is subject to a Difficulty 20 Notice check, success means that the wearer or someone nearby is aware of the "eye." Furthermore, an attack to the ring applies to the creator and severs the link permanently. Only one such attack inflicts damage, further attacks to the ring do nothing.

Lesser Bone Armor

Power: Bind Spirit

Spirit Rank: 6

Difficulty: Craft: Armor 23

Construction Time: 3 Days

Over his tattered tunic he wore a suit of bones all stitched together, it hung on him like a second skin. The way it moved with him made my skin crawl.

You create a suit of light armor that provides a +3 supernatural bonus to toughness saves with no armor check penalty. The spirit bound to it must have some sort of martial background or died a violent death. The armor also imposes a -3 penalty to all interaction skills except Intimidate as long as it is worn.

Donning the armor for the first time requires a Difficulty 16 save against Taint. Removing the armor requires a toughness save as if the wearer were struck by a weapon with a damage bonus equal to +3, the wearer does not gain the benefit of the armor's toughness bonus for this save.

Walking Death Powder

Power: Harm, Imbue Unlife

Spirit Rank: Varies

Difficulty: Craft: Alchemy 30

Construction Time: 4 Days

We had been traveling through the jungle for four days with no sign of the Shek-Tar tribesmen when suddenly we were surrounded by them. One of them, his face painted white to resemble a skull blew something into Marcus' eyes. Marcus immediately collapsed and what happened next I shall not forget till the ends of my days. Marcus stood up again but the skin sloughed off his face revealing hungry mouth and flapping tongue.

Amidst his gurgles I swear I heard him whisper my name...

These wooden or bone tubes are filled with a single dose of vile smelling yellow powder which is blown into the victim's face. The powder is created from the rotten remains of someone who died of disease. The target suffers the effects of the Harm power manifested at the rank set during item creation. If a target should die from this damage, he immediately rises as a zombie the next round.

EFFIGIES

Practitioners of the Witchcraft Power Path can imbue special items called effigies. These totems contain bits of hair, fingernails, scraps of clothing, and other personal effects from the target. Their function ranges from the beneficial to harmful.

The effigy is a tiny doll meant to represent the target, usually worn around the neck as a charm but not always. They require the user to have the effigy on their person for the magic to work.

Protective Effigy

Prerequisites: Imbue Item, Adept Level 2, Witchcraft Power Path

Power Rank: 5



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Construction Time: 2 days

A simple figure usually of wood wears garments made from bits of cloth of the owners own clothes and likewise sports real hair. Once per day this item can be used to add +2 to any saving throw. It will only work for whom it was made, if it is ever lost or destroyed the owner takes a +0 Damage Lethal Strike and a level of Fatigue.

Combat Effigy

Prerequisites: Imbue Item, Adept Level 3, Witchcraft Power Path

Power Rank: 6

Construction Time: 4 days

Almost identical in construction to the protective effigy, this little doll provides the wearer a small boon in combat either +2 to all attacks or to his defense (chosen at the time of creation). It will only work for whom it was made; if it is ever lost or destroyed, the owner takes a +3 Damage Lethal Strike and a level of Fatigue.

Sympathetic Effigy

Prerequisites: Imbue Item, Adept Level 12, Witchcraft Power Path

Power Rank: 15

Construction Time: 13 days

This sinister little fetish is what the witch is most well known for, made just like any other effigy it is crafted in secret against the owner's will. Whatever should happen to this effigy happens to the one whom it is made to resemble. It grants the bearer familiarity with the target equal to "Very Familiar" no matter what distance.

Creating this fetish is not without its risk though. Upon completion, it requires a Difficulty 25 save against Taint. Furthermore, when a witch completes this item she must whisper her own name to the doll. The target gets a Notice Check 30 to "hear" this whisper and if they succeed, they become aware that someone has created this effigy and learns their name. The witch never knows if they are found out or not. From then on if the witch should evoke the power of the effigy, the target has a chance to counteract it, by yelling the name of the person using it they turn whatever effect the witch was using back on them.

Finally should the effigy ever be destroyed both the target and the witch take +10 Damage Lethal hits which ignore armor, if they survive they each take a level of fatigue.

COINAGE OF SIMARRA

Those who brave the collapsed temples of the ascendant gods or the harsh wind blasted lands of the Vaskraall Wastes may uncover relics of a past age, small discs of metal with icons on both sides. Some bear seals of defunct nation-states or visages of long-dead kings.

To many these trinkets are little more than a curiosity, to be pondered briefly then smelted into their base metals and traded as scrap. However, to some, the astute scholars of bygone eons they are collectors items, helping to punctuate various periods of time, as the coins were a form of portable wealth, having a value assigned the them far greater than any survivor of the Age of Blood could guess.

Still there are some would seek to reinstitute this ancient form of wealth, the Trade Lords being one such group. Another are the Treshir Sandwalkers who carry coins called drognais, although they never trade them with outsiders. What value they have who can say?





Illustration by Joseph J. Calkins



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CHAPTER FIVE

LIFE IN SIMARRA

"These roving street gangs are a real problem. It's bad enough that we have to live in shanty towns in back alleys and beg for food, but when organized scum like the Razors come along and pick us clean like we was some carcass in the streets... Well, I suppose I should count myself lucky. I'm still alive, that is, if you want to call this living."

- Refugee in Ardrennen Falls

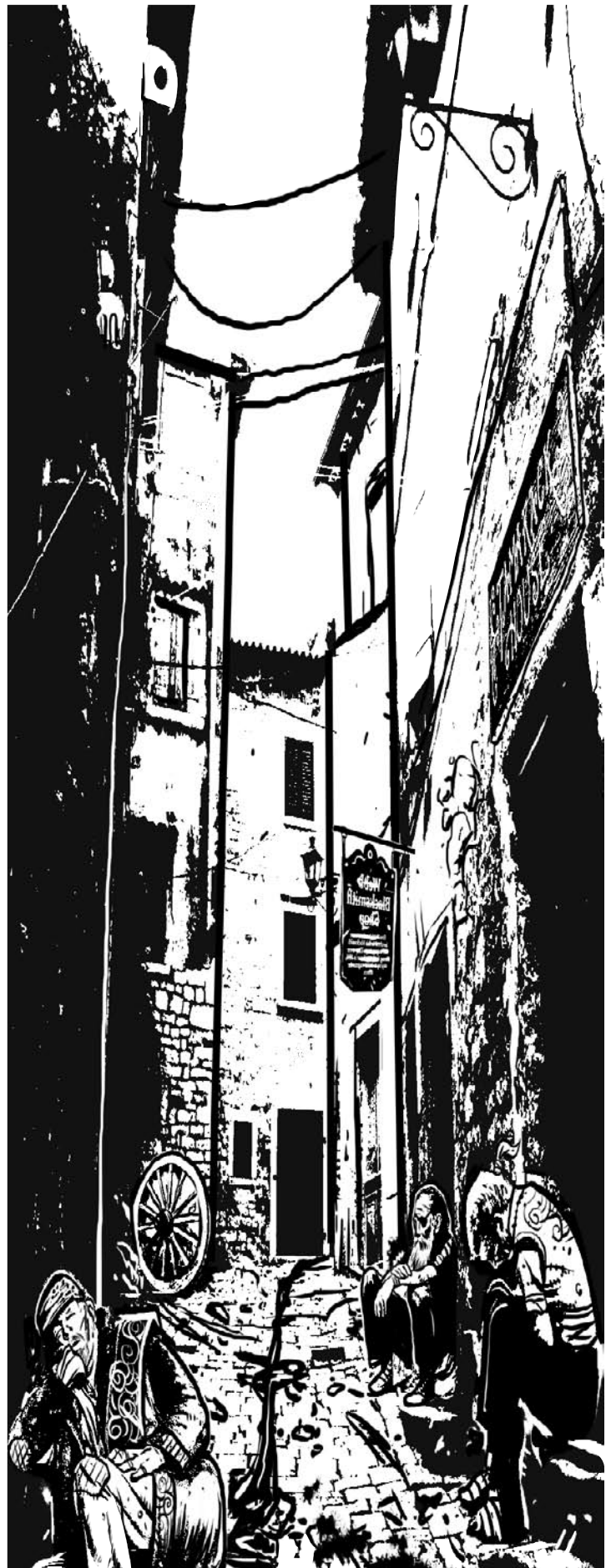
The past decade has seen a great deal of changes in the world. The invasion of the keza-drak has had an apocalyptic impact on Simarra and its people. The average person lives with very little hope for a bright, shiny future. They live from one day to the next. Most have fallen into poverty, which brings with it a fierce, desperation that overrides all sense of decency driving them to commit monstrous acts in order to survive.

The average person has a lean, hungry look to them. The lack of an abundance of water in many free holds means people go without baths. Their clothing is dirty, their hair matted and tangled from lack of combings. Indeed, a lack of personal hygiene causes many problems. Diseases like the plague and cholera are common in free holds, especially in slums where there are high numbers of people living in a single room.

Travel is not safe. Danger stalks those who venture out of the relative safety of a town or free city. keza-drak and Sundaari war parties patrol the main roads. The Stone Gates are becoming perilous to use due to the growing taint that has come out of the Threshold realm. Thieves, organized mercenaries and even desperate refugees prey on the unwary traveler, nor is living in the free cities of Simarra free of hardship.

Food and supplies are always in short supply. The average meal consists of watery soup, a chunk of flat bread or hard tack and the occasional piece of meat. In the latter case, this varies greatly depending on where people are living. In cities, this typically means salted pork, dried beef, venison, and rats baked into meat pies or sold on skewers. In the wilderness, people who can hunt and fish are more fortunate, being able to live for weeks off the fruits of their labors if they properly cure and smoke the meat.

Criminal activity has always been a problem in every city, but in the Age of Blood, these individuals



often act with relative impunity as the populations of cities and towns mushroom, consequently making it more difficult for local law enforcement to maintain an effective presence on the streets. Indeed, the larger cities such as Aradan, White Castle Harbor, Ghandakarr and Ardrennen falls are plagued with organized crime.

Slumlords control entire neighborhoods, offering protection from other corrupt landlords and their minions, not to mention independent rogues and gangs who roam darkened city streets looking for prey. In return, people are expected to give up all but the essentials to these despots or lose what protection they offer. Cults are also becoming a problem in cities across Simarra. These crazed people peddle their strange and often dangerous ideologies to the masses, providing hope to people who have none. No matter how well protected a city is, there is always the threat of the keza-drak. Indeed, free holds are major military targets for the minions of Agärazôn, representing the largest concentrations of people who still live free.

The betrayer's minions constantly work to destabilize the infrastructure of targeted cities, often sending in spies capable of altering their form, such as the evil morargrim, to engage in subversive operations, perform sabotage and even convert others to their cause. In light of the afore-mentioned dangers of living in a city, more than a few people have taken their families and friends out of major cities, preferring to go it alone in the wilderness.

Those who do choose to live outside of a free hold face all manner of dangers. These people live in constant fear of conflicting with keza-drak or Sundaari patrols. They risk being attacked by monstrous horrors that roam the land, some looking for food, some simply looking to sate their blood lust. For these people, isolation from larger communities means a greater risk of death due to disease. Food is less of a problem, for those who know how to hunt and farm. Those who lack basic survival skills tend to die quickly out in the wilds.

RECKONINGS OF THE SEASONS

It may seem to some people who will – I hope – read this in the years to come, that our ways of recording the passage of time are simplistic. It is true that throughout the ages, as the myriad civilizations of Simarra developed and flourished, the scholars of their day made no effort to reform the methods by which they documented the passage of time.

I will not offer conjecture as to why they chose to mark the passing of the years by the four seasons, nor will I offer alternative method (though there surely must be other techniques by which the reckoning of time is handled) to more effectively record future events.

-Elohan Salaistrien

According to Daelian reckoning, a single year in Simarra lasts for 650 days and goes through four seasons.

The seasons that dominate Simarra are as follows:

Authel – *The Time of Renewal*: Marked by the annual passing of the great comet Turûs, the coming of Authel signals an end to the bitter cold of Saeoethel.

THE UNBOUND

In White Castle Harbor, a large cult calling themselves the Unbound have recently seized control of the city. Following a mysterious woman claiming to be a holy Seeress of the Fallen Goddess, the Unbound have grown to over five thousand adherents. The Seeress has taken the throne and declared herself ruler of the city-state. Reports from people who have fled White Castle Harbor claim that many parts of the city are burning as city militia hold out against the warriors of the Unbound who have orders to purge the city of all non-believers.

Authel generally lasts for one hundred and eighty days, during which time the world warms and plants begin to bloom anew. It is said that Iragreth holds sway during Authel, and many Simarrans choose to marry during this time.

Valaen – *The Tempering Fire*: The one hundred and twenty days of Valaen are dominated by blistering heat as Simarra's orbit is flung perilously close to Solruna – "The Great Light." In these sweltering days, it is not uncommon to see great swathes of gas-laden earth ripped out of the ground to hover at varying levels in the sky .

Most of these detached pieces of earth and stone will eventually fall back to the ground as the gasses dissipate. However there are some chunks of rock that defy the forces of nature, instead riding the winds across the globe. Such is the case with the floating kingdoms of the wicked Ghaskrii raiders.

Forlaen – *The Weakening of the Veil*: Eventually the heat of Solruna yields as Simarra spins away into the cold black of the cosmos. As it does, the world enters the chilling days of Forlaen; a time when it is whispered the dead are given leave to roam Simarra

once more until Authel comes again. This time is marked by shortening days and cooling temperatures, which cause great rain storms to sweep across the lands. The presence of thick nigh impenetrable mists at dawn is sure signs that the one hundred and fifty days of Forlaen have begun.

Saeothel –*The Long Night*: Bitter winds and heavy snows mark the two hundred days of Saeothel. It is a time when Simarra slips into a deep slumber. Sickness and death hold sway in these bleak days. Fell beasts come down out of the mountains to prey upon the unwary.

TIMELINE

THE MAJOR CONJUNCTURES

The following is a compilation of the most important events in Simarran history. Unlike the Celestial Arcanum, these particular entries are based on events that took place largely outside the realm of mysticism. Some events are inextricably linked to the Elder Gods, however, so you will see a few entries that have ties to both the mythic and mundane history of this world.

Some of you out there may disagree with my slant on which events were most important in the grand scheme of things. But, as I am writing this and not you, I have the luxury of making my own determinations in this regard. Trellan, you will just have to forgive me if I chose not to rank the invention of beer as high as you might have liked...

-E.S

THE PRIMEVAL AGE

- Birth of Elder races
- Megath-Tor is Built
- Magic is taught to the Elder Races. Covens Form.
- Creation of the Threshold Realm.

THE SHADOW YEARS

- Loss of Immortality for Elder races
- Concepts of time begin to take shape. Seasons are given names and the passage of time begins to be recorded.
- Tribes form. Migration out of the Cradle of Life begins.
- Age of Steel Begins

THE AGE OF STEEL

- Year 1: Daelian scholars begin to document the passage of time and events of Simarra.
- Year 130: The Hunting times begin.
- Year 176: Ardrennen Falls is founded.
- Year 288: War in the wild lands.

- People flee to Ardrennen Falls, Old city is evacuated.
- Year 432: Ascendant technology First used.
- Year 433: The first Mana Well is tapped at Megath-Tor.
- Year 507: Trade Lords first appear in the port city of Kuspala on the edge of the Sundering Sea.
- Year 1501: Enâra creates the othrännän.
- Year 1504: Battle of the Plains of Lorduun, Great Moot
- Year 1505: Age of Steel Ends.

THE AGE OF PLENTY

- Year 1506 “The 1st Year of Plenty”: Enâra is imprisoned in the Threshold Realm.
- Year 1510 “The 5th year of Plenty”: Kiv’Larast is founded in secret by Dragon-kin.
- Year 1839 “The 333rd Year of Plenty”: The Talmosan Revelations are heard in Tadar-kesh, Japira Xutlu slain.
- Year 1264 “The 758th year of plenty” shodonai come to Megath-Tor.
- Year 2736 “The 1,230th Year of Plenty: Agärazôn opens the Stone Gates, the keza-drak invade Simarra. The Age of Plenty Ends.

THE AGE OF BLOOD

- Year 2736: Urkog-Drall comes to Simarra. Agärazôn sacks Megath-Tor and renames it Thel-Kaza.
- Year 2737: The keza-drak take control of the Kotarran Highlands and Thusparr.
- Year 2738: The remaining Elder Gods are rumored to have fled the cosmos and hide from Urkog-Drall on Simarra. keza-drak invade Talmosa. The nation surrenders as Zashtazzra forges alliance with Urkog-Drall. Tadar-kesh comes under keza-drakian rule. Insurgents hold out in various freeholds deep in the swamps.
- Year 2740: Thelstaad keep is sacked.
- Year 2745: Civil war erupts within Agärazôn’s empire. The conquest of Simarra grinds to a halt as the keza-drak begin fighting each other.
- Year 2746: Present day.

REGIONS

“We were five days out of Thel-Kaza, making our way South East towards a freehold in the Kaerlon Mountains when the Sundaari bastards hit. One of our guides -the half-giant Korl Axe grinder - got hit by four arrows in the first few seconds, but the scrapper kept on fighting, even after the damned blood magi slammed him with a sorcerous blast that seared the flesh from his bones! He took five of those Thûrak-damned bastards with him before the Zôrûn-Ahmrê hounds dragged him down. Ol’ Korl made it possible for the rest of us to escape.

We slowly made our way down out of the rugged desolation of the Hadrannath hills into the Thusparran Lowlands, skirting enemy outposts using old trails and switchbacks known by the elves that lived in the region long before those blasted keza-drak invaded. We passed a number of secret bunkers and camps along the trails down into the lowlands; way stations for escaped slaves like us who needed to get a bit of a rest before moving on.

I don’t think I’ve ever seen people as hard as them who lived in those camps, cold-blooded men and women, changed by years of war, years of hiding in the shadows and rocky crags of the Hadrannath. They spoke very little, save to threaten us with all manner of pain and suffering if we so much as stuck our toes outside of the hideouts. I tell ya, it was like sitting on a bed of iron spikes. We stayed huddled together in those lairs for days, just waiting, praying we weren’t discovered by the Sundaari and keza-drak patrols that all too often seemed to be standing right outside our camps.

It wasn’t until later, after we were well away and moving across the war torn lowlands, that our guide tipped us off to the fact that a couple of Arcanus magi had been using sorcery to hide our locations. Even so, the thought that with one miss-step, just one of those bastard keza-drak could have stumbled into the camp at any time is enough to bleed the piss right out of my bladder.”

-Yaran Gaer, refugee

The following section provides an in depth look at the war torn regions of Simarra.



THE ARADI HEARTLANDS

The Aradi Heartlands are a region of vast grassy plains that stretch from the Broken Bone Hills to the north and the undead haunted kingdom of Numarath. Given to the Aradi lionmen by their god Aradon, the Aradi Heartlands were sacred to the lionmen for centuries before the breaking of the Elder races.

The Aradi Heartlands would be despoiled first by the Baldarran gypsies who strip-mined the land in search of gold; then again by the keza-drak when they invaded the Heartlands through the Raven Bluff stone gate. Though the aAradi and their allies the Narmrothans were successful in pushing the Baldarrans out of the Heartlands, they were completely unprepared for the invasion of the keza-drak who now hold the Heartlands in a stranglehold. The keza-drak burned much of the grassy plains during the initial invasion, which are just barely beginning to recover.

Estimated Population: 150, 000

Major Settlements:

Aradan: (Metropolis, Population 25, 000): This freehold was the first one built within the Aradi Heartlands. It is the capital of the Heartlands only now it is not so free.

Aradon remains free but for how much longer is anyone's guess. A large force of keza-drak are camped outside the gates keeping the residents prisoners in their own city. It is only a matter of time before the fundamentalist forces of general Zugosh-Drak takes the city.

Charr: (Large City, Population 75,000): Located in the Broken Bone Hills, Charr was established by the keza-drak to serve as a staging ground for all of their activities in the Aradi Heartlands.

It was built by Aradi and Narmrothan slaves on the command of general Zugosh-Drak. Many of the buildings are built from stone quarried from the strip mines of the Baldarrans in the Broken Bone Hills. keza-drak taskmasters force their slaves to continue mining the hills.

The Aradi chafe at being party to such desecration of their ancestral lands, though many have come to view it is the judgment of Aradon for allowing other races to despoil their lands. Zugosh-Drak is massing his forces to force the radical elements of his command back into the fold or to wipe them out entirely.

Millhaven: (Large Town, Population 4, 500): A town on the eastern frontier just north of the Misted Moth river. For the most part the keza-drak have left this town alone. Life continues as it did much during the Age of Plenty. It (and its sister town South Fork) was founded by the Baldarrans soon after signing a treaty with the lionmen. The Baldarrans were run out of the town by the Aradi and their allies when the Baldarrans began strip-mining the Broken Bone Hills. The keza-drak keep only a token force here of about 2000 warriors under the command of general Konnalgath. These keza-drak have turned their back on Agärazôn. They allow the residents of Millhaven a high degree of autonomy in exchange the residents have agreed to stand with the forces of the general should they fall under attack by fundamentalist forces.

South Fork (Large Town, Population 5, 100): Another town on the eastern frontier northeast of Millhaven. It too is under the jurisdiction of general Konnalgath. The majority of the general's forces reside here, as well as general Konnalgath himself. As with Millhaven, the residents of South Fork are free to go about their daily lives, but are sworn to stand with the forces of the general in an attack from fundamentalist forces. The general considers South Fork to be of more significance than Millhaven that is why he has stationed the bulk of his forces here.

Wealth Limit: 30

Racial Demographics: 30% Aradi lionmen, 35% keza-drak, 20% Narmrothan humans, 15% Other (mostly Baldarran and Dassurri humans, Dassurri half-elves and Volsparan elves)



Major Organizations:

The Lion Chargers of Aradon: When the keza-drak invaded the Aradi Heartlands, the lionmen and their long time allies - the Narmrothan greymen - worked together to repulse them. The two forces were tired, having just fought a long campaign to push the Baldarrans out of the Heartlands. Being faced with another invasion so soon left many of them exhausted, unprepared for another prolonged conflict. They failed and the Heartlands were conquered by the keza-drak.

Many Aradi and Narmrothans lived to fight another day, but the same could not be said of the magnificent mounts of the Narmrothans. The keza-drak methodically cut the horses out from under their riders. These "unhorsed" Narmrothans and the surviving lionmen broke into "prides" of insurgents using hit and run tactics to continue the fight against the keza-drak.

The Aradi and the unhorsed Narmrothans had to rethink their strategy. The Narmrothans began to ride the Aradi into battle. It was quickly discovered that the two allies made a nearly unstoppable duo. This continued for many months during which time the two allies discovered that they had learned to think as one and predict each other's moves. Thus were born the Lion Chargers of Aradon.

Places of Note:

Broken Bone Hills: Once a sacred burial ground of the Aradi lionmen and the site of their greatest holy ground, the Stone Gate of Raven Bluff has been desecrated twice. First at the hands of the Baldarrans who strip-mined the hills in search of gold during the Age of Plenty and again at the hands of the keza-drak after they conquered the Aradi Heartlands.

The keza-drak established a city nearby called Charr (named for the slash and burn tactics employed by the keza-drak during the initial invasion) both to solidify their position near the stone gate and as a base of operations to bring the rest of the Aradi Heartlands under their control.

Raven Bluff: The most sacred site in the Aradi Heartlands, Raven Bluff is also the site of a powerful stone gate. The stone gate at Raven Bluff lies within the Broken Bone Hills and was the entry point of the keza-drak into the Aradi Heartland.

Rumors

- To the east lies a community of keza-drak that has forsaken Agärazôn. It is said that these keza-drak do not lord over the areas they control but are content to let the residents live in peace.
- A burial mound in the Broken Bone Hills has been claimed by a pride of renegade Aradi. It is the site of several graves desecrated during the Age of plenty by the Baldarrans. These lionmen have turned their backs on Aradon and gone feral, killing all they encounter. Taint seeps from the desecrated graves infecting the local wild life, who demonstrate the same feral behavior as the lionmen.
- Undead are streaming over the bulwark in the Numaràn Gap. They are said to be lead by a death lord that brings ice and snow in his wake. Several villages have been buried in ice.

THE BALDARAK HIGHLANDS

Nestled between the Wild Lands on the West and the Griffon Peaks on the east, the Baldarak Highlands is a region relatively untouched by the invasion of the keza-drak. This is partially owed to the fact that, strangely, there are no major stone gates within the Baldarak Highlands. An invasion by keza-drak forces from the nearby Aradi Heartlands never materialized due to the eruption of a civil war among the keza-drak. What few keza-drak that have attempted to invade the Baldarak Highlands have been bought off by syndicate bosses offering, slaves, weapons, and other trade goods.

The Baldarak Highlands does not have a capital, though several cities are large enough to make that claim; the region is more a collection of walled city-states than a single nation.

Each city-state is under the control of a Syndicate. The larger more powerful syndicates control the larger city-states and by virtue have a greater amount of influence in city-state politics. Each city-state is ruled independently, though all issues involving the city-states as a whole are decided by the Council of Free States.

Estimated Population: 275, 000

Major Settlements: Fairhaven, Snowhaven, Drugan's Folly.

Racial Demographics: 85 % Baldarrans, 10% Dwarves, 5 % Other.

Major Organizations: Political power and purchasing power in the Baldarran Highlands and many freeholds are controlled by Baldarran Syndicates. Below are just a couple of such syndicates.

The Gilded Road: A syndicate that prefers negotiation and assassination to blatant violence. The Gilded Road controls all aspects of the gold trade in the Baldarak Highlands and for much of the continent as well. The power of the Gilded Road was nearly shattered by the invasion of the keza-drak.

Gold, the standard of wealth for thousands of years has become nearly worthless in a world that struggles to survive just another day. That said, gold is still prized among the elite for its aesthetic value and among those same elite is still the preferred standard of business. Thus, the Gilded Road syndicate bides its time. In the meanwhile, it has been pushing the barter system as a replacement. In order to keep the value of gold stable, the Gilded Road has begun to issue paper notes backed by an equal amount of gold, called Trade Notes. Most internal business in the city-states is conducted via these trade notes.

The Seven Veils: A mysterious syndicate that is rumored to have seven layers of hierarchy. Just when you think all has been revealed the Seven Veils displays another layer. The Seven Veils syndicate controls all aspects of the fabric trade.

The Flesh Traders: The flesh traders are a syndicate that specializes in the traffic of slaves and prostitution. Some of their best clients are the keza-drak. Flesh Trader caravans can be seen as far away as Thel-Kaza. Flesh Traders do not have a city-state to call their own, as they are nomads. Despite this lack of a city-state, the Flesh Traders are still allowed representation on the Council of Free States.

The Thunder Hammer: The Thunder Hammer is a small syndicate that controls the city-state of Drugan's Folly. It is responsible for overseeing armor and weapon production. Unlike the other syndicates, The Thunder Hammer does not use slave labor.

The rugged dwarves who toil for the Hammer do so willingly and with pride, knowing that their arms are

traded all over Simarra.

The Cult of Baldar: The Cult of Baldar is group of fundamentalist Baldarrans who preach against the decadent ways of the Baldarrans of the Baldarak Highlands. They call all they encounter to return to the teachings of Baldar and to abandon syndication and civilization.

Places of Note: Black Peaks, Gray Sea, Griffin Peaks

Drugan's Folly (Large Town, Population 13, 000): Drugan's Folly, named in honor of Drugan Moreheim, First boss of the Thunder Hammer syndicate, is a bit of an enigma among the other city-states in that slavery is illegal. It is the black sheep of the Council of Free States but also the most vocal in terms of gaining rights for all people, not just citizens of the city-states.

Many of the city's permanent residents are of dwarven stock, most of which who were born in Drugan's Folly. A perpetual black cloud hovers over Drugan's Folly; spewed from the many forges the city keeps going producing weapons and armor. Drugan's Folly is one of the largest producers of weapons remaining on the continent. All of the day-to-day operations of the city-state are controlled by the Thunder Hammer syndicate.

Fairhaven: (Large City-State, Population 100, 000). Also known as the Gilded City, Fairhaven is the largest city in the Baldarak Highlands, but is not its capital. Like other city-states it is a walled city, however unlike most others, the majority of buildings in Fairhaven "scrape the sky" with most being at least 10 stories tall with windows of gilded glass. Fairhaven is called the Gilded City for two reasons; one, It is controlled by the Gilded Road syndicate which is one of the most powerful syndicates in city-states; two, there is gold everywhere.

Fairhaven is a very ostentatious city. Its apparent affluence draws many to this city-state. Unlike some of the other city-states, Fairhaven has next to no homeless population and few if any people living at the level of poverty. Poverty and homelessness are crimes in Fairhaven, punishable by being sold into slavery. This is one reason Fairhaven does not have a large population of homeless people. Slavery is common in Fairhaven.

By virtue of its population, Fairhaven wields the most influence in the Council of Free States, using this influence to force other city-states to do its bidding.

Griffin Peaks: The Griffin Peaks are located to the east of the Baldarak Highlands. It is a dangerous mountain range home to such creatures as mountain trolls, ogres, griffons and ratlings; even a lake infested with bear-sharks, if the rumors are true. Escaped slaves can elude Flesh Trader bounty hunters for months in the peaks, but often fall prey to the native creatures.



There are only a few passes through this rugged mountain range and each year they become snow-clogged from mid-winter to late spring. There are half a dozen small mountain towns such as Coaldale, Leadville, Black Hawk, and Silver Thorn. Many of these are old mining towns, but most are little more than ghost towns with a handful of stalwarts remaining. There are even rumors of a secret Shield Wall Dwarven holdfast.

Snowhaven: (Large City-State, Population 37,000) Snowhaven is the second largest city-state in the Baldarak Highlands and owes much of its design to that of Fairhaven. Like Fairhaven it is a walled city-state, however it is nowhere the size of Fairhaven and boasts only seven buildings over ten stories tall, the rest average about 5-6 stories. These seven buildings house the syndicate heads of the Seven Veils syndicate. Though poverty and homelessness are illegal here, the city boasts a large population of such vagrants. Any such vagrants caught by the city watch are swiftly sold into slavery and forced to work in one of dozens of sweat shops located through out the city.

Rumors

- A Cultist of Baldar is helping slaves escape from the city of Fairhaven. No one knows who he is, but so far, dozens of slaves have been smuggled out of the city. A bounty has been placed on the head of the Cultist.

- The child of one of the bosses of the Seven Veils syndicate has been kidnapped by Flesh Traders and is being held for ransom. The Flesh Traders demands

are simple. They want to see a change in syndicate leadership within the Seven Veils. If the leader relinquishes power, they agree to return his child unharmed; if he refuses, she will be given to the keza-drak.

THE CRADLE OF LIFE

*"Oh she has fallen,
The gem of the world,
Light of Enâra,
Blessed Megath-Tor has fallen!
Banished from your embrace,
We wander,
Beggars lost in darkness...."*
-Harkon Beltoran

Once home to millions of people from a myriad cultures, the cradle of life is a ravaged shell of its former self. The utter dominance of the keza-drak and the minions of Agärazôn is apparent in every conquered city and razed town in the near-1000 mile stretch of land that is the betrayer's seat of power on Simarra.

Over half a million keza-drak and roughly 300 thousand Sundaari occupy the cradle of life, imposing their will on a multitude of conquered, enslaved peoples, twisting them into mutated horrors to be unleashed on the free people of Simarra. Even more of these wretched masses are fodder for the sacrificial pyres, offered up as tribute to Urkog-Drall, the dread god Thûrak and a host of blood gods who have ascended since the dawn of the Age of Blood.

Estimated Population: 1.2 million

Major Settlements: Thel-Kaza, Thel-Zagron, Kael' Zarack, Kaz-Rakhûl

Wealth of the region: Effectively unlimited.

Wealth Limit: No item cost over 60.

Major Organizations: Fundamentalist keza-drak, keza-drak loyal to Agärazôn, morargrim, Sundaari Blood Lords, Zôrûn-Ahmrê, Renegade Arcanus Magi, Insurgent groups including the shodon Warlords and the Sons of Simarra.

Places of Note

The cradle of life was once a lush, fertile region with wondrous natural beauty. In the 10 years since the invasion of the keza-drak, that beauty has been crushed under the iron boot of industry, forever marred by the despoilment of the land and rape of its natural resources. The land is dotted with iron fortresses, byzantine temples and alien buildings that burrow into the earth, sucking black oil and natural gas from the depths.

The Hadrannath: Acting as a natural barrier for the north, south and western borders of the cradle of life, these rugged, heavily forested hills have been



transformed into a warren of mines where slaves plumb the earth for iron, copper, gold and silver ore or cut down trees.

keza-drak outposts house garrisons who stand vigilant over the corridors leading into and out of the cradle of life. Ruins of smaller cities destroyed during the invasion and temples to the elder gods can be found scattered across the Hadrannath. Some of these are used as bases of operations for brave insurgents who work to destabilize the region.

Thel-Kaza: (Large city-state, Population 800,000): Once a metropolis of unsurpassed beauty, the city once known as Megath-Tor has been transformed into a lawless, pestiferous tumor on the face of Simarra. The city is a treacherous place where death and corruption are a way of life.

The air is filled with the sickly stench of burning bodies, garbage and raw sewage. The pollution caused by the oil refineries and foundries has grown so bad that the city is in a perpetual state of twilight. All visceral desires can be sated in Thel-Kaza.

Pleasures of the flesh, drugs, poisons, weaponry, blood sport; all of these and many more red delights can be had, for a price.

Kael' Zarack (The Undercity): Thel-Kaza has been rebuilt over the centuries due to previous occupations by enemies and the need for expansion to fit a growing population. Technological advances also contributed to the growth of the city such as expanded sewage and waste systems and, most recently, mechanical sub-stations that operate various machines. Due to structural concerns, many portions of the city remain intact deep below Thel-Kaza. Indeed, some have even been expanded by various factions within the city. This warren of tunnels and sub-structures are used by insurgents as havens and bases of operation for their efforts to free their brethren and mount attacks against the keza-drak.

Thel-Zagron: (Stronghold/City: Population 100,000) Located in the center of the cradle of life, the city of Thel-Zagron is the base of operations for the keza-drak, housing three legions of heavy infantry, two armored divisions consisting of battle tanks, reconnaissance drones and a number of support facilities including weapons manufacturing plants and fuel depots.

Thel-Zagron is commanded by General Zagûm-Drak, overlord of the keza-drakian legions. Zagûm-Drak is a ruthless commander, known for his tendency to slay his subordinates for even the slightest provocation. Zagûm once had all of his personal advisors crucified in his war room because one of them was late to a council meeting.

They were left that way for weeks, forced to continue counseling the commander right up until they died.

After, Zagûm-Drak forced his new delegation of advisors to eat the remains of the previous group so that they might learn from their predecessor's mistakes.

Kaz-Rakhûl (The rats nest): (Large Ghetto, Estimated Population: 300 - 400,000): A sprawling, walled ghetto composed of tents, shacks and squalid tenements outside the walls of Thel-Kaza; Kaz-Rakhûl is a disease-ridden cesspool where the slaves are forced to live when they are not serving their masters.

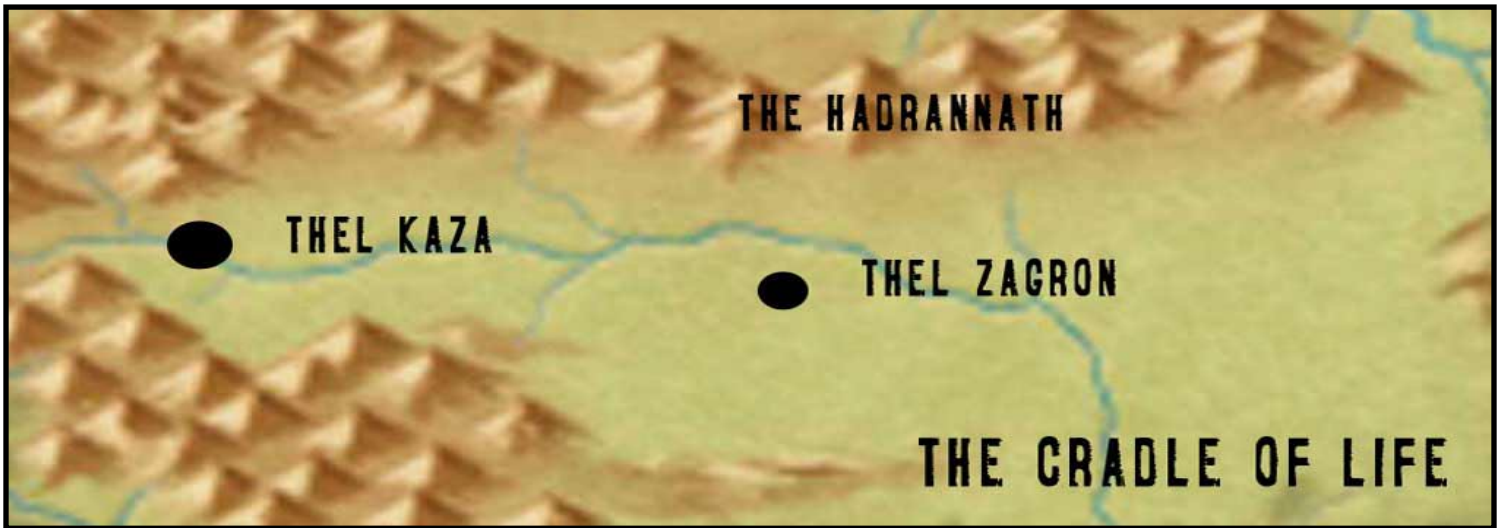
The rats nest is home to thousands upon thousands of people from all different races and creeds. For the most part, the races live in communities segregated according to race.

These individual districts are ran by keza-drak appointed Nailheads; overseers chosen from the general slave population who regularly meet to discuss various issues that affect the overall welfare of the rats nest. Not all nailheads have their brethren's best interests at heart, however.

More than a few nailheads have become corrupt, using their somewhat elevated status to set themselves up as slumlords within the rats nest. They use the threat of keza-drakian intervention to maintain their control of those people in their sectors, living in old taverns, apartments or warehouses that are easily defended by their grunts.

The nailheads and their henchmen are the eyes and the ears of the keza-drak, providing information about potential uprisings and insurgent activity in exchange for additional rations, alcohol, drugs and





undemanding assignments.

Rumors: Some say that the fundamentalist faction of keza-drak are planning on abandoning this war and going back to their home world; a development that would drastically reduce Agärazôn's forces, weakening his hold on remote bases of operation. Zagûm-Drak has responded to this perceived threat by attacking fundamentalist-held outposts in the cradle of life in addition to bolstering defenses in Thel-Kaza, where infighting in various quarters of the city have broken out between the two factions.

Some slaves, primarily shodon oracles - have also been receiving visions hinting at a possible new ally in the war for Simarra, the crone of the Fell Marshes in Northern Talmosa. More insurgents have been slipping into the rats nest via tunnels deep underground. Some say that a slave uprising will happen very soon.

THE DAELIAN WOOD

Running along the southern border of the Plains of Lorduun is a forest with a memory as old as Simarra itself. Though traveling into the forest will reveal a silence, both reverent and solemn, the very wood of the trees seem to know everything about you. The roots of the trees whisper tales of a long lost civilization of learning and knowledge into the earth and the willows weep as the wind blows through their boughs. They weep for the loss of their world and for the pain brought upon the land by the horrid keza-drak. The Daelian forest was once home to a great civilization of elves and man that stood together in their pursuit of knowledge. Like so many civilizations that flourished during the Age of Plenty these two people, the Daelian elves and the Daelian humans lived in peace with one another.

From their union came the order of Daelian sages, arguably the greatest historians Simarra has ever known.

The order was named for its founder, Daelian Mal-Vur, who discovered a unique use for mana shards in the fact that they could be used to store memories. Mal-Vur was an elder elf renowned for his knowledge of Mana and Sorcery. He showed his people how to sing to the shards, charming the magical stones into keeping the song within them. It is through this song-chant that stories could be told time and again by the Mana Shards and bards from all over Simarra traveled to learn this craft from the Sages so that their tales may live on.

As the order of Daelian Sages thrived, not only bards but also other scholars would travel to them as well, either seeking to record events or find reference to certain areas of history. Nobles would travel to the Sages when an important decision would have to be made to consult the lessons of history before making their decree.

Nothing more than a soft echo in the rivers and streams that run through the forest can be heard of the song sung to the shards so long ago. Because of the vast storehouse of knowledge and history that it was, it was one of the first targets of the keza-drak when they ventured through the stone gates to make Simarra their own.

News out of the region indicates the Daelian Sages still exist, that even some of the Mana Shards of knowledge were saved from the keza-drak's destruction and are kept by them, deep within the woods where only the elves would know. It is whispered that some communities continue living in the war-ravaged wood, and that if one enters the forest with pure intention in their hearts, the light of the Mana Shards will show them the way to knowledge once again.

Estimated Population: Scattered, some 30,000 refugees still live in remote villages and communities throughout the forest and mountains, many staggering under the tyranny of the keza-drak that now populate

the capital city of Tarmana.

Major Settlements: Avok-Mar, Northram, Tarmana
Wealth Limit: 25

Racial Demographics: In the scattered communities throughout the woods elves and man still live together, referred to as Daelven or Daelmen, because of their peaceful co-existence. Half elves are common here as well. keza-drak and Sundaari war bands are also common in the region.

Major Organizations:

Daelian Sages: A once structured order now nomadic in nature, having no center, constantly on the move protecting what remains of the mana shards that still hold tales of old Simarra.

Shard Scouts: Commanded by the keza-drak, Shard Scouts hunt for what remains of the Sages, seeking to stamp them out for good.

Everguard: A network of common folk throughout the remaining communities of the forest who keep the secrets of the Sages and oracles safe, they are ever watchful of Shard Scouts and report to the Sages in times of trouble, helping them move to somewhere more safe if need be. When a Sage ventures out to travel the forest, Everguards throughout the forest house them and keep them out of plain site.

Places of Note:

Avok-Mar (Freehold: Population 10,000): A tunnel complex within the hills at the southern end of the forest was said to be one of the first hiding places of the Daelian Sages when they sought refuge from the keza-drak. The sages have long since moved from this place, but many fell creatures have come to claim the tunnels as home, some creatures, such as the wicked Gretchclaw, have found their way to the warrens from deep within the bowels of Simarra. These vile beasts plague the already embattled Daelians.

Ghurel Grove: When the keza-drak swept through the forest in their initial invasion, it is said that an Arch

Druid magically fused a mana shard within the trunk of an oak tree called Felam. Felam sits in the center of Ghurel Grove, and early in the age of blood, many people would come to visit the ever-vibrant grove to remind themselves of the forest's origins. Lately, however those who have visited Felam have returned changed, as if interacting with the grove has somehow blessed them.

Some people are rumored to have gained healing powers; others even more miraculous gifts such as the ability to change shape. Some speculate that the elder goddess Iragreth has blessed the grove, while others insist it is the work of the goddess Gimbureth. The truth remains shrouded in mystery however, for the grove is becoming increasingly dangerous to reach, what with constant patrols of shard scouts and the iron legions of the keza-drak.

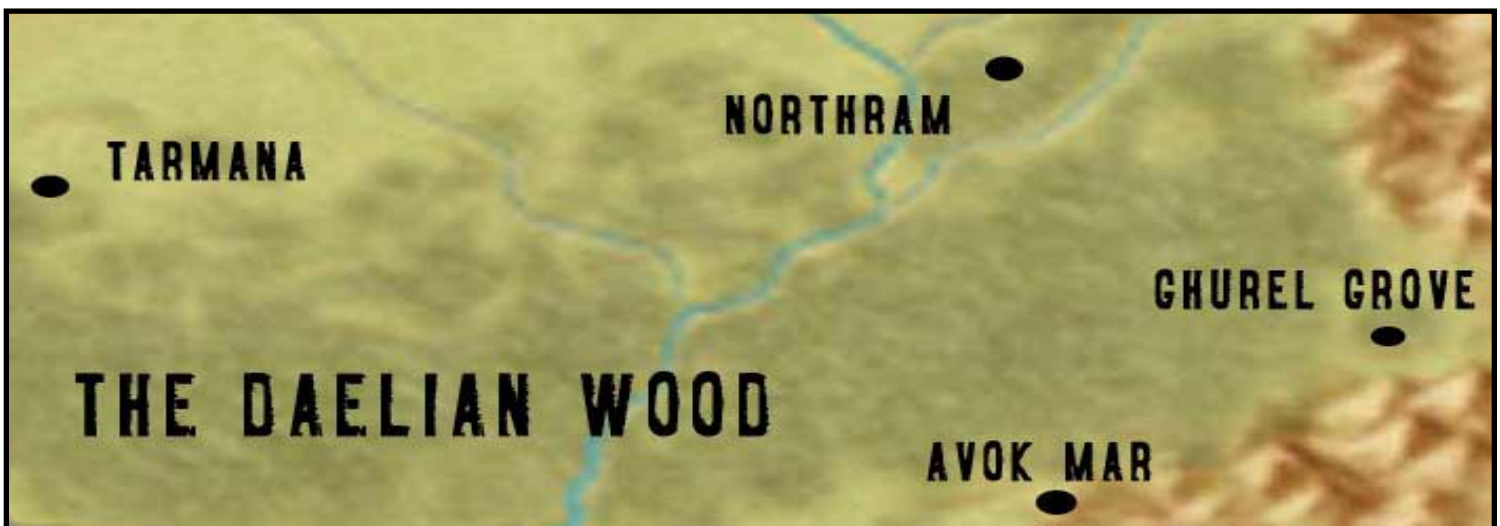
Northram (Stronghold/City: Population 40,000): This ancient city has long been considered the gate to the great wood by those who live in the region. Nestled on the shores of the swift moving river Iboran, the forest town of Northram was once a sprawling city built around a stone gate commonly known as "the Northram Gate."

Now Northram is a ruinous wreck, occupied by a thousand of Agärazôn's iron legions, battle hardened keza-drak are tasked with rooting out the last remaining pockets of resistance in the Daelian Woods.

Tarmana (Stronghold/City: Population 50,000): The westernmost city on the outskirts of the Daelian Wood, Tarmana was once a bright beacon of learning. In the age of blood, the city has devolved into a dark city of industry ruled by the keza-drak.

The hammers of war pound ceaselessly in this smoke-shrouded city, pounding out new weapons, armor and other war machines for Agärazôn's armies operating in the southern lands of Simarra.

Rumors: Rumors have been flying throughout the region about a sighting of the elder goddess



Gimbureth somewhere deep in the woods. Whether or not this is true is not certain, but more and more people have been traveling to the Daelian Woods to find the truth of this rumor. Strange, nameless horrors have been coming out of the deepest parts of the forest, attacking travelers. Where these creatures come from and what ill this bodes for the already embattled refugees of the region is not known.

THE DASSURRI BASIN

The ravaged Dassarri Basin is one of the main battlefronts in the ongoing struggle against the minions of Agärazôn. During the Age of Steel, the Dassarri people built a great wall - known as Blisterback's wall - just north of the Tarn gap. This wall is all that prevents the keza-drak from directly advancing north into the heartland. The keza-drakian civil war has also played an important role in the continued survival of the Dassarri people, allowing the construction of outposts along the coastline and along the base of the Kotarran Highlands to watch for any signs of keza-drak offensives. The Dassarri navy constantly patrols the waters of the Sundering Sea, fighting against the iron ships of their enemies, keeping possible routes of escape open.

Life for the Dassarri people is hard. While the bulk of the armies of Thel-Kaza are kept at bay, Agärazôn's minions still manage to attack along the coastlines as well as send war parties down out of the Kotarran Highlands from their strongholds in the fallen kingdom of Kotarra. Most civilians have abandoned the smaller towns, seeking safe haven in the free city of Ghandakarr, though many still brave the lands outside the protection of the great city to farm and hunt, knowing that their efforts are important to the continued survival of the Dassarri nation.

Estimated Population: 175,000

Major Settlements: Blisterback's Wall, Ghandakarr, Bell Hill

Wealth Limit: no item cost over 34

Racial Demographics: Primarily consisting of Dassarri refugees, the Dassarri basin is also home to many half giants, Daelians, Thusparri elves and other migrants from the cradle of life. In recent years the shodon warlords have come east across the Kotarran Highlands to aid the Dassarri people in their struggle against the keza-drak.

Major Organizations: The House of Lords, The Arcanus League, The Order of the avikus, Trade lords, Brigg's Wall Busters, The Skullhammer Squadron, Cutter Black's Ridge Runners, The Wolf Brigade.

Places of Note: The Dassarri Basin, once running some 500 miles from north to south along the Kotarran highland, has been cut in half by the invasion of the keza-drak.

The keza-drakian occupation of the southern region has been hard-won, the result of years of battle with the Dassarri militia, the remnants of the knights of the Wolf Brigade and a large force of half-giants from the ravaged, fallen kingdom of Kotarra. That said the domination of the southern region is not without contestation. The aforementioned military forces have established bases in the haunted ruins of Alkamarr and other caves and hidden valleys in the rugged basin.

Bell Hill (Small City: Population 15,000): Bell Hill is a large town along the west road leading out of Ghandakarr. Centrally located in the Northern Dassarri Basin, the city of Bell Hill serves as a supply depot and distribution center for goods being sent to other regions of the realm. Essentially a frontier town, the law in Bell Hill tends to be lax compared to that in Ghandakarr. Consequently, a number of criminal organizations have risen, each vying for control of the growing black market.

Blisterback's Wall(Stronghold/City: Population 35,000): Constructed during the Age of Steel as a defense against the Sundaari Blood Lords, the massive edifice known as Blisterbacks wall is a 50-foot high, 30-mile wall of iron, wood and stone, spanning the gap between the Kotarran highlands and the Sundering Sea. Hotly contested, this wall comprises the first line of defense against the keza-drak. As such, it is the base of the largest concentration of Dassarri militia, numbering more than thirty thousand men and women who wage a day-in, day-out war for the survival of their brethren. The garrison manning Blisterback's wall is commanded by Alkurûn of house Breanar, Knight Commander of the Wolf Brigade.

The Coldmill Mines: Located at the base of the cold-water run as it pours out of the Kotarran Highlands on its journey to the Sundering Sea, the cold mill mines are a vast resource of minerals including iron, copper, tin and other precious metals such as gold and silver. The cold mill mines were taken by the keza-drak in recent years.

Consequently, the people of the Dassarri Basin have suffered a severe shortage of resources needed to build and repair their weapons, armor and other war machines, not to mention effecting repairs to Blisterback's wall. The reclamation of the Coldmill mines is a high priority for the forces of light in the Dassarri Basin.

Ghandakarr (Port City: Population 100,000): The free port of Ghandakarr is one of the largest bastions of freedom for the people of Simarra. Ruled by the House of Lords, a council of the six remaining noble houses in the Dassarri Basin, Ghandakarr is a hotbed of betrayal and intrigue.

Representatives of the houses and common folk loyal to them are constantly vying for control of the city, often leading to bloodshed as fighting breaks out in various sectors between rival houses.

Each of the six sectors of Ghandakarr is patrolled by the militia of the current ruling house. This tends to make for a very fluid legal system, as not all houses have Ghandakarr's (or its peoples) best interests at heart.

Bribery is common, as is corruption among the various houses, so people tend to hoard supplies and good in case they run afoul of the militia and need to pay their way out of the stockades. Major crimes such as murder and treason are punishable by hanging. Those caught stealing are given a choice of losing a hand or enlisting in the Dassurri regulars, which usually means a trip to Blisterback's wall to protect the kingdom against the keza-drak and Sundaari blood lords. Many choose to lose a hand.

Ghandakarr has three basic class distinctions, freemen lowborn and nobles. While the nobility of Ghandakarr are in the minority, their influence among the lowborn and lesser houses of the region ensure that the noble houses retain much of their power in the Age of Blood.

Those Dassurians who belong to lesser houses – those houses who have not been granted legitimacy by the six noble houses – are considered lowborn and represent the nation's middle class comprising the second largest demographic in the city and by proxy, the whole of the Dassurri Basin. Freemen represent the lowest social class in Ghandakarr, comprising the vast majority of the free city's population. They are merchants, artisans of all kinds and especially refugees of the war.

The Ruins of Alkamarr: Long considered the southern jewel of the Dassurri Basin with a population nearing 350,000 souls, the port city of Alkamarr was razed during the early years of the Age of Blood. In addition to being a large seaport, Alkamarr was once a center for learning and industry, home to many aviki and other scholars of technology. Now, rumors say all that remains is a vast, haunted ruin claimed by the foul dead lords. Some say the souls of those who died when Alkamarr was razed remain as ghouls, wights, zombies and worse. The highly superstitious keza-drak are rumored to avoid this region like the plague.

Rumors: In recent months the fighting between the houses comprising the ruling faction of Ghandakarr has spiked, especially in the port district of Ghandakarr - a sector controlled by house Kural'damin - suggesting that a possible coup is coming. There are those who feel that Dal'rogan Storm sword – the current head of the council and patron of



House Kural'damin - has shown too much leniency with regard to the growing corruption in the city.

Insurgent groups in the southern region of the Dassurri basin are reporting a rise in encounters with undead, suggesting that a new power is rising in the ruins of Alkamarr. What ill this bodes for the already harried defenders of the Dassurri basin is not yet known.

DROGHEDIA

With its volcano fields, toxic air, hot geysers, rivers of molten lava and ash-strewn wastelands, the Droghedian peninsula is arguably the most desolate region on the continent of Simarra. Geographic horrors aside, Droghedia is also home to a myriad monsters and monstrous humanoid races hell bent on the destruction of all trespassers upon their domains. Giants, ogres, renegade orcs, Gretchclaw and numerous other fell beasts prey on travelers of the blasted Droghedian peninsula. This realm is also home to the stalwart fire dwarves of Clan Volagar.

Estimated Population: Approximately 640,000

Major Settlements: Baelog-Dargûsh, Gundrog-Arak, Gundrog-Magul, Gundrog-Sargash

Wealth Limit: No item cost over 60.

Racial Demographics: Primarily fire dwarves aligned with clan Volagar, refugees of all races are a minority in the region.

Major Organizations: The Skauld Dragoons, The Flaming Fist legions, The Fire Priests of Galburak, the Scarred Society.

Places of Note: Running nearly a thousand miles from north to south, the Droghedian peninsula is a desolate land, filled with stark horrors. There are relatively few places of marginal safety in this broken region. Those that exist are zealously protected by those who call them home.

Other places, such as Hellfire Lake and the obsidian plains, are contested regions where clan Volagar must constantly fight to maintain a footing in order to protect their interests.

Baelog-Dargûsh (Siege Break Point) (Stronghold 10,000): Located at the eastern edge of the Ash Mountains along the trail of despair, Baelog-Dargûsh – otherwise known as siege break point – is one of a number of outposts for the Skauld Dragoons peppering the blasted region. Aside from being a military fortification, Baelog-Dargûsh is packed with refugees fleeing westward to escape Morash-Ghóran war parties and keza-drakian slavers operating in the Fell Hills and Trachan Steppes. A garrison of ten thousand Skauld dragoons including warriors and adepts from other races man the stronghold.

Cinder Spires: A perilous region located deep in heart of the Ash Mountains, the cinder spires are home to tribes of mountain ogres and giant-kin who prey on unwary travelers, making war against all non-giant-kin in the region. Led by Gumak One-eye, the cinder spire ogres are becoming a real problem for clan Volagar, having assailed the steel gates of Gundrog-Arak more than once in the past year, a sign that someone or something is guiding the hand of these notoriously dim-witted creatures.

Gundrog-Arak (Citadel of The Unconquerable Spirit)(Stronghold/City: Population 210,000): Long considered the philosophical and spiritual center for the myriad peoples of clan Volagar who live on the surface of Simarra, citadel Gundrog-Arak is a sprawling metropolis built inside the fiery mountain Arak, known as *The Unconquerable Spirit* in the common tongue. By far the largest volcanic citadel on the surface, Gundrog-Arak is home to nearly a quarter-million dwarves hailing from clan Volagar and its myriad sub-clans.

All fire priests of Galburak living on the surface must begin training in the citadel of the flaming fist before

venturing out into other areas of the blasted region.

Gundrog-Magul (Citadel of the Flaming Fist)(Stronghold/City: Population 250,000): Known as the citadel of the flaming fist, Gundrog-Magul represents the military seat of power for clan Volagar of the surface of Simarra. General Dunkan Two-Hammers is high commander of the Flaming Fist Legions, a military force numbering upwards of 50,000 soldiers garrisoned in various regions of Droghedia and in the deep earth below.

Gundrog-Sargash (The Shrouded Citadel) (Stronghold/City: Population 100,000): The dwarves who live in Gundrog-Sargash – the fortress commonly known as the shrouded citadel – are a mysterious sect of clan Volagar credited with the discovery of Tûrgash – black – powder. It is in Gundrog-Sargash that the famed munitions of the fire dwarves are crafted, sent throughout the realm of Droghedia or traded with merchants who brave the arduous trek through the blasted realm to acquire them.



Some of the dwarves living in Gundrog-Sargash belong to a cult of assassins known as the scarred society.

The scarred society is rumored to have bases of operation all across the continent in various cities, including the slave pits of Thel-Kaza.

Hellfire Bay: Known for nightmarish fire storms which devastate the coastline and wicked salamanders that prey upon the unwary, Hellfire Bay is home to one of the largest known surface deposits of flint on Simarra. As such, Hell Fire Bay is vastly important to clan Volagar who use the flint in their creation of black powder weapons such as flintlock pistols, rifles, bombs and cannon. A garrison of a thousand dwarves protects the miners from salamanders and other horrors who come to the lake in search of prey.

The Obsidian Plains: The obsidian plains are a jagged stretch of black lands dividing the northern Ash Mountains from their southern counterparts. Named for the black obsidian that is mined there, the plains are an abundant source of minerals, providing Volagar blacksmiths with all they need to construct their famed adamantine-laced obsidian blades, melee weapons of unparalleled craftsmanship, so sharp that one must first be properly trained in their use or risk losing a finger at the slightest touch.

Not without its inherent dangers, the obsidian plains are home to mazgrok, dog-like beasts seemingly born out of the obsidian around them. These deadly horrors stalk the miners who come to harvest the prized ore.

Rumors: As of late, sightings of keza-drak have been increasing in the deep earth below Droghedia. However, sentinels have sent word to Gündüm-Zog insisting the main tunnels leading into Volagar domains remain clear of keza-drak, prompting some to wonder if there is a secret route into the region.

Most recently, members of the renegade clan Volugrash have been spotted in Gundrog-Magul, prompting even further speculation that the clan of dissidents may be working in league with the minions of Agärazôn. The surface has seen increased activity in the cinder spires.

The ogres and giant kin who dwell in that treacherous region have become more organized. Reports from scouts indicate they have enslaved nearby tribes of Ungchuk goblins and, even worse, have begun working strange magicks. What ill this bodes for the already embattled dwarves, none are sure.

THE FROSTLANDS

The Frostlands are a vast tract of heavily forested lands located between the Shield Wall Mountains and the Whitecap Sea.

Estimated Population: 150, 000

Major Settlements: Aeurthalgraras (Frostwind Grove), Frostwind Hold,

Wealth Limit: Nothing over Cost 39. As with most other areas hit hard by the invasion of the keza-drak, the economy of the Frostlands has been shattered. It has led to the rise of barter as a means of commerce. Attempting to use Trade Notes in the Frostlands will get the person suggesting such a stern lecture for attempting to pass “useless currency”.

Racial Demographics: Frostwind Dwarves are the majority race of the Frostlands. Up until the Age of Blood, the Frostwind Dwarves were extremely xenophobic. To a certain extent, this is still true; the Frostwind Dwarves do not easily accept other races. The Surge of refugees into the Frostlands forced many Frostwind dwarves to change their views on other races. They have accepted that many of these other races have nowhere left to go, but it does not mean they have to like it. The Surge was made up of people from all over Simarra, including the Cradle of Life, the Dassurri Basin, and Volspar. The Frostwind dwarves are especially hostile toward the keza-drak.

Major Organizations:

The Oracles of the Sirens: An order of dwarf maidens devoted to the teachings of a trio of ascendant goddesses called the Sirens.



They have been taught to tap the mana wells of the world rather than stripping the energy from them, as do other races. The oracles do this with reverence and respect for the world around them honoring the Sirens in their rites. The Oracles are one of the few religious orders remaining in Simarra that continue to venerate and draw power from their gods.

Places of Note:

Aeurthalgraras(Stronghold/City: Population 5,000): Also known as Frostwind Grove, Aeurthalgraras, is the site of the largest stone gate in the Frost Lands. During the Age of Steel, a large community developed around the stone gate, mostly the oracles of the Sirens, their families, and their protectors. It was through this gate that the keza-drak launched their invasion of the Frostlands; and it was here that the keza-drak were repelled by the Frostwind Dwarves.

Frostwind Hold (Stronghold/City: Population 100,000): Frostwind Hold city is one of the largest remaining free ports on Simarra and is the capitol city of the Frostlands. During the Age of Plenty the Frostwind dwarves only reluctantly traded with other races and even then forbade them access to all parts of the city except for the docks.

In the Age of Blood, many refugees arrived via ship from other lands taken over by the keza-drak and clogged up the docks for days as King Hearthforge and his council debated about what to do with them. Finally, it was decreed that they would be allowed to settle outside the walls of Frostwind Hold but would have to pledge to aid the effort; no refugees would be allowed to live off the generosity of the dwarves.

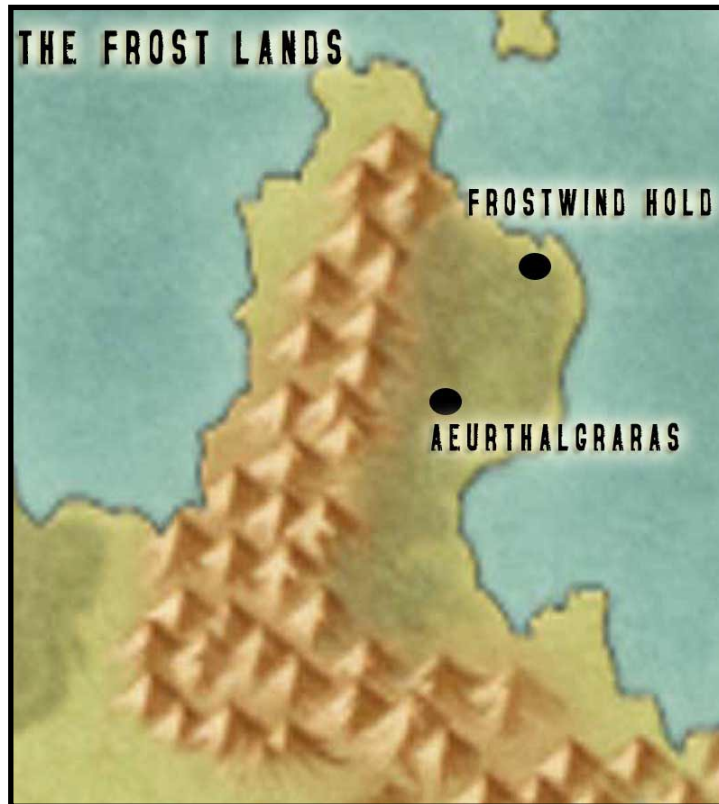
Rumors:

Refugees have been steadily disappearing of late. No one quite knows the reason for it. Rumor has it that a fundamental sect of Frostwind Dwarves has created a death camp and seeks to dispose of as many refugees as possible to return racial purity to the dwarves.

A Trade Lord has wormed his way onto the King's Council. Publicly he supports the king and his policies by privately he works to stir public opinion against the King.

One of the stone gates is stuck; unfortunately, it is open. All manner of corrupt creatures are issuing forth from the stuck Nexus. The up side is that while it remains open, the keza-drak cannot use it to launch strikes against the Frostlands.

The down side is that the gate has been corrupted and the creatures coming out of it may prove just as dangerous as the keza-drak.



KOTARRA

For nearly two millennia, the Kotarran highlands have been the ancestral home of the Kotarran half giants. This rugged, mountainous region has been ravaged by ten years of war that have seen the noble race driven from their homes to wander the lands of Simarra, a ragged people seeking vengeance for the atrocities committed by the Sundaari blood lords and keza-drak who now occupy what is left of the once-mighty cities of the half giants.

Estimated Population: roughly 300,000

Major Settlements: Ruall, Ostorna, Torgana

Wealth Limit: (keza-drak controlled) no item more than 35

Racial Demographics: The fallen nation of Kotarra is occupied by the keza-drak and Sundaari who comprise roughly 90% of its inhabitants. The other 10% consists of half-giant freedom fighters, Dassurri soldiers operating in conjunction with the half giants and a smattering of other peoples of various races.

Major Organizations: Cutter Black's Ridge Runners, Lothoron's scourge, The Order of the avikus, The Skull Hammer Squadron, Sundaari blood lords, The Uzmak "Iron" Legions, Zôrùn-Ahmrê.

Places of Note: Nearly a thousand miles long, the lower and upper arms of the Kotarran highlands are peppered with keza-drak strongholds and numerous tiny sanctuaries for the insurgents.

Darker places dot the land as the influence of Lothoron grows among monstrous races and taint seeps out of the Threshold realm. These nightmarish areas are avoided, when at all possible, by both freedom fighters and oppressors alike.

Ostorna (Stronghold/City: Population 40,000): Once the capital of Kotarra, the city of Ostorna is now a base for fifteen legions of keza-drak who are tasked with ridding the lower arm of the Kotarran highlands of any remaining pockets of resistance.

Fiercely loyal to their commander, general Kaoluk-Drak, the iron legions are a force to be reckoned with. Recent additions of battle tanks and recon drones have brought to Ostorna via the city's stone gate and it is rumored they will be used in spring to mount a massive assault on Blisterback's wall.

Ruall (Stronghold/City: Population 10,000): Once the second largest city in the Kotarran highlands, Ruall is now a haunted, desolate ruin occupied by a contingent of 10,000 blood lords and Zôrùn-Ahmrê.

Those brave enough to risk the wards protecting this haunted wreck to spy on the blood lords have reported strange, vile magicks being worked and twisted horrors walking the battered streets of the mountain city.

Tarn Gap: Historically, the Tarn gap served as a trade route between the Dassurri basin and regions west of the Kotarran highlands, specifically the cradle of life and the Daelian wood. Now, the keza-drak use the great valley as a staging ground for assaults on Blisterback's Wall.

The openness of the valley works in favor of insurgents however, who sneak down out of the



mountains to raid keza-drak encampments (usually built in and around old towns) and harry supply trains moving through the gap.

Torgana's Refuge(Freehold: Population 20,000): The freehold of Torgana's refuge lies high in the northern arm of the Kotarran Highlands. Torgana's Solace was founded early in the Age of Blood by a half giant maiden by the name of Torgana Eal-glane, a Bakta in house Eal-glane.

Torgana, seeking a refuge for her kinsmen, Torgana took up the blood sword of her fallen brother, Kaeldrin Eal-glane, and led the ragged remnants of her house high into the Withering Fangs, a treacherous hinterland named for spirits who haunt the broken trails and primeval forests of the region.

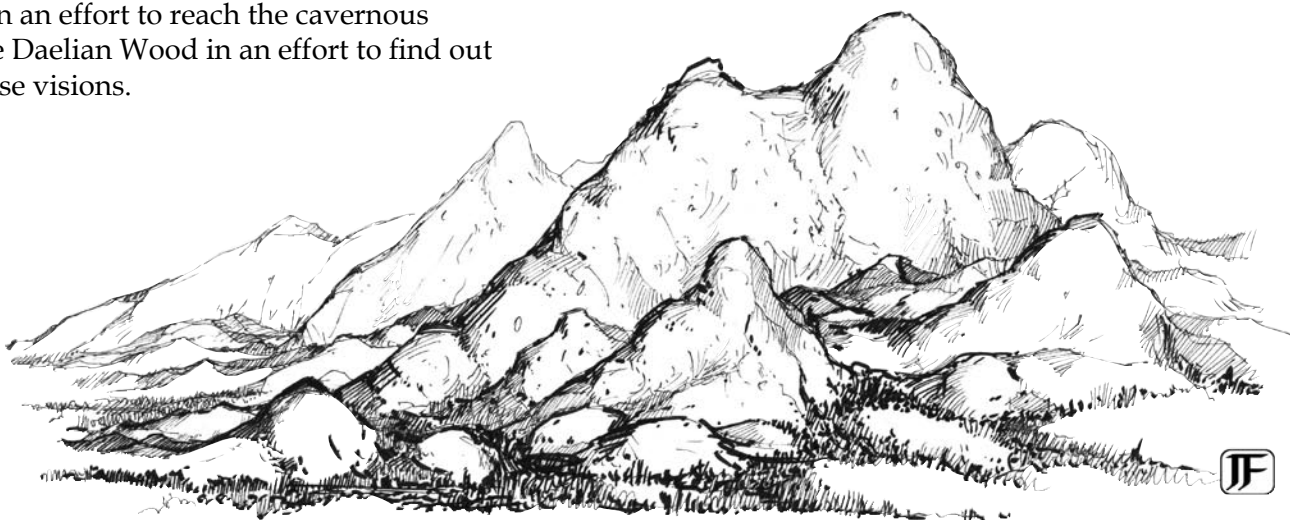
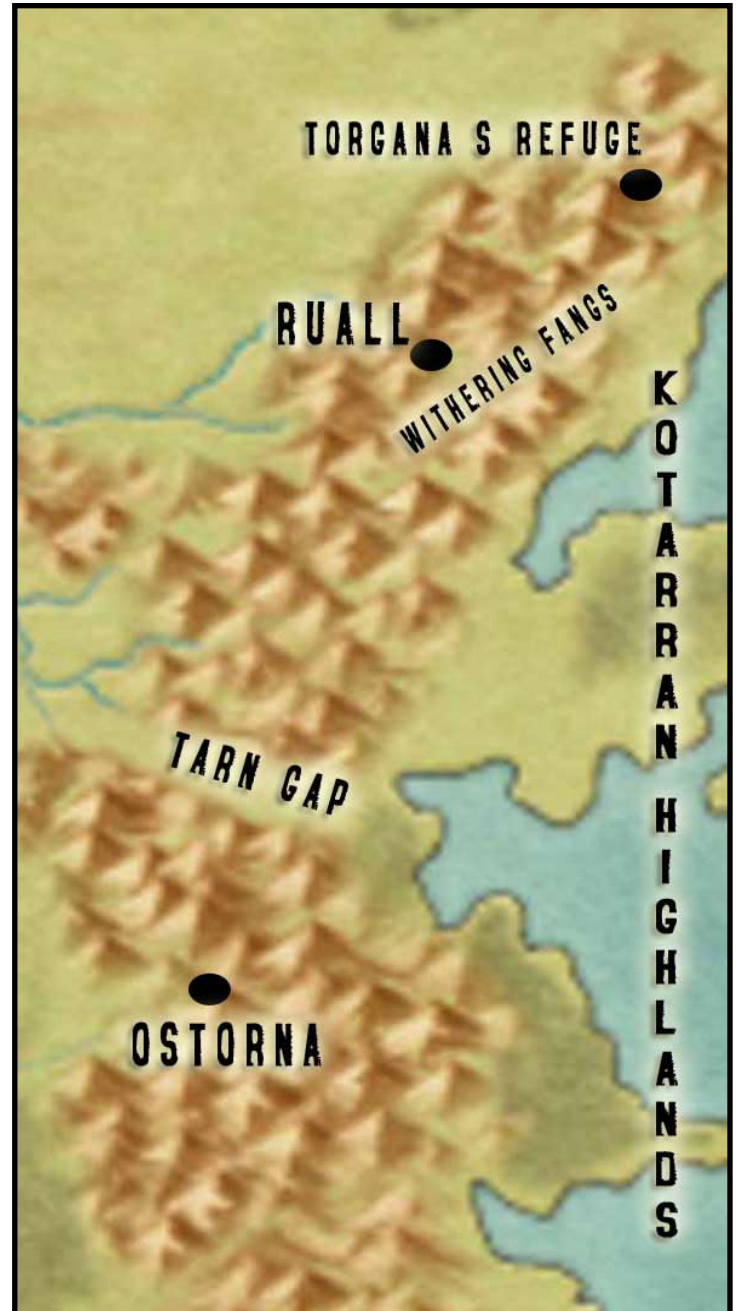
It was here, deep in a wooded vale, that Torgana founded the freehold that came to be known as "Torgana's Refuge." The freehold shelters roughly thirty thousand souls of various races. Insurgents use the place as a shelter when they are not engaging the enemies who roam the highlands.

The Withering Fangs: An especially dangerous region high in the northern arm of the Kotarran highlands, the withering fangs a rumored haunted by ancient spirits slain in past wars. Much of the region is polluted with tainted seepage from open stone gates, presumably leading to the threshold realm.

Horrors of all kinds have come creeping out of the gloom into the hinterlands, preying on the weak and weary travelers who venture into the region seeking shelter at Torgana's Solace.

Rumors: Some claim the ascendant god Lothoron has come under attack by Sundaari blood lords and Zôrùn-Ahmrê, which would explain the frequency in sightings of tainted beasts and mutated creatures roaming the northern arm of the highlands.

Elsewhere, word has reached the people of Torgana's Solace of a series of visions received by the Sedrin Oracle, prompting some to travel south through the highlands in an effort to reach the cavernous freeholds of the Daelian Wood in an effort to find out more about these visions.



THE KORDUC BARRENS AND THE THARAN FLATS

Probably one of the hardest-hit regions of western Simarra during the initial invasion, the region north of the Hadrannath encompassing the Korduc barrens and the Tharan flats. The unforgiving Korduc barrens are a ruinous wasteland ruled by countless petty warlords who have subjugated the inhabitants of the barrens, forcing them into the yoke of slavery.

More than a few of these tyrants are disenchanting keza-drak who, disgusted with the civil war between their brethren, have deserted the Iron Legions. War is a daily reality in this region as the forces of light regularly clash with the keza-drak and Sundaari.

Estimated Population: unknown

Major Settlements: Thel-Gurgoch, Calen's Bluff, Beldarra, Kubaeth, Naeth- Kügraz

Wealth Limit: 30

Racial Demographics: The korduc barrens are technically a keza-drak controlled region, with major military installations at Thel-Gurgoch and Kubaeth. Consequently, the majority of humanoids living in the region are either keza-drak or Sundaari.

That said people of all races; especially the dwindling Korduc tribesmen can be found eking out an existence in the korduc barrens, as freedom fighters, brigands and runaway slaves.

Major Organizations: keza-drakian Iron Legions, The Order of the avikus, The Arcanus League, Blood Lords, The Sons of Simarra, Zôrùn-Ahmrê.

Places of Note: The Korduc Barrens are a treacherous region where conquered peoples are forced to live under the heel of keza-drakian dominion. As with many occupied regions in Simarra, insurgency is rife in the korduc barrens. Many homesteads and towns under the oppressive yoke of the keza-drak harbor brave heroes who struggle to free their kinsmen.

Thel-Gurgoch (Stronghold/City: Population 45,000): Located at the mouth of the Sarach River where it empties into the Gulf of Rana, Thel-Gurgoch is a major power center for keza-drak operating in the northern sector of the Korduc barrens. Thel-Gurgoch's primary role is to control the shipping lanes along the mighty Sarach and Salmarin rivers where the iron legions regularly face opposition by Narmrothans and other freedom fighters.

Simarrans captured in this region are sent to Thel-Gurgoch and prepared for transport either overland or via stone gate to regions where they are most needed. Thel-Gurgoch also supplies the city of Naeth-Kügraz, sending troops and supplies to the northern legions fighting in the Trachan Steppes and Droghedian Peninsula.



Calen's Bluff (Freehold: Population 5,000): Home to approximately five thousand freedom fighters and refugees, Calen's Bluff (named for Calen Raging Bear) is one of the few remaining havens for free people living in the Korduc Barrens.

Calen's bluff is located in a lonely ring of hills that jut out of the barrens. Believed to be an ancient, sacred natural fortress and burial ground for the korduc plainsmen, the few Maj-karan who remain in the age of blood have commanded the remnants of the various tribes to fortify Calen's bluff, claiming the spirits of their ancestors will aid in the defense of their people.

Thus far, it has proven to be true. Calen's Bluff is built on a nexus of Taer' las Brennath and the Maj-karan has used the energy of that nexus to call the spirits of the dead who are buried in cairns to fight in times of need.

The Coal Mountains: Named for the ore that has been mined there for centuries, the Coal Mountains are home to the Juun-Tee skin shifters, a fearsome sect of Korduc plainsmen who migrated into the region after the little-known war of the broken spear, a conflict that pitted the Juun-tee against the combined might of the other tribes in the barrens. T

he tribes united against the terrible skin shifters in accordance with teachings of a particularly vicious ascendant god named Kaban Hellborne. This child of Thûrak was raised up as an ascendant by the black god and commanded to wreak havoc on the other tribes of the region, teaching their Maj-karan the black art of skin shifting; using the skin of a fallen foe to become that person.



The war of the broken spears lasted three long, bloody years. In the end, the Juun-Tee were driven west to the edges of the Korduc barrens and commanded never to return. These savages made new homes in the Coal Mountains where they were free to practice their black arts.



Over time different cultures would come to live in the coal mountains digging deep to mine coal and other minerals. The Juun-Tee contested all encroachments upon their domain, earning a fierce reputation among other cultures of Simarra for being bloodthirsty savages.

The Age of Blood has only served to fuel the Juun-tee's lust for battle. A fiercely independent people, the Juun-tee slew the ascendant god Kaban Hellborne when he commanded them to join forces with Thel-Kaza. The repercussions of this event have only just begun to ripple throughout Simarra as rumors of the god's demise spread from freehold to freehold.

Beldarra: Once a city of some 200,000 people, Beldarra once served as a waypoint for travelers heading north to Thelstaad keep or East to the Northern edge of the Dassurri basin and the Maelstrom. Now it is one of the major battlefronts of the war, contested by the keza-drakian iron legions and the Sons of Simarra.

Thirty seven thousand keza-drak heavy infantry and battle priests of Urkog-Drall have squared off against a considerably smaller force numbering 18,000 soldiers including sappers, light cavalry, three cadres of battle magi, Thusparri Wind Riders and a contingent of battle-hardened aviki. At least one of the morargrim and an unknown number of blood magi and Zôrùn-Ahmrê bolster Agärazôn's army. The city is a key location in the war. Its fall would mean access to the northern provinces of the Dassurri Basin and the possible conquest of the entire region.

Belaspran: Once the depraved capital of Thara, Belaspran was razed by dragons early in the Age of Steel, sparking the Hunting Times. Never rebuilt, the ruins of Belaspran stand as a reminder to the people of Thara of the atrocities committed against their ancestors during that bleak age. Very few people venture into the ruins of Belaspran anymore. It is a tainted place, rumored occupied by dark beings, wraiths and vile undead known only as risen.

Kubaleth (Stronghold/City: Population 10,000): Located along the Salmarin River, the fallen city of Kubaleth is another hotly contested city, ruled by Abelzök-Drak, the commander of the infamous Kuzad-drom heavy legions.

Sent to scour the Trachan Steppes, the Kuzad-drom find themselves pitted against the fierce Narmrothans and Saran-Ghori orcs who attack supply lines meant for keza-drak forces in the Shield Wall Mountains and mount raids on every enemy encampment on the northern shores of the mighty river. Kubaleth is the location of a major stone gate and in recent years has enjoyed a steady stream of reinforcements and supplies. However, the eruption of the keza-drakian civil war has split the city in two, pitting



fundamentalist keza-drak against those loyal to Agärazôn. Eager to take advantage of the schism, Saran Ghori warriors and Narmrothan skirmishers have infiltrated the embattled city.

Naeth- Kügraz(Stronghold/City: Population 76,000): The wicked city of Naeth- Kügraz is the largest port city on the western continent. Held by the keza-drak, Naeth-Kügraz is vital to the northern campaign, providing the bulk of arms and supplies to the keza-drakian iron legions. The vast majority of captives taken in the war find their way to the city.

There, these poor souls are shackled and bound, sold to slavers who either put them to work on galleys or transport them to slave camps in Thel-Kaza or the Sundanar Peninsula, if they're lucky. For many, Naeth-Kügraz is the last place they see before being sent beyond the stone gate to serve on the home world of the keza-drak, never again seeing their ravaged homeland.

Rumors: Chief among the tales to come out of the Korduc barrens is the slaying of the ascendant god Kaban Hellborne. Some say that Agärazôn himself is planning to travel to the region to oversee a campaign against the Juun-tee, a development that, if true, could prove to be one of the best chances the forces of light have of turning the tide of the war.

THE NORTHERN REACHES

Often referred to as the roof of the world, the rugged northern reaches is a vast, largely uncharted expanse of snow-capped mountains stretching across nearly half the western continent until they merge with the Sundered Stone peaks.

The division of the two massive mountain ranges is nigh on invisible, but the distinction is important, as the Sundered Stone peaks have recently been staked out as territory for the vile Morash-Ghóran, allies of the minions of Agärazôn and the keza-drak. The Northern reaches are largely a desolate, unforgiving land of stark beauty. All manner of horrors including mountain trolls, mammoth frost ettin and other nameless, fell beasts make their homes in these treacherous windswept crags.

The people indigenous to this region are distant cousins of Narballans who migrated east into the northern reaches long ago. Legend has it that the wild men (as they are known by other cultures in the region) found something deep in the vastness of those mountains, a great mesthuselan monolith which the wild men came to call the Meshuggat, the heart stone.

Some believe the heart stone contained a dark consciousness, malevolence so foul that it corrupted the wild men who came to regard it as the very essence of the mountains themselves. They worshipped the heart stone as if it were some primordial god, their shamans offering animal sacrifices, the blood of which they smeared upon the stone until it had become



stained red. Others argue the heart stone somehow drove them mad, that the thing whispered to them while they slept, showing them maddening visions until it had reduced them to little more than barbaric savages, dirt eaters hiding away from the rest of the world.

Whatever the explanation, the wild men of the northern reaches have ever been a reclusive, fiercely territorial people living in caves and huts made of bone, fur, and leather hides. The dawn of the Age of Blood has seen the intrusion of more and more cultures and races into this rugged wilderness, a development which has some of the tribes calling for a moot to decide whether or not to wage war on these newcomers.

Estimated Population: roughly 60,000

Major Settlements: Twin Rivers, The hidden city of Thearis-Kal.

Wealth Limit: 20

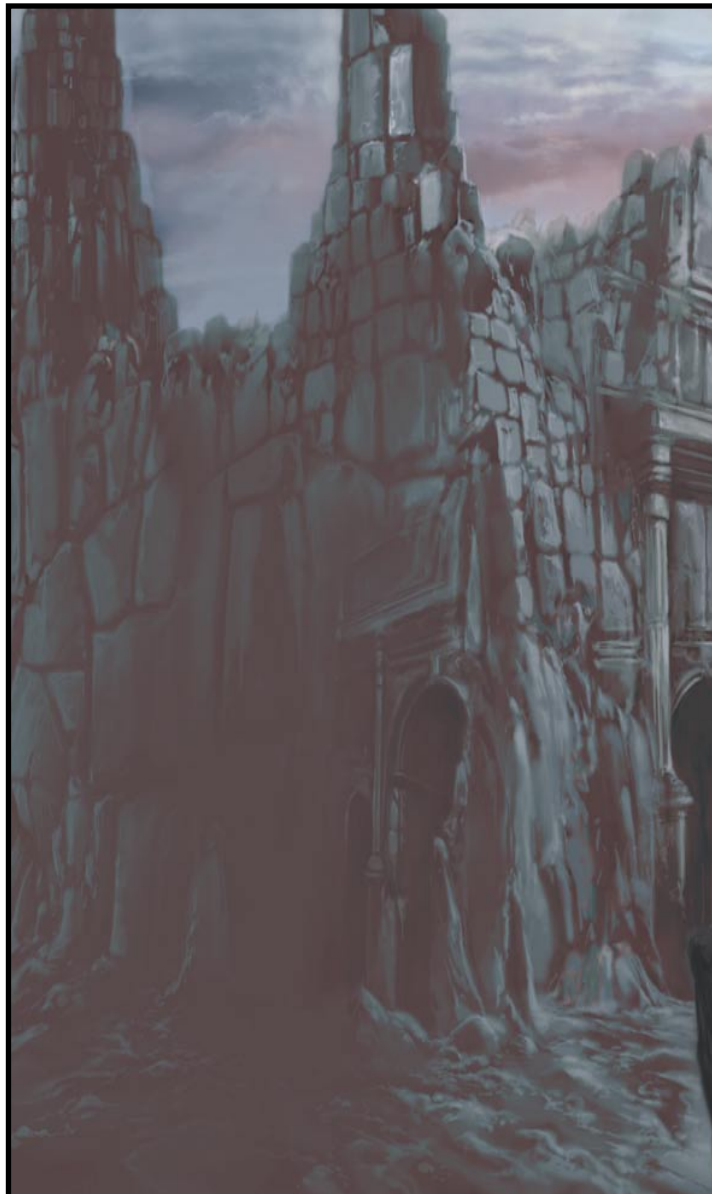
Racial Demographics: Narballans, Shield Wall Dwarves, Narmrothans, Sudejans, keza-drak, Morash-Ghóran orcs, Saran-Ghori orcs, Wild men.

Major Organizations: The Watchmen, The Arcanus League, The order of the avikus, Twin Rivers Militia, Sentinels

Places of Note: A vast mountain range, the northern reaches are a treacherous region filled with many different types of beasts including mountain trolls, giants, renegade orcs, gretchclaw and undead. Never fully explored, there are many secrets hidden in the snow-capped mountains of the north, many ruins of settlements filled with the bones of people who died long ago.

The ruins of Arùkhan: Legend has it somewhere in the vastness of the Northern reaches is a place lost to the ravages of time, an ancient stronghold built early in the age of steel known as Arùkhan. Said to be constructed by powerful magi, the stronghold is rumored to contain eldritch magicks so powerful that Agärazôn has sent an entire legion of keza-drak into the northern reaches to seek out these ruins so that he might have the treasures contained within for himself. Many have gone into the wilds of the Northern Reaches in search of the fabled treasures of Arùkhan, the magus for which the fortress is named. As of yet, none have returned.

Shadow Vale: The haunted valley known as the shadow vale has long been avoided by the people living in this region. It is said that an ancient malice lurks at the heart of the winding crags where the mighty Baelon River runs. Long, long ago during the first Sundaari occupation of Kotarra, a blood mage by the name of Zimâin Wroth was executed for crimes so vile even the ruthless Sundaari found them reprehensible.



As he descended into the Dead Lands, the dread ascendant god Azagog, having taken delight in all the vile actions of the magus, snatched Zimain's soul up into his foul embrace.

How long Zimâin Wroth lingered in the presence of Azagog is not known, but legends hint that a bargain was eventually struck with the god of the dead. The wicked Sundaari magus was returned to the world of the living as a creature of the night, a vile, twisted shell of his former self, forced to feed off the blood of the living. Azagog had made Zimâin a vampire.

Azagog commanded the undead magus to travel into the northern reaches to carve out a realm in the land of frost and stone in preparation for a coming darkness that, the god said, would sweep across the land like a plague, casting even the gods themselves out of the heavens.

It was then that Zimâin Wroth traveled to the snow-capped peaks of the Northern Reaches, into the land that would come to be known by those living in the region as Shadow Vale.

Those who travel near the shadow vale (and return to tell of it) often speak of seeing horrific beasts out in the wilds, dead things that were once animals, but have since changed into monstrosities fresh out of a nightmare. Vampires, they say, also plague the mountain passes, preying on both man and beast.

Twin Rivers (Freehold: Population 30,000): Nestled between the Andrin and Baelon rivers, the Twin Rivers freehold is a city of roughly 30,000 people, many of whom have made the arduous trek into the Northern reaches, seeking refuge from the horrors of war in the southern lands.

Twin Rivers is the base of operations for the Watchmen; a group of rangers who patrol the Northern reaches, bringing food and supplies to other smaller communities that dot the region. The watchmen also maintain a strong presence in the area of the Shadow Vale, where there have been increased sightings of undead and mutated horrors.

The hidden city of Thearis-Kal (Freehold: Population 85,000): Rumored to be located in a secluded valley somewhere high in the northwestern region of the Northern Reaches, Thearis-Kal is fast becoming one of the largest freeholds west of the Shield Wall Mountains. Thearis-Kal is ruled by Karlith Undoron, a powerful magus who left the Arcanus league after the sack of Megath-Tor.

Karlith vehemently opposed the persecution of the shodonai, which ultimately contributed to the destabilization of his beloved city. Blaming the Arcanus league for the failed defense of Megath-Tor the magus traveled north to Twin Rivers intending to live in solitude. As luck would have it. The magus met an aviki, a gnome by the name of Glorin Thistleburr.

At the time, Glorin and a group of five other aviki were stationed in twin rivers on assignment from Ardrennen Falls, tasked with mapping nearby Taer' las Brennath and nexus points for possible construction of mana wells, when they discovered a series of stone gates leading to the valley which would eventually become the location of Thearis-Kal. Karlith, who immediately recognized the potential of the valley, convinced Glorin's team to keep its location a secret, while he organized the construction of the city and its defenses.

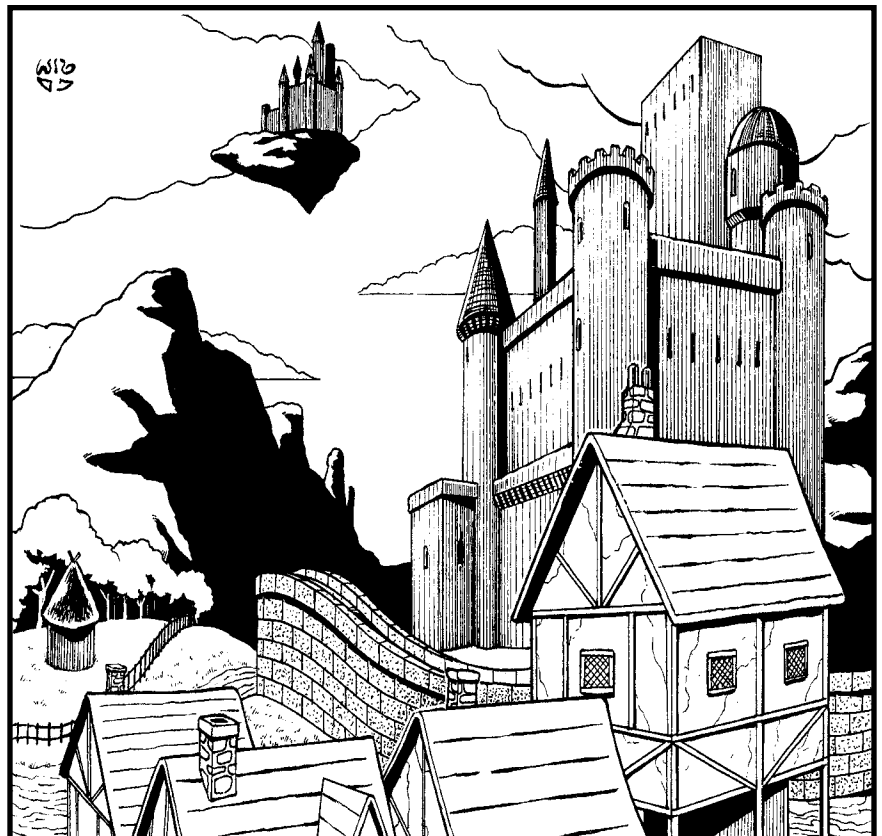
Thearis-Kal can only be reached by traveling through a series of minor stone gates (in proper order), each of which are heavily guarded by a shadowy organization known only as the Sentinels. The Sentinels have dedicated themselves to the dangerous task of exploring the Threshold Realm with

the intention of mapping all of the open stone gates from inside the horrific, tainted dimension. Unlike other freeholds, Thearis-Kal does not accept everyone who seeks sanctuary from the outside world. The location of the gates is a heavily guarded secret, known only to a few people.

Petitioners must first prove they are trustworthy before a sentinel will even contact them.

The Tarud Mesa: The ancient homeland of the Saran-Ghori orcs has erupted in warfare over the past decade, pitting the Saran-Ghori orcs against the renegade Morash-Ghóran, led by the brutal warlord Drogon-Felslayer. The Morash-Ghóran enjoy support from three legions of keza-drak and Sundaari blood magi who occupy the ancient realm of Narballa, while the Saran-Ghori are bolstered by a thousand battle-hardened Twin Rivers militia, Narmrothan Outriders from the Iron Knife clan and a small contingent of Skauld Dragoon Sappers led by Dorgar Blackfist.

In recent years, there have been strange happenings on the shores of the upper portion of Stillmire Lake, playing heavily into the ongoing struggle between the two armies operating in this region. Carnivorous reptilian creatures have begun to settle on the surface of the lake, raiding both factions and taken prisoners back to their camps, presumably to be eaten by the rest of their tribes. Named Grek by the locals, these vile creatures spread a poisonous taint to everyone they encounter.



Rumors: The Northern reaches are a hotbed of activity, from the war fronts along the Tarud Mesa to the growing threat posed by Zimâin Wroth and his growing army of undead. Some claim the ascendant god Azagog has taken refuge in the shadow vale, which would go a long way towards explaining the sudden activity in that haunted region.

Recently, Twin Rivers has been the target of attacks by wildmen who view the city as a threat to their dominance in the Northern Reaches. Indeed, other smaller settlements in the mountains have come under attack by various wild clans, a threat that will soon have to be dealt with.

SARGOLIA

Closed off from the world for nearly 2000 years, the realm east of the mountain range known as the Sargolian Wall was mercilessly conquered by the vile keza-drak, who, through use of stone gates fused open during the invasion of Simarra, were able to completely overrun the largely xenophobic people of Sargolia, driving them into the alien western world. However, that was nearly a decade ago. In the time since, the once-peaceful Sargolians -with the help of the Volsparran elves, Sudejans and the Grey men - have militarized and begun a campaign to reclaim their homeland.

The conflict will not be an easy task however, as Sargolia is occupied by over 200 thousand keza-drak who have rebuilt the mountain fortresses once manned by Sargolian sentinels. These fortresses were originally strategically placed to guard against any incursions by the people of the outside world. Ironically, these same fortresses now pose a problem for the Sargolians whose ancestors built them.

There are other options however.

Naval landings can be attempted by crossing the Sheath - a small sea separating Sargolia and the fallen kingdom of Numarâth - though this option carries with it its own inherent dangers, as Numarâth is the domain of countless undead horrors including, it is said at least three dead lords. Another option is to invade from the north, going through Tolan Glen, though the forces of light risk fighting a two-front war, as the Volspar nation has been overrun with keza-drak as well. Forces stationed at Thulassan will undoubtedly march on any Sargolian armies in the region.

Estimated Population: roughly 250,000

Major Settlements: Faeramor, Janghallor Keep, Maerlon, Saratha, Tolan Glenn

Wealth Limit: no item cost over 25

Racial Demographics: keza-drak, kithanni scouts, Sundaari blood magi, Sargolian slaves and freedom fighters from all races.

Major Organizations: keza-drakian Iron Legions, blood magi, Zôrùn-Ahmrê, kithanni slavers, grey men, Sargolian freedom fighters, Jihran war packs.

Places of Note: A lush, heavily forested region, Sargolia is prized by the keza-drak for its natural resources; Shadow wood, copper, tin, iron, natural gas and oil. The latter two have only recently been discovered by engineers of the enemy occupiers, prompting the despoilment of the land as vast stretches of trees are cut down and replaced with oil derricks.

Blood Fang Vale: The location of one of the largest strip-mining operations in Sargolia, Blood Fang Vale was once a region of astonishing natural beauty, home to intelligent bear-like creatures known as Jihran.

The Jihran were once a gentle race of creatures, living in peace and harmony with the Sargolians. Their shamans, deeply in tune with the world around them, were great healers and wise men.

The keza-drak came, viewed these intelligent, peace-loving creatures as little more than animals, hunting them for food, selling their bones and pelts. Thousands upon thousands of the Jihran were slaughtered, forced to leave their ancestral homeland or face extinction at the hands of the keza-drak and Sundaari.

Those who survived became twisted versions of their former selves, haunted by the wholesale slaughter of their kin. Jihran Shamans turned from their peaceful ways, exploring darker paths of magic, their obsession with avenging their fallen brethren eclipsing all other considerations.

Jihran warriors ritually shave much of their bodies, tattooing runes of war into their flesh, scarring their faces to represent the horrors their kin suffered at the hands of the keza-drak. These formidable creatures rival even the fearsome half-giants of Kotarra in their thirst for blood vengeance.

Nearly five hundred miles long, the Blood Fang Vale is littered with caves and warrens that were once the dens of the Jihran. Most of these have been converted to mines. Some of the warrens have recently been retaken by the Jihran who have converted them into strongholds from which they assault keza-drak outposts in the valley.

Faeramor(Port City: Population 40,000): A small port city on the edge of the eastern ocean, Faeramor's sailors and fishermen were slaughtered by the thousands as the iron warships of the keza-drak steamed into the shallow port, preventing any escape. Now a major harbor for Agârazôn's navy (indeed the only harbor on the eastern continent) Faeramor has become a juicy military target for Sargolian insurgents and Elarian Corsairs who constantly harry keza-drak shipping lanes.

Janghallor Keep (Stronghold: Population 15,000): A small outpost in southwestern Sargolia, Janghallor keep was built to fortify the underbelly of the broken nation and serves as a base of operations for 15,000 keza-drak and kithanni. The latter of whom have for reasons unknown to the keza-drak, taken a sudden interest in the trackless marsh and the ruins it is said to contain; ruins, some claim, mysteriously pre-date the age of steel.

Maerlon: Once the shining capital of Sargolia, Maerlon is a devastated ruin, not even fit for the keza-drak to inhabit. Scouts who have managed to cross over into Sargolia report the city -the location of two major stone gates - has become a tainted spawning ground for demonic horrors from the threshold realm. Indeed, the keza-drak have had to abandon the gates due to the ongoing losses they have suffered at the hands of these malefic fiends from the nether regions of Simarra.

Saratha(Stronghold/City: Population 75,000): Once the spiritual centre of Sargolia, the ruins of Saratha are home to 75,000 keza-drak who use the city as a base of operations for mining efforts in blood fang vale. Saratha is also of great interest to the morargrim, who have come at the behest of Agäräzôn to investigate a series of subterranean temples said to be dedicated to Enâra, a curiosity given the fact that the Sargolians have never claimed adherence to any one god. Saratha's legions are commanded by battle priest Udog-Drak.

Shadowthorne Oaks: The location of one of a mere handful of known groves of shadow wood on Simarra, the Shadow Thorne Oaks are said to be inhabited by specters, ghosts and fey, a little-known race of creatures thought to be distant kin of elves who were born as a by-product of the creation of Simarra.

Inherently magical beings, these once-benevolent, reclusive creatures have felt the effects of the surge more so than even the most powerful adepts, undergoing horrifying mutations because of the taint that seeps out of the threshold realm. Fiercely territorial and exceedingly devilish, the fey have begun their own war for conquest of Sargolia, killing anyone in their path.

The Starlit Grove(Stronghold/City: Population 100,000): Another cultural and philosophical center in Sargolia, the starlit grove was once a place where Sargolian Maghadee -wise men - would meet to discuss various aspects of life. Various temples dedicated to philosophic studies ringed this ancient Tor that was, unfortunately, the site of Sargolia's third largest stone gate.

When the stone gates opened at the dawn of the



Age of Blood, the ensuing slaughter of the Maghadee was nothing short of a holocaust. The gate at the Starlit Grove still remains open (as do the other two major Taer' las Brennath nexuses in Maerlon) and is commonly used to ferry goods and troops back and forth from Thel-Kaza. Over one hundred thousand keza-drak occupy the ruins of the starlit grove.

Tolan Glen: Once a sizeable city, Tolan Glen represented the first line of defense against any invasion from northern territories. When the keza-drak invaded Sargolia, they razed the city and crucified its inhabitants.

Now, the city has been rebuilt and, as before, stands as the base for northern operations in Sargolia. Forty five thousand keza-drak occupy the iron city along with a number of squads of Zôrùn-Ahmrê who hunt down insurgents and act as scouts.

The Trackless Marsh: Long considered by Sargolians to be a place of great negative energy, the trackless marsh has always been little more than a haven for criminals and hermits. Even in the age of blood, the place is avoided by all save for the kithanni, who, it is said, have begun excavating ancient ruins

found all across the marshes. The highly superstitious keza-drak avoid the region like the plague, claiming it is haunted. Indeed, Sargolian legends speak of an ancient race of un-named creatures that once lived there. Where they came from, and more importantly where they went, is a mystery.

Rumors: Sargolian scouts have been reporting a rise in sightings of tainted beasts coming out of the forests near Tolan Glen and all along the Sargolian wall, prompting so to believe there are hidden gates in the mountains.

The Fey of the Shadowthorne Oaks are said to be attacking keza-drak outposts in the western forests in response to recent attempts to harvest the shadow wood. Massive troop movements north to Tolan Glen also hint that the keza-drak may be preparing to mount a campaign to link up with the forces in Volspar.

The Jihran have begun attacking supply trains all along the northern roads, prompting Udog-Drak to call for Zôrùn-Ahmrê blood hunters to begin hunting the fierce Jihran in earnest.

THE SHIELD WALL MOUNTAINS

The Shield Wall mountain range stretches 750 miles from tip to tail and spans nearly 300 miles east to west.

Estimated Population: 800,000

Major Settlements: Ardrennen Falls, Agribanâth, White Castle Harbor, Ubrathil Keep

Wealth Limit: no item over cost 34

Racial Demographics: Mostly Shield Wall Dwarves, Thusparran Elves, and Dassurri Humans, though just about every race on Simarra can be found in the Shield Wall Region.

Major Organizations:

Knights of the Wolf Brigade: This once prestigious organization comprised of the finest Dassurri warriors has been scattered to the four winds. It exists now only in scattered packs, the largest of which is believed to be in Ardrennen Falls under the command of Edward Brinhold, High Commander of the united forces of Ardrennen Falls.

The Storm Rider Legion: Said to be the largest gathering of Thusparri elves on the continent; the Storm Riders and their mounts also comprise a great portion of the aerial forces of Ardrennen Falls.

They are under the capable leadership of Perethil Skyhand and are said to number a thousand strong. They launch lightning quick raids against the keza-drak forces besieging Ardrennen falls and fly support missions to assist the beleaguered Shield Wall dwarves. It is rumored they have a secret aerie located somewhere in the Shield Wall Mountains. The location of which is a closely guarded secret.



Places of Note:

Ardrennen Falls (Stronghold/City: Population 400,000): One of the largest freeholds remaining on Simarra, Ardrennen Falls is also a prime target for the forces of the Betrayer, who seeks to use the city as a staging ground to launch assaults into the Wild Lands. The city has already weathered a massive siege from the keza-drak.

Twenty thousand keza-drak soldiers keep the pressure on the city allowing little in or out. The majority have been shifted north where they recently conquered Ubrathil Keep.

The Hanging City of Agribanâth: Once a mid-point from travelers descending into the Wild Lands, the Hanging City of Agribanâth is a cursed ghost town. It was overrun by Shek-Tar gnomes and their fiendish servants during the War of the Wild Lands. It is unknown what the current state of the city is; suffice to say that no one with any sanity descends the Great Stair into the city.

Spire Reach Pass: The war for Spire Reach Pass has cooled in recent years, with each side unable to gain a firm footing. The main keza-drak force has splintered due to the civil war, each faction isolated into their own camps.

Fundamentalist keza-drak control much of the region in the center of the pass, their base of operations in the small town of Dol' Modron, an ancient dwarven settlement along the pass which served as a rest stop for travellers making their way to Ardrennen falls and beyond.

Those keza-drak still loyal to Agärazôn maintain a tight hold on the ruinous wreck that is Thelstaad Keep. In addition, they maintain tenuous control of a number of small towns and settlements along the lower arm of the pass due to recent attacks by Throrongrar forces. The far eastern end is held by the Throrongrar dwarves, though their ability to maintain defense of the mountain citadels and outposts along this stretch of valleys and gorges is, at best, tenuous due to the fact that the 20,000 keza-drak who lay siege to Ardrennen Falls make it increasingly difficult to get supplies to the defenders.

Much of the subterranean realm of the Throrongrar has been cut off from the dwarven defenders of Spire Reach pass due to recent keza-drak incursions into the deep earth from their base at Ubrathil keep. At this point, it seems only a matter of time before the fundamentalist keza-drak mount a strong offensive and drive the dwarves from Spire Reach Pass. Such a victory would surely spell doom for the people of Ardrennen Falls.

White Castle Harbor (Stronghold/City: Population 30,000): The Port City of White Castle harbor has long been a free port, a place of refuge for the displaced masses. The city has enjoyed the protection of a contingent of aviki and also elements of the famed Wolf brigade, as well as Elarian Corsairs, who protect the harbor against keza-drakain war galleys who risk the fury of the Maelstrom to attack the port. Recently, however, the city has fallen prey to infighting and violence. A cult calling themselves the "Unbound" have taken control of the city, supplanting the ruler in favor of a woman known only as the Seeress of the Fallen Goddess.

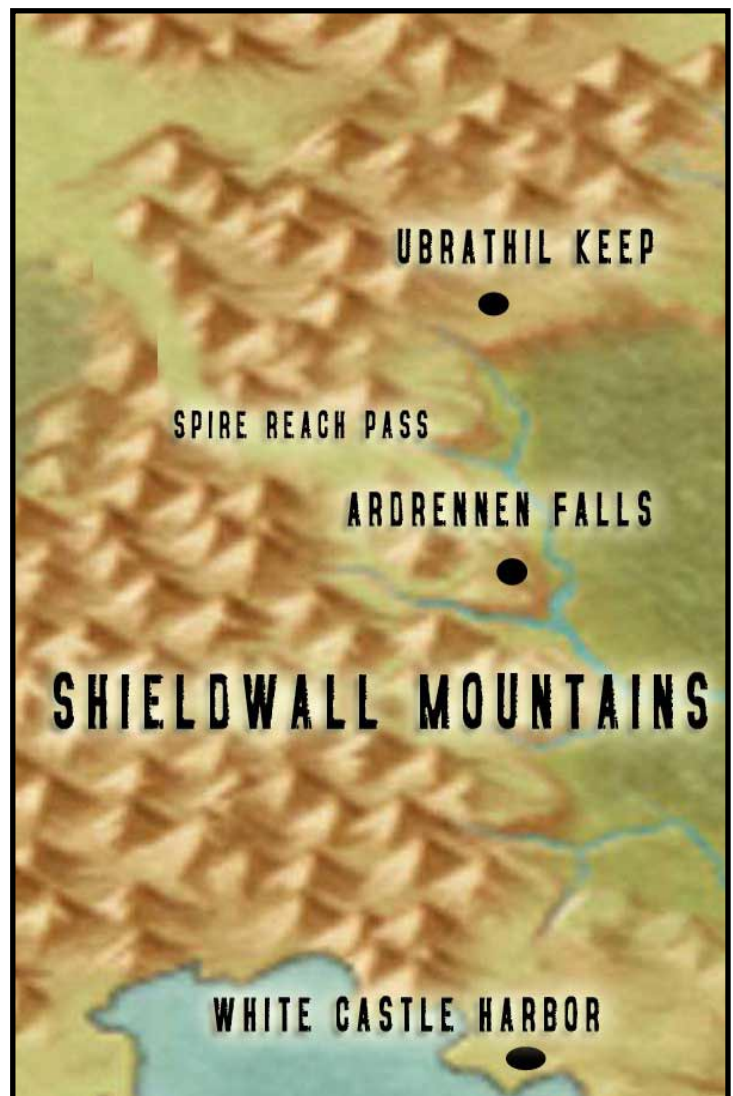
Ubrathil Keep: This stronghold of Shield Wall dwarves has only recently fallen to the keza-drak. The dwarves have earned the ire of the keza-drak. It was partially due to the technological devices of the dwarves that the keza-drak were repulsed at Ardrennen Falls.

This has caused the eyes of the Betrayer to focus on the dwarves whom he views as a genuine threat. The keza-drak are Agärazôn has shifted his keza-drak forces here to claim the technology of the dwarves for himself. Once he is confident that he has conquered the dwarves, and then he will focus his full attention and fury on Ardrennen Falls. He is using Ubrathil Keep to root out the dwarves in the isolated underground strongholds.

Rumors: A traveler from Theragas, one of the underground dwarven strongholds has staggered into Ardrennen Falls babbling incoherently about a "Super-Gate" located far beneath the foundations of Ubrathil Keep. In his rambling he makes mention of what he calls "silver beings."

News has spread rapidly around the city. Is there really a super gate that is not connected to the Taer' las Brennath or is it a trap designed to lure the keza-drak to their doom? A spy for Agärazôn has heard the traveler's ramblings and is keen to report them to his dark master.

Assassins have entered the tunnels under Ubrathil Keep with the stated goal of killing King Delgan Hammerfist. Rumor has it that these assassins are dwarves! All of this was gleaned from a street urchin who witnessed the dwarves plotting in Garret's Ring in Ardrennen Falls. If they succeed in killing the King the dwarven armies will be thrown into chaos making them easy pickings for the keza-drak. The heroes must prevent these traitors from killing King Hammerfist, but first must find a way past the blockade of Ubrathil Keep and into the tunnels.



THE SUNDANAR PENINSULA

"I am not telling you to be brave; I am warning you to keep your heart beating warm within your chest. Because believe you me, the Sundaari will rip it out."

If peace and harmony ever touched the lands that make up the Sundanar Peninsula, it would have been a time beyond even the memory of the elder gods.

The Sundanar Peninsula has always been a place of pain and death, the wind that blows through the heavy-leafed boughs of this jungle echoes with the screams of countless souls who have died, sacrificed in sinister blood rituals to appease the ascendant blood gods that have long ruled this land.

The jungle itself has become a pit of evil over the centuries. Unless travelers happen to be Sundaari, navigating the jungle is dangerous at best. Stories circulate all over the lands about how the jungle is a living, breathing thing; consuming unwary travelers who dare enter its confines. Trees, vines, even the ground itself has been rumored to swallow innocent people alive, feasting on flesh and blood and spitting out the bones.

At a first glance, the Sundaari seem to be a theocracy based upon the priesthoods of their foul ascendant blood gods. The head of the priesthood is the high imperator Thazrain-Coalle, a hierophant of immense power.

Some claim Thazrain is on the verge of Ascendancy, a development that would leave the rest of the priesthood scrambling to find a suitable replacement among their ranks. The priests of the region hold powerful sway in society, owning many slaves and performing blood sacrifice on a daily basis. Public sacrifices are commonplace in Sundaari cities, always performed by a hierophant so that the people are reminded of who controls their fate.

Some say the true power in the Sundanar peninsula is in the hands of neither the high Imperator nor the blood priests, but in that of another group. Others speculate this group simply knows enough that even the priests fear them.

Commonly known as the Zôrùn-Ahmrê, or, the Brethren of the Flesh, these wicked men and women are the secret police of the Sundaari, used to hunt down renegades and enemies of Agärazôn in the northlands.



The brethren of the flesh can be found anywhere in the Sundaari peninsula and are widely feared by the general populace. Some whisper that the Zôrùn-Ahmrê are actually vampiric servants of the blood gods who act as brutal intermediaries between these nefarious beings and mankind.

Many Sundanari believe that they are actually secret servants of renegade keza-drak who seek to attain a firm hold on the jungles of the Sundanar Peninsula. Whatever their agenda truly is, one thing is certain; the Zôrùn-Ahmrê are a force to be reckoned with.

Estimated Population: Between 500,000 and 1 million

Major Settlements: Aza-Ghul, Thuul, Sundanara, Lurash, Manatar

Wealth Limit: 50

Racial Demographics: Sundaari, Urrumâz half-giants, keza-drak, trollkin, various other human cultures (mostly slaves brought from other regions of Simarra).

Major Organizations: Various priesthoods who worship different blood gods. The Zôrùn-Ahmrê, who are rumored to be the true rulers of the Sundanar Peninsula, urag rangers; hunters and guides who are expert at the dangerous jungle terrain, usually renting themselves out as guides through the land,

Places of Note:

Aza-Ghul (The city of the forsaken)(Large Metropolis: Population 230,000): A smoking, sodden city-state in the center of the Sundanar Peninsula, Aza-Ghul is a wicked city, built on the bones of slaughtered innocents. Known for the first pyramid-temple built to venerate the blood god Mahzak-gol -the stained one - Aza-Ghul is a home to over two hundred thousand Sundaari. This byzantine metropolis is known for its red delights.

All manner of foul urges can be sated in Aza-Ghul. Slaves brought south to this city are submitted to horrors beyond imagining. Either slaves are sacrificed, sold off to brothels or other establishments specializing in more exotic uses for the human body, or they are taken away to spawning pits and used as lab rats. Bred with specimens of different races so the Sundaari brood masters to see what new types of horrors can be created and put to use as shock troops.

Lurash (Outpost/Freehold: Population 2,000): A hidden outpost along the border of the Sundanar Peninsula and the Daelian Wood. If safe passage is sought through the dreadful Sundanar Peninsula, Lurash is the place to enter. Here many traders and merchants can be found, as well as some Urag-Rangers who know the terrain and can be trusted enough to guide people without slitting their throats.

Manatar(Large City - State: Population 137,000):

Another city-state, yet not as large as Aza-Ghul. Manatar is the home of the ascendant blood god Zhorug-bhal, a vicious entity who revels in cannibalism and all manner of blood sports. Great arenas are built throughout the empire in the name of Zhorug-bhal, places where gladiators fight professionally to appease their dark god and gain fame and fortune. Many slaves -especially women and children - are brought to the arenas of Manatar to be thrown to great tigers and other fell beasts.

Sundanara (Large Metropolis: Population 460,000):

Home over four hundred thousand Sundaari, the tropical city of Sundanara is the heart of their nation, the seat of power for the High Emperor Thazrain-Coalle, the ruler of the Sundaari people and close friend of Agârazôn himself.

Emperor Coalle rules his growing empire with a bloody fist. Historically, Sundanara has ever-been the religious center for the Sundaari, with Thûrak being the primary god worshipped in the myriad temples scattered throughout the city.

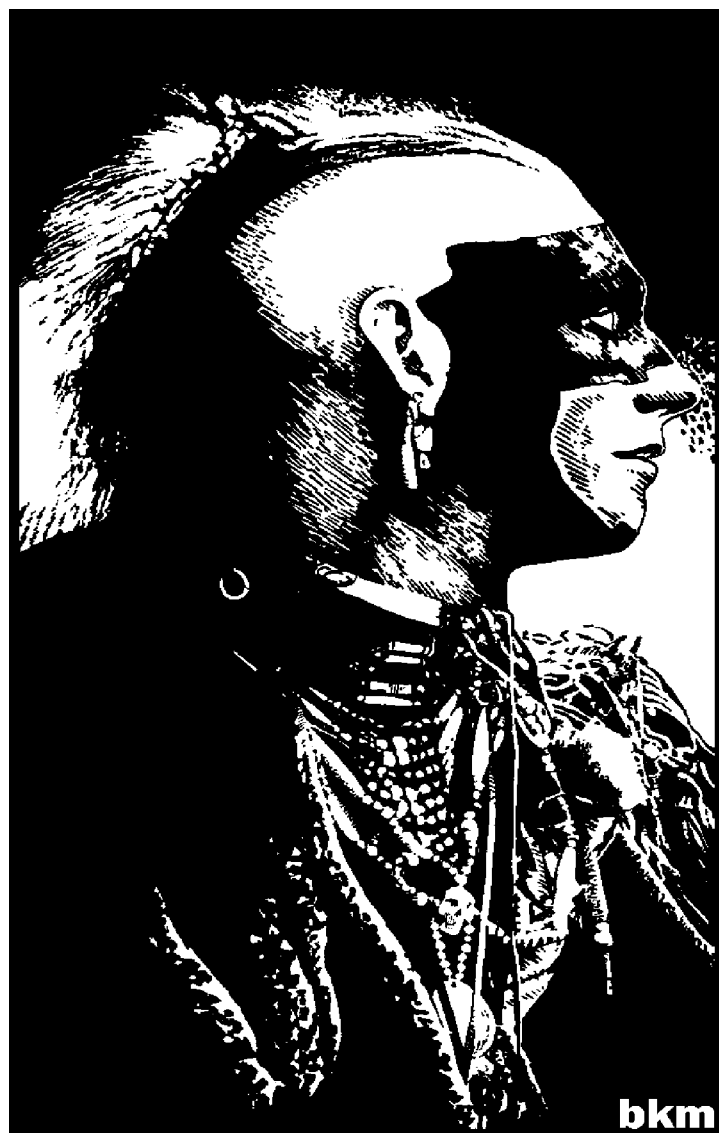
With the ascension of various blood gods during the past ten years however, more and more obscure cults have been cropping up in the city. Most recently, it has been said that Emperor Thazrain-Coalle is on the verge of ascension, prompting a number of assassination attempts on high-ranking hierophants throughout the city as people scramble to prepare for the power struggle that will rage across the city in the wake of the Emperor's passing from Simarra.

Thuul (Large City-State: Population 80,000): Located at the northern edge of Sundaari territory, the city-state of Thuul serves as a staging ground for raids into the embattled Volsparan lowlands. A force of ten thousand keza-drak and over fifty thousand Sundaari



occupy Thuul, which is also reported to be a stopover for caravans taking slaves and other supplies and equipment deeper into the Sundanar Peninsula. Built on the outskirts of ancient ruins of unknown origins, Thuul is a relatively new city-state, ruled by imperator Lorjhan Anassii, known by his lackeys as Lorjhan the mad. Lorjhan has recently begun to have wild mood swings that keep his subordinates on edge, as they never know what the Emperor will have them do next. Once, Lorjhan flew into a fit of rage after receiving news that his sister married a hierophant of a rival blood god to seal an alliance with the priest's family, he commanded the messenger and thirty of his soldiers to throw themselves over the edge or a nearby ravine as a gesture of his displeasure.

After hearing news that Volsparan renegades operating in the northern edges of the peninsula had defeated one hundred of his soldiers and captured an entire slave caravan bound for Sundanara, the madman fell into a fit of laughter that lasted some twenty minutes, after which he butchered a nearby advisor and ate his tongue.



Commanders of the keza-drakian iron legions stationed at Thuul no longer deal directly with the lunatic, preferring to take their orders through intermediaries who do not fly into fits of rage at the slightest provocation. Some keza-drakian battle masters have gone so far as to say that if Lorjhan's unpredictable antics continue they will forcibly remove him from power. Indeed, word has reached Sundanara of Lorjhan's strange antics, and high Imperator Thazrain-Coalle is rumored to be planning a trip north to deal with the maniac personally.

Rumors: As the whole of the Sundanar Peninsula braces for the imminent ascension of the high imperator, conflicts are erupting within every major city-state as priests and cults begin to war against each other, each vying for position in what promises to be the biggest power struggle in ten years. Volsparan renegades are taking advantage of this chaos to gain ground in the northern sector of the peninsula. These stalwart heroes have begun staging massive attacks on supply trains and smaller towns, raiding slave pens and generally causing as much confusion as possible before disappearing back into the hellish jungles of Sundanar.

SUDEJA

Located far to the Northeast, the mountain kingdom of Sudeja has always been an obscure region, the majority of it's people content to live in their beloved, fertile land of broken mountains ranges, old-growth forests, hot springs, swift rivers and deep, icy lakes. The discovery of mana shards in Sudeja, combined with their other exports, made the mountain kingdom a rich land. Indeed, many aviki took up residence in the land so that they might continue their studies of mana shards and their relation to Taer' las Brennath.

When the Age of blood dawned, the keza-drak who invaded Sudeja were successful in gaining a small foothold in the region, sacking the city of Ghatarmann.

Their presence became negligible however, for the fiercely superstitious keza-drak would not contest the territory, fearing the dreaded blight elves who marched east from the Sarangak forest to do battle with their hated enemy. Instead, the keza-drak built outposts along the border, satisfied to keep Sudejans from fleeing the advance of over twenty thousand blight elves and their vile, corrupting magicks.

Some Sudejans have managed to make their way into the western continent, but are unwilling to discuss the horrors their kinsman endure in the forsaken lands of the Northeast.

Estimated Population: 160,000

Major Settlements: Belfire Hill, Berengrand, Ghak-Thron, Port Dorothon, Rock Ridge

Wealth Limit: 20

Racial Demographics: Primarily Sudejans, Blight Elves, Volsparan Elves, Grey men, keza-drak, Frost Trolls, Goblins.

Major Organizations: Brotherhood of the Arrow, the Shadow Watch, Ebon's Rangers, The Order of the Avikus.

Places of Note: The rugged, mountainous region of Sargolia is wracked with war. Unlike many other people of Simarra, Sudejans have very little choice about where they can go. All the Major Henges are guarded by keza-drak, making flight through the threshold realm nigh impossible. Smaller stone gates provide a handy route of escape, but curiously enough, none of the known stone gates provide direct links outside of the region. Barring risky overland travel or trekking through goblin and troll-infested mountains, the people of Sudeja have no choice but to stay where they are and fight for their homeland... or die.

Beggars Pass: Located on the western coast of Heart's Home Lake, Beggars pass was made famous by the hero Dregor "One eye," who single handedly held off a blight elf raiding party for three days during the Thungee offensive in early years of the Age of Blood. Today, Beggars Pass has become a key strong point in the defense of Sudeja. The bulk of the Blight elf army (commanded by Ukhata the Blind - an entropic warlock and member of the Thuzgul brotherhood) continuously harries the stout defenders

of Beggars Pass.

Berengrand: A staging area for the blight armies operating in the Southwest region of Sudeja, Berengrand was overrun early in the offensive, its peaceful people slain or enslaved and taken into the Sarangak forest, mutated into entropic vessels for the Witch Queen's zombie shock troops.

Ten thousand blight elves and a thousand zombies are stationed in Berengrand, serving under the War Witch Oruskad Rotskull.

Belfire hill(Stonhold: Population 10,000): The Mountains to the southeast of Moberon Pass have always been infested with wicked mountain goblins. To help contain this threat, the people of Sudeja built a keep on Belfire hill, a place long held sacred by the people in the region who still practice witchcraft. Ebon's rangers operate out of Belfire Hill, their efforts key in keeping the growing goblin hordes and other beasts that live in these mountains at bay.

Ghak-Thron(Large City: Population 50,000): Located on the edge of heart's Home Lake, the capital city of Ghak-Thron has been placed under martial law by the ruler of the nation, Lord Darniun Trake. Constant attacks from small companies of blight elves who have somehow managed to slip past the Northern and Southern watch posts have been a plague on the once-beautiful city.

The order of the avikus has a strong presence in the city and their strange ascendant technologies have proved vital in its defense.





Rockridge has been fortified and turned into a military outpost with a garrison of twenty-five thousand soldiers. Members of the Brotherhood of the Arrow, Ebon's rangers and the Shadow Watch - a group of magi who have honed their arcane skills to be useful in combat and tracking - call Rockridge home.

The men and women who man the defense of Rockridge regularly skirmish with the blight elf forces at Berengrand and in recent weeks, scouts have reported massive troop movements to the north and south out of Berengrand, hinting at a major offensive in the coming days, maybe weeks, if they're lucky.

The Sarangak Forest: The seat of power for the evil witch queen Salena Valanas, the Sarangak forest is a blighted land stretching some 600 miles from the Griffin peaks to the north along the shores of the Grey Sea. All manner of tainted horrors make their home in this rotting forest. Vile entropic witches of the blight elf nation harness tainted mana wells at

junctions of Taer' las Brennath to perform experiments with the forces of life and undeath, creating monstrosities; entropic zombies, toxic ghouls, cinder ghouls, withersprine trolls and dreaded plague bears, which the elves ride into battle against the beleaguered Sudejans who struggle valiantly to survive.

Rumors: It is rumored that, faced with the prospect of fighting a possible three front war, Lord Trake has sent envoys to Ghatarmann to seek out an allegiance with the keza-drak. This development has people talking about deposing the ruler of Sudeja, who has been showing signs of a growing madness, possibly brought on by the tainted water.

Even in spite of the dangers, many people, not happy with being forced to reside in rapidly deteriorating living conditions are demanding to be allowed return to their homes, a development that has Lord Trake worried his beloved city will collapse from internal conflict.

The Ruined City of Ghatarmann (Stronghold: Population 20,000): Once a thriving center of trade and commerce, Ghatarmann was a vital link to the outside world, it's stone gate able to connect traders with cities such as Volsparra, Tadar-kesh and even Ghandakarr. Once the keza-drak invaded, however, they sacked the city, driving the survivors away into other areas of the region. Rather than mounting an offensive front Ghatarmann, the superstitious keza-drak chose to stay there, afraid of the blight elves that had begun to invade from the west.

Twenty thousand keza-drak are garrisoned at Ghatarmann, their orders are to protect the stone gate and keep people from using it to leave Sudeja. Members of The Shadow Watch and The Brotherhood of the Arrow patrol the region, attacking keza-drak hunting parties and outposts.

Heart's Home Lake: Ghak-Thron relies heavily on the water of Heart's Home Lake, not to mention the various types of fish. Recently the lake has been polluted by some type of deadly poison that has made people gravely sick and killed off the fish that the citizens of Ghak-Thron have come to rely on. Many people believe the blight elves are using vile magicks to pollute the lake, a development that could be devastating for the people of Sudeja.

Rockridge (Stronghold: Population 25,000): Once a small town numbering some five thousand souls,



THE SUNDERED STONE PEAKS

The Sundered Stone peaks dominate the landscape of Northwestern Simarra, running along the western rim of the Tarud Mesa to bleed into the treacherous Blood Wood and blighted Fell Hills. Historically this region has always been an untamed wilderness, dotted with small mining and logging towns, with the exception of the city of Narballa, far to the north in a remote stretch of hinterland famous for its rugged beauty and fierce barbarian tribes. But that was before the dawn of the age of blood.

Recent years have seen the Sundered Stone Peaks explode with war and conquest. The fearsome Morash-Ghoran orcs, led by Drogon-Felslayer have claimed the whole of the Sundered Stone Peaks as their territory, founding the imposing city of Blackstone Hearth as the capital of their growing empire. Using Blackstone hearth as a base of operations, the Morash-Ghoran have spread up and down the length of the mountain range, capturing various outposts, towns and villages, either slaying or enslaving their inhabitants. Narballa and the surrounding region has become a battleground, pitting keza-drak, Sundaari, Morash-Ghoran and renegade Narballans against their kin who have been forced even deeper into the ominous Feycrag woods and ancient mountain holds of their ancestors.

Estimated Population: 260,000 +

Major Settlements: Amaldas, Blackstone Hearth, The Feycrag Woods, Widowmaker Point, Uannan

Wealth Limit: No item cost over 20.

Racial Demographics: The orcs of the Morash-ghoran tribes are the most common humanoid race found in the Sundered Stone peaks, with Narmrothans, Narballans and other human cultures running a close second. keza-drak and Sundaari are also found in ever-increasing numbers, as are the wildmen of the Northern Reaches. Goblins, ogres, mountain trolls, gretchclaw and various types of undead thrive in this rugged region. Most recently, blight elves have been sighted in the Blood wood and Fell hills.

Major Organizations: The Spotted Dog tribe, The Mord-Zag, morargrim, The Gnawed Bone tribe, the chained ones, Skauld Dragoons, Storm Riders, Stoneshear ogres, Zôrùn-Ahmrê blood hunters.

Places of Note: The Sundered Stone Peaks hold many secrets, long forgotten by the elder races. While the Sundered Stone peaks have been a sparsely populated region for centuries, as more and more people travel into the region, evidence has been uncovered indicating the mountain range hasn't always been barren of life.



Ruins of great cities can be seen throughout the mountains, in valleys and along the walls of yawning, high-impassable gorges. Precisely who built these antediluvian cities is unknown. Some say Kiv'larast – the ancient draconic kingdom – lay deep below the cold stone of the mountains, but, barring any confirmation, this is only speculation.

Amaldas (Small Town: Population 1000): A tiny, walled hamlet of roughly 1000 people, Amaldas is located at the summit of Breakers Crawl, a treacherous mountain pass leading through the Sundered Stone peaks to the town of Uannan on the Long Sea. During the Age of Plenty, the town served as a waypoint for travellers and caravans seeking to resupply before beginning the second leg of their journey. In the Age of Blood, Amaldas has become a sanctuary for refugees of the war.

The trail head to Breakers Crawl begins at the Northern edge of the Blood Wood, an ominous forest named for the trees which have begun to take on a deep red hue.

Nightmarish creatures from the threshold realm prey upon unwary and Blight elves have also been sighted in the region. The trail follows a zig-zag pattern, leading high into the Sundered stone peaks. The lower protions of Breakers Crawl are heavily patrolled by the Spotted Dog orcs, a renegade tribe of Morash-Ghoran who, while stallwart in their hatred for humans and other non-orcs, rejected the alliance with the vile keza-drak.

Once out of the territory of the Spotted Dogs, travelers begin an eight thousand foot climb through switchbacks and narrow bridges; a harrowing journey that is plagued with sudden rockslides, encounters with ogres and goblin tribes who inhabit caves and ruins of the region.

Blackstone Hearth (City-State: Population 35,000): The Capital city of the Morash-Ghoran, Blackstone Hearth is the seat of power for Drogan-Felslayer and his renegade tribes. Over thirty thousand orcs make their home in this warren of caves and inter-linked valleys, accessible only by a heavily guarded ravine.

The The Mord-Zag - an assemblage of the most powerful Morash-Ghoran bone shamans - also claim Blackstone Hearth as their base of power. Indeed, Zirra runeskull - the leader of the Mord-Zag and personal advisor to Drogan-Felslayer - chose Blackstone Hearth for it's abundance of ancient cairns and barrows, knowing the Mord-Zag could harness the latent energy trapped within these houses of the dead.

Recently emmisaries from the armies of Thel-kaza have taken up residence in Blackstone hearth. Morargim advisors have come to gauge the effectiveness of the Morash-ghoran in their fight against the Saran-ghori and Narmrothans. There are many who resent the presence of the morargrim and their entourage of Zôrùn-Ahmrê blood hunters. Zirra runeskull has been an especially vocal dissenter, claiming the presence of the demons fouls the energies of the land, angering the antediluvian spirits who rest there.

The Feycrag Woods: Rumored to be forest hiding the location a temple where Enâra was born into the world late in the Age of Steel, the Feycrag woods are so-named for wicked fey creatures who inhabit

deep gulleys and ravines snaking their way through the evergreen forest. Sprites and horned fey known as Azradîl live in this region, plaguing Narballans and the minions of Agârazôn alike. Legends claim the Azradîl (and all Fey) were born into the world as a side-effect of Enâra's birth. As the fallen goddess slipped away into madness and despair, many fey - most notably the Azradîl - became tainted and insane. Those fey who have managed to resist the taint live on the northern edges of the forest in caves and ruins. They shelter narballans who have been driven from their homes by the keza-drak.

Narballa (Large City-State: Population 80,000): The location of the second largest stone gate on Simarra, Narballa has always been a relatively primitive region, the fiercely proud, independent people who live there not weighed down by the need for shiny baubles or new technology. Narballans pride themselves on their co-existence with nature, of honoring their ancestors by handing down the tales of their deeds from generation to generation. When the keza-drak invaded narballa at the dawn of the age of blood, the clans of the region joined together in a valiant effort to throw the invaders back from whence they came, only to be thwarted by superior numbers and hulking machines that belched toxic black smoke into the air, raining

fiery destruction down upon the narballans. History would see Narballa fall quickly to the keza-drak, but conflict still rages throughout the region as the surviving narballans, having learned the futility of engaging in major battles against their hated foes, strike back using hit and run tactics designed to break supply lines, destroy frontier outposts and slay scouting parties.

The Wailing Grove: Located somewhere deep in the Feycrag woods, the Wailing Grove is a grotto said to be built around the site of the cabin where the fallen goddess was raised during the age of steel. In recent years, a cult has begun to spread throughout Simarra.

Calling themselves the chained ones, this group of people believe that the spread of taint in the world is Enâra's way of reaching out to her children, and that, to truly hear the message of the chained goddess, one has to embrace the taint. The cult is rapidly spreading





through all populated areas of this war torn world.

Widowmaker Point (Freehold: Population 6,000): Named for the ongoing war with the gnawed bone tribe of orcs, Widowmaker Point is a freehold high in the Sundered Stone Peaks. An estimated six thousand people of various races and cultures struggle to maintain their grip on this hotly contested mountain pass which leads down into a lush valley, the location of one of the few freeholds in the Sundered stone peaks. Widowmaker point might have fallen long ago if not for the Storm Rider legions who have played a vital role in resupplying the isolated defenders.

Uannan (City-State: Population 35,000): Another freehold on the coast of the Long Sea, the port city of Uannan enjoys relative safety from the conflicts which rage across the Sundered Stone peaks. Uannan serves as a freeport for the Elarian Corsairs who patrol the icy waters of the North sea, the vigilance of these former pirates preventing the keza-drak navy from landing on the east coast of Droghedia. Boasting a population of 35,000 souls, Uannan is a walled city with soldiers manning outposts all along the base of the western face of the Sundered Stone peaks to guard against attacks from keza-drak armies stationed in narballa and Morash-Ghoran raiding parties, which are increasing as the dogs of Drogon-Felslayer expand their territory.

Rumors: A flood of news has been coming out of the Sundering Stone Peaks lately. The keza-drak have suffered a major defeat somewhere deep in

the bowels of the earth, giving rise to all manner of speculation as to what they might have been doing down there. Some believe the fabled kingdom of the dragons – Kiv’Larast – has, at long last, been found. Expeditions deep into the earth are being organized by the free people of Simarra to discover the truth of these rumors and, if at all possible, recover any pieces of ascendant technology thought to be hidden in the ancient kingdom.

Born on the wings of the Storm rider Legionnaires, a plea for aid has been sent from the valiant defenders of Widow maker Point, requesting the assistance of brave men and women to aid in the defense of the embattled stronghold.

TALMOSA

The kithanni Oracles were given visions by the ascendant goddess Zashtazzra of the coming invasion weeks before it began. Avatars of Zashtazzra manifested in the form of medusas and commanded the snake priestess Amrai Zaltara –the now-exiled ruler of Talmosa – to surrender or face dire consequences. Amrai did as she was commanded, and the major cities of the swamp nation of Talmosa surrendered to the keza-drak without a fight, allowing the armies of Agärazôn to take control of the bulk of the nation.

In the days following the occupation many low born humans and known dissidents were enslaved and taken back to Thel-Kaza, prompting many humans(

and a few kithanni) to flee cities such as Tadar-kesh or face a life of chained servitude.

Estimated Population: 643,000

Major Settlements: Aden's Ford, Deadwell, Tadar-kesh, The Sunken Temple of San-jin

Tog-Badar,

Wealth Limit: 30

Racial Demographics: Groa'khan, Night Hags, Humans, keza-drak, kithanni, Shek-Tar,

Major Organizations: The circle of seven, Arcanus League, Order of the avikus, the Zôrùn-Ahmrê

Places of Note:

Aden's Ford (Large City-State: Population 60,000): Ruled by a military council sent from Ardrennen Falls by Edward Brinhold. The council is tasked with protection of the city's inhabitants and providing supplies to insurgent groups operating in the swamps of Talmosa. The bulk of the population of Aden's Ford consists of refugees fleeing the keza-drakian occupation of Talmosa and Dassurri refugees who have crossed the Sundering Sea. In addition, a large military contingent from Ardrennen Falls occupies the free city.

Seguire gnomes can be found in Aden's Ford as well as a number of Shield Wall dwarves, Thusparri elves and a company of half-giant mercenaries in the Skullhammer squadron. Twenty thousand garrisoned soldiers act as city guards for Aden's Ford in addition to defending the city from its enemies. Citizens are not allowed to hoard necessary items such as food and medicine. Anyone caught stealing or hoarding food will be hanged. Indeed, there are only two punishments for crimes committed in Aden's Ford, banishment, or death.

The city guard cannot be bought. Any rumors of corruption are investigated and offending parties are dealt with immediately and harshly.

The Arcanus League has sent a cadre of fifty magi from their home base in Ghandakarr to the Aden's Ford with the intention of bolstering the garrison's combat magi. Arch magus Tharogaine Sazôr commands these men and women, often sending squads south with messengers and supply trains to secret outposts in the swamps of Northern Talmosa.

In addition to strengthening the military capabilities of the city, the Arcanus League has been tasked with shoring up its severely depleted numbers via recruitment efforts.

It is rumored the arch magus has been commanded by the elders of his order to monitor other aberrant magi in the city; specifically the hated order of the avikus. Recent attacks on The Order of the avikus hint that the Arcanus league may secretly be using hounds to cull the numbers of their rivals.

The order of the avikus plays a vital role in the protection of Aden's Ford, utilizing mana barriers and mechanus constructs to increase the defensive capabilities of the city. Led by Glarik Ironbender, an intensely passionate and industrious gnome committed to the reclamation of the continent of Simarra, the Aden's Ford contingent numbers seven hundred and thirty eight souls who engage in regular resupply operations as well as tours of duty in Talmosa where mana shards and Taer' las Brennath are widespread.

Dubbed the Aer' lok Thron (the Iron Fist) among the people of Aden's Ford, this contingent of aviki have developed a reputation as a gritty, battle-hardened force capable of swinging the outcome of any engagement with their combat drones and ascendant weapons and devices.

Aden's Ford straddles the Taernan River that empties into Northern Talmosa. The surrounding region is a rugged stretch of land sandwiched between the Sundering Sea and the Wild Lands. The road north to White Castle Harbor is fraught with peril. Many brigands prey upon unwary travelers and caravans. Monsters also roam this region including ogres, Gretchclaw, shadow hounds who have found their way out of the Threshold Realm through unknown stone gates.

Deadwell (Outpost: Population 1,000): Located in the Northwestern region of Talmosa, the remote Deadwell outpost is occupied by a company of keza-drak heavy infantry, two squads of Zôrùn-Ahmrê and a number of kithanni scouts. The small force is tasked with rooting out Talmosan freedom fighters supposedly based in the region.

Named for the tainted water well responsible for



the deaths of a handful of keza-drak when they first settled in the region, Deadwell is little more than a collection of buildings ringed by a wooden wall.

Tadar-kesh(Large City-State: Population 600,000): The capital of Talmosa, Tadar-Kesh is home to nearly six hundred thousand people of varying races and cultures. The keza-drak maintain a strong presence in the swamp-mired city and outlying outposts. Three morargrim have recently come to Tadar-Kesh to address the growing problem of the Crone of The Fell Marshes, Anadriendra Udalanarae, as well as investigate rumors that the sunken temple of San-jin has been found.

Tadar-kesh is rife with political intrigue. Kithanni and human nobles, having been deposed by Sundaari Prelates sent from Thel-Kaza by the heads of their order, scheme and plot against the new leadership while maintaining an innocuous façade of loyalty. Many, while secretly providing insurgents with key information regarding troop movements and locations of supplies, give the Sundaari names of insurgents to maintain their cover.

The relative openness of Tadar-kesh provides many opportunities for humans posing as Tharans, Baldarrans and even Narballan renegades to enter the city without drawing any undue attention, providing many opportunities for insurgent activity.

In recent weeks, the Prelate - a ruthless blood lord named Gogum Bloodwalker - has considered closing off access to the city until insurgents operating in Tadar-kesh are rooted out and slain for their crimes against the empire. Many kithanni have argued against this course of action, however, calling it futile due to the fluid nature of the city. Too many subterranean passages and other hidden entrances lay beneath Tadar-kesh. Trying to monitor all the potential inroads to the city would be a waste of manpower. Building walls would be costly. In addition, martial law would only add to the low morale of the citizens and quite possibly cause more insurgent activity to crop-up.

The Sunken Temple of San-jin: Long ago, in the early years of the age of plenty, the dreaded kithanni sorcerer San-jin formed a cult known as the circle of



seven. Said to be a right-wing sect of Zashtazzra's most devout followers, the cult began to spread throughout the region. As their influence grew in Talmosa, members of the cult began speaking out against the notion of kithanni society being ruled by inferior humans. The circle of seven are believed to have been responsible for the assassination of several influential members of the governing body, both human and kithanni alike.

While no evidence was ever been uncovered linking the circle of seven to the murders, the ensuing uproar in the wake of the assassinations led to a decree ordering the jailing of all members of the cult wherever they might be found.



A large force of Talmosan militia was sent to the temple to apprehend San-jin and his followers, who naturally fought back. The ensuing battle raged for a week, both sides suffering heavy losses. Then, in a stunning feat of sorcery, San-jin and his inner circle unleashed a blast of sorcerous energy that laid waist to the entire area. Those who would later come to retrieve the bodies found only ash and bone fragments. In addition, the massive temple had begun to sink into the mire of the Fell marshes. Time would eventually see the swamp consume the temple until all that remained were a few decaying outlying structures, the only evidence that the temple had ever existed at all.

Legends claim that the sunken temple of San-jin holds many powerful artifacts, including ascendant rites detailing their construction. The morargrim are eager to get their hands on these items and bring them back to Thel-Kaza.

Tog-Badar (Freehold: Population 2,000): Somewhere along the rim of the Wild Lands approximately four hundred miles to the north of Tadar-Kesh lies the bog town of Tog-Badar, a freehold for rebels who fight against the growing presence of keza-drak in the region. Comprised primarily of Dassurian refugees, Talmosans and ancestors of the Nothrôn Kai (Narmrothans who settled in the region long ago to aid in the Talmosan struggle for freedom against the kithanni), Tog-Badar is a haven to nearly two thousand freedom fighters and refugees.

Arcanus Magi have come to Tog-Badar, their powerful magicks helping to conceal the settlement from Zörün-Ahmrê blood hunters and kithanni scouts. Most recently, a handful of night hags have come to Tog-Badar on behalf of the Crone. These enigmatic creatures often accompany war parties on missions throughout the region.

Rumors: Rumors have been spreading through the region that the sunken temple has been found. More importantly, it seems to be infested with swamp trolls and other nightmarish beasts. Some even claim to have seen the mark of the circle of seven on their foreheads. What ill this bodes for the future, none can say.

The morargrim are rumored to have taken an active interest in the struggles of the region. Some say they seek to find the location of the crone, so that this wild card might be dealt with.

Word is also spreading throughout Tadar-Kesh that Agärazôn, wanting to use Talmosa as a staging ground for campaigns in the Aradi Heartlands, is not pleased with the uprisings in the region and is debating whether or not to simply throw both kithanni and Human alike into the slave pens of Thel-Kaza, thus removing any possibility of insurrection inside Tadar-kesh.

THUSPARRAN LOWLANDS AND KAERLON MOUNTAINS

The heavily forested region southwest of the cradle of life has always been populated by the Thusparran elves, who migrated into the lush region, many eventually building mountain cities high in the Kaerlon mountains, where they could be closer to the great birds who would eventually become inextricably linked to the reputation of the elven culture.

The conquest of the Thusparran lowlands and the Kaerlon mountain range has been surprisingly difficult, even with the bulk of Agärazôn's forces descending in droves on the mountain strongholds in the early days of the invasion. The ensuing slaughter and enslavement of the Thusparran people in those early years was nothing short of a campaign of genocide.

The keza-drak have outposts all throughout the region. The Sundaari operate concentration camps in these bastions of terror, where they perform experiments on captured Thusparran elves and runaway slaves seeking solace in remote freeholds in the mountains. While the keza-drak are still a dominant force in the region, all hope is not yet lost for the forces of light.

The recent civil war between the two dominant factions of keza-drak has provided an opportunity for the Thusparri and shodonai to respond to the brutality they have suffered over the past decade with a tenacious ferocity, enabling the forces of light to regain much of what they have lost.

The shodon warlords have marched north out of the Vaskraall wastes to do battle with the keza-drak and Sundaari, waging guerrilla warfare against the larger, more technologically advanced Iron Legions, commanded by battle master Ghorûk-Drak, a fearsome commander of the elite Kozak legions, a mighty force of the most brutal keza-drak on the continent.

Estimated Population: 200,000

Major Settlements: Asennya, Crow Point, Dalannans Ferry, Orellegron, Salinion

Wealth Limit: 20

Racial Demographics: Dwarves of varied cultures, Gnomes, Thusparri Elves, Humans, keza-drak, shodonai, Sundaari

Major Organizations: Kozak Legions, shodon



warlords, Zôrùn-Ahmrê, The Thusparri Resistance.

Places of Note: Though it is a small region compared to the rest of the continent, the Thusparri Lowlands is, nevertheless, a hotbed of conflict.

Asennya: Once the largest city in the lowlands, Asennya is now a ruin occupied by ten thousand keza-drak serving directly under the command of Ghorûk-Drak. Asennya also has a strong Sundaari presence. The Sundaari maintain a string of concentration camps commonly referred to by Thusparri resistance fighters as the Sug-khag, or death fields.

Asennya is the base of operations for campaigns in the Kaerlon Mountains. The city's stone gate is linked to the Thusparri capital of Orellegron, allowing Ghorûk-Drak to send reinforcements and supplies to the mountain stronghold in support of the mountain campaign to rid the region of all thusparran elves.

Crow Point (Freehold: Population 10,000): Located high in the Kaerlon Mountains, the Crow Point freehold is the largest haven for refugees east of the Hadrannath. Over eighty thousand souls call Crow Point home, living in a massive warren of catacombs and tunnels running deep into the mountains. Crow point is the base of operations for The Thusparri resistance movement, which has satellite camps all throughout the region.

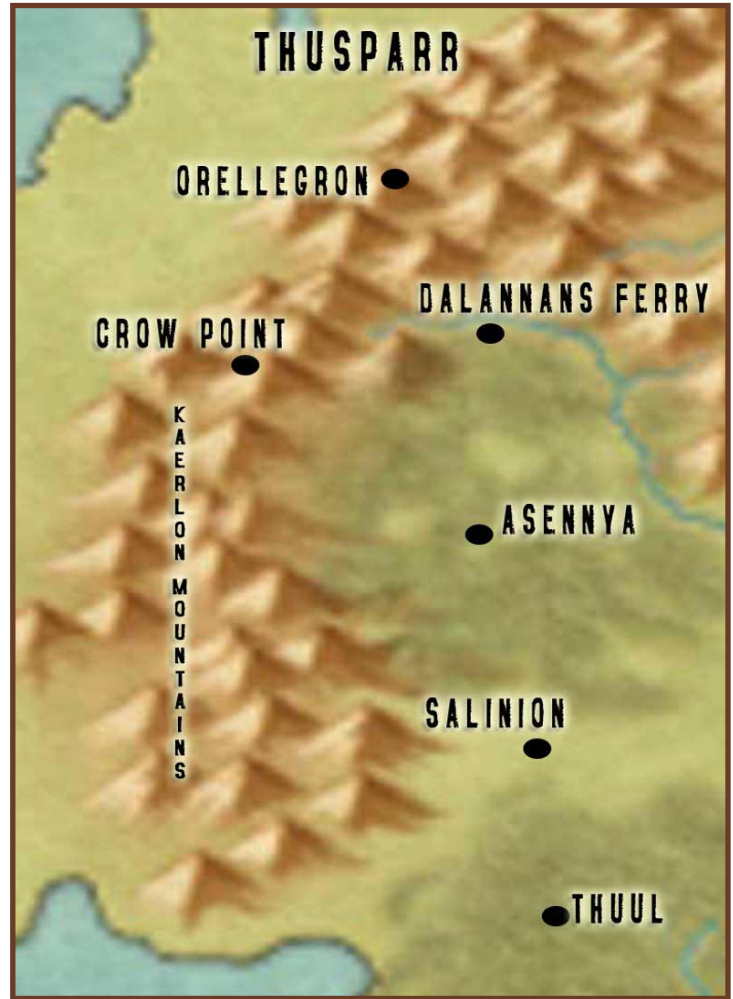
Dalannans Ferry: Located in the Northwest region of the Lowlands, Dalannans ferry is the only passable ford along the northern arm of the Tear song river,

a highly contested area which has been overrun numerous times in the past decade by the keza-drak who, in turn, have not been able to hold it against hordes of shodonai, elite Thusparri rangers, elven shamans, and other magi including members of the Order of the avikus and the Arcanus League. Some say the town has been cursed by the people who were butchered there at the hands of the Sundaari who initially occupied the town at the beginning of the age of blood.

Orellegron (Stronghold: Population 10,000): Once the gleaming capital of the Thusparran Lowlands, the ruined city of Orellegron is now occupied by some ten thousand members of the infamous Kozak Legions who have been trained specifically for mountain combat. Using Orellegron as their base of operations, the keza-drak have spread out across the Kaerlon mountains, attacking Thusparri outposts and freeholds wherever they find them.

Salinion (Contested City: Population 5,000): At the southern borders of the lowlands, the city of Salinion was originally founded as a military base where the Thusparri could monitor activity in the Sundanar peninsula. In the Age of Blood, Salinion has become the site of a series of battles pitting the shodon warlords against the Kozak legions. Currently, Salinion is occupied by a force of nearly five thousand shodonai and Thusparri elves. Among them are remnants of the Storm Rider Legionnaires who have not yet left this battlefield to engage operations elsewhere on the continent.

Rumors: A number of ruins have recently been found in the Kaerlon mountains on Taer' las-Brennath nexus points. The buildings are constructed using mana shards and technologies that seem to defy logic. Many of the buildings are inaccessible, requiring those who would enter to use a proper combination of mana shards, or solve mysterious puzzles. Exactly who built the strange buildings, and what their purpose is, is not yet known.



THE TRACHAN STEPPES

They say the first orcs were born in the Trachan Steppes. The land bled them out of the rocks and molded them in its own, rugged likeness. The land suckled them on the flesh of the scarred boar and the blood of the jackrabbit, tested their mettle against the obsidian claws of the horned lions and the flint-tipped spears of the Baasi-Golú. The Trachan Steppes made the orc, made all things hard, it is said, but then the Horse Lords came, and the Trachan Steppes yielded to their will."

*"Settling The Trachan Steppes"
Thorus Hron, 560th Year of Plenty*

Marked by its frigid, biting winds, tornados, steep ravines, rocky hills, an abundance of monstrous humanoids and animals, the rugged Trachan Steppes are a hard, wild land, filled with many dangers for those who cannot adapt to this naturally hostile environment.

People live in small, tight-knit communities denoted by clan, with low populations, most with less than a few hundred people.

Villages are scattered throughout the region in isolated, easily defended locations.

The Trachan Steppes are rife with conflict. Even with the ever-present threat of the Morash-Ghóran and the keza-drak, many Narmrothan clans are reluctant to unite. Most prefer to stand alone, trusting to their fellow kinsmen rather than set aside old feuds and join with other clans. Another wedge preventing unification is the alliance with the Saran-Ghori the orcs, who have long been enemies of many Narmrothans. Consequently, more and more keza-drak have been able to cross the Salmarin and Sarach rivers, establishing footholds in the southern part of the region.

Most recently, a large contingent of five thousand half-giants have come north to join the fight against

the hated keza-drak, their strength and ferocity in battle a welcome addition to the embattled warriors fighting on the front lines. In addition, the remnants of the vaunted Storm Brigade – the defeated defenders of Thelstaad keep - have taken up refuge at Racktharen hold. The Sundered Company or “Breoad’s Mauled,” as they have come to be known throughout the region, are said to be licking their wounds at the ancient fortress and preparing for a campaign to re-take Thelstaad Keep.

Estimated Population: 180,000

Major Settlements: Greystol, Stormwatch Keep, Racktharen Hold, Morgrush-Kel

Wealth Limit: 20

Racial Demographics: Fey, Tainted Fey, Kotarrans, Narmrothans, Saran Ghorl orcs, Shield Wall dwarves, keza-drak, Morash-Ghóran, Baasi-Golú, Sundaari, and a smattering of other races and human cultures.

Major Organizations: The Arcanus League, The Skull Hammer Squadron, The Sundered Company (a.k.a. “Breoad’s Mauled”), The Order of the avikus

Places of Note:

The Blood Wood: The blood wood has always been home to bandits who prey on caravans traveling from Greystol to deal with various settlements in the Trachan Steppes and the Tarud Mesa. In recent years, however, the eerie forest has become infested with tainted horrors, suggesting that at least one

open stone gate lies somewhere within the over two hundred miles of old-growth forest. Many travelers in the region claim that the dreaded Blight Elves of the eastern continent have a stronghold deep in the forest at the base of the mountains.

Greystol: Originally built by Baldarrans at the beginning of the Age of Steel, Greystol is a frontier town on the southern edge of the Blood Wood. Once a waypoint for caravans traveling from Naeth-Kügraz into the Northern regions of Simarra, Greystol has recently fallen to keza-drak forces that now use it as a staging ground for expeditions into the Blood Wood and Fell hills.

The Fey Woods: Located between the Northern Reaches and the Shield Wall Mountains, the vast forest known as The Fey Woods received it’s name at the end of the age of steel when explorers encountered a variety of creatures, all of whom had features similar to elves, but clearly weren’t members of that elder race. Originally named Fey, these creatures came to be known by other names.

Daelian sages who traveled to the forest to study these beings found that there were a number of distinctly different races, all of whom seemed to have innate magical abilities and spoke in a dialect similar to the legendary “true speak,” a dead language thought to have been spoken by all the elder races during the Primordial Age.



These fey creatures would come to be known as Satyrs, Sprites, Gremlins, and Ashanai. The latter being distant cousins to the corrupted Azradil, more commonly found in the Feycrag woods.

The Sages who studied the Fey creatures were startled to find that these magical creatures somehow winked into existence right around the time that Enâra is said to have been born into the world. This discovery led to speculation that these creatures were somehow connected to the birth of the elder goddess, in essence, a side effect of Enâra's birth.

Just as the other fey creatures of Simarra, the denizens of the Fey Woods have fallen prey to the surge of taint from the Threshold realm. Consequently, the Fey Woods have become a battleground wherein pure fey struggle against the Azradil and their gremlin minions for dominance of the region. Adventurers traveling through the woods have returned telling tales of vile magicks, polluted rivers and scarred trees. At night, pale greenish-orange fires can be seen in the distance accompanied by haunting whispered voices riding the winds.

Fell Hills: A major front in the struggle to invade Droghedia; the Fell Hills are a blasted war-torn stretch of land which sees daily clashes between the keza-drak and clan Volagar.

Skauld dragoons make up the bulk of the defenders, though General Dunkan Two-hammers has indicated he will commit a legion of his finest warriors to the cause when the snows clear in Authel, if the defenders can hold out that long. Meanwhile, over 10,000 battle-hardened keza-drak are rumored to be marching north from Naeth-Kügraz to reinforce the advance.

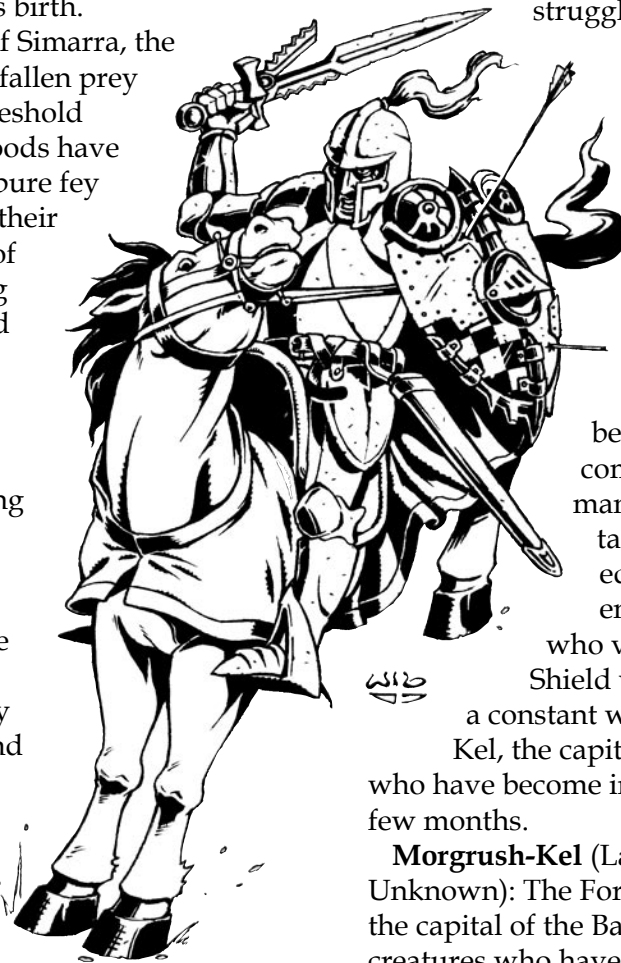
Stormwatch Keep (Freehold: Population 20,000): Located on the shores of Lower Stillmire Lake, Stormwatch keep is an ancient fortress originally built by Liram Tharathon as a refuge for his kin during the long winter months. Ruled by the venerable Vageron "wolfheart" Horgrim and his clan, Stormwatch Keep is a haven for refugees seeking solace in this Age of Blood. Five thousand horselords garrison the defenses and patrols the region guarding against any incursions into their domain.

In recent months, riders bearing the standard of Amon "whoreson" Creed have been sighted in the company of Morash-Ghóran war parties who regularly raid outlying villages.

Thelstaad Keep: Once an enduring symbol of strength and stability for the people of Simarra, Thelstaad Keep is now a broken fortress occupied by the rear guard of the keza-drak army, a force currently engaged in the ongoing struggle for Spire Reach Pass.

Racktharen Hold (Stronghold: Population 8,000): Home to a few thousand battle hardened soldiers and nearly two thousand refugees, the outpost known as Racktharen hold is commanded by King Breoad, leader of the Sundered Company, the remnants of the last defense of Thelstaad keep who managed to escape before the broken fortress was completely overrun. The soldiers manning the ancient fortress are tasked with patrolling the eastern edges of the Trachan Steppes and engaging Baasi-Golú war parties who venture out of the Northern Shield wall Mountains. Scouts maintain a constant watch over the city of Morgrush-Kel, the capital of the dreaded Baasi-Golú, who have become increasingly violent over the past few months.

Morghrush-Kel (Large City-State: Population Unknown): The Fortress city of Morgrush-Kel is the capital of the Baasi-Golú, a cyclopean race of creatures who have lived in this rugged region for as long as anyone can remember. Fierce enemies of Human and orc alike, the Baasi-Golú are said to have created many of the ancient monoliths and cities that litter the Shield Wall Mountains, many of which are nothing more than ruins. Fearsome warriors and shamans, the Baasi-Golú have a strong hatred for all the elder races of the world save for orcs, who are considered inferior beings suitable only for slavery. Elves, especially, are considered abominations by the Baasi-Golú who see the elder race as a weak race, ill suited for survival. Nor does the Baasi-Golú hold any love for the keza-drak, who have twice attempted to sack Morgrush-Kel, only to be driven away in defeat. Now, the Baasi-Golú are



said to be planning their own campaign of conquest, a development that could spell doom for the already embattled people of the Trachan Steppes.

Thel-Kadra (Outpost: Population: Unknown): A recent keza-drak settlement in black maw gorge in the south east region of the Trachan Steppes, Thel-kadra is home to an undetermined number of keza-drak and Sundaari Blood Lords who have come north seeking to enslave as many Narmrothans as they can.

Rumors: People living along the Northwestern edge of Lower Stillmire Lake have been reporting attacks from strange creatures that rise from the depths of the lake to harass fishing boats. Some have even begun to attack villages directly. In related news, fishermen have been bringing in less and less edible fish.

The fishermen claim that many of the fish they do catch are marked by blackish green sores. Some are horribly mutated, having what look to be the beginnings of legs. All of these fish have been deemed unfit for consumption, a source of worry for the people of this embattled region.

More and more sightings of horribly mutated Baasi-Golú have been reported along the eastern marches, prompting King Bread to bolster his already depleted reserves. Some of Racktharen Hold's refugees have been force-drafted into the Sundered Company, some at sword point. There are those in the keep who wish King Bread died with his kin at Thelstaad keep. Some are even speculating that, if the drafts continue, someone might put a blade in the old veteran's back.





VASKRAALL WASTES

"They say that the wastes hold many secrets, brother. Some worth many, many gold drognais to the right buyer, others dangerous truths that, if revealed, will stain the history of the world as sure as moon blood stains a maiden's lily white panties. But that Vaskraall bitch, she keeps her secrets, lad. Aye, she guards them well..."

-Anonymous Sandwalker in Kuspala

A vast desert in Southern Simarra, the Vaskraall wastes are said to have once been a lush land with rivers and green fields, where farmers tilled rich, black soil. It was a land of plenty, they say, but no more. Now, the wastes are home to thieves, brigands, slave traders and treasure hunters. Its once gleaming cites now little more than dusty havens for road-weary travelers and refugees seeking to escape the horrors of the northlands.

Treasure hunters search for ancient ascendant technology or wealth that is unearthed by fierce sandstorms that rip across the blasted surface of the Vaskraall, as the desert is commonly referred to by those who live there.

The blighted region is home to many people. The Treshiri Sandwalkers - traders who travel from oasis to oasis - are the most common folk living in the wastes. Brothers of Sand, outcasts feared for their power, but invaluable to those who seek to use magic to quickly travel and excavate newly discovered ruins also call the Vaskraall wastes home.

This region is also home to the fierce shodonai, tribal warriors who once lived in the cradle of life were driven from those lands long ago. They make their home in the Azruun Badlands, claiming the region a holy land of sorts, sacred to their people and the location of the entrance to the realm of the nekarim; the faceless gods of the shodonai.

Estimated Population: Somewhere between 70,000 and 100,000

Major Settlements: Aran-bhedrin, The Korbannath Freehold, Kuspala, Treshir, The San-Gheri Oasis,

Wealth Limit: No item cost over 25.

Racial Demographics: Treshiri Sandwalkers, Dassurians, shodonai, Seguire Gnomes, Dwarves of various clans (Primarily clan Thorongrar, clan Volagar and clan Volugrash), Tharans, Elarians, keza-drak

Major Organizations: Arcanus League, The Brothers of the Sand, The order of the avikus, The explorer's guild, The Order of the Crescent Moon, The Seven Scars, The Guilds, The Purifiers, Zôrùn-Ahmrê.

Places of Note:

The San-Gheri Oasis (City-State: Population 20,000):

Located Southeast of the Azruun badlands along the trail of bones, The San-Gheri oasis is a welcome site for caravans and adventurers making their way deep into the fiery belly of the Vaskraall Wastes. Ruled by Hamaran Zatar, a self-titled Shaikh (otherwise known as Hamaran the jackal) who took control of San-Gheri five years ago when a keza-drak offensive into the region threatened to destroy the vital oasis.

Hamaran –an adept of great power- and a thousand men and women rode out into the wastes. There they defeated the keza-drak invaders by luring them deeper and deeper into the burning sands, using magic to confound their sense of direction, and hit and run tactics to whittle away at their enemy and sever vital supply lines. Inside a month, the keza-drak offensive had ground to a halt, its survivors staggering back to their base in the fallen city of Aran-Bhedrin with tales of devils who rose up out of the white-hot sands to suck away the life of their enemies.

Hamaran and his warriors rode back into the San-Gheri Oasis and were greeted as conquering heroes. The Shaikh offered Hamaran and his warriors anything they wanted. Hamaran took the Shaikh's head and proclaimed himself ruler of the oasis. The jackal's battle-hardened warriors, having fought many skirmishes against the fearsome iron legions of the keza-drak, easily defeated the token defenses of the San-Gheri Oasis, many of whom surrendered.

Life for the people who live in the San-Gheri Oasis

is rough. Those seeking to live in the oasis must pay an immediate titling of one-quarter their goods and pledge to bring in an equal amount every turn of the moon or face exile. The pressure to meet the jackal's demands leads to a great deal of lawlessness as people, desperate to stay in the oasis, rob and murder newcomers for their supplies. Traders must deal with Hamaran's merchants, paying exorbitant prices for the barest of necessities, especially water and medicines. Such is life in the Age of Blood.

Kuspala (City-State: Population 30,000): Once a gleaming port city and the shores of the Sundering Sea, Kuspala is now little more than a den of thieves, con artists and assassins. Kuspala is split into three districts, each ruled by a Shaikh. Officially, the Shaikhs determine both the laws of their given district as well as laws that affect the city as a whole. Unofficially, the city is a battleground, each Shaikh plotting and scheming to find ways to drive their counterparts from power.

A port city, Kuspala hires the Elarian corsairs to defend the harbor against the iron galleons of the keza-drak, paying the heroic privateers in surplus goods and equipment as well as providing a port of harbor to repair damages to their corvettes and heavy warships. Many people seeking refuge from the war come to Kuspala via the ocean. Most come to believe they may have been better off had they stayed where they were.

Aran-Bhedrin (Stronghold: Population 10,000):

Once considered the holiest city in the Vaskraall wastes, the fallen city of Aran-Bhedrin is now home to roughly ten thousand keza-drak who invaded through the stone gate at the heart of the city at the dawn of the age of blood. All throughout its long history, Aran-Bhedrin has been ruled by Witch Kings; wizards who belong to the sacred order of the crescent moon, a little-known cabal of magi who venerate the elder goddess Uzgora. When the keza-drak invaded, the order was hunted mercilessly by Zôrùn-Ahmrê mage slayers sent from Thel-Kaza to ensure the formidable magical power of Aran-Bhedrin was brought to heel. Those who were not slain or enslaved were forced to flee into the burning sands of Vaskraall.

Like the elder goddess who played a major role in the lives of the people who once lived there, Aran-Bhedrin is a city of secrets. Rumor has it that the order of the crescent moon worked with powerful aviki to build great complexes deep below the sands,



vast, sprawling developments which the aviki warded with strange puzzles, or locks requiring specific mana shards to access. What mysteries lie in the buildings below Aran-Bhedrin, none can say - save for the magi - and very few of them remain.

The Korbannath Freehold (Freehold: Population 34,000): Once a thriving trade city in Bell Canyon, a lush valley nestled in the Dragonspine Mountains along the trade route between the Daelian Wood and the Vaskraall Wastes, the city of Korbannath has become a refuge for Daelians fleeing the destruction of their beloved forest homeland. Over forty thousand souls call this valley home.

Many are farmers, sages and other tradesmen who lived in a region long known for its peace-loving folk. Nevertheless, to look at them, a person would not have expected the hardy, grim folk of the Korbannath freehold to come from such humble origins. War changes people, though. It certainly has with the people in the Korbannath freehold, a people obsessed with vengeance for the rape and murder of their loved-ones, for the loss of their beloved homeland, once a beautiful region, now wrecked and burning away day by day.

Once known as the gateway to the burning wastes, Korbannath played a key role in resupplying caravans on their southern trek into the desolate lands beyond the rugged Dragonspine Mountains. For this reason, the people of Korbannath had no shortage of food, clothing, medicine and other goods when the keza-drak invasion began.

In the long, arduous years since the invasion, the people of Korbannath have further expanded on their surplus by forging alliances with various shodonai sects who use the trade route to join the fighting in the northlands. The shodon war-tribes bring food and supplies, scavenged from various regions of the desert, to Korbannath whenever they take refuge in the freehold. In exchange, the people of Korbannath aid the brave shodonai in any way they can. Many younger folk have begun training with the shodon warriors in the hopes of someday traveling north to avenge the atrocities of the past.

The Pillars of Fire: Deep within the Azruun Badlands, at the very heart of the Vaskraall Wastes, is a place where a precious few people have ever seen, the Pillars of Fire. This treacherous region is said to be the home of the shodonai and the gateway to a world beyond Simarra, beyond even the blighted Threshold Realm, an enigmatic world known only as the Tae'los-nekarim: The land of the nekarim. Said to be the gods of the shodonai, these faceless beings are shrouded in mystery and speculation.

Some claim they are beings of vast power, old ones who existed long before the elder gods. Other insist

they are ascendants who have somehow created their own plane of existence, a place they have shown only to the shodonai, who are said to have disappeared from Simarra early in the age of steel after they were driven from the cradle of life during the first Sundaari invasion.

The shodonai are said to live in cave cities and egg-shaped buildings made of bone and thin leathers taken from various beasts such as the Rhuuku and Choi-tahk. The oval buildings appear to hang along the sides of the cliff walls at various heights. Those who have been to the Pillars of Fire say at night, when the camp fires are lit, the gorges and canyons where these strange buildings reside take on an eerie orange glow.



Treshir (Medium-sized City-State: Population 25,000): The Arcanus League has sent a cadre of a dozen magi to the dome city of Treshir with the intention of bolstering their own coffers and securing any powerful artifacts found by the Exploration guild. In addition to strengthening the offensive capabilities of Treshir, the Arcanus League has been tasked by its leadership with keeping tabs on other aberrant magi in the city; specifically any of the hated order of the avikus. Recent attacks on The Order of the avikus hint that the Arcanus league may secretly be using the Dust Cloaks to cull the numbers of their rivals.

A single unit of 1,000 soldiers called the Dust Cloaks act as city guards for Treshir in addition to defending the city from its enemies. Citizens are not allowed to hoard necessary items such as food and medicine. Anyone caught stealing or hoarding food will be severely punished. Indeed, there are only four punishments for crimes committed in Treshir, lashings, banishment, slavery, or death. The Dust Cloaks are ultimately focused on survival. Anyone with enough wealth including the guilds can appeal to buy the support of a Dust Cloak to enforce their version of the law. Unfortunately, the Dust Cloaks are more than willing to work for both sides of a dispute, and it is not until swords are drawn that they reveal which side they are truly supporting. Of course, there are no refunds for services rendered; then again, there are rarely any survivors to complain about the service. The order of the avikus plays a vital role in the protection of Treshir, utilizing mana barriers and mechanus constructs to increase the defensive capabilities of the city.

The Desert Bazaar: The floor of the dome in Treshir is the commerce district, filled with merchants, slave traders, treasure hunters, and all manners of people. Treshir incorporates a barter system as a way of dealing with supply and demand. If citizens want specific items, they need to provide something of equal value in exchange.

Food and medical supplies are always distributed to the general populace by the Commerce and Trade guild as evenly as possible to ensure everyone receives what they absolutely need to survive. Money has very little value, except perhaps to merchants who are getting ready to head back to civilization. The most valuable commodity is housing, the better-protected dwellings reside in the higher levels of Treshir's massive dome.

The Nests: The walls of the inside of the dome are covered with doorways leading into small cave-like dwellings carved into the walls of the dome. There are eight surface levels in the dome, from the poorest levels nearest the ground, to the top level reserved for

the wealthiest or strongest of Treshir.

Travel from the ground to the various levels of the dome can be achieved by catwalks, ladders, rope bridges, pulley lifts, and various swinging ropes.

The Shrine of Enâra: The Purifiers maintain a small shrine to Enâra, this one is dedicated to the Enâra of ancient times, when she was their patron goddess, symbolizing all they hold true. They celebrate her purifying light, with elaborate altars that combine sunlight, prisms, and open flames.

Rumors:

The Well: Hidden in a large nondescript tent in the center of Treshir lays its greatest mystery. The copper shaft is approximately five feet in diameter and sinks into the sand; the interior of the shaft is etched with endless engraved runes of unknown language. When it was first discovered treasure hunters lowered a torch down into its depths looking for a bottom, the torch disappeared from view and still nothing.

Later, treasure hunters attached a clay jug to the bottom of the rope, and then attached a heavy circular plate above the jug. They reasoned that if the clay jug hit something solid, the weight of the plate would then crush the jug once it was lowered onto it. The treasure hunters tied every foot of rope they could find together, and lowered their new depth finding into the shaft, in 10-foot increments, they finally hit something at 600 feet. Soon after it was found, the site was captured by a band of Purifiers, and they guard it religiously, keeping it secret from all.

Treasure in the Desert: The fierce daylong sandstorms that rip through the Vaskraall Wastes often unearth small ruins that have been consumed by the desert sands. These ruins often contain small quantities of treasure, such as ascendant technology, ancient rites, or even mana shards.

VOLSPAR

The ravaged nation of Volspar has been occupied by the keza-drak for nearly ten years. Once a region of great beauty, the Volsparan lands around Mirror Lake have devolved into a ruinous wreck. Cities that have not been completely sacked have fallen into disrepair. Vol-spareth –the once gleaming capital city of Volspar – has been completely sacked; the gutted remains standing along the shores of the polluted Mirror Lake; a haunted wreck filled with vile creatures and tainted horrors from the threshold realm.

That said, the ragged Volsparan armies, working with Aradi lionmen, Sudejans and Sargolian refugees have managed to carve out a number of havens in the western and northern areas around the ruins of Orelgrennan and Red Rock Outpost, with various freeholds in the Griffon Peaks.

Estimated Population: 220,000

Major Settlements: Orelgrennan, Red Rock Outpost, Thulassan, The Northwatch

Wealth Limit: 20

Racial Demographics: keza-drak, blight elves, Volsparrans, Baldarrans, Aradi lionmen, Sudejans, Sargolians, Grey Men, Thusparran Elves, Clan Volagar, Shield wall Dwarves

Major Organizations: The Arcanus League, The Order of the avikus, The Volsparran Free Companies, The Steel Brigade, The Hawkwind Airmen, Grimeye's Warders.

Places of Note:

Red Rock Outpost: Located 50 miles to the south of the Northwatch, Red Rock outpost is the home base of the Steel Brigade, a contingent of ten thousand Volsparran heavy infantry tasked with curtailing the advances of the keza-drakian iron legions operating out of Thulassan.

Commanded by Valerian Stormspell, a magus of considerable power, the Steel brigade has managed to rack up a series of victories along the battle fronts on the plains North of Thulassan. These successes have given Highlord Tarien Keldaras the freedom he needs to secure more and more of the griffon peaks, making freeholds such as the makeshift towns of the haunted sunken vale safe from the incursions of Blight Elves.

Orelgrennan (Freehold: Population 20,000): Home to the Volsparran free companies, the lone freehold of Orelgrennan sits at the base of the Griffon Peaks. The walled city houses some twenty thousand refugees of

varying racial stock, many of whom have chosen to fight in the free companies who patrol the southern edges of Volspar, attacking keza-drak outposts wherever they are found. Orelgrennan sits at the trailhead to the warrens; a maze of trails and mountain passes leading deep into the mountains, where many refugees have gone to build new towns. The warrens are infested with Mountain trolls and other horrors.

Thulassan (Stronghold: Population 24,000): The fallen city of Thulassan was once the cultural Mecca for the Volsparran peoples. Its amphitheaters and vast libraries were surpassed only by the great memory vaults and forums of the Daelian wood and Megath-Tor.

Now, the city is a cesspool, occupied by thousands of keza-drak and Sundaari blood magi. People captured in battle or traveling through this war torn region are taken to Thulassan to be kept as slaves or used as entertainment in the fighting pits.

Many insurgents have risked death in those pits to gain access to Thulassan under the guise of slaves in hopes of finding rites and other technologies lost when the city was captured. Some simply want to work towards freeing other slave, or cause as much damage as possible through their close proximity to the enemy.

The Northwatch (Stronghold: Population 14,000): The long wall known only as the Northwatch was created to fend off attacks by the dreaded blight elves during the Age of Steel. For over a thousand years, the men and women manning the Northwatch have ensured the threat of the dreaded blight elves has



not affected life in Volspar. Now, the beleaguered defenders find themselves fighting daily engagements against their hideous cousins who seek to drive the Volspar people into oblivion.

Sunken Vale (Stronghold: Population 17,000): Considered a wicked region, filled with all manner of strange beasts and evil spirits, the heavily forested region known as the Sunken Vale has historically been avoided by all people living in the region. The age of blood has changed that, however, forcing the dispossessed Volsparan elves to seek out refuge in any place they could find.

Settling in the sunken vale has been a deadly undertaking, resulting in the loss of many, many innocents. During the early years following the invasion of the keza-drak, the first Volsparan settlements in the region were constantly attacked by vile rat-like humanoids. Entire towns were burned, women and children dragged off into the night by these monstrous terrors.

As the years wore on, an organization formed, Grimeye's Warders. Grimeye's warders are a force dedicated to eradicating the menace that plagues the sunken vale. The warders have made some headway over the years, but for some, as of yet unknown reason, the beasts keep coming back in greater numbers.

Vol-spareth: Once the great capital of the Volsparan nation, Vol-spareth has been reduced to little more than a mass of ruins. Occupied by a contingent of five thousand keza-drak and Sundaari who are tasked with monitoring any activity in the area and hunting down refugees found in the wrecked city and outlying ruins of small towns where some people still hide.

The city is filled with relics of the bygone age and thus is a tempting target for people who wish to uncover its secrets. Those who do enter the ruins face more dangers than the keza-drak, however. Taint has seeped out of the threshold realm, polluting the surrounding region. The waters of Mirror Lake are a foul, corrupted toxic soup, out of which crawl all manner of strange mutated creatures who crave flesh and blood. Many of these beasts dwell amidst the ruins, claiming the fallen city as their territory.

Rumors: Recent clashes between the keza-drak based in Charr and those operating in Volspar along the border of the Aradi Heartlands hint of an escalation in hostilities between the two opposing factions. In addition, more and more keza-drak have been crossing the Sargolian wall lately to join with the forces in Thusparr. This development suggests a possible northern offensive will happen soon. Tarien Keldaras has issued a call to all adventurers, asking for assistance dealing with this new threat. Many would-be heroes have headed into the rugged mountains to link up with resistance fighters operating in the region.



LANDS OF MYSTERY

"They say the Realm of the Lost is a dangerous place, filled with demons and other horrors. The order of the Avikus has sent expeditions to that dreaded chain of islands over the centuries, but none have returned. I was once given a chance to accompany an expedition to that realm shortly before the dawn of the Age of Blood, but I chose not to. I often wonder if I made the wrong decision. It can't be any worse there, can it?"

-Tarlán Gren, Master Avikus

The following section takes a look at regions of Simarra which are, for various reasons, avoided by most people in Simarra. Many of these "lands of mystery" are so hostile to life that people only venture there when the need is dire. Other places, such as the wild lands, are, barring traveling paths known to be fraught with peril, otherwise virtually inaccessible.

Other regions such as the islands on the Sea of Storms, are notorious for their lawlessness and depravity. Havens for buccaneers such as Tuguk's Raiders and rogue elements of the Elarian Corsairs, the islands of the Sea of Storms are generally avoided by all but the most desperate and degenerate of people.

THE BROKEN KINGDOM OF NUMARÁTH

"Numaráth. It is a land of horrors, friend. A place where the dead rule and the living fear to tread."

Once home to the Narmrothan horse lords, the broken kingdom of Numaráth is a sprawling wasteland on the south eastern borders of the continent, home to countless undead horrors risen once again from the dead lands to plague the free people of Simarra as they have many times throughout the history of the world. Only this time, the vile fiends have come in force, organized by - it is rumored - at least three death lords who have ventured out of the blighted Dead Lands to establish bases of operation in Numaráth.

The primary resistance to the growing threat Numaráth represents lies at the great bulwark which spans the Numarán gap on the Northern border of this mysterious land. There, stalwart undead slayers known as grey men man the watch towers and mountain passes high in the lower arm of the Sargolian Wall, ever vigilant against the growing threat of the undead menace.

In recent months, Elarian Corsairs patrolling the Sea of Balan and Faran Bay have sighted ships with ragged black sails sailing off the coast of Numaráth. The

presence of these black ships bodes ill for the people of Simarra. If the death lords have indeed begun to build seafaring vessels, they would be able to assail other nations.

Estimated Population: Unknown.

Known Settlements: Numaráth is a land of ruins, abandoned long ago by the people of Simarra. At present, there are a handful of settlements of living people in this ravaged region, small hold outs which have been reclaimed by the grey men who seek to push the front lines of the war south, away from the embattled bulwark.

Strongholds have been sighted in various areas by grey men scouts who monitor the movements of their hated enemies from bases within the nation. The largest of these is located in the ruins of Voarralon, the antediluvian capital of the realm, forsaken long ago by the horselords.

Racial Demographics: Aside from the Narmrothans, Aradi and a smattering of members of other races who venture to this region seeking to combat the growing evil and learn the art of slaying undead from the grey men, there are no other known living beings in Numaráth.

Major Organizations: The grey men are the dominant organization in the region, their bases dotting the lower arm or the Sargolian wall, with the main camp at the bulwark where upwards of five thousand brave souls battle back the undead hordes. The grey men are commanded by Thadrún Brinn. A grim Sudejan refugee, the young man traveled south early in the Age of Blood with the intention of becoming an undead slayer. His efforts since have earned him the nickname death's nemesis by his fellow grey men, all of whom would follow Thadrún into the deadlands if he led the way.

Places of Note: Largely unexplored, the kingdom of Numaráth hasn't seen human population since the horse lords were driven from the region during the Age of Steel. As more territory is reclaimed in the name of the Grey men, however, ruins of ancient towns and even cities are discovered.

The Bulwark (Stronghold: Population: 5,000) : Located at the northern edge of Numaráth, the great bulwark spans the Numarán gap, a canyon in the southern arm of the Sargolian Wall. Some five thousand men and women man the bulwark, guarding against the hordes of undead who regularly come out of the southern lands, seeking the flesh and blood of the living.

Rumors:

Word is spreading through the Aradi Heartlands claiming the Bulwark has been overrun by strange new undead who freeze people with a touch. These withered undead wield pale, wicked blades and are

said to command powerful magicks. The truth is not yet known, though lionmen and other adventurers have set out from Aradan to find out the truth.

THE REALM OF THE LOST

There are many theories about the mysterious subcontinent to the Southeast of Simarra commonly known as the Realm of The Lost. Some say the Sundaari went there at the end of the Age of Steel. Others say the place is filled with horrific beings who contest any attempt at exploration of the region. The truth is that precious little knowledge can be found in this war torn age.

In recent years there have been suggestions that expeditions to the Realm of the Lost are in order. If an outpost can be constructed it might be possible to settle in the region, thus providing another place of refuge for the free people of the world.

THE SEA OF STORMS

Located to the south of the main continent, the Sea of Storms is historically a place of refuge for buccaneers and outlaws. These bandits have established their own lawless havens from which they mount raids on travelers who risk the violent Sea of Storms looking for refuge from the war torn continent.

Estimated Population: Unknown.

Known Settlements: Crown Point, Skull Bay,

Crown Point (Stronghold: Population: 25,000): Located on Shurisspen Isle, the sea port known as Crown Point is historically a haven for the Elarian Corsairs who once plagued the shipping lanes through the Sea of Storms. Now, it is home to many refugees who have left the continent looking for a place free of the Keza-Drak. Crown Point is ruled by Josogo Tul'ak, a Korduc plainsman who escaped the slave pits of Thel-kaza and made his way to Ghandakarr early in the Age of Blood.

Josogo hired on a ship as a deck hand and took an immediate liking to the sea. He worked his way up, eventually gaining command of his own ship. Now, he rules the Crown Point free port and a small navy of twelve frigates, which he uses to defend the harbor and send aid to other embattled regions of Simarra. Crown Point is considered a free port for all peoples seeking refuge from the war.

Skull Bay (Free Port: Population: 14000): Named for the numerous bodies of victims dumped into the harbor after being slain, Skull Bay is a dangerous port city, filled with murderers, cutthroats and thieves who care little for the troubles plaguing the world. Indeed, many see the war for Simarra as an chance to raid and plunder without worrying about repercussions from organizations such as The Dassuri Navy, who spend

much of their time combating the iron ships of the keza-drak.

Skull Bay is one of those places where people enter at their own risk. Might makes right in this seedy town, which is ruled by Turguk Four-toes, a vicious Saran-Ghori orc sorcerer cast out of his tribe for practicing taboo magicks involving the resurrection of ancestor spirits and foul cannibalistic tendencies. Turguk's infamous raiders are known far and wide for their butchery and use of undead to crew their ships. Turguk's raider rarely ever keep their prisoners alive, preferring to kill them for food or let the necromancer raise their victims from the dead and force them into eternal servitude.

Turguk cares little for the welfare of the people living in Skull Bay beyond what they can do for him and those few people he trusts enough to keep around. Anyone stealing in the city must kick back a hefty percentage of their take to Turguk or risk taking a headless bath in the bay. What's more, those who do seek refuge in the port must pay Turguk for the right, or go elsewhere.

THE WILD LANDS

The wild lands run some two thousand miles north to south and half as many from east to west, covering a wide array of terrain from deep emerald forests of fir and spruce in the Northern hilly regions and open grassy plains along the eastern borders to a sprawling jungle encompassing most of the south western portion of the vast canyon.

The Wild Lands have seen numerous attempts at settlement in the centuries that have passed since the elder races migrated out of the cradle of life, all ending in blood shed for the people who tried. Those who survived returned to the lands above that great chasm telling tales of a land of rugged beauty, a land teeming with wild life and soil so black and fertile one would think the gods themselves blessed the land.

But, they said, to live in the wild lands is to court death, for there are others who live in that land, and they will not suffer any to live long in their territory. Called Shek-tar, these wicked gnomes, they say, are cannibals who wear the bones of those they have eaten and bind spirits, creating fetishes of great power. Even more are creatures called Ashoi Notkah, vile undead who are also spirit binders, but have the uncanny ability to see into the lands of the dead. Their touch channels the energy of the Deadlands freezing people where they stand.

Though it is generally thought that nobody has ventured down into the Wild Lands in over a thousand years, there are a few people who claim to know the location of hidden trails leading into the

region. Sightings of Shek-tar, groakhan and ashoi notkah in the swamps of Talmosa would indicate the boasts of these adventurers are true.

Estimated Population: Unknown.

Known Settlements: Glitterstem

Racial Demographics: Ashoi-noktah , groa'khan, Seguire gnomes, Shek-tar gnomes, wydlings.

Major Organizations: Unknown

Places of Note:

Bone Hills: Located along the Passage of Bones, the legendary trade route used by travelers to get to the eastern stair, the bone hills are a sacred site of the Shek-tar gnomes, who bury their dead in cairns and caves. Many spirits infest the region as well as undead guardians who protect the bones of the dead as well as the treasures buried there. The bone hills are also the location of a nexus of Taer' las Brennath.

The Wild Lands Compact: A collection of towns and hamlets that sprung up during the settling of the Wild Lands. All of them are believed to have been overrun by the Shek-tar during the war which resulted in over three thousand deaths and the evacuation of all survivors from the land.

There is no reason to believe that any one inhabits these towns. Some say the wild lands compact are the location of powerful rotes created during the Age of Steel, but none know for sure.

Glitterstem (Stronghold: Population: Unknown): a city nestled against the northern cliffs of the wild lands by Boggan Lake, named for the first gnome to discover it. It is said to be the capital of the lands controlled by the Seguire gnomes; though no non-gnome has laid eyes on it since the taking of Harken Keep by the Shek-tar.

Harken Keep: Originally a military outpost in which explorers, settlers, and travelers could rest and replenish supplies, it was overrun by Shek tar gnomes and their wydling slaves. It is believed to be abandoned, though this is not known for sure.

Rumors: There are rumors coming out of the Baldarran highlands that the keza-drak based in the city of Charr have found a way down into the wild lands and are fighting fearsome creatures known only as groa'khan.



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