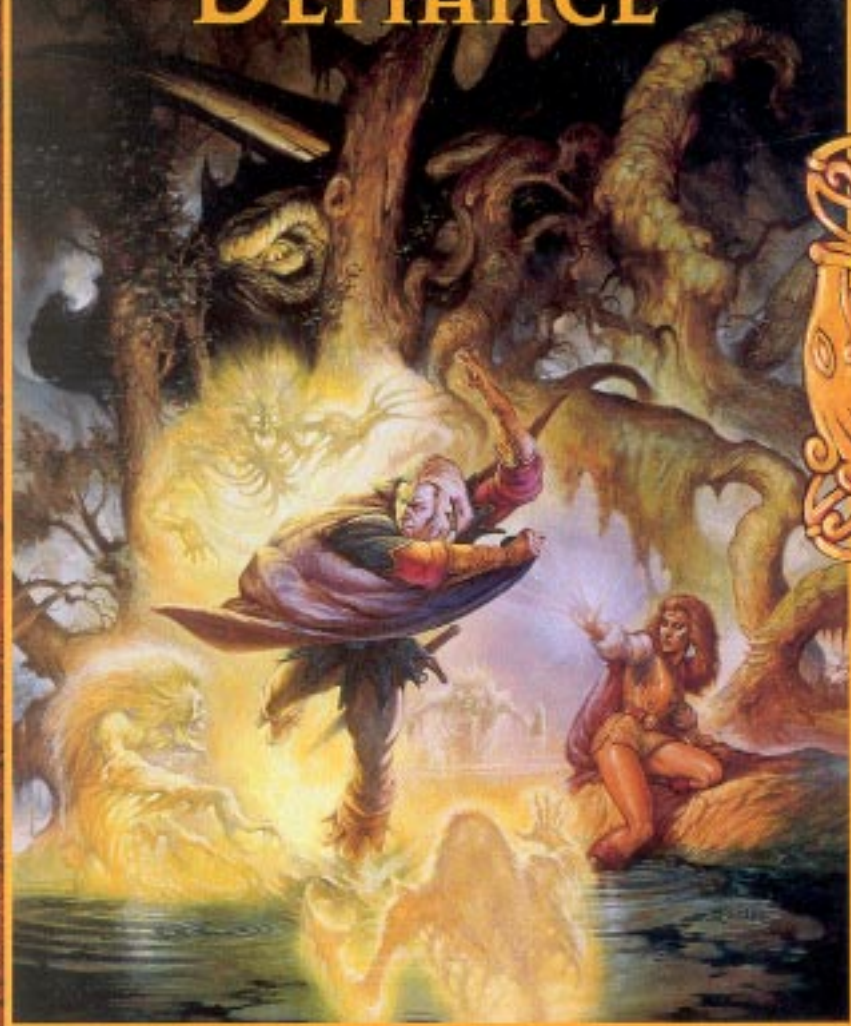


DRAGONLANCE

FIFTH AGE™
DRAMATIC SUPPLEMENT

HEROES OF DEFIANCE



SAGA™
GAME RULES



FIFTH AGE™

HEROES OF DEFIANCE

BOOK
ONE





CLOAK AND DAGGER

Ansalon's Heroes of Defiance



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Author's foreword



Generally, when we think of the DRAGONLANCE® Saga, we see in our mind's eye vast armies clashing while dragons wheel overhead. But actually, very few escapades of the Heroes of the Lance involved open confrontation. By and large, their early adventures were tales of survival through stealth. The famous, grand battles came much later and most cases emerged amid great loss, such as the death of heroes like Sturm Brightblade, Tanis Half-Elven, and Steel Brightblade. Some say a heroic end is worth the example it sets for others, but more pragmatic individuals believe it's better to live to fight another day.

This sourcebook is about the latter group. It is about heroes who consider personal glory—even personal honor—far less important than surviving to see the struggle end in victory for their side. Their belief in their cause is as strong as that of knights boldly bearing the crest of their lords into battle. These heroes just have different priorities: survival for themselves, their loved ones, and their people. This is a book about spies, freedom fighters, and even dark-cloaked assassins, the Saga's unsung heroes and villains.

As Narrators and players, you can use *Cloak and Dagger* to build a DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE™ campaign with a different flavor. Chapter One spotlights new roles, from street urchins to displaced nobility. In Chapter Two, you learn how to create an intrigue-laced campaign, as well as glimpse the array of underground and resistance activity sweeping Ansalon. Chapter Three offers new rules for creating roguish heroes who keep secrets from even trusted comrades, as well as optional guidelines for playing one of the most downtrodden races ever to skulk or thieve: the gully dwarves. Finally, Chapter Four discusses Northern Ergoth, a land whose ancient history ties it to the bards and rogues of the world; this is the first time this island has been treated in detail anywhere.

Suggested Reading

To create fantasy adventures full of intrigue and duplicity for your FIFTH AGE, campaign, you can draw from a variety of DRAGONLANCE novels, such as:

- *Dark Heart* by Tina Daniell (Meetings sextet Vol. 3).
- *Murder in Tarsis* by John Maddox Roberts.
- *Lord Toede* by Jeff Grubb (Villains series Vol. 5).
- *The Dark Queen* by Michael and Teri Williams (Villains series Vol. 6).
- *The Reign of Istar*, an anthology (Tales series Vol. 4).

Also, for those with Usenet access through online service providers, the newsgroup alt.fan.dragonlance provides an Internet forum to exchange ideas about the Saga.

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Chapter One



did not come here to speak of poetry," said the aristocrat. "I desire the death of a ran. Is that not your craft?"

"It is, indeed," said Nistur.

"Truly, I am a poet, but these times are unkind to one who seeks to exercise the divine gift, so I must have a means to earn my bread. I choose the ancient and most honorable vocation of the assassin."

*-A client to Nistur the Assassin,
Murder in Tarsis*

The DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE game is designed with a flexibility intended to facilitate the creation of any type of hero appropriate to the setting and a Narrator's campaign. Roles help players get a handle on their character type at the start of play, to complete the package of a fully defined hero. From there, the hero will grow and change as he takes his part in the Narrator's story.

While the hero creation system in the FIFTH AGE boxed set introduced roles briefly, this supplement, like *Heroes of Steel* before it, elaborates on the concept with guidelines and sample roles.

Defining Roles

Some roles can be defined most simply by requiring maximum or minimum ability scores or codes of a hero. After all, a Knight of Solamnia should have a fairly high Strength score and code to

conduct himself as a proper warrior.

However, creating roles for rogues, thieves, and covert members of underground resistance movements can call for a somewhat different approach.

Degrees of wisdom and strength matter less to a hero of defiance than his cunning, his knowledge about the world, and his place in society.

For this reason, this chapter initially defines most roles according to a hero's social status. A person with a social status of a peasant (2) is not likely to be an ambassador or courtier, while someone with a social status of royalty (9) probably won't wind up a street urchin.

The SAGAN™ hero generation rules (*Book of the Fifth Age*, Chapter One) defines nine different social levels derived from a hero's wealth score. To determine the proper roles for their heroes' social status, players should consult the chart below, which divides the status levels into three *social classes*.

A roguish hero can play any of the roles allowable for his class.

Wealth	Social Status	Class
1	Slave	Lower
2	Peasant	Lower
3	Commoner	Lower
4	Tradesman	Middle
5	Guildsman	Middle
6	Gentry	Middle
7	Aristocracy	Upper
8	Nobility	Upper
9+	Royalty	Upper

Social status does not govern all the roles in this chapter, however. Some are defined by the hero's race or background, while a few others are open to all heroes. Regardless, a hero's role must always suit his demeanor and nature. For instance, the role of a spy would be a poor match for a hero with an honest nature. Matching a hero's role to his demeanor and nature is more important than score, code, or social status requirements.

ROGUISH ROLES

Using Roles

The roles in this chapter are offered as suggestions only. They are not intended to lock heroes into set molds but instead to heighten the enjoyment of the game and further support role-playing efforts.

Therefore, it cannot be stressed enough that players should feel free to define their own roles, based on what kind of heroes they want to play or upon their favorite DRAGONLANCE characters. If Narrators think of ways to improve the sample roles in this chapter for use in their games, they may combine them, modify them, or use them as models from which to construct their own unique roles.

Lower-Class Roles

Heroes with the social status of slave, peasant, or commoner may not have a wealth of riches at their disposal, but they can often place themselves in the perfect position to collect information as valuable as any dragons hoard.

The Barmaid

A barmaid works in an inn or tavern serving the customers. Those who frequent the establishment might consider her a friend—at least someone to whom they can vent their frustrations—while less savory persons who only happen by the establishment occasionally may view her as a potential sexual conquest. These heroes enjoy the unique position of keeping tabs on virtually everything happening in the community. Tika Waylan from the DRAGONLANCE Chronicles first appeared in this role.

Note: Although servers in taverns and inns are typically female in the DRAGONLANCE setting, males can assume this role as barmen.

Role-Playing

Barmaids are used to dealing with a wide variety of people, from friendly guardsman and locals to abrasive mercenaries and obnoxious drunks. They can skillfully switch from one emotion to another, depending on who they are interacting with, in order to gain information or another favorable result.

Requirements


As their job revolves around interacting with others, barmaids must have a Presence code of “C” or better. Further, they cannot have a Strength code higher than “C,” as barmaids typically do not have the time it takes to become weapons masters.

Advantages

Everyone has to eat and drink sometime, and the common room of the local inn remains the central meeting point in many towns across Ansalon. This gives barmaids the unique ability to keep track of law enforcement activities and underworld movement alike, just by seeing who’s meeting with whom and how often. They also can identify the comings and goings of strangers to the area and gather all kinds of interesting tidbits while serving drinks or wandering the common room—patrons, viewing servers as just another part of the scenery, often forget themselves and continue sensitive conversations while the barmaid stands nearby, absorbing every word.

Barmaids become adept at dealing with people on a variety of levels and in a variety of situations. Whenever they interact with a character in a non-combat situation, any card played for actions to put on a false face (appear to the character as seductive, angry, friendly, frightened, or any other suitable emotion) is automatically considered trump. In melee combat—a bar fight, for instance—any card played for





the barmaid to wield an improvised weapon becomes trump as well. (See *Heroes of Steel* for details on improvised weapons such as chairs, tankards, or Tika's famous skillet.)

Heroes who begin work in a tavern or inn can adopt this role during play.

Disadvantages

Although working at a community's central gathering point has its advantages, it has its drawbacks also, particularly for a hero leading a double life—simple barmaid by day, daring rebel by night.

Whenever the hero encounters someone who frequents her inn or tavern in another setting, she must perform a Reason action to recognize him before he notices her. (This action's difficulty depends on how often the character has seen the hero.) If the player fails at this action, the character recognizes the barmaid, as follows:

- ❖ If she failed her target action score by 1 or 2 points, she looks vaguely familiar to him, but he isn't sure where he's seen her before.
- ❖ Failing the action by 3 to 7 points means the character knows that she doesn't belong here.
- ❖ Missing by 8 or more points tells the character exactly who the hero is and where he's seen her before.

The actions the character takes upon recognizing the hero will vary depending on the circumstances. A quick-thinking hero might be able to bluff her way out of the situation.

The 'Loyal Servant'

A hero with the "*loyal servant*" role works in the household of a high-ranking or wealthy enemy, so he can watch his foe's plans develop. More often than not, employers trust this hero implicitly, even if he is secretly a prime source of information for those who oppose them.

Although the hero might not know

how to use a sword properly, he leads a life more dangerous than most front-line soldiers. Not only does he risk being discovered as a traitor, but the loyal front he presents may make him a target for those who would hurt his master. Anyone who courts opposition from both the villains and those loyal to his own cause is truly playing a dangerous game.

Role-Playing

The "loyal servant" always seems friendly toward his master, as well as the family and any visitors to the house. Eager to please them, he always tries to stay one step ahead of their needs. This is only a facade, though. His friendliness gets him close to the action, and his desire to remain one step ahead of those he serves makes him appear indispensable.

Further, if a hero with this role is ever caught eavesdropping, or perhaps tailing a villain who recently visited his master, he has a fair chance of bluffing his way out of a potentially bad situation. Characters are prone to believe even a mildly convincing story that comes from their faithful servant.

Note: Because a "loyal servant" becomes familiar with virtually every detail of his master's life, the Narrator has an opportunity to give a villain a sympathetic side. For example, an oppressive, corrupt lord may be enacting his foul plots to protect his wife and child, whom he loves very much—he may even be a very gentle and loving parent. Another employer might beat his wife, torture prisoners routinely, and force his young son to perform weapon practices until the boy drops from exhaustion. In both examples, the villain may see his "loyal servant" as an assistant and a confidant. Each situation generates dilemmas that can create interesting role-playing situations.

Requirements

It takes mental stamina to seem friendly toward, supportive of, and

subservient to those one actually opposes (and perhaps even despises), so heroes with this role must have Spirit and Reason scores of at least 4.

Advantages

Heroes who act as servants become adept at eavesdropping, as well as listening for approaching footfalls while searching through documents on the master's desk. Any cards played for such surreptitious actions are considered trump.

A hero can acquire this role during play, however he must have had some prior acquaintance with his employer to establish the bond of trust.

Disadvantages

Beyond his immediate circle of secret allies outside his master's household, a "loyal servant" hero has difficulty convincing those who share his true sympathies that he is on their side. Whenever trying to deal with "good guy" characters, the hero must perform an *average Reason (Spirit)* action, opposed by the leader of those he seeks to convince of his true intentions. Mishaps might involve the hero being dismissed, imprisoned, or even attacked, depending on the situation.

The Street Performer

A fixture of seedy towns like Port o' Call on the New Sea and large cities like Gwynned in Northern Ergoth are *street performers*. They dance or play their instruments on corners and in plazas, hoping someone will reward their efforts with a few copper pieces. Men and women in equal numbers become performers; most heroes with this role can both play and dance.

Street performers are young: between 17 and 25, typically. They often work in pairs—one musician and one dancer—although sometimes larger groups join together in troupes to perform more elaborate works. The musician usually plays a flute or a

drum, or some other easily portable instrument, while the dancer(s) gracefully performs traditional routines ranging from the pseudo-religious (such as the famous "Mishakal's Lament") to the erotic (like the popular Ergothian dance "Huma and the Silver Dragon," performed by one male and one female dancer). There are hundreds of kinds of dances, inspired by everything from the ceremonies of Plains barbarians, to the lurching stumbles of drunken goblins, to the majestic flight of the kingfisher.


Some of the best street performers are asked to perform at the parties of merchants, and even the rare noble. This is how they make most of their living—they use their street routines to attract attention to their skill. Others provide private entertainment or companionship for lonely travelers who can afford such luxuries; these performers generally focus their repertoire around more exotic or erotic dances. A rare hero with this role makes his living entirely by performing on the street.

Street performers move in a wide variety of social circles and enter the homes and rooms of any number of rich and powerful people. It is not at uncommon for them to act as lookouts for thieves—with prearranged musical signals used as warnings—or for performers to "case" lavish homes for burglar associates.

Role-Playing

The street performers of Ansalon are some of the land's greatest musicians and dancers, and they know it. While pampered nobles might play at making music and bards use music as an excuse to spin tall tales of trips to the moon, street performers live the craft of dancing and creating music. Thus, when it comes to conversations about music and dance, these heroes seem quite haughty and inflexible in their opinions—except when speaking to a potential customer.





Note: Many street performers eventually go on to become bards, honing their crafts to the point where they get tired of the snobbish attitudes and the abuse of the upper classes. Further, the life of a bard is less physically taxing than that of a street performer. (See the bard's description on page 19.)

Requirements

Street performers get by on good looks and grace, not to mention a pleasant personality when dealing with an individual who might pay them for one night's work what they otherwise would make in a week. To adopt this role, a hero must have Presence and Agility scores of at least 4, with codes of "C" or better in each. Further, street performers must have Spirit codes of at least "C" as they genuinely put their heart and soul into their craft—even if many augment their income with the occasional less-than-respectable activity.

Advantages

Street performers excel both at playing instruments and dancing—unless the player's concept for his hero limits him to one or the other. Therefore, actions they attempt for playing small, portable instruments (Dexterity actions) or dancing (Presence or Agility actions) are always considered trump.

In fact, normally street performer heroes succeed at actions related to their craft automatically. They need only play cards when performing under the pressure of unusual circumstances—such as a command musical performance before Malys or a special dance atop the merlons of a battlement. Narrators might also call for card play when the dancer or musician wants to copy a work he has seen or heard performed once or when he decides to make something up on the fly.

Finally, a particularly charming street performer might be able to subtly extract information from an unwary lover. On a successful *easy*

Presence (Reason) action, the character inadvertently lets something slip.

A hero with the proper background can acquire this role during play.

Disadvantages

Street performers never enjoy a trump bonus for Presence actions to deal with middle- or upper-class characters. Although the rich folk of Ansalon's cities frequently draw upon these heroes to entertain at parties, they look down upon them at the same time, viewing them as having loose morals and no dedication to anything but money and maybe their so-called "art." In their prejudice, they believe that "serious" artists would not be forced to live in tenements or sleep in alleyways.

In other words, the wealthy don't mind using the street performers when convenient, but they don't want to be bothered with them at other times.

The Street Urchin

Ragged, unwashed, and on the edge of starvation, *street urchins* are living examples that life on Krynn is not fair. Many of these children have been abandoned by uncaring parents. Some have become lost in the chaos of this invasion or that, and still others are orphans with no relatives to raise them. A few of these lucky children find a caring soul to raise them properly, like Tika Waylan found in Otik Sandath, owner of the Inn of the Last Home during the War of the Lance. However, most street urchins must just survive as best they can. The more adventurous of these are the stock from which heroes are drawn.

Marsi, introduced in the adventure *Heroes of a New Age* in the FIFTH AGE boxed set, epitomizes the street urchin.

Role-Playing

More so than any other heroes, street urchins display their natures clearly, as the harsh realities of the world hammer them into shape. Whatever their

natures and demeanors, most urchins have learned to take care around strangers and trust only those they know well. Likewise, they help only those they know well—unless the assistance will buy them some food, clothes, a couple of coins, or a warm place to sleep. Not greedy or self-centered, street urchins just want to survive. And the best way to survive on the uncaring streets is to help your friends so they will help you.

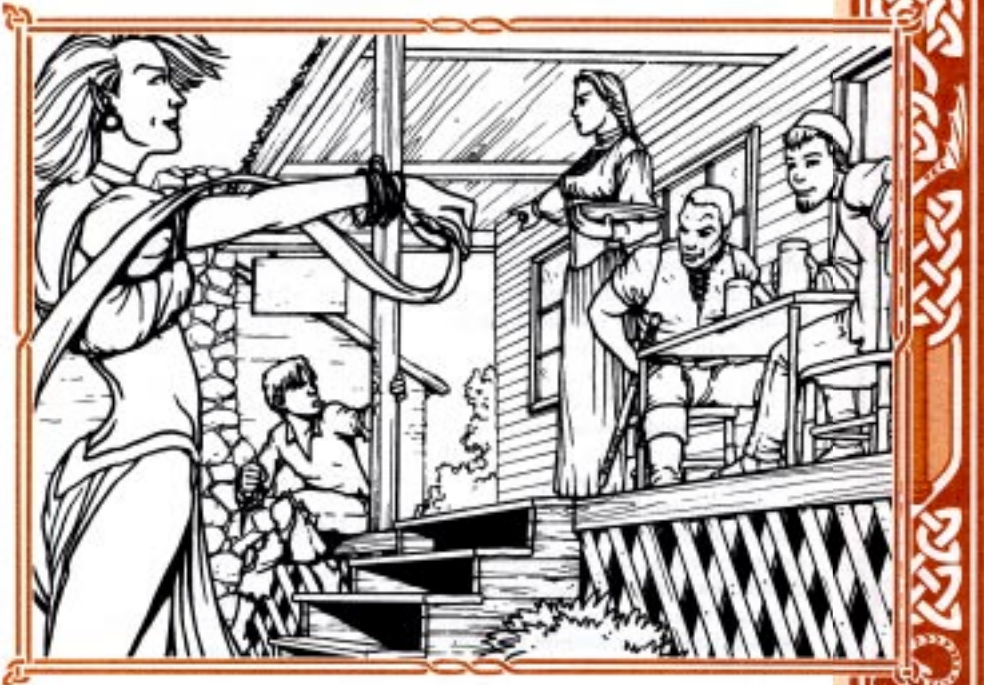
Street urchins tend to get involved with adventuring and covert activity—freedom fighting, spying, and thieving—for a number of reasons. Some like the pay. Others admire someone involved in such ventures, a role model or someone who reminds them of their parents. Perhaps the lifestyle is simply a way to keep their bellies full. The player of a street urchin hero must decide, with help from the Narrator, why his hero decides to accompany the adventuring group.

Note: As heroes, street urchins are still coming into their own. But, like all children, they must grow up.

Once the hero has accrued five total quests (or has reached the age of eighteen, whichever comes first), he must abandon the street urchin role and all that comes with it. He remains on good terms with the characters from his network of friends (see “Advantages”), but they no longer seem as willing to lend him assistance—he’s an adult now and can take care of himself. The hero must at this time adopt a new role, one that has grown out of his experiences during his quests.

Requirements

A street urchin may not begin play with more than three completed quests and should be younger than eighteen years of age. Further, the player of such a child hero must create a small tale to explain any ability codes higher than “C” at the start of play. (For instance, a kindly old mystic taught him the ways of the spirit before cruel city guards killed her.)



Advantages

Street urchin heroes have three things going for them: They know the streets of their town like the back of their hands, they have a network of friends they can draw upon for protection and support, and they spend much of their time beneath the notice of adults.

When they need to lose pursuers or just find a place to rest in their home city, street urchins can attempt the action below:

➤ Find a Hiding Place

Difficulty: Easy (4)
Action ability: Reason
Opposition ability: None

Comments: Success at this action means the street urchin recalls a good hiding spot nearby for himself and his companions. To determine how far away it is, the Narrator turns over a card from the Fate Deck. A One means the heroes make it to safety in one minute, while a Ten indicates the trip takes a full ten minutes.

The suit of the random draw might indicate the nature of the journey to the hiding place: Shields would allow safe passage, while Arrows would engage the heroes in a running battle along the way. The Narrator might instead let the card's suit determine the nature of the hideout or tell whether someone is already there: A Moons card links the spot to the powers of sorcery, while a Crowns card could let the group slip into a castle or manor house. **Mishap:** The heroes' enemies have followed them to the hideout.

Besides their knowledge of the city's secret nooks and crannies, street urchins have a network of friends and supporters they can draw upon for information and help. These folks range from other street urchins to street performers and kindly merchants. Few of these characters will endanger their lives for the hero, but they will lie for him, attempt to delay

someone chasing him, and perhaps even hide him.

Many characters, both Good and Evil, see street urchins only as living refuse on the city streets. In their arrogance, they find such heroes barely worth notice. Therefore, street urchins can potentially gather all kinds of tidbits of information, as adult characters speak more freely around them—even fail to notice their presence.

Finally, street urchins frequently have to live off what they can steal. Therefore, they enjoy a trump bonus when attempting Dexterity actions that involve pilfering small items or picking pockets. (See the "Pick a Pocket" action in Appendix Three of the *Book of the Fifth Age* in the FIFTH AGE boxed set.)

Disadvantages

Most heroes enjoy the limited protection that being a semipublic figure grants. However, this is not the case for the anonymous street urchins—few characters outside the urchin's network of friends will care whether he lives or dies. Therefore, any enemies a street urchin might make during his adventures will feel free to take their revenge with impunity.

Once the hero is known to have played a role in fouling up a character's carefully laid plans, any Presence action involving that character must always be at least *daunting*. A mishap at such an action means the character has tired of the street urchin's meddling and will try to murder him, either personally or through minions.

The role of street urchin must be part of a hero's original background; one cannot acquire it during play.

Middle-Class Roles

The middle classes of Ansalon include tradesmen, guildsmen, and landed gentry—common workers who often lead very uncommon lives.

The Guild Thief

Many thieves across Ansalon belong to a widespread guild, described in the sidebar on the next page. The behavior of these *guild thieves* is governed by the organization's Articles of Conduct, a code that contains almost three hundred points. All these guidelines feed into four main principles, however:

- ☞ Practice one's craft honorably.
- ☞ Steal only from those who have more than they need.
- ☞ Harm only those who would harm you or the defenseless.
- ☞ Defy oppressors.

Usha learned the ways of a Palanthas guild thief in *Dragons of Summer Flame*.

Role-Playing

A guild thief, ever proud of his ancient profession, sees no insult in someone calling him a thief. These heroes usually follow in the footsteps of their parents and have trained since childhood to enter the family occupation. Guild thieves are expert locksmiths, masters at building and disarming small mechanical traps, and almost as stealthy in cities as elves are in woodlands. Although they freely admit they rob, cheat, and steal, these heroes target only those who deserve such treatment according to their guilds Articles of Conduct.

Guild thieves tend to refer to themselves as "eveners." They seek out the extravagantly rich and teach them the folly of showing off their wealth by taking it from them. They identify those who would take away the freedoms of others and free the oppressed from their yoke by punishing the oppressors. In the process, guild thieves invariably gain for themselves a bit of wealth or power, thus making everyone a little more equal. Hence the nickname "eveners."

Many of these heroes hope to make life on Ansalon more pleasant for everyone in the long run—to reach a day when no one actively seeks to bet-

ter himself without thought or concern for his fellow beings. Members of thief guilds consider themselves needed now more than ever before, and their devotion to bringing freedom to Ansalon grows stronger every year.

Note: Guild thieves frequently adopt false roles, either to infiltrate the their foes' organizations or to conceal the fact that they make a living by stealing from and tormenting the powerful of Ansalon. (See "False Roles" on page 28.)

Requirements

Guild thieves train from childhood to serve as equalizers between the haves and the have-nots. Therefore, each guild member must have at least a "B" code in one or more of the following abilities: Dexterity, Reason, or Perception. This is not to say that guild thieves are all master marksmen or hedge-wizards (although many are). Instead, these code minimums indicate that years of practicing their trade have given guild thieves a high degree of manual dexterity from lockpicking or a keen mind from building and disarming intricate mechanical traps.

Further, guild thieves must have a nature derived from a card with a value of 5 or less.

Advantages

Guild thieves receive an automatic trump bonus when performing any thieflike actions that rely on Reason, Perception, or Dexterity. Examples include picking pockets, climbing walls, searching for traps, and picking locks. A hero might also include interpreting clues and interrogating a witness or rival, if the Narrator agrees.

Further, these heroes know a special sign language called "hand talk," which only other guild thieves know.

A hero with the proper connections can acquire this role during play.



Thief Guilds

Thief guilds in Ansalon are an ancient tradition, dating back to the early days of the Ergothian Empire almost three thousand years, ago. During the Age of Dreams, Emperor Ackal II attempted through law to limit the exploration and looting of ancient ogre ruins to the empire's growing ruling class. (See Chapter Four for details of Ergoth's history.) When adventures banded together to defeat this unjust law, the emperor's sheriffs took to calling their unions "guilds of thieves." In time, that's indeed what they became.

As corrupt Ergoth began to rot from within, the adventurers turned to banditry. By the time of the Rose Rebellion, which sundered the empire, the thief guilds had become a greater source of woe to citizens than were dishonest tax collectors and insane governors. However, deep in the guilds' mire of corruption were men and women of good hearts. Their names have long since been forgotten, but their legacy lives on. During or shortly after the Rose Rebellion, the thief guilds began to return to principles more in step with their founding precepts. Two millennia later, the thief guilds remain staunch opponents to dictatorial force everywhere on Ansalon.

The Guilds Today

In recent times, thief guilds have evolved to hold a specific place in society—not only in Ergoth, but across the continent. During the War of the Lance, for instance, many famous freedom fighters in dragonarmy territories belonged to thief guilds. The most renowned of these is the Silver Fox of Flotsam, an aging half-elf who now sits on the ruling council of that beleaguered city.

The guilds today are governed by Articles of Conduct dating from around the time of the Cataclysm, when the thieves of the day fought the oppression of Istar's Kingpriest. These Articles define guild thieves' behavior according to the ancient Ergothian tradition: to protect the common man from the abuses and excesses of his "betters."

In many places, however, the notion of thief guilds is not one the folk of Ansalon care to envision: Thieves just want to rob

whomever they like whenever they feel like it, commoners believe. Thus the guilds have become semisecret organizations in nearly every realm of Ansalon—except for Ergoth, where the organization remains more or less an institution. These covert thief guilds, autonomous chapters of a single organization, operate with a secrecy few other large groups can manage. Some examples of their activities include the following:

- The Thief Guild of Flotsam remains a strong supporter of the ruling coalition of goblins, gnolls, humans, and kender constantly trying to rebuild the city.
- Sanction's guild members have thrown in their lot with the Legion of Steel.
- Members of the Palanthas Thieves' Guild play a constant cat-and-mouse game with the Dark Knights, while robbing both them and the agents of Khelendros the Blue.

Guild thieves get along relatively well with the Legion of Steel; in fact, many people work actively for both factions. Members of both parties can usually set aside the philosophical differences between the ancient Ergothian ideals and the Legion's more modern principles when it is clear they seek the same goal.

A strong enmity exists between the guilds and the Solamnic Knighthood, however. The rivalry remains first a traditional one: Legends hold that it was guild members who opened Vinas Solamnius's eyes to the Evil of the empire he then served, yet the guilds receive no credit in historical accounts of the Rose Rebellion. Secondly, guild members take great exception to the Solamnics' penchant for proclaiming themselves symbols of moral virtue—a morality that they've forced upon other peoples time and again.

Scholars who have studied both the Solamnic Measure and the guilds' Articles of Conduct have found similarities leading them to suspect the documents have common roots. As citizens of Ergoth founded both organizations in order to further justice in Ansalon, this conclusion is perhaps not surprising. However, both guild members and Solamnics take great exception to the comparison and continue to oppose each other's pursuits.

Disadvantages

Most guild thieves act cocky and self-assured and seem possessed by a strong sense of purpose. This combination can lead them to act rashly, despite a general nature to the contrary. Whenever confronted with a blatant example of injustice or oppression (for example, a jewel-bedecked merchant throwing water in the face of a beggar who asked for a drink, then proceeding to beat him), the hero must attempt a *challenging Reason* action to resist taking immediate steps to stop the abuse, heedless of any danger that might arise from lack of planning.

The Merchant

From the Ergothian isles to the forested domain of the Green Dragon Beryl, commerce and trade have remained an important part of life in Ansalon. Even in this dark and chaotic time—dragons claiming large swaths of the land, Dark Knights once again trying to subjugate the populace, and new weather patterns making sea travel in the west nearly impossible—the *merchants* of Ansalon continue to ply their trades. By covering their caravan routes, merchants spread goods and knowledge and make cultural contacts across Ansalon.

At the same time that merchants enjoy a spot at the center of activity in a town—their business—they frequently find reason to travel far and wide in search of trade goods. Often they even carry news from distant lands and may even spy for the lords of a particular realm.

The dwarf Sonnus Ironmill, a Haven merchant, personified this role in the novel *Steel and Stone*.

Role-Playing

Merchant heroes are generally motivated by whatever will earn them money. Other factors may influence them as well, but without profit, merchants can't keep their businesses going. Therefore, any political sympa-

thies they may have must take a back seat to maintaining their livelihood.

Note: A merchant's vulnerable spot is his business. The Narrator can use threats to his establishment to generate adventures—anything from a smuggling mission to avoid unfair taxes to a battle against thugs trying to collect protection money from the heroes. The Narrator also can change the face of the game by dealing a crippling blow to the merchant's business, causing the hero's wealth score to fall 2 points until he rebuilds his livelihood, a process that leads to more adventures.

Requirements

Merchant heroes must have Perception, Presence, and Reason scores of 3 or higher to even hope to conduct successful business transactions.

Further, a merchant may not have derived his nature from a card with a white aura. This type of hero must remain somewhat cold-hearted to keep his business profitable.

Advantages

The primary advantage of playing a merchant hero is that he owns a small shop or possibly a caravan business. Together, the Narrator and the player should establish the nature and size of this business, as well as its number of employees and their personalities. This business can serve as a cover for the hero's secret activities or as a central meeting point for the heroes and their allies. The group can easily make contacts here.

Additionally, merchants always receive a trump bonus for actions involving trade, bartering, appraising, or haggling (usually Presence actions opposed by the character's Reason). This advantage can neutralize the racial Presence disadvantage for minoturs, elves, half-elves, and dwarves.

A hero with appropriate resources can acquire this role during play.



Disadvantages

Once again, because merchants concern themselves primarily with profit, they rarely bother with such sentimentalities as charity work or similar compassionate goals. Therefore, merchants never receive a trump bonus to Presence actions for a charitable or selfless goal.

The River Pirate

The massive Vingaard River has long served as a major trade vein in north-central Ansalon. And, of course, with commerce come thieves. Along the Vingaard, these thieves have sprung up from their Solamnian roots into a unique culture—that of *river pirates*.

Most river pirates live and die on their boats; these vessels represent to members of this culture what farms mean to Solamnian peasants. Unlike said peasants, however, pirates are strongly independent, recognizing no leader higher than the matriarch of a family. Basically, each riverboat operates independently, although families with more than one

vessel support each other in times of need. Occasionally, two or three generations may live on the same boat, as pirates tend to marry at an early age. However, the community will not treat pirate heroes as adults until they have become masters of their own riverboats.

From their base in the ruined town of Vingaard, the pirates tax merchants plying the Vingaard River between Kalaman and points south. Most traders would rather pay the tariffs than risk attack.

Role-Playing

The independent-minded river pirates all respect the matriarchs of their families, as well as the matriarchs' husbands. However, these heroes have no use or patience for those who try to lord over others based on the false authority conveyed by titles or by the steel-shod weight of armed force.

With the coming of the Great Dragons, river pirates—like all peoples—face an even greater force of repression. Though they levy no armies against the dragons, they operate several “under-



ground” routes leading from the realms of Khellendros and Fenalysten to free lands. Further, ships carrying supplies or troops meant to oppose a dragon lord often fall under the protection of every riverboat along the way. (Of course, the vessels still are subject to tax.)

Considering their free-spirited nature, though, not all river pirates oppose the dragons. Many remain neutral, some hire themselves out to the highest bidder, and others pretend to take a side, all the while serving as secret moles. It’s never easy to identify a riverboat’s pirate crew as friend or foe.

This fact has led many powerful folk—both Good and Evil—to label the river pirates a complication that ought to be removed. Even their dedication to exterminating the undead river pirates of Nightlund has not offset this troublesome reputation. (See Nightlund’s entry in Chapter Two of *Dusk or Dawn* in the FIFTH AGE boxed set for details.)

Requirements

River pirate heroes—neither the purest nor the vilest of individuals—should have a nature derived from a card with a red aura.

Advantages

Since they grew up on riverboats, these pirate heroes enjoy a trump bonus for all actions relating to operating a vessel on the relatively calm waters of a river. True, the Vingaard stretches to more than a mile wide at points, so it can get quite choppy. However, the nautical skills of its pirates cannot rival those of sea barbarians or mariners when it comes to the open sea.

Disadvantages

Due to their untrustworthy reputation, river pirate heroes never gain a trump bonus for Presence actions to deal with people outside their own culture.

In addition, those not born into the culture of the Vingaard river pirates cannot acquire this role during play.

Upper-Class Roles

The upper social classes—members of the aristocracy, nobility, and royalty—comprise a fairly small segment of the cross-section of Ansalon. Still, many of their number involve themselves in subtle opposition to the forces of Evil, while others, remaining true only to themselves, sometimes stand against the forces of Good.

Ambassador


Few people generally *want* to wage war. It is a costly activity, both in lives and in steel pieces, and by its end, whatever the parties fought over likely has been destroyed or severely devalued. Now that gods no longer remain to spark wars, free realms seek more and more to avoid conflicts with each other—and especially with the Great Dragons. This attitude has led to an increase in exchanges of emissaries among governments and multinational fighting forces, like the Knights of Takhisis or the Legion of Steel.

The *ambassador* hero dedicates his life to serving his realm or cause through words rather than deeds. Of course, few heroes are all talk and no action; ambassadors specialize in underhanded exploits, such as spying, thieving, kidnapping, or even murder. Such duplicitous heroes, particularly those in the service of Dragon Realms, can smile while getting ready to backstab those at the negotiation table.

Role-Playing

While ambassadors believe in the cause or nation they support, most have enough experience to realize that alliances shift and political outlooks change. Therefore, in public they express their personal opinions very carefully. They always appear thoughtful and polite, even to individuals who oppose their own stance. Masters of oratory, ambassadors usually consider physical conflict the last option when it comes to resolving differences. Further,





these experts at character reading can sometimes even spot a foe claiming to be a friend.

Requirements

Ambassador heroes must have a demeanor derived from a card with a red aura. Additionally, they need at least a “C” code in Presence.

Advantages

Ambassadors enjoy a trump bonus when engaging in negotiations with heads-of-state, lords, or military officers (Presence or Reason actions, depending on the circumstances).

In addition, ambassadors may attempt the action below while conversing with a character or hero to figure out what he is really thinking:

➤ Discern True Thoughts

Difficulty: Varies
Action ability: Perception
Opposition ability: Reason

Comments: Success at this action gives the hero an insight into another’s true intentions and feelings by observing his body language. The difficulty depends on the hero’s distance from the subject:

- 🍷 *Easy* (4) at melee range.
- 🍷 *Challenging* (12) at near missile range.
- 🍷 *Daunting* (16) at far missile range.

Naturally, the hero must be able to see the character in order to attempt this action. Narrators may increase the difficulty to account for dim lighting or other visual obstructions.

Mishap: The subject senses the hero’s suspicions and may react with varying degrees of annoyance.

Heroes with appropriate backgrounds may adopt this role during play.

Disadvantages

Ambassadors never enjoy a trump bonus for Presence or Reason actions to interact with lower-class individuals

(wealth of 1 to 3). Such “common” folk have seen too much hardship from smooth-talking nobles like the ambassador to easily trust anything he says.

The fop

Even in a world as harsh as Ansalon has become in recent centuries, some men and women manage to grow soft inside their fancy mansions and walled palaces.

Fops are decadent, silly hedonists who pose a great source of annoyance to warrior nobles. They don’t care about politics and nebulous notions like “right” and “wrong” Instead, fops worry about fashions, social gatherings, and writing poetry—which they recite frequently, whether their audience wishes to hear it or not. They often engage in trysts for the romance of it, and they keep a perfumed handkerchief nearby to ward off any offending odors.

Heroes who adopt this role are actually cut of much sterner stuff than it would seem at first. They adopt this pampered, useless air merely to make potential enemies think them harmless. In actuality, the mask of the fool hides a keen mind, well-honed skills, and dedication to the cause he supports.

Role-Playing

Fops tell lots of tasteless jokes, brag about famous people they’ve met, and find reason to recite bad poetry on almost every occasion. They swoon often and frequently faint when someone levels threats at them, waving their perfumed handkerchiefs theatrically as they slump into a nearby chair.

In all, the fop is a comic figure—except when it comes time for real action. Then the hero seems to transform into a grim, amazingly skillful individual whom opponents invariably regret having tangled with.

Requirements

Fops are highly capable heroes hiding behind a veil of incompetence. Thus, such heroes cannot have any ability



scores lower than 5, and at least four of their codes must be “B” or better.

Advantages

Most characters (even most heroes) consider fops mere bubble-heads. People act less cautious around fops than they otherwise would—even regarding activities they wish to keep secret.

Ideally, the Narrator should let clues slip at moments appropriate to the story. To determine randomly whether a character gets careless around a hero he views as a buffoon, the player can draw a card from the Fate Deck: A card with a white or red aura means the hero gains some useful information—the character makes a revealing comment or leaves evidence relating to his activities where the fop can find it. A black-aura result, on the other hand, indicates the character keeps his wits about him. Turning over the Ten of Dragons might mean the character becomes suspicious of the hero, perhaps beginning to suspect that his foppishness is just an act.

Disadvantages


Just like the villains do, most potential allies consider fop heroes just empty-headed fools. Should the fop reveal his true capabilities, of course, the ally will never doubt him again.

However, if the hero lets too many people in on his secret, word of his duplicity will get out. Eventually, so many people will learn of his facade that villains will act particularly careful around him. Therefore, if the hero shows his true nature to anyone but a select few other heroes and characters, he loses the role’s advantage.

Heroes cannot acquire this role during play unless they have just moved to a new realm where no one knows them.

The ‘Staunch Supporter’

Since the Second Cataclysm, events have swept up Ansalon in wave upon wave of change. Dynasties have toppled and entire nations have vanished. Often, nobles and royals find them-



selves cast aside, landless, penniless, and hunted. Others have managed to roll with the punches, retaining their holdings and social standing by immediately becoming vocal and active supporters of the new regime—even that of a dragon or the Dark Knights.

The “*staunch supporter*” sticks close to the realm’s ruler, quick with advice and even quicker to suppress even the slightest whisper against the regime. The ruler, depending on his nature, may view such a hero as either a sycophantic lapdog or as a loyal adviser, worthy of both friendship and trust.

One might think these men and women have traded in their principles for wealth and comfort. However, those who adopt this role actually have made deception a way of life. They have put everything on the line for their principles by pretending to be all that they are not.

The Qualinesti Speaker of the Sun, Gilthas, exemplifies this role.

Role-Playing

This hero always seems friendly toward his overlord, ever eager to please and assist him. This is only a facade, though. His friendly appearance stems from his desire to stay close to the action, so he can secretly thwart the lords’ plans.

Requirements

It takes a fair amount of mental stamina to act friendly toward those one actually opposes—perhaps even despises. So, heroes who adopt this role must have Spirit and Reason scores of at least 4.

Advantages

A “*staunch supporter*” always enjoys a trump bonus when dealing with the servants and minions of the ruler he supposedly supports.

Disadvantages

This hero has difficulty convincing those who share his true sympathies that he is on their side. Whenever trying to deal with the “good guys,” the

hero must perform a *challenging Reason (Spirit)* action, opposed by the leader of those he seeks to convince of his true intentions. Mishaps range from potential imprisonment to an attack, depending on the situation.

Heroes cannot acquire this role during play unless they find themselves in the circumstances of entering a realm with a new government.

Other Roles

Not all roguish roles depend on a hero’s social status. Some are open primarily to heroes of a certain race, while others can apply to any hero at all.

The Bard

Where learned men such as those in Astinus’s order of Aesthetics in Palanthis devote their lives to chronicling the major events of history in books, the *bards* of Ansalon wander from village to village collecting songs and local folktales. Historians concern themselves with kings and truth, while bards pay more attention to the common man and ripping-good yarns.

Bards—an important but seldom recognized part of society—rarely appear in big cities like Palanthis or Solanthis. They leave those stomping grounds to the younger street performers, and hence often go unnoticed by “authoritative” (and urban) historians.

Ansalon’s bards come in many different stripes. In the desert land of Khur and the polar Icewall Glacier they often serve as tribal shamans as well as storytellers, lending a moral significance to most of their tales. Bards of Abanasinia and the Plains of Dust specialize in romances and love ballads. Many popular songs of the last fifty years revolve around the War of the Lance, a time now viewed as an age of grand heroism.

In Solamnia, the Estwilde, and among minotaurs and goblins, the bards—generally former street performers—specialize in supposedly

historical sagas filled with exaggerated accounts of heroic deeds. Kender and gnomish bards create tales and songs even more fantastic. Popular kender tunes include:

- ❖ “Toede of Flotsam,” which chronicles a trip to the Abyss and back, supposedly taken by the aging hobgoblin general-turned-poet-philosopher-ruler;
- ❖ “Go for the Toe,” the tale of how Hero of the Lance Tasslehoff Burrfoot defeated the Chaos god by stabbing him in the big toe; and
- ❖ “The Kender Cleric of Chemosh,” a tale of a kender hero who bluffed his way in and out of Sancton at the height of the Dark Queen’s power during the War of the Lance.

Bards in Ergoth and Saifhum study at bard colleges (see sidebar, next page), where they learn something from the repertoire of all the other bardic types.

The elf Quevalin Soth, mentioned in Chapter One of *Dusk or Dawn*, is one of Analson’s best-known bards.

Role-Playing

Bardic heroes can be varied as the songs they sing. The most famous bards can command hundreds of steel pieces for a single night’s performance at a lord’s party, while others wander the countryside, telling tales in exchange for food and a place to sleep. All of them, however, share a love for storytelling and an almost insatiable curiosity about legendary sites, fabled heroes, and current events.

Almost without fail, these heroes love to gossip even more than old maids. For this reason, small, isolated villages welcome them with open arms, viewing their tales as news—even if they hold only a fraction of truth.

Generally speaking, these heroes have gregarious and outgoing personalities. No bard has ever been known to turn away an eager audience unless he had pressing business elsewhere. Even the richest, best-paid bards give spon-

aneous performances to children on street corners or entertain a village of poor peasants for free. A bard’s life is all about the telling of the tale, and the wonderment, sorrow, or amusement that goes hand-in-hand with it.

Note: As bards travel from place to place, groups like the Legion of Steel often recruit them to carry messages from cell to cell.

Requirements

To sing their songs and tell their tales with passion, bards must have a minimum Spirit score of 4. In addition, they require a Presence score of at least 5 to hold an audience’s attention.

Advantages

As inveterate travelers and lore-lovers, bards most likely know a little bit about every important or mystic place on Ansalon. While visiting a significant site, a bardic hero enjoys a trump bonus to any Reason action he attempts to recall stories or songs he’s heard about the place (the Narrator determines the action’s difficulty).

Additionally, these effective storytellers can hold an audience virtually in thrall with their tales:

➤ Enthral an Audience

Difficulty: Varies
Action ability: Presence
Opposition ability: Perception

Comments: Succeeding at this action while telling a story or performing a song means that characters within earshot become absolutely engrossed. During the performance, they fail to pay attention to minor events around them—such as heroes sneaking into an off-limits room, picking pockets, or quietly abducting someone at the edge of the crowd. The Narrator determines the difficulty according to the circumstances. The listener who would be hardest to distract (highest Perception, acute senses, etc.) provides the opposition.



The Bard College

Ergoth is one of the few realms where bards receive formal training beyond a mere apprenticeship. The small Bard College, dating back to the days of the Quevalin dynasty, still stands today in the town of Lancton.

For many centuries now, the Bard College has admitted no more than ten students at any one time. As part of the six-year program, students commit to memory hundreds of legends, songs, and epic poems and become proficient in a variety of musical instruments.

Although the foundation of this training program is centuries old, the school's Master Bards convene to update the curriculum every twelve years. They drop songs and legends that have become so widespread even the buffoons that pass for goblin bards can recite them accurately and add several that have emerged during the decade just past. The result is an ever-growing repertoire that preserves ancient tales without growing stagnant.

With Ergoth re-emerging as a cultural center, other realms may well attempt to create colleges that follow this model. Istar attempted to do so in the century before its destruction and, in fact, allowed only those bards formally trained at schools approved by the King-priest to give public performances. Such past efforts ultimately failed, however, as free-spirited bards refused to limit themselves to an accepted canon of works. Even some Ergothian bards reject their own college but, much like thief guilds (see page 12), it remains a part of their culture.

Some travelers note with surprise that the cheerful, independent mariners of Saifhum have a bard college in their capital of Sea Reach whose organization mirrors the Ergothian model (though the curricula differ). Scholars call this institution a holdover from the years just after the first Cataclysm, when Ergothian expatriates arrived in the Blood Sea to settle this isle alongside the surviving Istarans already there.

Mishap: The listeners find the bard's rendition unappealing or in poor taste. Their exact reaction depends on their disposition before the performance started. Friendly characters merely chide the hero, while hostile ones may attack him. Narrators can determine the listeners' reactions using the aura of a random draw from the Fate Deck.

Heroes with the proper training can adopt this role during play, although those from Ergoth or Saifhum should first attend their realm's bard college.

Disadvantages

Like their kindred spirits, the street performers, bards are frequently looked down upon by the rich and powerful. Although these heroes may perform at parties and festivals-sometimes for enormous sums-many Ansalonians disapprove of their lack of roots.

Consequently, bards never enjoy a trump bonus for Presence actions (other than when performing) involving those with a wealth of 8 or higher.

The Con Artist

Certain individuals are gifted with the ability to offer convincing theatrical performances, to head the masses, or to make profound arguments on the strength of their personality alone.

Some such folk become entertainers or politicians, using their skills at least partially to benefit others. On the other hand, some choose to use their talents for purely selfish means. These individuals become con artists.

Con artists make their living by creating scams, playing sleight-of-hand tricks, and preying on the superstitions of the ignorant. These tricksters devote themselves to swindling up a fortune, copper by copper. Sorcerers dislike their phony magic tricks, mystics take offense at their false spiritual claims, healers resent their take salve, warriors distrust their underhanded ways and thieves hate them for using their

con games to steal from *them*.

Tika Waylan Majere's father, Alleran Waylan, was a con artist who targeted only rich lords.

Role-Playing

Happy-go-lucky sorts at heart, most con artists view the world in the context of what they can squeeze out of it. A rare few focus their efforts only on those who can afford to lose their money, such as lords in their opulent palaces, but most five little or no thought to whom they con. Of course, these con artists stand at the top of their fields and often spend hundreds of steel pieces to plan a heist that will net them thousands of steel pieces. These elite can pick and choose their targets at leisure. As con artist heroes represent the cream of the crop, most of them are too big to take a peasant's last copper.

A discussion of staging cons appears in Chapter Two.

Requirements

Con artists must have a Presence code of "B" or better to seem trustworthy while running their cons. Additionally, they cannot have a nature drawn from a card with a white aura. Even the most conscientious con artist, one who targets only other blackguards, isn't *that* sensitive toward others.

Advantages

Heroes with this role have a way of making others feel at ease, easily earning their trust. Con artists enjoy a trump bonus to any Presence action they attempt to convince a mark they really are selling bottled dragon breath-or whatever their con of the day. (This benefit cancels out racial disadvantages regarding Presence actions.)

Inspired heroes can acquire the role of a con artist during play.

Disadvantages

Once characters discover what the con artist does for a living, they will find it

hard to trust him again-this may apply to other heroes, too. When dealing with characters wise to his games, the con artist receives no trump bonus for Presence actions. (Races that normally do not receive a trump bonus to Presence actions involving other races instead suffer a -3 action penalty for such actions.)

The Displaced Noble

With all the upheaval Ansalon has seen in recent years, many nobles and royals have found themselves stripped of land and title. Some of these people are kind-hearted folk who refused to submit to evil overlords, while others are greedy oppressors forced to flee in the face of peasant uprisings. Many such *displaced nobles* hope to some day reclaim their land and title. Others just try to adjust to their new lot in life while keeping themselves and their families safe.

The dark elf and former Silvanesti Queen Alhana Starbreeze is an example of a displaced noble in the Fifth Age.

Role-Playing


A hero with this role once enjoyed a much better station in life. He frequently attempts to issue orders to those now "above" him and occasionally may even act imperious with other heroes. More often than not, the hero quickly realizes his mistake and apologizes. As he has seen everything his family owned taken away, he wants to make sure to keep what few comrades and allies he has left.

Note: Many displaced noble heroes—like the woman pictured on page 17—choose to assume one of the upper-class roles described earlier as a false role (see that section on page 29).

Requirements

Heroes with this role may not have a wealth greater than 6. Once, they might have had a higher score, but those days are gone. The player and Narrator can either choose the hero's former social





status or determine it through a random draw from the Fate Deck:

♠ *Card value of 1 to 2:* Aristocrat (7).

♠ *Card value of 3 to 4:* Nobility (8).

♠ *Card value of 5 to 6:* Royalty (9+).

♠ *Card values above 6:* A wealth score equal to the face value.

Advantages

The hero still has a few highly placed sympathizers in the region he or his family used to rule. The Narrator and player should define these sympathizers, who can offer any reasonable aid to the hero and his friends as long as it doesn't endanger them or their status.

In addition, regardless of his current standing, the hero gains an automatic trump bonus when assuming the guise of an individual of his former social status.

At the Narrator's option, the displaced noble ultimately can regain his lost social status. Accomplishing this goal should be the result of several quests.

Disadvantages

Just as some folks want to help the hero, others want him dead. At least once per quest, the displaced noble should come face to face with an agent of his enemies, or perhaps find some sign of their continued interest in destroying him. This need not turn into a combat scene—it might not even be a life-and-death situation—but it should feel tense and threatening. A hero's enemies may range from nobles who betrayed him to peasants once oppressed by his family.

A hero may adopt this role during play only if circumstances in the campaign robbed him of his birthright.

The Handler

Of all the types of kender, one is admired above all by his fellows. The kender themselves don't really have a name for such an individual, except perhaps "role model" or "hero." The rest of Ansalon, however calls him a *handler*.

Moreso than any others of his race, this hero always seems to know when to seek adventure, where to find neat stuff, and how to extract himself from trouble. He is truly a kender's kender.

Most even-tempered individuals know kender don't steal purposely—they just forget what is and isn't theirs. As with all kender, curiosity and an insatiable hunger for new experiences motivate handlers to action. They prove more capable than most kender at satisfying their curiosity, however: It is a rare lock or magical ward that a handler can't get around. Once he sets his heart on obtaining an object, he invariably will get his hands on it—unless something more interesting comes along, of course.

Role-Playing

While kender handlers live to purloin, they do not purloin to live. Unlike thieves and bandits, handlers do not act out of greed, but out of curiosity. The more forbidden and protected an item is, the more curious the handler becomes.

Once he has obtained and examined it, however, he often loses interest. Thereafter, he may absent-mindedly lose the item or pass it along to friends with an interest in such things. (This is why the Legion of Steel makes a concerted effort to befriend kender: One never knows when a handler might tire of a set of secret battle plans he has secured from a Knight of Takhisis.) A handler has absolutely no interest in the financial value of an item. An ornate brass-plated clay statue will hold his attention far longer than a priceless but boring raw diamond.

Tasslehoff Burrfoot was a notorious handler. (Just ask anyone who ever met this legend what he lost!)

Requirements

Although not all kender are handlers, all handlers are kender. As only true or afflicted kender may adopt this role, they must meet the basic requirements

for that race, as outlined in Chapter One of the *Book of the Fifth Age*. Additionally, in order to be a handler, a hero must have a score of 8 or better in both Agility and Dexterity.

Advantages

Regardless of his actual background, the hero is considered nobility (wealth 8) when interacting with kender who know him—they try to please him in pretty much any way they can. He also enjoys a trump bonus for Presence actions directed at such kender.

Whenever the handler meets a new group of kender, his player turns over a card from the Fate Deck to see whether they recognize him. (Any kender who recognize him treat him as detailed above.) Drawing a card with a white aura means the new kender know him by sight. A red aura indicates that they recognize his name, while a black aura suggests that they are unfamiliar with him. Of course, handlers who don't want to be recognized can disguise themselves with average *Reason* (*Perception*) actions. They can also attempt average *Presence* (*Perception*) actions to deny that they are who the new kender think they are.

Handlers also receive the advantages listed for their race in Chapter One of the *Book of the Fifth Age*.

Disadvantages

While handlers are treated like heroes among their own kind, most other folk are less than thrilled with them. Once a handler has been identified as such by a community of nonkender, he no longer enjoys a trump bonus for Presence actions and he suffers a -2 penalty to all his action scores there. Furthermore, innkeepers and merchants will keep an extra close eye on the handler and overcharge him to make up for any items he has “handled” while in their establishment. Regardless of the handler's background, his effective social status falls to that of a peasant (wealth 2).

To see whether others recognize a handler for what he is, the player turns over a card from the Fate Deck. Drawing a Dragons card means someone in the community has either witnessed him “handling” or has, by a strange coincidence, encountered the hero elsewhere.

In most cases, recognition proves merely inconvenient for the kender and his friends—for instance, the local law follows them around during their visit. However, if the heroes find themselves in a town harboring a group of covert Knights of Takhisis, a clandestine circle of Solamnic Knights, or (worst of all) a gang of cutthroats about to conduct a major heist, the heroes may find themselves in grave danger: All three of these groups would rather not risk a handler, renowned for his ability to get at things hidden, getting wind of their activities.

Handlers also receive the kender racial disadvantages. Heroes can't adopt this role during play—handlers are born, not bred.


The healer

For millennia in Ansalon, gods granted their priests the power to create miracles of healing. But at the end of the Age of Might, they sent the Cataclysm down upon the corrupt land. It took more than three hundred years for the gods to return, only to remain a scant thirty years before abandoning their world again—this time to save the people rather than punish them.

Thanks to the long periods without divine healing assistance, *healers* have become fairly common in Ansalon. Villages have at least one man or woman who can effectively treat injuries and cure certain ailments. Cities may have five, ten, or even a dozen such physicians. No army or mercenary company marches without its doctor.

These heroes range from dirt poor to filthy rich and from obscure in stature to relatively famous. Of course, they vary just as greatly in talent and skill. Some healers seem like true miracle workers able to heal any injury





short of regenerating diseased organs, while others are merely incompetent fools whose cures often prove worse than the ailments.

Stunbog from the novel *Murder in Tarsis* exemplifies this concept of healer.

Role-Playing

Heroes with this role devote their lives to easing pain and suffering. Needless to say, some healers seem more selfless than others. Many heal the sick and injured to assuage guilty consciences, while others—always seeking to be well compensated—treat only the wealthy or those who pay in advance.

Requirements

Healers must attune themselves to the needs of their patients and have a working knowledge of common ailments and treatments. Therefore, heroes must have at least a “C” code in Perception and Reason to play this role.

However, healers may never have Strength and Dexterity codes better than “B.” These heroes spend so much time healing wounds inflicted by melees and missile weapons, they have little desire to learn to use them with skill.

Heroes need *not* have access to the mystic sphere of healing for this role.

Advantages

For actions involving the treatment of injuries, wounds, and diseases, healers always enjoy a trump bonus (Dexterity actions to apply splints, Reason or Perception actions to diagnose an illness).

Disadvantages

More than most heroes, healers shy away from inflicting harm in combat. Therefore, they never enjoy a trump bonus when attacking an opponent to cause serious injury, either magically or with weapons. This disadvantage does not apply in nonlethal combat, however (as described in Chapter Three of *Night and Day* from *Heroes of Steel*).

A healer’s in-depth training prevents most heroes from acquiring this role during play.

The Legionnaire Scout

Perhaps the least understood figures in the Legion of Steel are the *Legionnaire scouts*. Folks say that in the wilderness these heroes—expert woodsmen and trackers—can be found only when they wish it. However, they feel equally at home in urban settings. They can skulk in the shadows like murderous cutthroats or pass themselves off as merchants or locals with little effort.

These scouts serve as the eyes and ears of the Legion of Steel. Before the Order prepares an assault or establishes a presence in a new town, its scouts arrive on the scene. They skillfully note weak spots in an enemy’s defenses, determine a local commander’s or lord’s secret advisers, and identify potential sources of support and recruits. They might pose as Knights of Takhisis or some equally unsavory types in an effort to become intimately familiar with an enemy organization. These scouts face the challenge of making friends among the Legion’s enemies, learning as much as possible about their plans, and then betraying them.

Role-Playing

Generally, Legionnaire scouts are withdrawn and private people. They don’t make true friends easily because they tend to distrust others—those who regularly betray people find it hard to shake the feeling that someone’s going to do the same to them. As long as the scout keeps everyone at arm’s length, however, the betrayal will never come.

Requirements

Needless to say, a hero must belong to the Legion of Steel in order to play this role. The Legion requires its members to have a demeanor and nature drawn from cards with values of 6 or less. In addition, a scout cannot derive his nature from a card with a white aura.

As a full Legionnaire, a scout must have a reputation of Adventurer or above (less experienced Legionnaires are still in training). He should not have a wealth score beyond 5, as the Legion's goals do not involve amassing personal riches.

The scout must have scores of 3 or better in all his abilities, and a Perception code of no less than "B." Because this hero would rather skulk in the background than serve as a leader, he needs a Presence code of "C" at maximum.

Advantages

Every card played by a Legionnaire scout trying to conceal himself in an urban or forest setting is automatically considered trump. Additionally, the scout always enjoys a trump bonus to track an animal or an individual in natural surroundings.

The scout, more adept than most heroes at adopting facades, can acquire any false role he chooses, disregarding the normal limitations mentioned in the "False Roles" section on page 29.

Like all Legionnaires, the scout must train an apprentice: a character of Unknown reputation with scores and codes each 1 point or rating below the hero's own. This character—essentially a second hero for the player—assists the scout in his Legion missions as part of his training until he becomes a Novice.

Heroes with the proper background may acquire this role during play.

Disadvantages

The slightly paranoid air about a Legionnaire scout makes him a less-than-inspirational leader. Thus, he may never gain a trump bonus for Presence actions that involve leadership attempts.

Having an apprentice has its drawbacks as well as its good points. The scout must support the apprentice out

of his own wealth and is responsible for turning him into a fully trained Legionnaire. While he might not want to take the apprentice with him on the most dangerous undercover missions, he mustn't neglect him, either. When the Narrator deems the hero's overprotection is hindering his apprentice's training, the player must attempt an *average Presence* (*Presence*) action, opposed by the apprentice character, to prevent the youngster from quitting the Legion. Failure at the action means

the scout's player must immediately turn over the top card of the Fate Deck and reduce his hero's Presence score by one-third the value of the card (rounded up), to represent his loss of face in the organization. Drawing a Dragons card means the hero loses a category of reputation as well. The Legionnaire scout faces the same random draw if he lets his apprentice die in the line of duty.

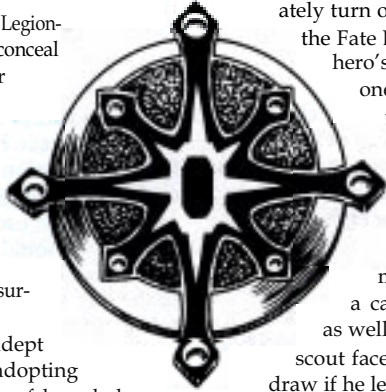
A disadvantage of all Legionnaires is that their great rivals, the Knights of Takhisis, usually execute any members of the Legion they capture.

The Qualinesti Rebel

Since the Summer of Chaos, Qualinesti has been an occupied land. First, it was conquered by the Knights of Takhisis, then by the Green Peril. The office of the Speaker of the Sun has become but a mouthpiece for the land's oppressors.

Many elves simply hope that time will wash away their hardships. Others fight back. *Qualinesti rebels* take up weapons to drive the enemy from their land—or at least make the occupation as costly and difficult possible.

Porthios of House Solostaran, one-time Speaker of the Sun, now leads a band of Qualinesti rebels.



Role-Playing

In the Fifth Age, one might encounter many different shades of the Qualinesti freedom fighter: the disgusted mother who lost a child to the abuses of the Dark Knights; the idealistic youth who wants to drive out the invaders so his people can act as masters of their own fate again; and battle-hardened veterans who have seen more brutality than any elf ever should. The two unifying elements among all these character types are their hatred for Dark Knights and dragons, and their desire to return Qualinesti to elven control at virtually any cost.

Requirements

As heroes with this role all belong to the race of Qualinesti elf or half-elf, they must meet the basic requirements for those races as described in Chapter One of the *Book of the Fifth Age*.

Advantages

Qualinesti rebels form part of an underground network of warriors and

rogues dedicated to freeing the elves from bondage. Much of this network actually exists beyond the boundaries of Qualinesti, where elves and half-elves secure weapons and supplies they then smuggle into the nation.

This hero knows a variety of secret signs and recognition codes that allow him to contact other members of the resistance inside or outside of Qualinesti. He may contact any of his freedom fighter acquaintances automatically; the hero knows a number of resistance members equal to twice his total completed quests. (The Narrator and player should detail these contacts together).

Further, if a freedom fighter wants to contact resistance members in unfamiliar areas, he can seek out favorable locations—a seedy bar in a city’s elven neighborhood, for example—and use the secret signs. The player should then turn over the top card of the Fate Deck. If the value of the card he draws equals or falls below the hero’s current Quests score,



he has successfully contacted another resistance member. (The Narrator can use the card's aura, portrait, or inscription to determine the other freedom fighter's disposition.)

Qualinesti rebels also receive the advantages listed for their race in Chapter One of the *Book of the Fifth Age*. Elf or half-elf heroes can acquire this role during play.

Disadvantages

Freedom fighters lead brutal lives. They are engaged in a guerrilla war where neither side takes prisoners. And, on top of everything else, these elves often find themselves opposing their own neighbors or family members who chose to either support the Green Dragon or to remain neutral.

One cannot lead such a life and remain unaffected. After completing two quests in which the Qualinesti rebel has faced other elves in mortal combat, his nature undergoes a change. To reflect these harrowing experiences, the player must select a new nature for his hero from a card whose face value exceeds that of the card previously used. This rule simulates the progression many freedom fighters go through—they start out as idealistic souls but end up bitter and full of hate.

Qualinesti rebels also receive their normal racial disadvantages.

The Spellfilch

Recent years have seen the emergence of a new stripe of thief, who draws upon sorcery and mysticism to increase his thieving skill. From spells that make victims temporarily forget a robbery to castings that make walls as insubstantial as air, these *spellfilches* devote their arcane talents to helping them make a living off other people's property.

Role-Playing

The reasons for thievery vary from thief to thief; one might discover

virtually as many different motivations as there are thieves. Heroes with this role generally focus their efforts on stealing from high-ranking Evil characters.

In general, thieves seem a self-assured bunch. However, the magical skill of a spellfilch usually makes him ten times as cocky as the average thief. Many of them leave "signatures" behind at the scenes of their crimes. For example, one infamous spellfilch known as the Ice Lady takes her name from the tiny, intricately carved ice figurines of an elf maiden she always leaves at her robbery sites.

These heroes generally know their limitations, but they invariably try to take charge of any group they join. A spellfilch knows he's the best there is.

Note: Most thieves do not steal from friends and allies. Realizing that everyone needs someone to draw upon in times of need, these heroes should never intentionally alienate those who could lend them such support.

Requirements

Spellfilches must have at least a "B" code in Reason or Spirit and a Dexterity score of at least 4.

Furthermore, the player must define his hero's "signature." It should be something small and relatively simple yet entirely distinctive, to show the world who committed the crime.


Advantages

Any card played for the hero to use a spell in thief activities—such as picking locks, disarming traps, and so on—is considered automatic trump.

Disadvantages

Due to their flamboyant nature, spellfilches tend to make enemies. One such enemy doggedly tries hunting the hero down. Although this character might not know what the hero looks like, he may nonetheless close by following the trail of signature





crimes. The Narrator and player should work together to determine this pursuer's identity.

Heroes can adopt this role during play only after previously playing a different roguish role.

The Thug

Thugs form the backbone of any criminal organization, but they also can prove violent and cunning enough to get by on their own. These folks literally would just as soon break your legs as look at you. While the common stereotype of thugs calls up images of unwashed, lower-class thieves, one might meet thugs of high breeding as well. However, they usually employ other thugs to do their dirty work.

Most thugs were bullies as children and now manage to make a living intimidating others. Most of them feel bigger and stronger while inflicting pain or suffering on a weaker victim.

Some thugs work as strong-arms for crime bosses. Even the relatively benign thief guilds have thugs in their ranks—without them, they might actually have to steal from Palanthian merchants rather than politely collecting their protection money. Other thugs prowl the back streets of Ansalon's cities in search of lost visitors, drunks, or others unfortunate enough to cross their path.

The rarest breed of thugs are those who embrace the criminal life because they have nowhere else to turn—adventurers down on their luck or warriors who were drummed out of their mercenary company or army. Generally, such circumstances produce the heroes who adopt this role, making a living the only way they know how.

Role-Playing

At his friendliest, a thug is loud, overbearing, and charming in a crude kind of way. When around someone he finds desirable, he is all hands (the

same can be said of female thugs).

Protests from the object of affection mean nothing to the thug, unless backed up by someone even tougher than himself. An angry thug, fearsome for an unarmed victim to behold, becomes all rage and fury.

Requirements

A thug must have a demeanor drawn from a card with a value of 6 or better.

Advantages

Thugs are very good at intimidating people. Facing a weaker opponent (one with a lower Strength or Physique score), a thug can intimidate with merely an *easy Presence (Spirit)* action.

Heroes can acquire this role during play, as long as previous role-playing matches the requisite personality.

Disadvantages

Most adventurers tend to look down upon thugs as bullying cowards. Should an honorable character (such as a Knight of Solamnia) see a thug threatening a weaker person, the character will challenge the hero to a duel. Even if the hero was beating up a con artist who had taken the last copper of a poor blind woman, the Knight may see only a poor victim.

If he wishes to avoid the conflict, the hero must succeed in a *challenging Presence (Spirit)* action to convince the Knight not to duel. The Narrator can dispense with this action if the hero had acted particularly vicious.

False Roles

In adventure fiction-fantasy and otherwise-heroes frequently pose as something they're not. Some conduct simple deceptions, such as bluffing a couple guards by claiming to be the new military commander. Others are more pervasive, leading a double life, even to the point where the hero's

family thinks him a simple tailor when, in fact, he's the greatest spell-filch in the land.

Role-playing such deceptive heroes is no easy matter. Once a player writes "guild thief" or "Solamnic Knight" on his hero sheet, he tends to assume that all who meet him will automatically recognize his hero as such. Not true. In fact, deceptions form an important part of the Fifth Age, as many forces of Good have gone "underground." Players need to think a bit about this aspect of role-playing if they want to create heroes that are more than they appear.

Adopting a False Role

A hero can have many secrets. The biggest one of all might be his true role. An apparent Knight of Takhisis may, in fact, be a Legionnaire scout on a mission. The hero only has one role at any given time, but he gives the impression of a completely different one. The concept of a *false role* takes the duplicity inherent in roles like the "staunch supporter" and the "loyal servant" a step further.

A player can give his hero a false role simply by telling the Narrator that the hero will make an effort to pass himself off as something he's not, like the Legionnaire scout posing as a Knight of Takhisis in the example above. The Narrator should make a note of the false role and ensure that, from that point forward, characters in the adventure treat the hero accordingly. In addition, the Narrator and player can lead any new players joining the campaign (as well as their heroes) to consider the false role the true one.

Playing a False Role

Putting on a front can get complicated, as the player must remain ever mindful that he is role-playing a hero who is playing a role. Most heroes can play a false role convincingly only when it

matches their own social class or is just one class removed from it. Clearly, a barmaid (a lower-class role) will not fool anyone into thinking her an ambassador (an upper-class role). The Legionnaire scout and displaced noble roles have special advantages that make them exceptions, but players should adhere to this general rule in the interest of maintaining believability.

Narrators will have to impose other logical limitations upon false roles, too. Few barbarian heroes can convincingly portray urban dwellers, and a native of equatorial Nordmaar cannot easily pass himself off as an Icewall Glacier local.

The trickiest part of playing a false role is knowing which role's advantages and disadvantages to take on. Since the hero hasn't actually acquired the false role in a strict rules sense just pretends he has, what benefits and liabilities (if any) does he incur?

Players and Narrators should work together to answer this question, taking two things into account: whether the hero adopting the false role meets the requirements to fulfill that role and whether its inherent advantages and disadvantages grow from training or from public perception. For example, a hero posing as a barmaid might find characters sufficiently oblivious to her presence that she can eavesdrop on their conversations. A hero pretending to be a bard, however, does not automatically gain the bard's knack for knowing a little bit about every place he visits.

Playing a false role along with a false demeanor or hidden agenda can make a role-playing experience even more exciting. Chapter Three describes these optional rules.



Chapter Two



e can't just stay here skulking in the alley,"
Palin

whispered.... "We should leave now, while it's quiet, before the knights come back."

Usha was

silent long moments, then said, "There's another way, a safer way, but you won't like it."

"Why?" Palin asked, chilled. "What is it?"

Usha tossed her silver hair. "The Thieves' Way, it's called...."

—Into the sewers of Palanthas, Dragons of Summer Flame

From the docks of Sanction to the sewers beneath Palanthas, Ansalon is crisscrossed with signs of defiance. This chapter describes how to introduce these elements into FIFTH AGE games and takes a look at the underground activity raging throughout the land.

Creating Intrigue

The unique nature of adventures that center around intrigue calls for a word of advice to both Narrators and players.

Selecting The Villain

In choosing a villain for a game of intrigue, a Narrator must think about more than just whether to use a master, a minion, or a few of each (as described in Chapter Two of the *Book of the Fifth Age*).

The villain's background and per-

sonality should reflect the game's desired tone. Should a Narrator choose a dangerous schemer over a seductive vixen or an honorable powermonger? All of the above would make excellent master villains but they would produce campaigns very different in mood.

In any case, the chosen villain should have complex motivations. Pure greed isn't very interesting, but the twisted ravings of a madman can be too hard for the heroes to relate to. The rational villain is often the most interesting. Next the Narrator must ask, what does a villain with these motivations really want? What's his goal?

As deception is key to intrigue, the villain often conceals his identity, motivation, and nature. He may purposely adopt an inoffensive appearance and benign personality just to throw the heroes off guard. He may even set up one of his own minions to look like the real mastermind. In any case, the heroes must wade through many layers of duplicity to learn who their foe really is.

Structuring the Intrigue

Once the Narrator has selected the villain, he needs to decide, based on the character's goal, what does he *do*? Of course, he won't go about achieving his goal in a straightforward manner. What tricks does he use to cover up his activities? How does he direct attention away from himself? How do the heroes stumble onto his scheme? What is his backup plan if they foil Plan A? The answers to these questions come together to form the adventure's main plot.

Subplots can derive from the villains' misdirections. For instance, a dupe the villain uses as a cover for some of his activities might find his fate in some way linked to that of one of the heroes. And no plan is perfect, either—a minion in charge of creating a diversion might make a crucial mistake and provide the heroes with a clue, as they peel away

A Land Defiant

layer after layer of the mystery.

The consequences of the foes actions also can inspire interesting subplots. Plus, bringing the heroes face to face with the effects of the Evil scheme can make them feel personally involved in fighting the villain—what better motivation do they need than the abuse of innocents or the death of a beloved character?

Narrating the Intrigue

A Narrator must set a mood of mystery appropriate to an intrigue—and that means doing more than just dimming the lights and playing spooky music. One technique is to make the heroes unsure of whom they can trust. Is the innkeeper really what he seems? Why did that knight give them a funny look? When everyone they meet seems to have a motive to oppose them, the heroes get paranoid, and tension mounts.

However, limiting betrayals and secret agendas to characters quickly leads the players to distrust only them. The Narrator should also encourage heroes to conspire among themselves. While players shouldn't seek to undermine each other's heroes, a few hidden agendas or false demeanors (as described in the next chapter) can create that "trust no one" atmosphere to great effect.

Pacing is another important point to consider. After all, players will get frustrated if their heroes keep running into dead ends or face a lack of action. On the other hand, Narrators should not rely too heavily on combat in this kind of adventure. They instead should force the heroes—and players—to *think*. A major discovery at the right time makes them feel as though they have outsmarted the villain and will spur them on like no battle ever could.

Staging Cons

Roguish heroes, who frequently have to survive on their wits alone, more often

than not choose to trick their way past characters rather than take them on in a toe-to-toe fight. Con games and other deceptions are part-and-parcel of game sessions revolving around rogues and other disreputable types. At the heart or any con lies the ability to convince someone that a hero can make good on something that seems too good to be true.

When heroes attempt to use trickery, the Narrator should keep one thing in mind: He is not matching wits with the players, the *characters* are. The heroes' con—such as tricking a merchant in league with the Dark Knights to give them evidence of his nefarious entanglements—might temporarily derail the Narrator's plans for a portion of the game. Nonetheless, if the heroes act cleverly and the merchant has no reason to doubt them, the con might succeed. As the Narrator is not playing to win or lose, it's okay for the heroes to pull the wool over a character's eyes—as long as their story could reasonably convince that character.

A Narrator should use card play only to augment the drama of a con. For instance, he could let the aura of a randomly drawn card determine whether a character catches on, but it would be better to just let the con succeed if the role-playing seems convincing. Having the heroes attempt Presence actions opposed by a character's Reason (or Intellect) can speed up the pace.

Below are some ideas for game heroes might pull on their adversaries or just to make a quick steel piece or two.

🎲 *Conning the conner:* Con artists can be easy marks, as they're always looking to make some quick coin and, as crooks themselves, they can't exactly run to the law after getting taken. The best way for heroes to con a con artist is to turn his own scam against him, such as convincing a phony seer that he has incurred the wrath of spirits for his trickery.



- ❖ *Swindles*: After convincing a mark he's getting a product for a certain sum, the hero fails to deliver. Say a hero sells the Dark Knights fifty crates of dwarven weapons. However, only two crates contain the goods—the rest hold rocks. The trick is ensuring that the Knights check only the right boxes, then making a fast escape.
- ❖ *Quackery*: Some heroes sell potions with supposed healing powers that in fact do nothing at all—they may even do harm. Usually, these schemes require the con artist to have an accomplice who appears to suffer from an ailment the treatment cures.
- ❖ *Forgery*: Counterfeiting, falsifying identity papers, even replacing stolen jewelry with replicas—these forgeries force a hero to attempt Reason and Dexterity actions to apply the necessary craftsmanship. The difficulty varies based on working conditions and the job's complexity.

Underground Ansalon

This section takes a look at major centers of resistance in Fifth Age Ansalon. While not a complete tally of potential underground groups, the survey provides a sampling to inspire Narrators. Each entry identifies the leaders of the groups at a particular location (locales in *italics* are referenced on the map on page 33) and details their objectives.

The Dragon Realms

Life in some draconic realms remains nearly unchanged from past ages—many peasants in Ski's realm feel they have merely traded one lord for another. Elsewhere, such as in Malys's realm, life has become unbearable. Yet each land harbors those who chafe at the yoke of oppression and work to throw it off.

Beryllintranox the Green

To the casual observer, Speaker Gilthas and his mother Laurana seem staunch supporters of the Green Dragon who occupies Qualinesti and the Dark Knights that serve her. In truth, the two secretly lead the elven resistance. Many nights find Laurana (*Qualinesti adult female, inspiring demeanor, Legend, 2* 🗡️) sneaking from the Tower of the Sun in *Qualinost* to help teams cause "accidents" at enemy strongholds or to communicate plans to loyalists in other realms.

Gilthas (*Qualinesti young male, serious demeanor, Hero, 2* 🗡️) does his part as well. His secret plans to evacuate his people through the new dwarven tunnel system proceed as fast as *Thorbardin's* miners can delve escape routes to secure positions in Abanasinia and elsewhere. With the completion of the tunnel system, Gil plans to stage an exodus right out from under the boots and claws of Qualinesti's oppressors.

The Speaker also coordinates more immediate, if slower, evacuation efforts with the Master of the Tower (*human adult male, thoughtful demeanor, Legend*) in nearby Wayreth Forest. For several years, Beryl has used elven search parties in her attempts to locate the last Tower of *High Sorcery*. However, most groups vanish into the mysterious Wayreth Forest never to be heard from again. The Master offers them passage to free lands from which they can launch attacks. Annoyed with the disappearances, Beryl has begun to take the searchers' families hostage before they depart.

This latest move has spurred rebels loyal to the dark elf Porthios (*Qualinesti adult male, distant demeanor, Hero, 6* 🗡️) to step up their hit-and-run attacks on Beryl's minions. The former Speaker knows Gilthas secretly opposes the Green Dragon but nonetheless keeps a close eye on his nephew; if he should ever come to suspect that Gil and Laurana have failed to act in the best interest of their people, he will devote all his efforts to destroying them both.

Khellendros the Blue

The adventure *The Storm Over Krynn* introduces Shen Korras (*half-elf adult male, shrewd demeanor, Hero*), a merchant and sorcerer headquartered in the town of *Relgoth*. In addition to his covert activities there, Korras has long supported the *Citadel of Light*. His agents in all major towns of the Blue's realm offer safe havens to Citadel mystics who have run afoul of the dragon's minions. Rumor has Korras even has Dark Knight spies, as he often knows a mystic has been marked for capture before the mystic himself does.

The Dark Knights' iron-fisted rule during the Summer of Chaos mobilized the cutthroats, murderers, and extortionists of the *Palanthas* Thieves Guild into action. They were aided by Daavyd Nelgard (*human adult male, motivated demeanor, Champion*), an Ergothian master thief dispatched from Gwynned to help the Palanthian resistance after Lord Ariakan executed local guild leader Lynched Geoffrey.

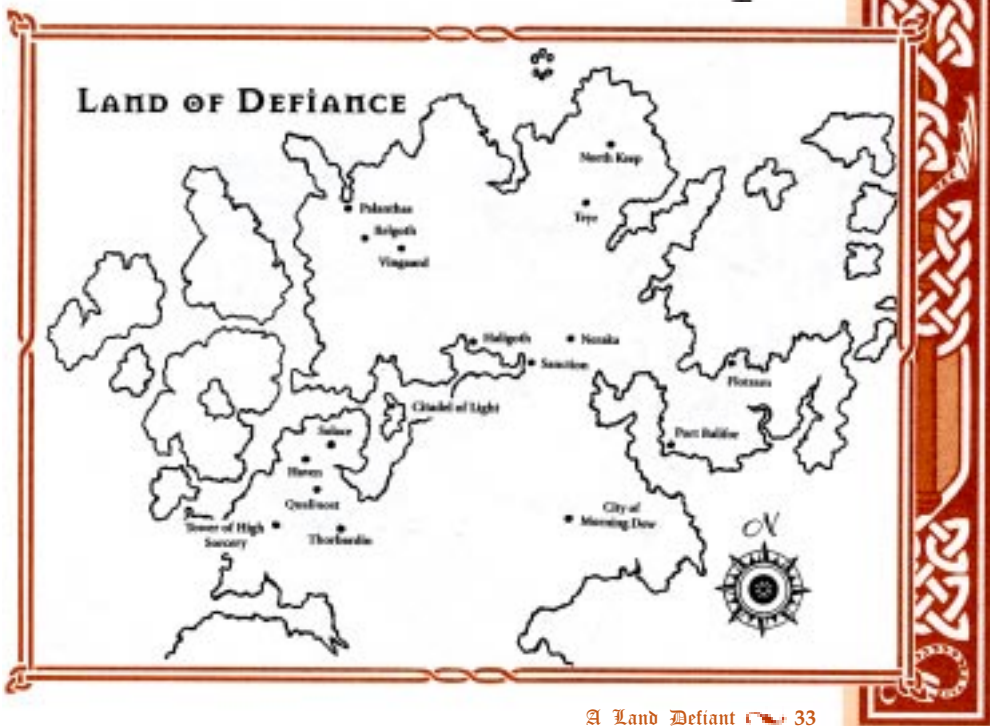
The coming of Skie made Nelgard's

job both harder and easier. The Blue rescinded the Dark Knights' mandatory death sentence for all crimes, but also took other steps to restore the city to normalcy—a move that led some thieves to desert the guild. Legionnaire scout Rindia Rolanta (*human adult female, cynical demeanor, Adventurer*) suggested a plan to once again galvanize the city's underworld: assassinating Knight-Officer Elstone Kinsaid (*human adult male, decisive demeanor, Adventurer*), commander of the local garrison. The ensuing brutal crackdown will undoubtedly restore the guilds motivation.

As discussed in Chapter One, many *Vingaard* river pirates provide ready aid to rebels traveling by boat.

Malystryx the Red

The city of *Flotsam* became a true hodgepodge of races and cultures after the War of the Lance. Humans, kender, gnolls, and hobgoblins all lived together in harmony under the leadership of Toede (*hobgoblin elder male, inspiring demeanor, Legend, 8* 🏰), who



emerged from the war something of a philosopher-statesman (to the surprise of those who “knew him when”). The inhabitants of Flotsam, loosely organized under the Silver Fox (*half-elf elder male, open demeanor, Master*), have managed to accomplish some remarkable feats, such as the destruction of the Great Red’s secondary lair along the Blood Sea coast. Currently they plan a strike against Hollintress (*red adult female dragon, murderous demeanor*), Malys’s favorite aide.

While bards across eastern Ansalon sing light-hearted songs of the exploits of the motley Flotsam crew, there’s nothing funny about the struggles of a local enclave of afflicted kender trying to regain their former homeland. The attacks of Kronn Thistleknott (*kender adult male, motivated demeanor, Master*) on the Great Red’s draconian minions and his efforts to map the Desolation (and identify dragon lairs) give hope to all in the realm. Heroes can often contact Kronn’s band in *Port Balifor*.

Onysablet the Black

Legion of Steel members working near the *City of Morning Dew* on the border with Iyesta’s realm frequently intercept the raiding parties that capture victims for her experiments. The *Citadel of Light* dispatches healers and animists to reverse the unnatural transformations the Black heaps upon the land and her victims.

The Free Realms

Most planning for rebel activity takes place in free lands. In fact, some former backwaters have emerged as centers for the struggle against the dragons.

Abanasinia

At the Academy of Sorcery near Solace, efforts are underway to unlock the secrets of the dragon overlords’ ability to shape the land. Palin Majere (*human adult male, impulsive demeanor, Legend, 1*) ordered the study as part of his goal to expand his knowledge of Krym’s new magic. If sorcerers can understand



the dragons' methods, they can undo much of the damage to the land.

In Solace as well as in *Haven*, the Legion of Steel works in an uneasy truce with Solamnic Knights to see Qualinesti refugees safely relocated.

Neraka

Under Nels Dargand (*human adult male, observant demeanor, Adventurer*), he Legion of Steel has placed a cell in the town of *Neraka*. Nels also has befriended one of the top aides to Governor-General Mirielle Abrena (*human middle-aged female, commanding demeanor, Master, 6* 🏰) and now seeks access to her invasion plans.

Sanction

Despite the firm grip Lord Governor Hogan Bight (*human adult male, indomitable demeanor, Master*) has on Sanction, both the Legion and the Solamnics have managed to infiltrate the city. Neither group sees how Bight can fend off the Great Dragons and Dark Knights without help. He must be a minion of the dragons, they surmise; work to expose him proceeds.

Their biggest hindrance, however, is each other. Whenever the clandestine Solamnic Knights think they've uncovered spies of the Lord Governor, they invariably find themselves on the trail of the covert Legionnaires, and vice-versa. The leaders of each group—Xavier Kross of the Legion (*human adult male, fierce demeanor, Champion*) and Karine Thasally of the Solamnics (*half-elf young adult female, confident demeanor, Champion*)—try to inform each other of their plans, but they still manage to trip over each other. Often they use Rose Knight Linsha Majere (*human young adult female, confident demeanor, Adventurer, 3* 🏰) as a go-between, as she is the only Knight known to most of the Legionnaires. Both Orders have forbidden their people in Sanction to work together, as their incautious zeal in the last attempt allowed the Dark Knights to wipe out both forces.

Teyr

The citizens of *Teyr*, Ansalon's only draconian realm, hate both their loss of freedom to Neraka and their forced participation in its coming invasion of the Estwilde and Nordmaar. Not long ago, Lord Kang (*Bozak, practical demeanor, Champion*) dispatched emissaries to the Solamnic Knights at *North Keep* in Nordmaar, seeking aid against the Dark Knights. Certain the request would fail, Kang set his second-in-command, Slith (*Sivak, resource demeanor, Adventurer*), to work covertly sabotaging Dark Knight equipment to slow down war efforts.

While the Solamnics' response was negative, Sir Reynol uth Sabar (*human young adult male, impulsive demeanor, Adventurer*) took pity upon the draconians. Resigning his place among North Keep's Sword Knights, Reynol took his retainers to Teyr. There, posing as an arms merchant, he secretly plans a massive strike with Kang and some human barbarians who prefer draconians to Dark Knights. Reynol hopes that once the Solamnics at North Keep see that Teyr genuinely opposes Neraka, they will support him. Anything else means death for Reynol and those with him.

Throt

Goblin freedom fighters originally from Sikk'et Hul in Northern Ergoth (see Chapter Four) have hooked up with members of the Legion of Steel in *Hali-goth*. The Legionnaires would like to see a more stable buffer state between Neraka and Solamnia—one not predisposed to doing the Dark Knights' bidding. This combined group hopes to assassinate King Uhkrin of Throt (*hobgoblin adult male, uncaring demeanor, Champion*) and take control of the realm. Each night they free a few more goblins from the hobaoblins' slave pens and steal a few more weapons for their fighting force.



Chapter Three



t had become obvious to the Highbulp that he was dealing with thieves and liars, not the heroes he had expected.... He needed some heroes, and if he had to create some

out of whatever scum came along, then he would do so. If they died, it was no great loss. If they succeeded in killing the dragon, so much the better. The gully dwarves would get what was—to them—more precious than all the pretty rocks in Krynn: a return to the sweet, halcyon days of freedom! And so, enough of this nonsense about sneaking around.

*—In Xak Tsaroth,
Dragons of Autumn Twilight*

Not only can Narrators weave the magic of intrigue into FIFTH AGE adventures, players can create heroes shrouded in mystery. Deceit and lies are acceptable tools to achieve a Good end, as long as the heroes never sacrifice their principles. More often than not, however, they carefully conceal these principles behind a veil of falsehoods.

Chapter One introduced the concept of false roles. This chapter offers some new twists on the normal SAGA rules to enhance campaigns of defiance. These rules are optional, of course, but they can provide extra challenges for players and Narrators as they explore new facets of the DRAGONLANCE Saga.

Gully Dwarves as a Hero Race

The FIFTH AGE boxed set described a variety of hero races, from gnomes to kender and elves to centaurs. Nevertheless, these races only scratch the surface of the many races that inhabit Ansalon.

Gully dwarves make an interesting additional hero race for intrigue-laced campaigns. As the passage at left illustrates, this race of little thieves has a remarkable gift for plotting and duplicity. Despite their less-than-sterling intellect, gully dwarves can always be counted on to do the unexpected. Beneath their groveling appearance lies a surprisingly strong backbone that has allowed this beleaguered race to thrive for thousands of years.

A Note of Caution

The description of dwarves in Chapter One of the *Book of the Fifth Age* recommends that readers not select the race of gully dwarf for their heroes, with good reason: Playing a gully dwarf can be a thankless experience. While other heroes receive lauds after a successful quest, gully dwarf heroes find themselves ignored and shunted aside. In fact, players of gully dwarves should count on such heroes getting more abuse than respect from characters in Ansalon. Of course, Narrators should not go out of their way to make the game a miserable experience for players who choose gully dwarf heroes—after all, the Narrator's job is to help players have *fun*. However, playing this race does carry with it the burden of being an outcast.

Therefore, Narrators need to consider both the campaign and the players before permitting this optional hero race. Only experienced role-players should embrace gully dwarves as a hero race. Further, Narrators should reserve this race for campaigns that focus on

Optional Rules

stealth and guile rather than brawn—flashy heroics just isn't in the gully dwarf nature. In the wrong campaign, these heroes will either seem out of place or find themselves reduced to mere comic relief.

A Bit of History

The history of the gully dwarves—or the Aghar, as they call themselves—is one of suffering. Arising from the unwanted offspring of humans and dwarves, these pathetic creatures live in the refuse pits and abandoned ruins of the civilized races, despised, mistreated, and looked down upon by even the lowly goblins.

The Cataclysm that doomed other civilizations more than four hundred years ago saved the gully dwarves. Destruction of Ansalon's high civilizations created dozens of ruined settlements where gully dwarves could dwell unmolested. Once-mighty cities like Xak Tsaroth in Abanasinia and Fav in Northern Ergoth became havens for the Aghar. Undisturbed by their tormentors, they settled down to establish their own culture. such as it is.

Description

A gully dwarf does not exactly cut an imposing figure. Members of this race average four feet in height and have narrow fingers with overly large knuckles. Both sexes carry pot-bellies and develop wrinkles soon after the age of twenty-five. More often than not, these creatures are knock-kneed. Poor living conditions mar their skin with scars, boils, and sores. The fact that they hardly ever bathe leads to an assortment of interesting odors always hanging in the air around them.

Both genders have unkempt hair of dirty blond, brown, rust, gray, or dull black. The men wear long scruffy beards, while the women may have

some cheek down at most. Their eyes are watery blue or hazel. Aghar lucky enough to possess jewelry wear it conspicuously and garishly. Most are smeared with enough grime and plant a small garden, and their be-draggled clothes are home to a variety of parasites. All told, all the filth, and mismatched jewelry can cast the gender of a gully dwarf in doubt.

The Aghar have crude and primitive societies “led” by the individual who can best bully the rest of the clan. Their Subjects address these leaders by the clan name, preceded by the honorific “High,” such as the “Highbulp” of the Bulp clan. The clan leader usually enjoys adopting a grand title as well, like “Master of All You Survey,” “Emperor of Everything,” and even “King.”

The thought processes of gully dwarves differ from those of all other races in Ansalon. They have no sense of numbers—two is as high as most of them can count—and they speak in a language made up of an ever-changing patchwork of words borrowed and mutilated from other tongues. The combination of these traits leave gully dwarves with no sense of history and no sense of tomorrow. They never plan for the future, yet they always find themselves running from the past.

Role-Playing

Aghar are proud, long-suffering survivors. Beneath the the cheerful and hapless exterior of a gully dwarf beats a tenacious heart. This race has survived, even thrived, under conditions that would destroy most peoples.

Gully dwarves have a very simple outlook on the world: We live, we win, We die, we lose. In keeping with this philosophy, they generally flee from even the faintest hint of physical violence. Failing that, they will plead, beg, grovel, and even hide in ostrichlike fashion. They only fight when the foe turns his back.



Other races may brand this behavior shameless cowardice and treachery, but gully dwarves see no shame, cowardice, or treachery in survival.

Despite their glaring faults, gully dwarves take themselves very seriously. Their continued escape from disaster has imbued them with a sense of rugged pride in themselves. Others may view an Aghar as foolish and stupid, but he feels secure in his own cunning and brilliance. He is more than happy to let the “intelligent” folk underestimate him—giving him the opportunity to get the drop on them (or run away, if that course seems more prudent).

Never will a gully dwarf sell out a friend of family member. If a non-Aghar treats a gully dwarf well, he has made a loyal friend for life, a friend willing to make great sacrifices for him. It is in trying to preserve himself and his friends that an Aghar's true cunning comes out.

Requirements

Living in filth has given gully dwarves a strong constitution. Therefore, a hero of this race must have a score of 7 or better in Endurance.

Gully dwarves are good climbers, and learn from childhood how to dodge cruel blows. This talent requires of these heroes a high Agility—a score of 6 or better.

Finally, the Aghar seem incapable of the focused mental energy required to wield sorcery. They may never have a Reason score higher than 4 or a Reason code better than “C.” However, their strong faith in themselves gives them the potential to be excellent mystics.

A gully dwarf's life is one of abject poverty. Even when they manage to secure some wealth, they either lose it through sloppiness and forgetfulness or they spend it on baubles and delicacies. These heroes may never have wealth scores higher than 2.



Advantages

Gully dwarves are harder to kill than cockroaches. They always enjoy a trump bonus when attempting to fight off the effects of poison and disease. In addition, they are hardy to the point of surviving death itself.

When the player of a gully dwarf hero has lost the last card from his Hand of Fate, he turns over a card from the Fate Deck. If the card's face value equals or exceeds the hero's Endurance score, or if it belongs to the Suit of Helms (the trump suit for Endurance), the hero has managed to cling to life. The player may draw a card in this way after each combat exchange until either he draws one that doesn't meet the above criteria (in which case, the hero dies) or until someone performs a *challenging* first aid action to restore the player's hand to one card.

The tendency of characters to underestimate gully dwarves also comes across as an advantage for an Aghar hero. After a successful easy *Presence* (*Perception*) action, a gully dwarf hero can become essentially invisible to the characters in a scene—as long as the hero doesn't get close enough for them to smell him. They will speak freely about even the most dastardly deeds, considering the hero too dumb to comprehend their discussion.

Disadvantages

Gully dwarves are innumerate and have no sense of time. To recall dates, report the size of an enemy force, or remember the time of a scheduled rendezvous with any accuracy, the hero must attempt a *daunting Reason* action.

A highly superstitious people, the Aghar are easily frightened by magic. Whenever a sorcerer or mystic casts a spell that has a dramatic effect upon a gully dwarf's immediate environment, the hero must succeed at a Reason action or flee in terror. The Narrator can make the action's difficulty match the point cost of the spell.


Finally, gully dwarves are everyone's whipping post. They never get a trump bonus for Presence actions, except those that involve other gully dwarves. Also, their reputation for stupidity means that few characters will believe a word they say. An eavesdropping gully dwarf who learns of a plot to kill the Solamnic Grand Master will get no response but laughter when he tells someone what he heard. Only with a successful *average Presence (Reason)* action can the hero convince his listen-

False Demeanors

The DRAGONLANCE Saga has introduced memorable heroes and villains who hide their true intentions for reasons known only to them. These characters all shaped their behavior to fit the false fronts they had created (see "False Roles" in Chapter One). For instance:

- In order to protect the Irda who raised her, the orphaned Usha pretended to be Raistlin's daughter when she arrived in Ansalon.
- The traitor Eben Shatterstone from *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* claimed to be an innocent escapee from imprisonment in the fortress of Pax Tharkas, when he actually worked with Dragon Highlord Verminaard to conquer Abanasinia.
- In the classic DRAGONLANCE adventure *Dragons of Faith*, a character calling himself Sevil claimed to be a member of the underground and pretended to assist the heroes in their quest. Sevil was, in fact, a disgraced Dragon Highlord who had survived an encounter with the heroes earlier in the storyline and now sought to regain the good favor of the Dark Queen.
- Who can forget the surprising revelations during the War of the Lance of the one-time hero Kitiara as a Dragon Highlord, or of the Kagonesti elf Silvara as a mighty silver dragon?





Creating and playing this type of hero—or featuring such a character as a protagonist or antagonist in a ongoing game’s storyline—becomes somewhat more involved than creating most FIFTH AGE figures. Others have to penetrate layers of falsity before these heroes and characters reveal their true faces. This section describes the idea of such *false demeanors*, how to arrive at them, and how to use the concept in play.

Creating a False Demeanor

The cornerstone of any phony identity is a false demeanor. A hero with a mission to infiltrate the Knights of Takhisis will have little luck in his charade if he broadcasts his open-minded nature and thoughtful demeanor. Such a hero would have to hide his true personality behind a veil of cruelty and dogmatic attitudes. In fact, the hero must keep up his ruse to the point where even the Dark Knights who “get to know him” think that they know his true nature. Of course, it’s just another false demeanor.

There are a couple different ways to give a hero a false demeanor. For new heroes, the player can simply start the hero creation process (described in Chapter One of the *Book of the Fifth Age*) with thirteen cards from the Fate Deck instead of twelve. After he has selected a card for the hero’s (true) demeanor, he should also assign one to his false demeanor, thus adding a layer of deceit to the emerging hero. The player then proceeds normally with the rest of hero creation. Players who want their heroes to have two different false demeanors (for different situations in the game) should start out with fourteen cards and allot two of them to false demeanors.

The second, and perhaps preferred, manner of creating a false demeanor is to intentionally assume one that matches a false role. Rather than simply applying a false nature to the hero at random, the player makes a conscious

choice as to how his hero will try to appear. As with the Knights of Takhisis example above, the hero can embrace a false demeanor of “cruel,” knowing it will convince that Order of brutal oppressors that he is one of them.

A hero may in this fashion select any false demeanor that appears as an inscription on a Fate Card. He may even choose an extra false demeanor to pass off as his “nature” to those he seeks to befriend. Of course, a hero can have only one *true* nature.

Playing a False Demeanor

Taking on a hero with a false demeanor can prove quite a role-playing challenge. The player must always keep in mind his hero’s true nature, since that is what ultimately motivates his actions.

Yet keeping a hero’s true personality and goals under wraps gets taxing—especially when he has to, in order to exist among enemies for extended periods and earn their friendship and trust. Remembering the following points can help the hero act convincing even under the greatest pressure:

- ❖ *Make the false demeanor straightforward, not overly complex.* The hero’s friends and enemies both ought to think there is little mystery to the hero. Trying to play a multi-layered false demeanor likely will trip up a hero at a crucial moment.
- ❖ *Always keep the ultimate goal in mind.* A hero who appears to be a steadfast Knight of Takhisis, yet hates everything they stand for, can bear up under the burden of the false role more easily if he reminds himself every day how his duplicity will help bring down the dark Order.
- ❖ *Make it count.* Heroes with false demeanors have to be people of action. An elf who seems a simpering lackey of Qualinesti’s Green Dragon might actually be the leader of a group of daring heroes smuggling elf children out of the forest

and weapons in. That's a goal worth the price of fawning to the overlord.

Of course, the danger to living this kind of life is that friends may turn into enemies, should they ever discover the hero's false demeanor and mistakenly interpret it as the real one. Likewise, the hero will find himself in grave danger if his enemies find out his true motivations. Clandestine Solamnic Knights, Legion of Steel members, smugglers, and pirates are types of potential heroes who lead double lives almost by definition. Yet sorcerers, mystics, or even humble serving wenches may be playing similar dangerous games—either for the sake of morals, financial gain, or survival.

Often, heroes with false demeanors also make use of another optional addition to the SAGA hero creation rules: hidden agendas.

Hidden Agendas

Secrets form a unifying theme among all the hero types described in this book. Few such heroes actually are what they seem on the surface, and hand-in-hand with such hidden identities come hidden agendas.

The character Sevil from *Dragons of Faith*, mentioned earlier, offers an example of a character with a hidden agenda. He had dragonarmy agents and heroes alike believing him a reliable source of information and aid. In truth, however, Sevil geared his every action toward advancing a secret goal: regaining the favor of Takhisis and returning to the ranks of the Highlords.

Of course, players should make sure not to pursue their heroes' hidden agendas to the detriment of the group as a whole. Role-playing games are a cooperative activity, so the heroes should have the same general goal when adventuring—whether to make some fast money or to permanently quell the Storm Over Krynn. Heroes ignoring the needs of the group to act in their own interests almost always causes

bad blood among players, and the campaign dies with the players' friendship.

One might argue that the rogues and spies of Ansalon exist in a shadowy world of trickery and betrayal where alliances last only long enough for an individual hero to achieve his personal goal. Indeed, many shortsighted or Evil individuals have no compulsion about burning their bridges behind them once they have what they want. However, a hero with foresight will maintain an alliance long enough for his companions to reach their desired ends also—as long as these goals do not conflict with his reason for joining them in the first place. In a dangerous world, it's important to have friends.

When to Pursue a Hidden Agenda

Not every hero needs a hidden agenda. For some, a false demeanor or role will suffice—and some heroes may be played straightforward, for contrast.

The idea of certain heroes having secret goals is more appropriate for some game groups than others. Before implementing these optional rules in a campaign, the Narrator should carefully consider the temperament of his players. Will they enjoy the intrigue and plot twists, or will they find the mystery annoying and frustrating? Narrators should ask themselves the following questions before deciding whether hidden agendas will suit any or all of their players.

Can the player keep a secret?

A hidden agenda is a part of hero's background that he does not want exposed. Therefore, the player must keep the hidden agenda hidden! In a ongoing campaign, it may take weeks or months of game sessions before a hero's hidden agenda becomes important. The player will have to wait patiently for that moment without giving his hero's secrets away.





Can the Narrator keep a secret?

The need for secrecy works both ways. The Narrator might feel the urge to drop hints about a hero's dirty secret—characters “mistaking him for someone else,” other heroes getting a chance to notice their duplicitous comrade sneaking off to secret meetings, and the like. After all, cool secrets are one of the hardest things to keep to oneself. However, the Narrator must resist the temptation of revealing the hidden agenda before it's dramatically appropriate. Carelessness might lead him to blow dramatic opportunities by saying too much at or away from the gaming table.

Does the group enjoy intrigue?

Different playing groups like different kinds of games. Some groups like campaigns that clearly define Good and Evil. Others enjoy more complex approaches that make it hard for the heroes to tell friends and enemies apart—a character might even be their ally in some respects and their enemy in others.

Most hidden agendas blur the line between friend and foe. If the players will get annoyed at shifting alliances within their adventures, then the Narrator should think twice about incorporating hidden agendas.

Does the group like role-playing?

This might seem like a silly question—if the group members didn't like role-playing, they would never have joined a DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE game, right?

The point is, there are different styles of play. Using hidden agendas in campaigns often results in extensive conversation between the heroes, or between the heroes and the characters. Narrators should expect short bursts of combat followed by long periods of hero-to-hero or hero-to-character interaction. After all, sometimes a hero has to justify an apparent or outright betrayal to his longtime friends and companions. They might feel hurt or

offended if he didn't confide in them.

In addition, certain types of hidden agendas lead the heroes to face moral dilemmas. Do I strike at the villain who betrayed my father, or do I save my companions? Such angst can be a useful story element in small doses.

Bottom line: If the impulses of the group members lean toward swinging swords first and asking questions later, hidden agendas may not be for them.

Can the group roll with the punches?

Hidden agendas can sometimes lead to unexpected results (see “Defining Hidden Agendas,” below). Narrators and players alike will have to think quickly if the revelation of a hero's hidden agenda changes the face of a campaign. Sometimes revealing a secret can have far-reaching effects.

Narrators who answered the above questions with at least a conditional “Yes” might want to urge certain players to adopt hidden agendas for their heroes. But above all, these agendas should always exist to serve the adventure's plot and help a player more clearly define his not-quite-who-he-seems hero. They provide the potential for an additional layer of tension that might not exist in a campaign where all the cards (so to speak) are face up on the table.

Defining Hidden Agendas

The SAGA game rules are designed to allow players to create any kind of heroes they can imagine. Still, the Narrator needs to control heroes' hidden agendas to some extent. If too many of members of an adventuring group have conflicting agendas, they could spend more time outmaneuvering each other than the enemy. Hidden agendas, though they can lead to power plays and backstabbing among the heroes,

should never invite players to create random mayhem in a game.

The Narrator should work with the player to define the nature of a hero's hidden agenda. (Establishing the hero's personality and motivations remains up to the player, of course.) Before anyone decides whether to give his hero a false demeanor or role, the Narrator should spend time with each individual player to complete the hidden agenda sheet on the back cover of this book. Putting these details in writing gives both the player and Narrator a clear picture of a hero's hidden motivations, preventing the need for clarification at the game table that might give secrets away.

The Hidden Agenda Sheet

A hidden agenda can be something as simple as secretly supplying food to the local orphans or as grand as plotting the downfall of a Great Dragon. It might even emerge naturally out of the player's discussion with the Narrator while he fill out the hidden agenda sheet.

What follows is a step-by-step run-down of that sheet. (Players might want to photocopy the form right onto the back of their hero sheets so that, over time, they won't lose track of their hero's various deceptions.) By filling out this sheet together, the Narrator and player can build aspects into the hero's personality that not only support the hidden agenda but also serve as a source of adventurer motivators and plot ideas.

The Narrator should retain a copy of his players' completed sheet for his own reference.

True Name and Alias

The player writes the hero's real name, as well as any aliases, at the top of the hidden agenda sheet. He should list next to each alias the place or context in which the hero goes by that name, as well as the supposed wealth score of that persona and any other pertinent facts. (The player may choose fictitious wealth scores for the fictitious names, but none may exceed the hero's actual wealth score.)





Nature

In the next spot, the player can record his hero's nature, as determined during hero creation. A hero can have only one true nature.

True Demeanor and True Role

The next lines are for the hero's demeanor and role, as determined during hero creation, as well as notes on the role's advantages and disadvantages.

General Outlook

How does the hero view the world and the people in it? The "General Outlook" entry makes the player consider what his hero's nature and demeanor mean, and how they interact to form his personality. Is the hero optimistic about the future? Does he like the people he lives among? Is he fond of his own people and homeland? How does he feel about the other heroes? What are his loves and hates?

Allies and Enemies

What friends and foes does the hero believe he has? The "Allies and Enemies" listing can include anything from very specific individuals to large groups or entire races. Against whom does the hero carry a grudge, and who might carry one against him? Who might he turn to in a desperate circumstance? Do the other heroes fall into either of these categories?

Note that those listed may or may not *actually* be the hero's friends or foes—it's all from his point of view.

Special Relationships

Does the hero have a past with one of the other heroes, or with a character who might pop up later? Possible relationships include blood relatives, a spouse, former lovers, former partners or competitors, and all sorts of other personal acquaintances.

As this section might involve another hero, the Narrator should make sure that the past relationship fits with each player's idea of his own hero's personality. A relationship

between two heroes may be known only to them; in that case, the Narrator should allow the players involved to decide when to reveal the connection or whether to do so at all. If the hero has a tie to a character, however, the Narrator can choose to reveal the relationship through the character at a dramatically appropriate moment. However, it's a good idea to rely on the player to reveal the connection.

Narrators should carefully evaluate players' ideas for their heroes' special relationships. Some might contradict each other in ways that may affect the storyline negatively. Others might give the hero an unfair advantage. While the nature of a "good" special relationship varies from group to group, Narrators should try to limit the benefits derived from these ties to plot hooks, sources of dramatic moments, and role-playing opportunities.

False Demeanor(s) and False Role(s)

As explained earlier in this chapter, a hero's false demeanor often stems from the identity of his friends and enemies. It might even change depending on the hero's current quest or location. A particularly deceptive or widely traveled hero, for example, might have three or four false demeanors. (People in Tarsis know him as a tight-lipped and surly mercenary, but in Palanthis he becomes an outspoken, hedonistic bard.) Legionnaires and other heroes who dwell hidden among their mortal enemies have false demeanors. If the hero uses one of the false demeanors as his "false nature," the player should note it on his sheet.

False demeanors often derive from false roles, as described in Chapter One. Players should make sure to write down the advantages and disadvantages of each false role, and whether or not the hero acquires them while in his disguise.

Hidden Agenda

From all the above springs the hidden agenda—the hero's ultimate ulterior motive and possibly the prime motiva-

tion for everything he does.

The Narrator and the player should define a hidden agenda for a hero together. As the player conceives of each new idea or aspect, the Narrator should watch for ideas that run contrary to his overall plan for the campaign. In addition, the agenda should not diametrically oppose the objectives of the party, either. No agenda should threaten to disrupt the overall campaign. Of course, some groups may thrive on unraveling a conspiracy that involves one of their own number, but most will not look kindly upon the player whose hero's hidden agenda has caused the death of all the other heroes.

The following examples of hidden agendas might spark ideas in players as they complete their hero's sheet:

- ❖ Seek the downfall of a powerful character.
- ❖ Reclaim lost family honor.
- ❖ Gain vengeance upon a character who has wronged the hero.
- ❖ Uncover the lost history of a mysterious object (perhaps an item of

magic) and learn its secrets.

- ❖ Win a lost or unrequited love.
- ❖ Find release from a secret curse.
- ❖ Achieve a longtime goal of personal ambition—perhaps even rulership.

Other Secrets and Personal Goals

In two catch-all categories near the bottom of the agenda sheet, the player can make notes regarding ideas for future goals and hidden agendas, or odd quirks of a hero's background or personality. Once again, the Narrator and player can collaborate on these goals and secrets. The Narrator might even choose to reserve the "Other Secrets" entry for aspects of the hero's background that not even the player knows. The hero might be the heir to a throne, for example, or perhaps the agent of prophecy.

See the guidelines starting on the next page for information on creating and using a variety of hero secrets.

The Narrator's Duty

Occasionally, the Narrator should refer to his copy of a hero's hidden agenda



sheet, to make sure he doesn't forget important facts over time.

For instance, say that one hero secretly hates the Solamnic Knights for not being there to save his family during the Dragon Purge. In order to crush them, the hero has infiltrated one of their clandestine circles. If the Narrator, forgetting that the hero is not a genuine Knight, eventually creates a scenario that exposes the circle's Senior Knight to assassination, the hero may shock him by *helping* the assassins—and in doing so, ruins the Narrator's carefully conceived storyline.

If the Narrator had remembered the hero's hidden agenda, he could have injected elements into the scenario to give the hero serious moral qualms about aiding in the Senior Knight's death. Instead, the Narrator's shock and indignation might force the player to reveal something about the hero that would have come out better through play.

Hero Secrets

Like all the other elements recorded on the hidden agenda sheet, a hero's secrets should serve to feed the Narrator's plot and storyline. However, a player might instead prefer to draw a card from the Fate Deck and consult the chart below to randomly generate a secret for his hero. Regardless of how the secret is designed into the hero's background or chosen randomly, though, it generally remains out of the hero's control. The Narrator decides how and when the secret manifests itself.

Descriptions of the secrets follow the chart

Card Value	Hero Secret
1	Haunted
2	Second sight
3	Shared body
4–5	Illegitimate child
6–7	Traitor
8	Enemy
9	Shapechanger
10	Predestined

Haunted

The spirit of a deceased relative, friend, or enemy is an important part of the *haunted* hero's life. The spirit can be recently deceased or a ghost that has followed members of the hero's family for generations. The Narrator should determine the nature of the spirit, though the suit, portrait, or inscription of the card drawn might provide hints to the spirit's nature or identity.

Depending on its motivation, the spirit either aids or hinders the hero and his companions during tense moments. It may visit the hero in his dreams, providing hints or filling his nights with terror. Should the adventurers choose to rid themselves of the spirit, they can do so only through a dramatic quest.

Berem Everman, the Gemstone Man from the *DRAGONLANCE* Chronicles series of novels, can be considered a haunted character.

Second Sight

A hero with *second sight* has limited precognitive abilities. He receives visions, prophetic dreams, and sometimes even sees omens and portents in seemingly everyday events.

Second sight differs substantially from both the sorcerous school of divination and the mystic sphere of sensitivity. It is not something the hero can control. In fact, his visions and dreams often make sense only as the event they describe has begun to unfold. A hero may dream about a specific sword but he has no idea whether that sword spells his doom or will prove his means of achieving a glorious victory.

The Narrator should create occasional prophecies for a hero gifted with second sight to experience. A dream might feature shadow-draped figures who implore the hero to seek out certain individuals or objects. During a quest, a hero may suddenly and inexplicably know that the three ravens he sees perched on a tombstone signify that a trio of necromancers will seek,

are seeking, or have sought to harness the Evil in Nightlund. Perhaps a vision appears to the hero as he looks at himself in the mirror in the morning. The glimpses afforded of the past, present, or future—for the hero never really knows which—always seem confusing and disturbing.

Prophetic visions and dreams are excellent tools to get the heroes involved in an adventure. Using second sight in a campaign may require additional planning on the Narrator's part, but in the end it is often worth it.

Larken, an ancestor of Goldmoon from the novel *The Dark Queen*, possessed second sight. One also finds it frequently among barbarian shamans and soothsayers. (They do not keep the ability secret, however.)

Shared Body

Though he may appear insane to those who know him, a hero might harbor two distinct spirits in his body. Control of this *shared body* switches back and forth between the two. In most cases, however, the spirits share the knowledge they gain, so the hero rarely finds himself at a disadvantage when the change comes over him.

Still, the two spirits have distinct personalities, likes, and dislikes. This means that players of a hero with this secret need to generate a second hero to represent the second spirit. The two heroes have different demeanors, natures, roles, and other background details. Their Physical ability scores remain the same but the codes may change—one spirit may belong to a weapons master, while the other may barely know how to wield a dagger without doing itself harm. All Mental ability scores and codes must be drawn anew for the second spirit. The player should use his original hero's wealth score and number of quests.

The player and Narrator together should determine the relationship between the two spirits inhabiting the shared body. They may resent each

other or consider each other friends—they may not even have the same goal forcing them into a constant struggle for dominance of the body.

Some event-determined by the Narrator—triggers the switch in control of the hero's body. Possible triggers include stressful situations, the full moon, certain odors, or the player's use of a Dragons card to attempt an action. A successful *challenging Spirit or Reason* action from the hero may allow the current dominant spirit to retain control of the body. To keep the circumstances surrounding the switch from becoming obvious to the players, the Narrator may wish to define multiple triggers or ensure that the switch does not take place every time the trigger event occurs.

Waylorn Wyvernsbane, as seen in the classic DRAGONLANCE adventure *Dragons of Dreams*, may have shared his body with the spirit of the legendary Solamnic Knight Huma Dragonbane. On the other hand, he may just have been suffering from a mental disorder.

Illegitimate Child


A hero might be the *illegitimate child* of a royal character or someone else that holds power and influence. Then again, perhaps the hero himself has parented a child out of wedlock, either unknowingly or purposely.

In either case, the hero may remain unaware of his status until certain events in the game take place. (The player should probably stay kept in the dark, as well.) Perhaps the royal parent dies, leaving the unknowing hero heir to a throne—unknowing, anyway, until assassins suddenly come after him for no apparent reason. Or maybe a young woman shows up one day and proclaims herself the offspring of a fling the hero had in his youth.

On the other hand, the hero may know his status and seek out his lost parent or child. (The search then becomes an aspect of the hero's hidden agenda.)

The Dark Knight Steel Brightblade, from the novel *Dragons of Summer*





Flame, was the illegitimate son of Dragon Highlord Kitiara uth Matar and Solamnlic Knight Sturm Brightblade.

Traitor

At some point in his past, a traitor hero betrayed a cause. Perhaps the scandal arose from something as simple as not following the family tradition and becoming a carpenter, or perhaps the hero perpetrated a double-cross that led to the deaths of hundreds. If other heroes or important characters learn this secret, the hero may face severe difficulties.

Whatever the betrayal (decided by the Narrator and player) there is a certain place or group of characters the hero feels compelled to avoid.

Dhamon Grimwulf from *The Dawning of a New Age* considers himself a traitor to the Knights of Takhisis.

Enemy

An unfortunate hero might discover himself the subject of great hatred from a powerful *enemy*. The Narrator and player can decide upon the details, but the enemy should constitute a group of people—a family or clan that has reason to hate or distrust the hero simply because of his family, perhaps as the result of a generational blood feud. Members of this group should show up at inopportune moments, either seeking to even the ancient score or as powerful figures who can make life difficult for the entire adventuring group.

The secret of the enemy's dogged pursuit of the hero might involve the origin of the hatred between the two families. Uncovering the history behind the feud, then finding a way to resolve it seems a quest worthy of any group.

Heroes who gain an enemy as a result of their role (such as the displaced noble) should choose a different secret, for better variety.

Shapechanger

Some rare heroes in Krynn can *shapechange* into the form of an animal. This ability is no curse or disease

(lycanthropy does not exist on Krynn), but rather an inborn power that runs in certain lineages. Members of such families can change only into the form of a specific type of animal, determined by the suit of the card drawn to generate this secret (or a random draw).

Suit	Animal
Shields	Crocodile
Arrows	Panther
Helms	Grizzly bear
Swords	Leopard
Moons	Giant owl
Orbs	Dolphin
Hearts	Wolf
Crowns	Kingfisher
Dragons	Giant lizard

The hero gains all the attributes and combat abilities of the animal form, as listed under "Animals of Ansalod" in Chapter Six of the *Book of the Fifth Age*. Unlike the "shared body" secret, the hero can will the change to happen but, upon returning to his normal form, he retains no memories of his prior activities.

The mercenary El-Nahvar from the novel *Dark Heart* is a shapechanger.

Predestined

The powers of Fate (or the will of the gods before they withdrew from Krynn), have decreed a special task for a *predestined* hero. Perhaps someone has recently uncovered prophecies referring to a savior (or destroyer) who bears an uncanny resemblance to the hero. Those with second sight may even have strange dreams about the hero battling some titanic force. This individual is meant to fulfill his special destiny, and until he has, his life will not be his own. No matter what he does, he cannot escape his destiny.

The secret of or predestination is one the Narrator must keep to himself. Although the hero may have heard about vague prophecies made at his birth or have come across one during play (as mentioned above), he should never find any evidence of the omens truth.

The hero's destiny should become clear only at the threshold of whatever

great event he is fated to influence. For example, say a former Wizard of the Black Robes tries to contact the god Nuitari to regain his lost magical power. He fails, but manages instead to open a dimensional rift to the Abyss—in specific, to the infernal realm where, prior to the War of the Lance, Takhisis harvested spirits to infuse into the new draconian race. Now more Evil spirits threaten to come through the rift and invade Krynn. Having long ago foreseen this calamity, Nuitari orchestrated the events that led to the birth of the hero, the one person who can seal the rift.

If the above example took place as part of a campaign, the villain trying to reach Nuitari would surface every two or three quests to confront the predestined hero. He manages to escape every time—or at the very least, dies an obscure death (falls into a river, gets buried under a collapsing wall, etc.). Gradually, the heroes see that the wizard lives and seeks to attempt a powerful ritual that will destroy the world. Only they know enough about his plans to stop him.... Thus the predestined hero meets his fate.

The Narrator should avoid gearing every quest in a campaign around the prefated figure—every hero ought to get a chance to be the “star” for a while. However, the campaign’s climax should center around the predestined hero, with each of the others having his own important role to play. After all, if the gods established that one hero would perform a great deed, might they not also have hand-picked those who would come together with him in a band?

The Herald, mentioned in Chapter One of *Dusk or Dawn*, is a predestined character. When he was a child, Paladine himself proclaimed that he would one day perform an important task. (An event from the Herald’s childhood appears in “The Missing Master Lor,” from the classic DRAGONLANCE adventure anthology *The World of Krynn*.)

One might also argue that the Hero of the Lance Goldmoon was predestined to be the center of the power of

the heart. Not only was she the first priestess of Mishakal during the gods’ brief return to Ansalon toward the end of the Fourth Age, it was she who first mastered the new powers of mysticism. In fact, Goldmoon’s birth is prophesied in the novel *The Dark Queen*.

Putting It All Together

Narrators who incorporate any of the optional rules described in this chapter should keep in mind that they are intended as tools to heighten the player enjoyment of the game. The new hero race and the concepts of false demeanors and hidden agendas also are meant to inspire players to create interesting hero backgrounds and personalities and Narrators to build story ideas that revolve around one or more of the heroes.

When using these new rules, however, Narrators need to remain flexible. Not every element will suit every hero and as the campaign progresses, both heroes and the storyline will evolve naturally. Conflicts will get resolved, and secrets will be revealed. Narrators should just allow this development to happen, and watch as other agendas and secrets grow from the changes.

All characters in good stories grow and change, and so will the heroes. One might go from a river pirate to a beloved liberator; perhaps a noble woman finds herself forced to assume the role of a serving wench to hide from assassins. Narrators should embrace such transformations, for rogues thrive on changing circumstances—it is not their nature to feel satisfied by a stagnant status quo. Evolution is at the heart of every quest undertaken by these heroes of defiance.

The description of Linsha Majere on the next pages combines false demeanors and hidden agendas with the concept of false roles introduced in Chapter One to create a multifaceted character harboring a number of secrets.



Linsha Majere

Description	Human female (civilized), thug role <i>Knight of the Rose</i>
Demeanor	Immoral (9 ♥) * Aggressive (7 ↓) * Confident (3 ♣)
Nature	<i>Vigilant</i> (5 ●)
Reputation	Adventurer (Quests 6, Hand 4)
Social status	Commoner (Wealth 3)
Agility	8A
Dexterity	7C
Endurance	3A
Strength	4A
Melee weapon	Short sword (+3) <i>Broad sword</i> (+6)
Missile weapon	Sling (+2) <i>Crossbow</i> (+5)
Armor	Leather (-2) <i>Plate</i> (-5)
Shield	Target (-3)

* Linsha Majere has adopted a false role and several false demeanors. Her true personality and profession appear in italics, as do the armor and weapons she bears when standing openly side-by-side with other Knights.

“Most of the people I meet think I’m a cutpurse and an alleybasher—not suitable jobs for a woman. I don’t do anything to discourage that impression, because living that lie is how I attend to matters of honor.

“As a girl I went, at my parents’ behest, to study with Goldmoon at the Citadel of Light. There, I discovered within me the power to speak with animals and plants, to read the auras of men and women, and to communicate with the spirits of the dead. These mystic powers aid me in my efforts to gather information for the Knighthood.

“A few years ago, I caused quite a stir by becoming the first woman to ever join the Order of the Rose. The fact that my family isn’t Solamnian made an even bigger splash. My parents, Usha and Palin Majere, and my grandfather, Caramon, were so proud of me. I wish



I could serve my Order today in a fashion that would continue to make them proud. But duty requires a different kind of service from me.


"I belong to a clandestine circle of Knights established in Sanction to keep watch over that city's mysterious lord, Hogan Bight. We remain ready to act should he ever reveal an allegiance with the Dark Knights and the Great Dragons. The people in Sanction know me as Lynn, a greedy and violent woman of loose morals. However, despite the charade, my heart and soul still belong to the Order of the Rose, and I always repay honor with honor.

"Although I know that my work aids the cause of Good, I often feel as though the pretense I engage in does neither my brave parents and grandparents nor the Knighthood the honor they deserve. When last I visited Solace, Grandfather told me how proud he was of me. The Grand Master himself has impressed upon me the necessity of my task and the honor inherent in my goal. Still, when I am alone with my thoughts, I wish I could live a more honorable life-like that led by others in my family, or by famous Knights like Huma Dragonbane and Riva Silvercrown.

"However, as long as I maintain my personal honor and perform my duty to my utmost, I live up to the Measure. For now, that will have to do.

"But someday, Linsha Majere will honor her family name with valor."

Game Information

Linsha (3 ) has assumed the false role of a thug. Reputedly she often seduces victims, then kills them (she actually has killed only rarely). She enjoys a trump bonus to use improvised weapons—a legacy of helping her mother, grandmother, and aunts around the Inn of the Last Home as a girl. It becomes a handy skill when subduing a would-be paramour as part of her cover identity.

This Knight of the Rose can cast mystic spells from the spheres of ani-

mism, sensitivity, and spiritualism. "Lynn" demonstrates her "aggressive" demeanor as a false nature to those she becomes acquainted with in her work.

When necessary, Linsha will reveal her true identity to another Knight of Solamnia. When recognized as a member of the Order, she gains the benefits and drawbacks of a Rose Knight (described fully in *Heroes of Steel*):

- Enjoys a trump bonus to close with the enemy, for combat with Legionnaires or Dark Knights, and for melee attacks while mounted.
- Can petition for an increase in Presence after increasing in reputation.
- Can draw from Solamnic treasury using her Presence score instead of her wealth score.
- Receives no trump bonus to achieve surprise before combat.
- Presence score drops 1 point if she fails in a petition for advancement.
- Bound by the Solamnic Measure.
- Can abandon or refuse a fair fight only after a *daunting Reason* (Presence) action.
- Gives sixty days' service to the Order.
- Personal wealth falls 1 point with each increase in reputation (due to donations to the Order).

While she does not currently possess any of the trappings of a Knight of the Rose, Linsha's custom-made plate armor and the broad sword given to her by her grandfather, Caramon, upon her induction to the Order of the Rose wait for her back home in Solace.

Appearance

Linsha seems the spitting image of her grandmother, Tika, when she was young: stunning green eyes, rich auburn hair, high cheekbones, and a supple, lithe body. Slightly smaller in stature than her grandmother, she has short-cropped hair and plentiful freckles, which help her to appear younger than she actually is. At age twenty-seven, Linsha still can pass for a teen, which makes her even more valuable as a covert Solamnic operative.



Chapter Four



Steel's thoughts were centered on Trevalin, on his talon. He imagined his comrades

flying into what was bound to be a challenging fight with the Ergothians, humans of

enormous courage and prowess, who had held their lands all during the War of the Lance and who were determined to hold them now.

— Steel Brightblade imprisoned, Dragons of Summer Flame

One of the oldest realms in Ansalon, the Empire of Ergoth introduced many traditions of intrigue and roguery now widely accepted across the land. For instance, the folk of Ansalon know Ergoth as the birthplace of thief guilds and the home of the Bard College. In addition, the people of Ergoth themselves embody the very spirit of defiance. As the passage above indicates, Ergothians are made of strong stuff—strong enough to keep their land intact through countless wars, two Cataclysms, and even the Summer of Chaos.

Despite its three thousand years of culture and history, though, very little has been written about Ergoth, primarily because the Empire had become quite a backwater after the Cataclysm. Now, the decline of the former Solamnian lands under the shadow of dragon and Dark Knight sees Ergoth once again emerging as the center of culture and learning on Ansalon.

This chapter expands the informa-

tion provided in the FIFTH AGE boxed set about the island of Northern Ergoth. As one of the few realms in Ansalon relatively free of threat from the Great Dragons, Narrators can choose this locale for campaigns featuring different themes. This island contains barbarian and civilized cultures, kender, gully dwarves, ancient ruins, and forgotten remnants of lost civilizations—all the makings of an exciting campaign. In addition, it is a land rife with political intrigue, and thieves and diplomats alike thrive in Gwynned, Ergoth's large capital city. Heroes can attempt a variety of quests without ever leaving the island.

Geography

The island of Northern Ergoth, just west of mainland Ansalon, was in fact part of the mainland in the ages before the first Cataclysm rent the land. Scholars from the *Empire of Ergoth* divide the island into two distinct realms: the Empire in the west and the kender nation of *Hyllo* in east.

In truth, the island contains three other distinct realms, which the empire has claimed in its bid to regain a fraction of its former size. The goblin- and gully dwarf-infested land of *Sikk'et Hul* in the south and the barbaric *Ackal* region in the north continue to ignore the Empire's claim of sovereignty. The marshy northeastern area of *Ogaral*—also considered a province of the Empire (in name only)—remains home to a naga and a clan of disturbingly intelligent trolls. All these realms appear on the color poster map of Ergoth.

Despite the island's position at the same longitude as tropical Nordmaar far to the east, it enjoys much more temperate weather. Its relatively mild summers last from Corij to Sirrimont, and the winters extend from Phoenix to Rannmont. (See the Ansalonian Cal-

Northern Ergoth

endar on the back cover of *Dusk or Dawn*.) Currents from the southern Sirrorion Sea cool the island during the summer months and bring to the island some of the chill of winter.

The Sentinel range runs the length of Northern Ergoth from north to south, dividing the island in two. Steep passes lead through the mountains in several places.

The island's western and northern regions, which contain the Empire proper and the province of Ackal, feature lush, grassy plains. Ages ago forests covered this land, but as the Ergothian Empire expanded, its citizens felled them to build ships and the cities of Truth, Gulfport, Lancton, Gwynned, and points even farther west and south (now part of the mainland or the isle of Southern Ergoth). These forests produced the finest quality wood on the continent.

The southern end of the island comprises a hilly desert of scrub and sage. This harsh land is home to the goblin and Aghar nation of Sikk'et Hul. Since the White Dragon buried most of Southern Ergoth in snow, these folk have had to struggle even harder for survival in their chilly land.

The eastern part of the island remains awash in lush old-growth forests. Since before the rise of the Ergothian Empire, the territory from the eastern coast to the foothills of the Sentinel Mountains has been inhabited by kender. While they call their homeland Hylo, other Ergothians know it as Kenderhome, as do many of Ansalon's cartographers. This forested land, like the rest of the island, enjoys a far cooler climate than one might suppose based on its proximity to the equator. Summer weather remains cool and pleasant, and in winter the mild climate results in wet snow that is just right for packing.

Empire of Ergoth

Volumes in the ancient library of the Imperial University in Gwynned detail the history of the people, places, and races of the Empire of Ergoth from its earliest days to the present. Long scoffed at by scholars of other realms, the university today enjoys a renaissance, thanks to the influx of scholars fleeing occupied Palanthas. Academics across Ansalon have begun to reevaluate Gwynned's library, which outsiders had long considered nothing but a collection of outdated tomes and inflated legends about the empire's lost glory days.

This section summarizes the history of Ergoth proper and its "provinces" up to the year 31sc and describes their culture and current happenings as well. The university library's vast historical section provided the source of this information; where it contradicts established accounts, both versions have been included to allow the reader to decide the truth for himself.

Ergoth Proper

Ergoth is enjoying a population boom and cultural resurgence during the Fifth Age, thanks to the influx of immigrants from former Solamnian provinces now held by Khellendros the Blue.



Important Holdings

The variety of civilized settlements, magical sites, and ancient ruins makes Ergoth proper a popular place for adventurers seeking their fortunes.





Noteworthy Settlements

All across Ergoth, new towns have popped up to serve the needs of newcomers, and established towns have swelled beyond their city walls.

Hillfal. The most important settlement in the northern part of Ergoth, the fortress town of Hillfal stands perched on the steep banks of the Alunatal River, guarding both it and the nearby mountain pass from invasion by the barbaric Ackalite tribes to the north. This austere fortress started out as just a small toll station, established to collect fees from caravans traveling from Gulfport through the mountain pass toward Solamnia, or returning through the pass. The Ackalites razed the station in an uprising during the reign of Emperor Redic I, though the empire ultimately managed to beat them back to the northern tip of the island. Hillfal's ruins formed the foundation for a new, strong fort.

Completed in 230AC, Hillfal is the newest fortress of Ergothian build in the empire. No less than a legion remains stationed here at any given time. The village of two hundred people just south of the fort consists mostly of shops, houses of ill repute, gladiatorial pits, and even shadier establishments that imperial troops frequent for an evening's diversion.

Gulfport. A remnant of the ancient Emperor's Road leads south from Hillfal to Gulfport. Once a major center of commerce, Gulfport remains Ergoth's largest merchant harbor. (The imperial fleet and the Solamnian warships that escaped Palanthas after the coming of the Blue fill the harbor at Gwynned.)

Ergothians also know Gulfport as the empire's primary metalworking site. The realm's finest artisans and weaponsmiths live here, working with metals imported from Sancrist or cut from nearby Wind Dancer Mine (so named for the long-abandoned abodes of the lost Kyrie, located on the mountain's least accessible peaks). This mine—perhaps the richest in all of Ansaon—has remained productive

since 567PC, and new shafts delve ever deeper into Krynn's surface.

Tantylvil. South of Gulfport lies the hamlet of Tantylvil, a living monument to the battle of wills between a father and son around 300AC. The elder son of Gulfport's aging lord was eager to assume power, but the old man would not step down. The son, already grown wealthy from New Sea trade, decided to break his father and Gulfport by constructing a city of his own.

He named it Tantylvil after his wife and spent his entire fortune building homes, docks, stables, inns, smithies, shops, and defenses. When finished, he had constructed one of the most aesthetically pleasing towns in the empire, for it was planned, not grown. He even had he had the blessings of the emperor—Redic IV believed Ergoth could never have enough port towns. Yet Tantylvil never attracted more than a handful of sea barbarian traders and some fishermen. Old habits die hard, and Tantylvil lacked Gulfport's primary feature: its link with Wind Dancer Mine.

Today, much of Tantylvil lies in disrepair. Rumors call the town the secret headquarters of the thief guilds, but otherwise it remains a fishing community of about three hundred.

Castle Crimson. Continuing south along the Emperor's Road leads to one of the oldest buildings in Ansalon. The blocky Castle Crimson takes its name from its spires of red stone, imported from the Khalkist Mountains. From the road, one can see the castle sitting upon a hill that rises sharply from the surrounding plains. However, as invaders discover, the hill itself is part of the fortress, covered with traps and hidden arrow slits and doors that defenders can tire through or emerge from without warning.

Built around 2300PC, the castle was a gift to a human noblewoman from her noble dwarf husband. Unfortunately, the relationship ended in embarrassment when she gave birth to twin gully dwarves (the reason why so few dwarf—human pairings last).

The Lord of Castle Crimson, who

traditionally occupies a seat in the imperial Senate, is the head of the Shadowlark family, half-elves of Qualinesti stock. They make bards, guild thieves, and Qualinesti refugees welcome in their home, but seem to have a strange disdain for anything Solamnlic.

Lancton. In sight of Castle Crimson stands the fortified city of Lancton. The city was founded in 1940PC as a combination toll station, guard post, and caravan stop at the only fordable section of the Dermount River. However, the completion of the Quevalin Bridge in 930PC removed the need for the city's garrison function, as caravans were no longer as easy to ambush.

Today, Lancton remains a trade hub. The section of the river between it and the capital serves as a portion of the Emperor's Road. An extension of this road allows traders to rapidly carry ore from the mines of Werim to the south to Lancton, and from there to Gulfport and Gwynned. Almost daily, oxen trod the well-worn riverside paths to draw loaded barges along the waterway,

Even more important than its trade status is Lancton's significance as the source of the finest Ergothian art, music, and songwriting. Graduates of the empire's Bard College, located here, are known throughout the continent for their famous works celebrating the Heroes of the Lance and other great figures in Ansalon's history. The renowned elf bard Quevalin Soth (*Qualinesti elder male, artistic demeanor, Legend*) attended and graduated from the school and currently serves as its headmaster.

Lancton is also the acknowledged headquarters of the Ergothian thief guilds—which causes many people to doubt the story, for why would a semi-secret organization like the guilds make known the location of their headquarters? Nonetheless, someone looking to make contact with the guild ought to start in Lancton, specifically at a tavern called "The Emperor's Clothier."

Werim. From Lancton, travelers can follow the Emperor's Road south to Werim, the largest mining town on

Northern Ergoth. To save their own lives during the Shadow Years following the first Cataclysm, Werim's village elders legally gave up their children and their descendants to an invading warlord. Even now, everyone born Werim is still considered a slave, the property of the local lord.

For centuries, the folk of Werim have fed the glory of local tyrants. The current lord is Governor Seta Eyt (*human adult male, cruel demeanor, Adventurer*) a harsh and greedy man. The Thief Guild has long targeted this unfit ruler, but his alliance with the cunning Li tribe, a group of disaffected Ackalite barbarians who act as his bodyguards, has kept Eyt alive through seven assassination attempts.


Gwynned. Downriver from Lancton lies Gwynned, the city that be the imperial capital when the old capital, Daltigoth (in Southern Ergoth), fell to ruin and ogres after the Cataclysm.

Seaside Gwynned had been a favorite summer retreat of emperors since the Quivalin dynasty. It featured a palace, although less glorious than the Golden Palace of Daltigoth, suitable accommodations for the Senate, gladiatorial arenas, opera houses, the Imperial University, and many other basic amenities for the life of an emperor. Redic I established his capital here and renamed the town Gwynned to evoke the memory of that extinguished imperial line and give his own reign an a legitimacy (see "History").

Since then, emperors have expanded Gwynned's defenses and harbor several times, helping the city evolve into a cosmopolitan of inequity. A visitor can find any serve here—as well as any pleasure. The bouts in the local gladiatorial arena enjoy a place among the strangest and bloodiest in the empire. (Citizens still talk about the fight between a lightning-breathing behir and five condemned criminals dressed in full plate mail and armed with steel rods.)

Landfall. Northwest of Gwynned stands a coastal fortification built around





an ancient tower of gnomish origin. Tradition holds that this tower marked the spot where the gnomes reached mainland Ansalon during their quest for the Graygem in the Age of Dreams. Landfall takes its name from that myth. While the tower still holds the gears, levers, and other odd manifestations of gnomish technology, the salty dampness of the ocean has long since fused the metal into an unworkable mass.

In 1770PC, after the Solamnians had established their presence on Sancrist, the Ergothians turned the gnomish tower into a sprawling fortification—just in case Solamnus intended to use Sancrist as a staging area for invasion. Today, the empire maintains the fortress as a last-ditch defense. Not only did it stand throughout the Ackalite invasion immediately following the Cataclysm, it contributed to the eventual defeat of these rebels at the hands of Redic I.

Thonvil. Almost due south of Gwynned, on the island's southern coast, is Thonvil. This relatively unremarkable fishing village plays host to the "Wooden Weapons Annual," a non-lethal version of the gladiatorial bouts held in other towns.

A popular local story claims the infamous Dragon Highlord Kitiara uth Matar attended the Annual and took the championship when she was but a strip of a lass (naturally, Ergoth's male-dominated society forced her to disguise herself as a boy). Supposedly she returned to the Annual every few years, always disguised as a man and always walking away with the championship and the purse of gold that came with it. Even after her death, the legend goes, she continues to attend the Wooden Weapons Annual on occasion. If her spirit shows itself to a contestant, he can be almost certain to win—or he can be certain to lose.

Almost without exception, however, historians of the War of Lance agree that the Blue Lady never visited Northern Ergoth. In fact, her own diaries indicate that she regularly competed in the Wooden Weapons Annual in the

town of Vocalion on Southern Ergoth, a site now buried beneath Gellidus's glacier. Still, the insistence of Thonvil's populace makes some scholars grant a grain of truth to the tales of the spirit, though no educated man thinks the ghost is that of the long-dead Highlord.

Attendance at the Wooden Weapons Annual has tripled in the past few years, as Solamnian refugees find it reminiscent of their honorable tournaments from back home. Of course, the influx of newcomers is altering some of the myths surrounding the Annual. For example, a version of the legend of the Highlord now circulating claims the ghost shows itself only to braggarts who will lose the competition.

The Solamnian South. The southern portion of Ergoth proper is the area most heavily settled by Solamnian refugees. The farming community of New Winterholm, the largest settlement there, got its start thanks to a land grant to Sir Wilhelm Tankreed (*human adult male, honorable demeanor, Champion*). As Khellendros descended upon northern Solamnia, this lord fled with the peasant population for whom he felt responsible.

Throughout the Solamnian South, the immigrants have settled in fairly well, but a few cultural difficulties seem inevitable. First, farmers and herders on the Sikk'et Hul border have a difficult time seeing the goblins of that province as peaceful neighbors (see page 81). The same holds true for the Solamnian fishermen. Border attacks by land and sea have increased on both sides, as the newcomers "defend themselves" and the goblins' patience wears thin.

Second, Solamnians entering into military service to the empire have a hard time adjusting to the Ergothian mentality. For instance, a Solamnian named Brevin Gantalian (*human young adult male, modest demeanor, Adventurer*) who helped uncover a plot to kidnap the emperor's son was awarded the command of Hillfort, a fortress originally built to guard a nearby mine and the Emperor's Road. The new commander appointed Marla uth Furstan

(*human adult female, honest demeanor, Adventurer*), a female Solamnic Knight, as his second-in-command—which many Ergothian warriors viewed as a personal insult. Further, he has launched expeditions into neighboring Sikk’et Hul to “keep the provincial borders safe.” Although such a move would seem reasonable along the Gaardlund-Throil frontier in his native land, in Northern Ergoth it disrupts a centuries-old peace.

Major Ruins

Ogre ruins pepper the Sentinel Mountains along the Hylo-Ergoth border. Most have been thoroughly explored at the urging of the cash-strapped empire, though goblin scouts and adventurers do occasionally find new sites.

Wind Dancer. One of Northern Ergoth’s more mysterious structures, the Wind Dancer ruins appear virtually inaccessible to anyone without flight. The few who have reached this ancient Kyrie dwelling describe it as a bewildering complex of hallways, staircases, identical rooms, and open courtyards. The only damage to the structure seems to have been wrought by the passage of time. It looks as though every resident simply vanished. The empire encourages expeditions to the Wind Dancer peaks, hoping to solve this mystery as well as claim any treasure hidden within.

Even. Unlike the Wind Dancer site, the fate of the ruined town of Even holds little mystery. In the decades after the Cataclysm, rampaging Ackalites razed this town—once a supplier of delicacies like caviar and honey-baked fish filets to Gwynned and other northern cities—and slaughtered every citizen. All attempts to resettlement the town (or loot whatever the Ackalites missed) have failed: The ghosts of dozens of murdered citizens haunt the area still.

Mystic Places

A site not traditionally associated with mystical occurrences in Ergoth proper is the abandoned hulk of Castle DiThon near Thonvil, once home to an ancient and noble family.

The last member of this line, the White-Robed Wizard Bram DiThon, vanished during the Chaos War. Ever since, locals have claimed that fairy folk inhabit the grounds and spirits haunt the castle itself. All who attempt to investigate the place have vanished without a trace, just as Bram DiThon did. (The *Defenders of Magic* novel trilogy recounts Bram’s earlier adventures.)

Main Populace

Native Ergothians are humans with dark skin and black hair. They typically have brown eyes, but occasionally a child is born with startling bright blue eyes. A growing Solamnic human minority also calls Ergoth proper home. This population has fairer skin, hair ranging from honey-colored to black, and eyes of blue, brown, or green. Children of mixed parentage invariably favor their Ergothian blood in appearance.


Local languages include Ergot, Kenderspeak (thanks to visitors from neighboring Hylo), and Solamnic.

Description

Ergothians like every aspect of their lives highly structured and regimented. These people believe in order and will fight to destroy any threat to their established lifestyle. History has shown that this battle urge generally breeds only more chaos, but it has become so ingrained in the Ergothian nature that everyone tends to overlook this fact. The rigidity of this society is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that the realm still clings to its traditional governmental structure—a Senate overseen by an emperor—even though for centuries the “empire” has been smaller than a Solamnic province.

Ergothians also consider an individual born to his station in life and believe it his responsibility to fulfill the duties of that station. When someone fails to live up to his responsibilities, it is traditional for another of equal or slightly lower status to assume them instead. This custom has led to periods





of numerous successive coups and assassinations of emperors.

Ergoth is a highly feudal society. The rich and powerful own the land, and peasants work it in exchange for the roof over their heads and a small amount of the food they grow or the livestock they tend. The empire is also heavily patriarchal, a cultural point that causes conflict with the refugees from Solamnia, which has granted increased status and opportunity for women for decades. Virtually since the founding of the empire, Ergothians have believed that women belonged at home, raising children and tending to the needs of their husbands and families.

Any woman unhappy with this existence generally leaves Ergoth proper, as a variety of laws restrict her ability to hold property or to profit as an adventurer, warrior, or in any other traditionally “male” field. Unless she passes herself off as a man, a woman who is not a matron can work as either a serving wench, maid, street dancer, or at an occupation of even lower standing. A very few women become bards, but they usually start out as street performers “discovered” by an established and respected male bard.

Women are not the only Ergothians legislated into particular roles, although they certainly take the brunt of it. The empire has laws that apply to virtually every other person, too. Each citizen has his place in the world—and it’s important to society that he stay there.

This view (aided by a large national ego) has caused the Ergothians to retain both emperor and Senate past the point where they are really needed. These people genuinely believe their empire will rise again, as it is Ergoth’s duty to be first among nations. Ergoth—never Istar or Solamnia—is the center of culture, arts, and human civilization on Krynn. For centuries, emperors, nobles, and scholars have tried to recapture that lost glory. It seems that the devastation of the Dragon Purge, which brought low so many other realms, was just the catalyst Ergoth needed.

Culture

The influx of refugees from Solamnia has provided Ergoth with a much-needed population boost. The fresh infusion of new creative expression—in the form of Solamnian tapestries and sculpture—has touched off something of an artistic renaissance. The one medium in which the Ergothians remain unmatched is epic verse and music composition.

While elves may produce the best instruments in Ansalon, none can match the skill of an Ergothian bard when it comes to penning new works. Unlike the flowing nature of elven music, which relies heavily upon improvisation, local bards compose highly structured and measured music. Lyrics, though less rigid, also follow specific formats. (However, the Bard College in Lancton identifies over three hundred verse formats, so only the most discerning listeners can recognize that bards work within set parameters.) Throughout Ergoth proper, commoner and noble alike love music and verse.

In stark contrast, Ergothians are equally fond of bloodsports. Virtually every settlement has some kind of gladiatorial arena: from simple pits in small villages to the vast sprawling stadium of Gwynned. Locals flock to these arenas to watch man fighting beast or man fighting man. The purpose of these bouts ranges from settling scores or punishing criminals to just plain having fun (such as Thonvil’s Wooden Weapons Annual). Gladiatorial combats represent to Ergothians what county fairs mean to the rest of Ansalon. Bards or dancers usually perform between each combat.

Trade

The empire exports copper, brass, and steel tools and weapons; ogre relics; and cut stone to nearby Gunthar on the isle of Sancrist and to Coastlund in the realm of Khellendros. In return, Ergoth imports precious metals from Gunthar, carved wooden figures and cut wood from Kenderhome, and fruits and leather from dragon-occupied Qualinesti.

The rapidly growing city of Gwynned has seen increased trade of late, thanks to Solamnian immigration.

History

The earliest history of Ergoth remains all but lost to the mists of time, little more than a collection of legends in an ancient tome called *History of the World*. The title of this work is highly misleading—"the world" of the unknown authors extended no farther east than the Khalkist Mountains and the Silvanesti forest. Yet enough of the lore corresponds with tales collected by scholars in Palanthas that one can glean some facts from it.

Although the *History of the World* includes no dates, loremasters have correlated events with the *Iconochronos* of the historian Astinus. For simplicity's sake, this section uses the method of reckoning common among historians in the Fifth Age (*Pre Cataclius*, *Alt Cataclius*, and *Saer Cataclius*).


The Formation of Empire

History of the World tells of an adventuresome youth named Ackal Ergot, who reportedly slew an entire tribe of bakali—a lost race of lizard men—because if they had captured him, he would have missed the celebration of his fourteenth birthday and his ascension rite to adulthood.

Ackal Ergot was born around 2650PC in the village of Sanction, far from the lands that today take his name. Many of his youthful exploits in the aftermath of the Second Dragon War appear in the *History of the World*, including his journey to the Sentinel Mountains, where he became the first human in fifteen centuries to venture into an ogre city. There he encountered vast treasures and the mystical artifact known as the World's Heart. A vision came upon him then—a vision that would drive him to forge the barbaric human tribes into a mighty empire.

Upon returning to Sanction, he led expeditions into the ruins of the ogre cities in the Khalkist Mountains. With





the wealth gained from these forays, he began bribing tribal chieftains for their loyalty. Those who could not be bought, he exterminated with sword and flame. By 2600PC, Ackal Ergot had united all the human tribes from the Khalkist Mountains to the far western edge of Ansalon. On his seventieth birthday, he declared Daltigoth, the former stronghold of a particularly powerful tribal chieftain, the capital of the Empire of Ergoth and commanded scribes to pen the *History of the World*.

Five years later, as his armies pressed into the southern lands where the remaining free human tribes had banded together under the woman warrior known as Kharolis, Ackal Ergot fell down a flight of stairs in the newly completed Golden Palace and died. (The *History of the World* claims he was pushed by assassins, but the *Iconochronos* implies that the self-made emperor tripped on his own cape while in a drunken stupor.)

Growing Pains

For the next century, the empire teetered on the brink of disaster. Ackal's sons proved stupid, petty, and self-centered. One by one, they ascended to the throne and assassinated each other. (For example, the only official act taken by Ackal II before his death was to require imperial permission to explore ogre ruins; see the thief guilds sidebar on page 12.) The last of Ergot's sons was assassinated by his own daughter when he tried to make slaves of all who dwelled west of the southern Sentinel Mountains. (He planned to set them to work carving the tallest peak into his own likeness.) When the young woman attempted to claim the throne, she was slain by angry priests and warriors who, thanks to their experience with Kharolis in the south, believed that female rulers could only lead the empire to ruin.

With the end of the Ergot line, the Quivalin line ascended to the throne and proceeded to rule ineffectively. For the next several decades Ergothian warlords fought among themselves, each

believing himself worthy of the throne. During this quick succession of four Quivalin emperors, some managed to expand the borders slightly—Ergoth's frontier now reached the border of Silvanesti in the east and the very northern tip of the Sentinel Mountains in the west. However, this expansion could not equal the growth achieved under Ackal. The empire grew into a brutal, bestial realm ruled by tyrants consumed by their egos and lack of vision.

Although the *History of the World* ends with the beginning of this period, the *Iconochronos* and recent Ergothian history texts provide further details.

Ergoth Rising

In 2480PC, the warlord Ackal Dermount claimed the throne. He had long considered war-internal and external—detrimental to the empire's welfare. Upon destroying the last of his opponents, Emperor Ackal IV set aside the sword of Ergot and began trade with the Silvanesti elves in the east and the fledgling kender nation of Hylo in the north.

Peace reigned for more than one hundred years, throughout the rule of Ackal IV and his successors Ackal V and Ackal VI. Humans and elves intermarried, and the first half-elves became assimilated into the empire. Humans and dwarves also intermarried. However, historians indicate that, unlike half-elves, who seemed a product of the best that the human and elf races had to offer, the offspring of human and dwarf unions were ugly, simpleminded creatures fit for little more than removing garbage or cleaning stables. New laws forbade dwarf-human interbreeding and marriages, and the unfortunate products of these unions—called “dirt eaters,” “muckers,” or “dump men”—found themselves cast out of Ergothian settlements. Most historians consider these creatures the first gully dwarves (or Aghar, as they have christened themselves).

Ackal Dermount's grandson, Ackal VII, ascended to the throne in 2240pc. In 2200pc he declared Hylo a vassal state of Ergoth. During the reign of

Ackal VII, stories of human–kender marriages are common (including a few involving the emperor supposedly having a kender wife). However, most serious historians consider these merely tales of political satire spawned by the fact that the emperor never quite got the kender to understand the concept of paying taxes and providing troops for the Ergothian army. Tax collectors in Hylo had to contend with carved wooden figurines and polished rocks, while military officers found themselves commanding bands of kender ready to go explore the empire.

Troubled Times

The reign of Ackal VII is marked by increasing tension among humans, elves, and dwarves. After his death, the young Emperor Quivalin V ascended to the throne—Ackal’s wife was barren, so he had named a member of the Quivalin line his successor. Three months later, rising racial tensions exploded when human hunters accidentally slew the Silvanesti ruler, Sithel.

Suspecting the death was no accident, Sithel’s older son, Sithas, declared war on Ergoth. This campaign, dubbed the Kinslayer War by historians, lasted more than fifty years. The legendary unaging wizard General Giarna commanded the empire’s legions, while Kith-Kanan, twin brother of Sithas, led the elf armies.

Only the first five years of the war saw any loss or gain of territory; the rest devolved into a long, bloody stalemate. The final battle of the war claimed the life of Giarna, the human wife and half-elf children of Kith-Kanan, and thousands upon thousands of elves and humans. Kith-Kanan negotiated a truce with Emperor Quivalin V. Soon after, western Silvanesti declared its independence, becoming a land where elves, half-elves, and humans could live together in peace.

In the years following the Kinslayer War, the empire found itself at odds with its dwarf neighbors. The governor of the southeastern province authorized

his people to begin mining in the Kharolis Mountains near Thorbardin. A border dispute arose: The dwarves claimed the mountains as their territory, while the governor, backed by Imperial Court, held that they had claim on the mountains. After all, Thorbardin had been built only thanks to the empire’s generosity in permitting the dwarves access to their mountains.

By 2128pc, negotiations had ended. The dwarves ceased trading with Ergoth and began harassing the miners, as well as caravans heading to western Silvanesti. When Quivalin VI assumed the throne in 2120pc, skirmishes between dwarf warriors and Ergothian border patrols were the order of the day. With Quivalin VII’s ascension at the age of thirteen in 2075pc, a full-blown war raged in the Kharolis Mountains, with the settlers in western Silvanesti caught in the middle.


Young Quivalin VII summoned Kith-Kanan to Daltigoth, and the elf leader set about negotiating a truce between the warring factions, just as he had for the emperor’s grandfather. In 2073pc, Kith-Kanan engineered a peace treaty between elves, dwarves, and Ergoth. His new elf nation of Qualinesti would serve as a buffer state between Ergoth and Thorbardin. The humans stopped mining the Kharolis Mountains and the dwarves lifted their ban on trade. Further, the dwarves forged a replica of the Hammer of Reorx and presented it to the Ergothian emperor as a peace offering.

During peace negotiations, the wise young ruler made a show of breaking with the past by changing his name; thereafter, emperors of his line would be called “Quevalin.” He also began a tradition of passing the gift of the dwarven hammer from nation to nation on an annual basis, to reinforce the spirit of the treaty known as the Swordsheath Scroll.

Golden Years

With Quevalin VII’s reign, the empire entered a cultural golden age. All the





classic forms of Ergothian song, music, and poetry appeared in their early stages between 2080pc and 1900pc. Quevalin VII took steps to encourage and preserve the performing arts by founding the Bard College of Lancton. His son, Quevalin VIII, established the Imperial University in Gwynned and also began assembling a large library of literature and history from all the races of the world. For the first time, an emperor encouraged sanctioned looters to retrieve something other than gold from ogre ruins. At the time of his death in 1997pc, Quevalin VIII worked personally to translate ogre texts into Ergot. Sadly, his work, as well as the original ogre tablets, has been lost.

Ergothians remember Quevalin IX as the emperor who created the Senate, a body to which nobles and wealthy citizens from across the empire could elect representatives. The Senate's primary duties involved advising the emperor, supervising the army, funding large construction projects, and ensuring that capable and fair governors ruled in the many provinces of Ergoth.

Some of the light of this golden age shone on Ergoth's neighbors as well. Dwarven and elven culture prospered during these years, and in 2000pc, Kith-Kanan urged further steps to reinforce the idea of peace in the minds of generations to come. Dwarves, humans, and elves came together to build the fortress of Pax Tharkas (an elven name that means "peace among friends"). Kith-Kanan and Quevalin X both died during the monument's construction, and both were laid to rest in secret tombs within the mighty fortress.

Quevalin XI took the throne in 1905pc, five years before the completion of Pax Tharkas. A wizard of the White Robes, this emperor began ambitious expansion projects of Daltigoth's Tower of High Sorcery and of the library his great-grandfather had built. He also attempted to alter the line of succession. For centuries, the throne had passed from father to son and, in the case of a childless emperor, to a

brother, the brother's son, a male cousin or nephew, and then to any other male blood relative. Quevalin XI sought to require that the emperor also belong to the brotherhood of wizards before he could take the throne.

This attempt not only frightened potential Quevalin heirs with no talent for the arcane arts, it also disturbed and angered warlords and nobles who suspected that the emperor ultimately hoped to elevate sorcerers to an elite status above all others in the empire. In 1900pc, General Macqui Hellman, commander of the Imperial Guard, led a military coup that ended the Quevalin dynasty and placed him on the throne. Depending on which text one chooses to believe, Macqui Hellmann was either a patriot who believed he was doing the best thing for his country or a sadistic madman whose hunger for power and personal glory set the empire on the road to ruin.

Sundering of Empire

Either way, Hellmann's coup marked the end of just rulership in the empire. The usurper became the first in a line of brutal, exploitive emperors, most of whom appear to have been driven from their thrones by assassins or court intrigue. Taxes grew ever more unreasonable, as petty tyrant after petty tyrant built elaborate monuments to himself and increasingly corrupt regional governors lined their deepening pockets. The throne exploited the resources and riches of the northern and eastern provinces. The laws against looting ogre rums without imperial permission grew even harsher: anyone caught near an ogre city without the proper papers would be killed on sight.

Throughout the reign of Hellmann's successors, the Quisling emperors, small rebellions arose in the north. The Quislings were also known to disregard the Swordsheath Scroll when it served their purposes. Imperial legions swiftly crushed all resistance, however. During this time, the thief guilds grew stronger and more powerful in most

Ergothian cities, struggling to break the empire's ever-tightening grip on the throat of its people.

In 1812PC, Emperor Emann Quisling appointed the distinguished and skilled commander Vinas Solamnus to position of praetor, the highest military office in the empire. From the moment he saved the emperor from assassination on his wedding day, Solamnus had earned the respect of both the empire's military and political leaders. However, he had a reputation of being somewhat naive when it came to politics. Quisling hoped to manipulate Solamnus and control those who admired him.

Solamnus served Quisling loyally for eleven years. His most notable achievements during this time include:

- Leading the force that in 1808PC destroyed a band of half-elf cutthroats that had been attacking and looting caravans around Caergoth;
- Risking life and limb when, in 1804PC, crazed priests of Takhisis abducted Quisling's sister. With the aid of a band of adventurers (including a mage named Fistandantilus), Solamnus saved the royal lady from being thrown into Raekel's Pit to complete some dark ritual (the pit is described in "Sikk'et Hul Province").

However, in 1801PC, events were set in motion that would forever turn Solamnus away from the empire he had devoted his life to defend.

The peasant revolts that came to be known as the Solanthian Troubles took place in the empire's northeastern provinces surrounding Vingaard and Solanthus in the spring of 1801PC. Local outpost commanders could not contain the rebels, so Solamnus was sent with a large body of troops to quell the rebellion personally.

The insurrectionists and their peasant army were no match for a skilled commander like Solamnus, so initial victories came swiftly—yet they yielded no results. Solamnus's army slaughtered hundreds of peasants, armed with pitchforks and stolen

swords they hardly knew how to use. In an effort to avoid an endless of massacres, Solamnus visited the rebel headquarters at Vingaard Keep under flag of truce. There he learned the truth: The empire had provoked the Vingaard Uprising and the other recent revolts through repressive treatment of its citizens.

In a period that historians refer to as "The Year of Waiting," Solamnus reviewed the details of the peasants' cause, all the while doing what he could to ease their plight. He did his best to stall the emperor's inquiries of progress and diverted the attentions of couriers from Daltigoth who came to check on his status. However, in 1798pc, Solamnus learned that the emperor had refused his request for permanent assignment to Vingaard and planned to send his grand-nephew to take over the post. The time had come to act. In a stirring speech, the praetor announced his intention to lead the rebellion against the empire and inspired most of his army to do the same. Those who would not join him, he allowed to leave.

The provinces of northern Ergoth rallied to Solamnus's banner, and the peasants trained in the ways of soldiering. Nonetheless, Solamnus knew his forces were not ready to take on the imperial legions that would be sent to relieve him of command once his former followers told the emperor of the events at Vingaard. Rather than rush forward with poorly trained troops, Solamnus's army fought to keep the legions from gaining too much strength in the north, while the peasant forces grew in size and competence.

By early 1794PC, Solamnus declared his forces ready to go on the offensive. For three years, they fought in northern Ergoth, primarily on the plains between Vingaard and Thelgaard. None of the emperor's commanders had Solamnus's command of tactics, sense of purpose, or skill in oratory. Historians estimate that Solamnus caused as many legions to join his



“Rose Rebellion” as he defeated on the battlefields. Even troops from other Swordsheath nations joined his army.

In 1792pc, Vinas Solamnus’s Swordsheath Army marched on Daltigoth. With skill and daring, he evaded or defeated Ergoth’s remaining legions. As winter was about to set in, he laid siege to the imperial capital itself. However, a foul trick lured Solamnus into the city and, victim of a ruse, he accidentally killed the empress. He was captured and sentenced to die in midwinter. However, on the day of his hanging, local peasants loyal to Solamnus helped his army breach the city walls, rescue the praetor, and take the capital. Quisling fled.

By early spring, Emperor Quisling surrendered, agreeing to permit provinces unhappy with imperial rule to forge their own nations. Many western provinces, close to Daltigoth, remained loyal to the empire. Most northeastern provinces and Hylo asserted their independence. The human nations declared Solamnus their lord, and he signed the Swordsheath Scroll on their behalf.

A New Era

Ergoth’s time as the dominant nation of the world had come to an end. As the new realms in the north and east grew strong and prospered, Ergoth foundered under a string of incompetent, corrupt, and even insane emperors. The thief guilds began to emerge as a major force in many Ergothian cities. By 1480pc, the nation of Solamnia had replaced Ergoth as Ansalon’s major military power, while Istar, a dynamic union of city-states beyond the Khalkist Mountains, had become the center of trade.

With increasing trade competition from Istar, Emperor Theolonius Lekaer II renewed the Swordsheath Scroll in an elaborate ceremony with the rulers of Qualinesti and Thorbardin in 1234pc. The three nations prospered through trade and cultural exchanges once again, and the Lekaers became the first dynasty since the fall of the Quevalin line almost seven hundred years prior. However, this relatively brief period of prosperity came to an end



when Ergoth became one of the primary battlegrounds for the Third Dragon War.

In 1060PC, plots by the Dark Queen came to fruition, and hundreds of dragons filled the skies of Ansalon, ravaging cities and sweeping smaller realms from the map. Emperor Lekaer IV marshalled what forces he could, but even Solamnia could not withstand the onslaught of the dragons. For four decades, the Evil wyrms wreaked havoc upon the land. The faith of the Ergothians in their emperor and in the gods began to fade as nothing seemed able to stop the dragons.

It was Lekaer IV and his primary magical adviser and instructor, Fistan-dantilus (an apprentice of Giarna from the Kinslayer War, well-versed in matters of war as well as immortality) who spurred the Orders of High Sorcery to create mighty magical weapons to use against the dragons. The wizards met at the Tower of High Sorcery in Palanthas and created the fabled Dragon Orbs.

In the end, the war was won by a single man: A young Solamnic Knight named Huma Dragonbane personally confronted and defeated Takhisis, forcing her to take her dragons from the world once again. Although the records from most realms during this time are spotty or confused, most historians agree that Huma's legendary battle took place in 1018PC.

The Road to Cataclysm

Ergoth was slow to rebuild after the Third Dragon War. Other nations eagerly accepted aid from the growing realm of Istar, but Lekaer V and his successors forever hoped to return their empire to the glory days it had once known without any such charity. In 947pc, shortly after ascending to the throne, Lekaer VII wrote, "Istar comes with smiles and open purses. But under her robes she hides poisoned daggers, which she will drive into the hearts of those who will not accept her overtures. Such is not friendship, but the relation of a would-be slavemaster to

property. Ergoth, the mightiest nation in Ansalon, will never be the slave of merchants who want to be kings."


Lekaer's words angered many of Ansalon's rulers, but a century later his words appeared prophetic. In 850pc, Istar began imposing and aggressively enforcing trade standards upon all other realms. By 673pc, when Istar attempted to gain exclusive control over trade lanes and key ports—including many Silvanesti and Ergothian cities—the trade capital began waging open war against the empire and the elf kingdom. Ergothian war galleys attacked Istaran privateers and merchant vessels, while the elven fleet blockaded Istar's harbor, preventing all vessels from entering or leaving.

When Istar appealed to Solamnia for aid, the militaristic realm convinced the signers of the Swordsheath Scroll to let Istar add its name. The mercantile realm proceeded to sign additional treaties with the kender and dwarves. Increasingly over the next years, Istar became the dictator of Swordsheath Scroll nations and policies. Soon every realm in Ansalon had signed it and, by the middle of the fourth century PC, the Swordsheath Scroll also had become known as the Istaran Greatmeld. Ergoth and Silvanesti were the only two nations who had refused to join. Although the Imperial Court maintained cordial relations with Istar, Ergoth traded only with Silvanesti and Thorbardin.

In 280PC, however, even cordial relations ceased. That year, Istar declared itself the moral center of the world and installed its first Kingpriest. The move outraged Ergothian priests and offended Emperor Gwynned II of the dynasty that followed the Lekaer emperors. He issued a proclamation that no one realm could be considered the moral center of the world, since that center existed with the gods, not with man. However, when Solamnia swiftly applauded the effort, Ergoth severed all relations with Istar.

Over the next two centuries, Istar became more corrupt with power than





the empire had been at its worst. Militaristic Solamnia served as Istar's primary fighting force, most of the Knights believing the Kingpriest a supreme agent of Good. Only Ergoth's priests continued to speak out against the Kingpriest, and their voices were weakening: Istaran religion had taken hold even in Ergoth. People were shifting away from the traditional view that each individual enjoyed a personal relationship with his god of choice, facilitated by priests. Instead, they began to see the Kingpriest of Istar as the only true source of divine knowledge from gods too distant to worry about each individual on Krynn.

A succession of Kingpriests continued to pass increasingly harsh, restrictive edicts. With the Proclamation of Manifest Virtue in 118PC, Istar asserted its moral outlook upon all of Ansalon with a list of "evils." One of those evils was directed squarely at the Emperor of Ergoth: "It is a sin to adopt a title more grand than 'king,' Paladine is the Emperor of Dragons, and any who would adopt a similar title do belittle him."

Gwynned V issued a proclamation of his own: The Istaran document held no meaning to Ergothian citizens. In the empire, it stated, only the gods can truly judge virtue. Still, the Kingpriest continued to gain followers, even in Ergoth.

Then, after almost a thousand years of ceaseless decline, Ergoth saw a rise in both cultural activity and religious fervor. In 39PC, the empire's priests-of Good, Evil, and Neutral gods-received visions that the mighty Istar would fall due to the corruption of the Kingpriest. They began speaking this prophecy, ignoring Istaran and Solamnian threats to punish them for such heresy. Their sermons boosted national pride throughout the empire and filled the temples like they hadn't been since Solamnia split from the empire. New works of art centered not around emperors and governors but instead around the glorious achievements of Ergoth's people. Some provinces that

had declared independence, like the region that would become Ackal, even rejoined the empire.

Meanwhile, Istar declared wizardry Evil and attempted to disband the Orders of High Sorcery. When the actions of the Kingpriest's followers in Daltigoth resulted in the destruction of the Tower of High Sorcery there (and the neighborhoods around it) in 19pc, local religious fervor rose to a fanatical level. Gwynned VI fanned the fires. The corrupt ruler of Istar had declared war upon Ergoth, he said, and now Ergoth would strike back!

Weakened by Solamnian and Istaran trade sanctions, however, the empire's "war" amounted to only a few skirmishes at first. Meanwhile, the Kingpriest in distant Istar proclaimed Emperor Gwynned VI an agent of Evil. However, increasing armed resistance by goblins, minotaurs, elves, kender, and other races declared Evil by the Proclamation of Manifest Virtue kept Istar's forces too busy in the East to act on the pronouncement. Even the Solamnic Knights began to feel disenchanting with Istar's oppressive edicts.

Gradually, Gwynned VI built an army large enough to strike against Solamnia, and from there against Istar itself. By 8PC, the border skirmishes had erupted into full-fledged warfare. By 1PC, the Ergothian army had laid siege to Thelgaard and Solanthus in the north, while combined human and dwarf forces occupied Xak Tsaroth in the south, preparing a push toward the Khalkist Mountains.

But then Gwynned VI died suddenly while his son, Gwynned VII, was barely in his teens. This gentle soul despised war and harbored deep-seated superstitions. He also feared the power of the Kingpriest so, even as his armies made ready to press toward victory, Gwynned VII ordered a halt.

Less than one month later, the Cataclysm struck. Thousands of Ergothians died, including Gwynned VII and most of the imperial legions, as the empire was ripped from mainland Ansalon.

Tidal waves swept across the plains where Ergoth's armies battled the Solamnians, drowning troops and cities in what became the Straits of Algoni and the New Sea.

Post-Cataclysm Ergoth

The centuries after the Cataclysm saw Ergoth finally die as an empire, though the emperor remains. The current Redic dynasty succeeded a series of petty despots who attempted to claim the throne during the Shadow Years. These rulers have tried valiantly to pull Ergoth together as a nation, but the dragon-armies, internal divisions (see the "Ackal Province" section), and the presence of ogres and other races on the islands that once made up the empire have rendered their efforts fruitless.

During the War of the Lance, Emperor Mercadior Redic V lent most of the empire's standing army to the assault on Neraka. Yet even that laudable effort did not bring the attention of the world back to Ergoth.

Ergoth escaped the Summer of Chaos and the Dragon Purge virtually untouched. The strength and fierce pride of the Ergothians staved off Dark Knight attacks in Ergoth proper, while goblins repelled an attempted landing by the Knights of Takhisis in the southern province of Sikk'et Hul.

Today, many Ergothians think their current Emperor Redic VI has more or less handed the empire over to the Solamnians. They applaud the magnanimous gesture of allowing refugees from the Blue Dragon's realm to settle in Northern Ergoth's hinterlands, and they know the influx of settlers has given the empire a much-needed population boost. However, they find it disturbing that the Knights of Solamnia, with their tradition of shortsightedness and siding with Ergoth's enemies, now outnumber imperial legions in military strength.

Nonetheless, most Ergothians feel that the events of the last few decades have set the stage for their empire's return to Krynn's center stage. Today, Northern Ergoth remains the only land

not ravaged by the Great Dragons or the Knights of Takhisis. And with the relocation of some scholars from the Great Library and the university in Palanthas, the empire has regained place as Ansalon's cultural capital.

Current Happenings

Emperor Mercadior Redic VI (*human adult male, kind demeanor, Champion*) works today to engineer Ergoth's rise from the ashes.

Politics

Ergoth is ruled by a dynastic emperor. A Senate comprised of wealthy landowners, merchants, and nobles advises him, but the emperor remains the ultimate authority in all matters—including appointing and dismissing members of the thirty-nine-seat Senate. Today Redic VI presides over an Ergoth with a changing political face. The Solamnic Knights that have relocated to Ergoth proper form a strong deterrent against Dark Knight invasion attempts. However, rumors hold that Redic VI has tried to push Solamnic leaders on Sancrist to commit their support to aggressive action as well. Redic VI also seeks to bring inces of Ackal and Sikk'et Hul more firmly under his control. So far, the Knights have not stated whether they wish to involve themselves in such ventures, but they have appeared at more and more Senate meetings of late.

One important semiofficial political force in the empire is the thief guilds (see sidebar on page 12). These societies have emerged as guardians against abuse of power in the hands of the ruling class. The guilds don't trust the Solamnic Knights and fear that Redic VI's desire to restore glory to the empire may cause him to cede too much control of Ergoth's destiny to them. In the past, thief guilds have moved against even emperors, and they stand poised to do so again if necessary.



Today in Ergoth

Throughout Ergoth proper, rumors abound of an imminent attack on the unruly northern province of Ackal. Whispered conversations around Gwynned hold that spies, scouts, and assassins have moved into Ackal on a variety of missions. Redic VI's ministers have increased the incentives to explore the ogre ruins in the Sentinel Mountains to search for treasure, apparently seeking to use the empire's cut of any finds to fund a new venture.

On a more academic front, scholars from Ergoth and Solamnia have compared texts from each others' libraries, revealing little-known facts about the conflicts between their nations, the origin of Solamnia, and the founding of the Solamnic orders. In fact, Gwynned tavern tales say that a pair of scholars—a Solamnian named Strom Vintein and an Ergothian named Terras Fellician—recently uncovered forgotten details about Vinas Solamnus's Quest of Honor, which led him to found his Knighthood. The Solamnian reportedly told a friend that what they had uncovered would change the way the world viewed Solamnus and the Knighthood. Before they could reveal any details, however, they vanished with their notes and reference books. Their mutilated bodies were dragged from Gwynned's harbor a few days later, but the books and notes remain missing.

In the interest of maintaining peaceful relations between the Solamnian refugees and native Ergothians, the Solamnic Grand Master and the Ergothian Praetor have offered a joint bounty to learn who killed the scholars and why. Gwynned's Thieves' Guild has also issued a bounty—to recover the missing notes and books. They think these notes hold secrets so awful that the Knights of Solamnia will do anything to suppress them. Thus, if the Thieves' Guild can get that information, they can control the Solamnics.

Ackal Province

Most of Ansalon, having only the empire's word on the state of affairs in Northern Ergoth, has no idea of the separatist nature of Ackal province.

This loose federation of barbarian tribes long ago rejected Ergothian civilization and returned to the ways of



Ackal Ergot, seeking to regain the power and glory he enjoyed at the dawn of his empire. Each of the nine families that led the initial departure four hundred years ago gave its name to a tribe. Today, three tribes have left Northern Ergoth to settle elsewhere and two have departed Ackal. The remaining tribes of Brindal, Karthan, Tran, and Vakt look to the leadership of their overchief rather than any emperor and fiercely patrol their province, killing any outsider who violates their territory.

Important Holdings

Wild Ackal, in the northern region of the island, has no capital city. Instead, each of the province's four major tribes takes a small stronghold as its seat of power. These holdings consist of a keep belonging to the chief and a village built around it which, in turn, is encircled by stone walls and moats. These structures, built in the first and second centuries after the Cataclysm, have been scrupulously maintained by generations of Ackalites.

While the defenses of Ackal's villages remain as sound as the day they were built, most of them could not withstand a concerted assault using magic or modern warfare techniques. (The one exception is Ker-Vakt, whose citizens continuously upgrade and expand its defenses due to its position on the border with Ergoth proper.)

Noteworthy Settlements

Unlike most longstanding communities, the villages of Ackal have not grown over the years, instead ranging in size from three hundred to eight hundred. The population has remained more or less constant for the past two centuries, thanks to a number of factors, such as:

- 👤 Losing inhabitants who leave to form new tribes;
- 👤 The nation's warlike nature; and
- 👤 A high infant mortality rate, particularly among baby girls.

Beacon. The most modern settlement in Ackal is Beacon, a lighthouse and fortified port built around 310AC by mariners from Saithum to reinforce their ties with Ackal. (Saithum was settled in part by seafaring Ackalites who left Ergoth to seek a home free of imperial threat.) Although far more progressive than their prickly Ackalite cousins, the mariners try to nourish a bond between the two peoples.

The Saithum settlers sought to use Beacon as a waystation near their Solamnian trading partners, thus allowing them to bypass river pirate tariffs on the Vingaard. However, they quickly tired of the constant arguments with the Ackalites, who insisted on applying their restrictive social codes to Saithum's women—many of whom captained their own ships.

Now, Beacon serves primarily as a staging point for Ackalite pirate activity, while the lighthouse—featuring a light that, through the wonders of magical technology, cuts through even the thickest fog—serves as a reference point for ship captains attempting to round the island's north tip on the way to the realm of Gunthar at night.

While other settlements consist of a single tribe and chieftain, Beacon is home to about three hundred people from various tribes, all of whom look for leadership to Ackal's overchief, Tambov Reknal (*human elder male, vigilant demeanor, Master*).


Ker-Brindal. South of Beacon lies Ker-Brindal, a community of some

four hundred people. Before trader from Saithum more or less surrendered Beacon to the Ackahates, Ker-Brindal was one of two main staging areas for pirate activity (Ker-Karthan being the other). These days, Ker-Brindal has become primarily an agricultural village. Surrounding fields reach as far inland as the ruins of Truth, and local herdsmen tend their sheep and horses on the plain between Ker-Brindal and Beacon. Ackalite mystics have learned to make the sandy soil more fertile magically, allowing this region to supply food for the entire province. Sheep provide wool that traders barter to the kender of Hylo for wood.

The Brindal chief, Dal Quenalen (*human young adult male, determined demeanor, Adventurer*), assumed leadership of his tribe only recently, following the death of his father in an unsuccessful attack on a merchant ship bound for Gunthar. Dal feels very unsatisfied with his tribe's current direction. He doesn't believe his people should be rooting in the dirt or tending animals—they are warriors, and warriors take what they need from the weak. He tried to convince Overchief Tambov Reknal to give his tribe control over Beacon's lighthouse and port, so the Brindals can regain their former warrior status. The overchief refused the request, so Dal intends to challenge him for his position next year.

Ker-Tran. A tribe more than happy to leave the warrior's life behind them is the Tran—although without them, there could be no warfare. In the village of Ker-Tran live the vast majority of Ackal's metalworkers and weaponsmiths. For countless generations—since well before the Cataclysm—Tran ancestors worked as master smiths. Before the rise of the Ackalites, they tended their forges in Truth. However, when the lord of that city refused to bend to the fanatics, they made an example of the town by leveling it. The Ackahates shortly after the Cataclysm thought themselves unstoppable, since they could destroy a city produced the empire's finest weapon





never mind that most of its citizens were craftsmen and miners, not warriors.

The same holds true of Ker-Tran today—it is a community of craftsmen, who pass their art from father to son. Other chieftains scoff at Chief Oklar Tran (*human adult male, resolute demeanor, Champion*) and his tribesmen behind their backs for their consistent poor showing during festival tournaments. However, the scoffing goes only so far. Everyone remembers twenty years ago when, to earn respect or his people, Oklar's father halted all mining, let the forges lay idle, and refused to mend armor. Other chiefs launched an armed assault on Ker-Tran, only to find the walls defended by a variety of built-in mechanical traps and defenses—not to mention by the village's men and boys, not as helpless with weapons as other chieftains liked to think. When it mattered, they defended Ker-Tran and their honor with great skill and ferocity.

Afterward, it was three months before Ker-Tran would mine ore or make or repair weapons for anyone but members of their own tribe. Other villages tried to use their own smiths, with less than stellar results. The fact that the Tran tribe controlled the only unspent mine in Ackal made matters even more difficult. Tran's father got the acknowledgment he wanted, and the tribe went back to work. Tran has continued in his father's footsteps, and his people have suffered no open disrespect.

Ker-Karthan. Southeast of Ker-Tran is coastal Ker-Karthan. In this sea barbarian village, the Ackalites build most of their ships. Locals trade weapons and small metal items for lumber from kenderhome, then float the logs down the Moon River to Serpent Bay, where the community's master ship builders turn them into some of the finest and fastest sloops Ansalon has ever known. Only the ships of Saifhum can outdistance Ackalite sloops.

The chief of the Karthan tribe is Sarkhem Nord (*human middle-aged male, brutal demeanor, Champion*), a

bloodthirsty buccaneer who leaves just a single survivor on any ship he attacks, to help his reputation grow. He carefully balances his tribe's activities among pirating, ship building, and (surprisingly) scholarly efforts to improve ship-building techniques and further the science of navigation. While he shares the Ackalite belief in attaining glory by following the ways of Ackal Ergot, Chief Nord doesn't consider advancing the technologies of war contrary to that philosophy.

Ker-Vakt. The settlement that sums up the Ackalite nature as perceived by other Ergothians is Ker-Vakt. This massive fortress consists of a stone keep surrounded by moats and earthen works fraught with pit traps, archer positions concealed by brambles, and false gates that lead to killing zones. Ackalite troops drill constantly on and around the defensive structures, and large work crews consisting of slaves and convicted criminals work constantly to expand the fortress and change trap locations. The rotting bodies of spies, traitors, and Ackalite warriors who just couldn't meet the commander's high standards serve as grisly ornamentations, impaled on wooden and metal spikes.

While Overchief Reknal resides in Beacon, his son, Sorath (*human adult male, inventive demeanor, Adventurer*), handles tribal concerns in Ker-Vakt. Built in response to Castle Hillfal, this fortress town provides a formidable defense. Though not as impressive in appearance as the Solamnic citadels on the mainland, it remains impenetrable—as commanders who have attempted strikes against Ackal can attest. The Alunatal River, impassible on both banks, forms another impressive barrier.

Major Ruins

In addition to the ruins of the lost ogre civilization that dot the Sentinel Mountains are the remnants of human cities. Such a site, called Truth, lies in the northern tip of the range.

Before the first Cataclysm, this bustling city of fifteen thousand held a

place of honor in the empire as a major religious center. Every one of Krynns' gods had a temple here, whether the government officially endorsed the religion or not. Further, Truth housed countless shrines to lesser entities, such as the nature spirits honored by some Kagonesti and barbarian tribes. At the empire's zenith, Truth served as a resting stop for pilgrims on their way to World's Heart. Only Daltigoth rivaled it as a cultural center.

All that ended with the Kingpriest's ill-fated attempt to command the gods. The city's priests all vanished on the eve of Istar's destruction, one seer claiming moments before she vanished: "The black Knight of the Rose has doomed Istar, the empire, and even his own homeland. Draco Paladin chose ill when he put his trust in a man of Solamnia."

Truth escaped the Cataclysm unscathed, but fell a few short years later when a murderous army of Ackalites descended upon the city to loot the temples and take revenge upon gods who had devastated the world. Historians estimate that the invaders mercilessly slaughtered ten thousand men, women, and children. Vengeful Ackalite leaders had the fields sown with salt, and their shamans placed powerful curses upon each and every temple.

To this day, guards still patrol the city to drive off the occasional treasure seeker. Legend holds, however, that Truth was the site of the return of Manthus, the Ergothian god of war and scholarship, after an adventurer reconsecrated the temple here in the early days of the War of the Lance.

Mystic Places

Ackal boasts two confirmed mystic sites, both in the Sentinel Mountains. (Some suspect that the ruins of Truth contain at least one more, but this is uncertain.)

World's Heart. The best-known mystic place is World's Heart. Located at the center of the remains of an ogre city, on a plateau overlooking Truth, World's Heart has been a fabled site since the founding of the empire.

According to legend, Ackal Ergot became the first human to lay eyes on the city since the ancient humans shed their ogre bonds. While exploring, he came upon an immense stone that pulsed with a reddish glow and gave off a faint sound not unlike a heartbeat. It is said that World's Heart inspired a vision in the barbarian warrior that encouraged him to embark upon the path of empire building.

World's Heart sits in a large arena-like structure. The weatherworn fragments of the arena's dome lie scattered about, yet the stone remains untouched by wind and weather. Even in winter, snow never falls upon it.


Pilgrims used to journey to World's Heart in the hopes of receiving a vision, as Ackal did. One must place one's hands upon the stone and clear one's mind, they believed; visions will come to the worthy. Unfortunately, this tradition ended when the Ackalites destroyed Truth after the first Cataclysm. Now, World's Heart serves as the site for Ackalite council meetings and challenges to the overchief. Powerful mystics and warriors guard the site at all times, emerging from the ogre ruins to slay trespassing explorers, adventurers, and seekers of knowledge.

World's Heart does not seem affected by the departure of the gods or any other madness of the events three decades ago. It continues to pulse rhythmically, and the overchiefs of the modern age still claim it guides them with visions.

The Moon Steps. Ackal's second mystical site once held one of Ansalon's "celestial ladders" (the most famous being the Silver Stair on Schallsea). Essentially, celestial ladders are steps that seem suspended in midair, winding around an invisible post up into the sky. Purportedly, these mystical conveyances would transport the worthies who climbed them to Godshome, and those found lacking to the Abyss.

When the gods left Ansalon, the three moons that had hung in the night sky for millennia vanished. At the same moment, the Moon Steps collapsed,





tumbling down on the shrines devoted to the gods of magic at their base. However, after a visit there some years back, representatives of the Citadel of Light say the ruined Moon Steps remain rife with arcane energy. Even sorcerers find their magic much easier to use here, especially when the pale moon that replaced the old ones is full.

Main Populace

The human barbarians of Ergoth's northernmost province are known as Ackalites. Most have dark skin, black hair, and brown eyes.

Like their neighbors in Ergoth proper, Ackalites speak Ergot.

Description

Men of Ackal commonly dress in leathers when not expecting battle. When preparing for war or meeting to discuss tribal business, most wear ornately filigreed or engraved leather or scale armor. Men wear their hair cropped close to the head and always carry at least one weapon.

Women wear loose-fitting cloth robes and veils in public. Tradition forbids them to cut their hair, which they wear in dozens of braids arranged in complex patterns.

Culture

Ackalite tribes have grown even more patriarchal than the larger segment of Ergothian society. Females are considered the property of their fathers until they bear a child—when they become the property of the baby's father. The single exception is the daughter of a man with no sons. This Ackalite daughter, raised to carry on the family line as a son would, may crew a ship, or practice a trade, or even join a war band.

Marriage is an unknown institution among the Ackalites, though extended families hold great importance, particularly when one of the frequent blood feuds erupt. Both men and women enjoy genealogical study as a pastime, and most chiefs claim to trace their

roots back to Ackal Ergot or some other hero of Ergoth's glory days.

Ackal province and its people embody all that is negative about the Ergothian mind-set. Since the first Cataclysm, they have engaged in violence for its own sake and for conquest.

However, they remain highly organized and exist within a rigid set of laws and behavioral codes supposedly handed down from Ackal Ergot himself. These codes contain guidelines on everything from how a woman should care for her man's boots to the proper way of dividing loot from raids. In truth, however, these laws only vaguely resemble ancient Ergothian legal codes.

Several varieties of bloodsports, similar to those practiced in Ergoth proper, enjoy popularity in Ackal as well.

Trade

The Ackalites consider raiding and piracy the honorable way of sustaining themselves. The only realm they trade with regularly is Hylo. The tribes practice a strict barter system among their towns, each of which specializes in a different craft. This way of doing business suits the kender just fine. In particular, the Ackalites trade a variety of objects—which they plundered or crafted themselves—for the right to cut lumber in northern Kenderhome.

History

In 8PC, Emperor Gwynned VI invaded Solamnia, vassal state of reviled Istar. At the height of the campaign, however, the emperor died and his young successor, Gwynned VII, ordered the legions to halt. Not long after, the Cataclysm struck.

The coincidence of these events led many Ergothians to believe the gods were punishing them for becoming soft. This notion led a vast segment of the surviving population to return to the barbaric ways of Ackal Ergot, the violent nomadic chief who had founded the empire more than two thousand years earlier. Arming themselves, these folk went on killing sprees, "conquering"

neighboring villages, “vanquishing” unsuspecting travelers, and looting and pillaging everywhere they went.

Of course, these “Ackalites” bore no resemblance to their ancient forebears; they became nothing more than vicious killers. Still, with each passing month, their numbers swelled. By 30AC, a second generation of Ackalites had come of age, and all land north of the Der-mount River and Hylo had fallen to them. More interested in power and wealth than wanton slaughter, these younger warriors seemed closer in spirit to Ackal Ergot than their twisted parents had been. They even defeated the coastal city of Gulfport, which the previous generation had never been able to do. With ships at their disposal, the Ackalites set their sights on Gwynned and the rest of the world, intending to bring back the glory of Ergoth from the ashes of a world sundered by the gods.

The Ackalites might have succeeded if not for Baridor Redic, an aging warrior who would one day become emperor. Redic beat the Ackalites back to the

northern bank of the Alunatal River, freeing the towns they had enslaved and ending their reign of terror. After breaking the tribes as an effective fighting force, Redic began rebuilding the freed cities. He also ordered the construction of Castle Hillfal, from which he could personally watch over the Ackalites to ensure that they would never again threaten civilization.

Today, the emperor allows the province of Ackal to exist virtually as a sovereign realm. Every few years, Ergothian troops make a show of force and the imperial fleet blockades the harbors of Ker-Brindal and Ker-Karthan to remind the wayward tribes that, like it or not, they remain a part of the empire.

Current Happenings

Over the centuries, the Ackalites have continued to cling to the belief that they are what Ackal Ergot intended for his people. Ironically, as time has passed, the tribes have drifted further from the traditions of their beloved ancestor than most of them would like to admit.



Politics

Ackal is ruled by the Council of Chiefs. Each chief rules his tribe for life, and his word is law for his tribe and its lands. The leader of the council, the overchief, mediates disputes among the tribes and may command all warriors when Ackal comes under attack.

An overchief holds his title for three years, after which time he must prove he remains worthy of the honor. At the summer solstice of the appointed year, the overchief travels to World's Heart along with tribal shamans and anyone wishing to contest his right to lead hem. The overchief fights each contender in single combat to the death. The victor of the day becomes overchief.

While it may not seem fair that the reigning overchief must fight several fresh opponents in short succession, the Ackalites believe their chief must be like Ackal Ergot—able to fend off attacks from all sides and still have the strength to lead his people on to glory. An overchief incapable of meeting this standard would rather die in battle than permit his weakness to endanger all the tribes.

The present overchief, Tambov Reknal (*human elder male, vigilant demeanor, Master*), comes from the Vakt tribe. His reputation for shrewd and ruthless behavior has sparked rumors that he has entertained emissaries from the Dark Knights of Palanthal. Other reports indicate that Reknal seeks to forge tighter alliances among the tribes of Ackal. Of course, either one of these circumstances would raise concerns in the Imperial Court. However, the coincidence of the stories has imperial advisers and generals agitating for swift, fierce action to prevent Reknal from bringing the horrors of the mainland to Ergoth.

For now, however, the emperor has agreed merely to send representatives to open discussions with Tambov Reknal. The overchief graciously received them, listened to their accounts of the emperor's concerns, then sent them back to Gwynned with not the faintest hint as to his long-term goals.

Today in Ackal

Overchief Reknal knows he will face challenges from several lesser chiefs when his term expires at next year's solstice. Whispered rumors hold that, rather than wait for the challenge at World's Heart, he uses covert violence to force would-be challengers back into line.

Each tribe traditionally provides the overchief with a dozen men for annual service in Beacon. Recently, Reknal has ordered each tribe to provide half again as many additional warriors and has begun massing ships. Troop commanders have been training the men harder than usual, which makes the Imperial Court in Gwynned increasingly concerned that the overchief plans to launch an assault against Ergoth proper.

Another rumor holds that Chief Nord of the Karthan tribe is not as interested in furthering the art of war at sea as he is in treasure seeking. Some claim that he discovered references to a land west of Ansalon while investigating a little-known section of ogre ruins at the head of the Moon River. Supposedly, this land holds untold riches and Nord wants to send his ships to raid it.

Ogaral Province

Like Ackal, Ogaral is a province that enjoys rather a "hands-off" policy from the empire. Emperor Redic VI seems more interested in assimilating Solamnian refugees and trying to predict the Dark Knights' next move than in bringing the monster-ridden province back under his firm control.



Important Holdings

In truth, Ogaral is hardly a province even in name. This tiny northeastern region just north of Hylo has no major cities. In fact, it contains no towns at all,

nor mystic sites—just one prominent ruin on the Isle of the Serpent and some scattered settlements of trolls.

The only large structure in the entire province is an offshore tower—all that remains of Fort Ogaral, once the mightiest citadel in the northern empire. The Cataclysm washed away most of the fortress, leaving only a single tower clinging to a wave-battered, rocky island.

The rest of the province comprises a small tract of rocky high ground along Northern Ergoth's coast and some swampy territory along the east bank of the Moon River. Trolls make their homes in makeshift shelters. The broken bones of thousands of trollish dinners litter the area around their dwellings, jutting from the ground like spikes. To approach these settlements without injuring feet or footwear, one must approach very carefully—or wear hard boots.

Main Populace

Two distinct packs of trolls populate the province of Ogaral. None of the local folk speak a language other than their native Troll.

The trolls' effective ruler is a naga, a snakelike monster with a human head and great intelligence and magical powers (see Chapter Six of the *Book of the Fifth Age*). It purportedly dwells in the ruin of Fort Ogaral's one remaining tower. This creature, known as T'ragna to those outside the province, has the following game characteristics:

☛ **T'ragna:** A naga. Co 8, Ph 30, In 8, Es 8, Dmg +7, Def -3, also spit poison, sensitivity, necromancy, mediation, sorcery (divination, transmutation, enchantment).

Description

Most of the time, little of interest takes place in Ogaral province. However, at every full moon, all the trolls in both packs swim across the narrow channel from their homes to the ruined tower on the Isle of the Serpent. There they remain for three days, during which time eerie howls and the haunting

sounds of raspy voices raised in weird song float out over the sea.

Clearly, the trolls visit the island each month to perform some manner of ritual, but no one knows its purpose. Neither have observers discerned any apparent result of this practice, but they do note that the odd behavior seemed to begin only after the Second Cataclysm.

Culture

Trolls generally don't have a culture or society outside their immediate pack, but somehow T'ragna has instilled within these stupid creatures a basic sense of honor and kinship. The two troll packs now cooperate in patrolling and watching over their swampy little domain.

Trade

T'ragna has been known to foretell the future or use sorcerous powers in exchange for slaves or rare gems. Dark Knights, Ackalites, and minotaurs who have visited the naga over recent decades report that the creature seems unerring in its prophecies. What T'ragna does with these people and items is unknown, but some link their fate to the apparent increase in the local trolls' intelligence. The monster's preferred slave stock includes dwarves, goblins, kender, and sea elves.

History

Prior to the first Cataclysm, Ogaral was a marshy, bug-infested lowland. As it proved impossible to move heavy cavalry or siege engines through this morass, imperial troops stationed at Fort Ogaral incorporated the terrain into their defenses—they basically fortified the entire region. The trolls, on the other hand, were a local feature that the Ergothian warriors did not find as useful but could never completely exterminate.

When the Cataclysm created the Straits of Algoni, much of Fort Ogaral sank under the new waters. The empire abandoned the province, and for centuries neither the kender of Hyllo to the south nor the Ackalites to the north felt inclined to challenge the trolls or the



mountains that hindered passage into the region. Explorers that finally ventured into the area in 5SC found themselves captured by trolls and taken to the tower on the Isle of the Serpent. There they met the resident naga, who warned them that any of the “lesser races” who attempted to settle the province or invade Ogaral’s tower would be destroyed. Then the creature freed a prisoner to spread its message.

So far, the naga has made good on its threat; many kender expeditions have died at the hands of its servant trolls or through bizarre magical effects. The trolls prosper in the small area.

Current Happenings

During harsh summers, when the marsh along the Moon River begins to dry out, the trolls have been known to raid kender farms near the Hylo border for livestock. In the past, the kender usually just battled them back to their marsh, heeding the naga’s orders to not trespass (enough kender had lost their lives that way for the border folk to get the point).

However, the afflicted kender who now live in the area—far more belligerent and martial than Kenderhome’s traditional residents—talk of mounting an expedition at the next sign of raiders.

Politics

T’ragna remains the undisputed lord of Ogaral and the land’s troll inhabitants. Its existence is not widely known beyond its foul slaver clientele and the folk of Northern Ergoth.

Today in Ogaral

According to some minotaur sea captains, the naga has recently offered greater payments for slaves, particularly goblins and kender. Reportedly, it also has grown quite short-tempered over the last few months. Slavers who have worked with T’ragna for many years speculate that this may not be the same creature they’ve dealt with in the past.

The empire’s remote scouts report that the trolls also have seemed restless lately—as though they sense that something is about to happen.



Sikk'ett Hul Province

The Empire of Ergoth's southern province, Sikk'et Hul, is an inhospitable region of badlands. Over the centuries, the race of surprisingly civilized goblins who live there have become part of life in Northern Ergoth. In fact, Sikk'et Hul has a better relationship with the Imperial Court than either of the empire's other two provinces.



Important Holdings

Sikk'et Hul boasts among its significant holdings three multi-ethnic settlements plus a scattering of ruins and mystic sites.

Noteworthy Settlements

Residents of Sikk'et Hul built their major settlements on the abandoned husks of human towns. The villages of Lusid and Depré each house three hundred goblins and a small number of kender, while the province's capital, Manic, is home to fifteen hundred goblins, one hundred kender, and a handful of human sea barbarians.

Lusid. Citizens of Lusid on the southern coast make their living from fishing and farming. Unfortunately, fishing is not as good as it used to be, thanks to the rough waters stirred up by the winds off the coast of chilly Southern Ergoth. Even more problems have sprung up for Lusid's fishermen of late, as Solamnian settlers from Thonvil in Ergoth proper have taken to harassing goblin boats.

Depré. The folk of Depré focus their efforts on mining a cache in the southernmost tip of the Sentinel Mountains and forging the ore into strong alloys. The small tribe of human barbarians living in Ker-Manth to the north trade for the metal, which they use to make weapons. More of these metals go to members of the sea barbarian enclave in Manic, who then sell

it to merchants from Saifhum.

Maniac. Both the capital and the heart of Sikk'et Hul, Manic contains sizable human and kender enclaves as well as its resident goblins. The province lord dwells here in an opulent (by goblin standards) manor house down the street from the library that helped civilize local goblins after the first Cataclysm.

Knowledgeable adventurers traveling to Northern Ergoth in search of ogre treasure generally hire a goblin guide in Manic before heading north into the mountains. The sea barbarians of this coastal city work both as traders and as innkeepers. Visitors will find two types of establishments in Sikk'et Hul: one for those returning from a successful expedition (and can afford virtually any comfort or pleasure), and one for those who either were unsuccessful or plan to embark upon a treasure hunt soon.

Ker-Manth. A barbarian village farther north than the three goblin cities, Ker-Manth consists of about a dozen families. These humans live much more peaceably than the Ackalites but trade in items of war: They barter swords and other metal items to the goblins of Depré for supplies of metal raw materials. A surplus of these swords go to Kenderhome in exchange for food and wood.

Ergoth's Gods

Citizens of the Empire of Ergoth know Kryn'n's vanished pantheon by different names than those the scribes in Palanthas use to refer to the deities. The chart below offers the Ergothian names for some of the major gods, and their better-known Solamnian equivalents:

Solamnian Name	Ergothian Name
Chemosh	Aelesh
Habbakuk	The Blue Phoenix
Kiri-Jolith	Corij
Majere	Manthus
Sargonnas	Argon
Takhisis	Dragon Queen





Major Ruins

The ruined city of Fav, located between the southernmost arms of the Sentinel range, has lain in ruins since just before the Cataclysm. The local goblins' one exploration effort ended when they discovered the gully dwarves who had claimed the ruins and found themselves quickly taken hostage.

The gully dwarves remain the only known inhabitants of Fav. Enticing rumors persist to this day of the city's fabulous treasures, their true value unknown to Fav's simple inhabitants.

Mystic Places

The province of Sikk'et Hul contains two ancient and mysterious sites: one long associated with the Dark Queen and her followers and the other a legacy of the lost huldre race.

Raekel's Pit. A terrible mark left upon Krynn by one of Takhisis's most Evil priests, Raekel's Pit continues in the Fifth Age to fester like an open sore.

At some point after the Second Dragon War but before Ackal Ergot conquered Daltigoth, legend has it that a priest known as Raekel plotted against Ergot. Although he claimed to be a servant of Manthus the Mighty, Raekel in fact honored a triumvirate of Evil gods—the Dragon Queen; her consort, Aeleth; and Argon, god of dark vengeance. These deities promised to give Ergot's fledgling empire to Raekel if he would perform rituals to grant them ultimate power over Ansalon.

Somehow, three gods of Good—Manthus the Mighty, Corij the Blade, and the Blue Phoenix—uncovered the plot and sent their own champion to oppose Raekel. The champion's identity varies from story to story: Some cast Ackal Ergot in the role (the most popular versions in the empire), while others name the elf leader Silvanos or even a lowly kender or gnome.

In all versions, however, the hero arrives too late to stop Raekel from performing the sacrifices that begin the ritual, but instead manages to throw him into the gap he has opened

to the Abyss. All the while, the three gods of Good combat the three gods of Evil.

The gods may have withdrawn from Krynn in the Fifth Age, but Raekel's Pit remains open. The shaft, two hundred feet across, overflows with boiling mists and howling shadows. Its location at the crux of the southern arms of the Sentinel Mountains makes it fairly inaccessible to those outside Sikk'et Hul—and locals never go there.

Since the Chaos War, stories have circulated that on the darkest, longest night of each year, a ten-year-old child crawls from Raekel's Pit. The tales go on to predict that when these children have all come of age, they will form a conclave of thirty-three mystics with the power to complete the ritual Raekel started so many centuries ago. If these stories are true, then only one more child will emerge from the pit. In roughly ten years, that child will come of age and join with his otherworldly kin to complete Raekel's dark ritual.

The Monolith. Another place where Sikk'et Hul natives never go (well, except for the odd kender now and then) is the Monolith, on the west side of Huldre Bay. An ancient huldrefolk site, the Monolith has reportedly emitted strange lights and sounds, noticeable even far from shore. More than one kender, after going to investigate, has never been heard from again.

Main Populace

Sikk'et Hul's diverse population includes goblins, kender, gully dwarves, and humans. Most residents speak Goblin, Kenderspeak, Gully Talk, or Ergot-and many speak more than one language.

Description

By goblin standards, the inhabitants of Sikk'et Hul are remarkably civilized. While still clannish scavengers lacking the creative spark to construct their own technologies, these goblins have overcome the short-sightedness and insatiable drive for conflict that histori-

cally has made their mainland cousins into the pawns of Evil forces.

Culture

Uncharitable souls say the Sikk'et Hul goblins became docile after breeding with gully dwarves and kender. The goblins themselves credit their early leaders with their success as a society. These goblin ancestors did something few other goblins had ever done: They read the works of literature and philosophy in the cities they looted. From the basis of Pre Cataclius Ergothian philosophy—mostly the teachings of the scholar-monks who followed the Ergothian god Manthus, the goblins learned organization, industry, meditation, dream interpretation, and the martial arts.

Over the last four centuries, the goblins of this province have built a society that revolves around carefully contemplating each idea before acting on it. This revolutionary development arguably marks the first truly independent goblin culture on Ansalon.

However, they still lack the imagination to create their own tools, weapons, and buildings. Repeated attempts all meet with failure—although they have managed to invent a selection of less-than-effective weapons, such as razor boomerangs and exploding mace heads.

Still, bards from Lancton have observed goblins in Sikk'et Hul performing ancient Ergothian tunes. At first, the visitors winced at the singers' squeaky voices, poor renditions of traditional arrangements, and out-of-tune instruments. Then, slowly they realized the instruments weren't out of tune—the goblins had adapted them to better suit their voices. Likewise, the goblins had created new arrangements to make the Ergothian work their own. Perhaps the next step is original goblin compositions. Whatever the case, a unique goblin culture is emerging in Sikk'et Hul.

The gully dwarves of ruined Fav live much like gully dwarves do anywhere else—in the dirt. They scavenge for food and clothing in the long-dead ruins, hiding or groveling for mercy whenever

someone with a weapon happens by.

The peaceful human barbarian residents of Sikk'et Hul keep to themselves. The kender living along the border between Sikk'et Hul and Kenderhome also coexist peacefully with the goblins, although the afflicted kender of Hylo cause some problems (see “Hylo”).

Trade

The goblins don't really produce much worth trading for. The metals refined from the ore in the mines near Depré constitute the bulk of local trade goods.

The goblins also let adventurers loot the ogre ruins in the southern Sentinel Mountains (even without the empire's permits), provided they take nothing that might be a book or other source of information or instruction. A goblin “guide” always escorts these parties to make sure they adhere to the deal. Groups that prove untrustworthy find themselves facing not only the wrathful goblins, but also irritated kender and angry human barbarians—the friend-and allies of these unusual folk.

History


Goblin history is hard to recount factually. After all, goblins rarely write anything down (few can write at all so all scholars have to draw upon are goblin oral histories and the histories of other nations. The most likely his story of Sikk'et Hul follows.

Snagglegang and the Sentinel Treaty

In issuing his Proclamation of Manifest Virtue in 118PC, the Kingpriest unwittingly encouraged a strange alliance. For centuries, the Empire of Ergoth had tried to exterminate the goblin tribes of the Sentinel range. However, the edict united these two factions against a common enemy.

Shortly after the proclamation, famed goblin chieftain General Snagglegang approached the Ergothian garrison commander at Even and asked him to carry a message to the emperor. The commander chased the goblin del-





egation back into the hills, but the message nonetheless made its way to the emperor. It was an offer of alliance from several goblin tribes. After the members of the Imperial Court had a good laugh, they went back to plotting the downfall of the Kingpriest.

Meanwhile, Solamnia stood on the empire's doorstep, rattling sabers on Istar's behalf. Ergoth had more important things to worry about than the goblin raiders in the Sentinel range, so the emperor diverted those legions to more constructive pursuits. Snagglefang, however, assumed that the end of the goblin hunts meant that the Empire of Ergoth had accepted his proposal. He immediately began preparing his tribes for war against Solamnia.

Modern historians know very little about Snagglefang. He appears to have been an unusual member of his species, as he directed most of his efforts toward the long-term survival of his' people rather than self-gratification and personal aggrandizement. One theory states that the empire's active hunting of Ergoth's goblins over a period of centuries in fact produced a stronger and smarter breed of goblin by killing the weaker members of the race.

Snagglefang had spent years clawing his way to the top of the western goblins and, in Ackal Ergot-like fashion, united several tribes under him to form a small kingdom in the Sentinel Mountains. Some historians speculate that he controlled these tribes by giving them riches from a secret ogre ruin, known only to him and his heirs, which made them wealthy beyond imagination. Others posit that Snagglefang somehow secured the services of fey creatures living near Raekel's Pit and controlled the Sentinel goblins through their magic.

Snagglefang apparently passed his astounding leadership abilities on to his son, Deathwielder, who assumed control of the tribes some time before 38pc. This aging goblin contacted the Imperial Court in the spring of that year to discuss their alliance.

After sneaking into Daltigoth (he

and his delegation were nearly killed at the gate), Deathwielder provided Gwynned V with a breakdown of his troops, intelligence on the forces arrayed along the Solamnia—Hylo—Ergoth border. Finally, he announced that he and his Sentinel Warriors stood ready to do their part for the alliance. While the diminutive creatures had simply amused Gwynned and his advisers up to that point, mention of an alliance surprised the emperor. A search of imperial records uncovered Snagglefang's original offer.

To Gwynned's credit, he dismissed the guards (waiting to slay the emissaries as soon as they ceased to be amusing) and ordered a scribe to put the "Sentinel Treaty" into a more respectable format; while Snagglefang had been able to write—an unusual trait for a goblin—he had managed only a barely legible, childish scrawl. Gwynned and Deathwielder each put their mark on the new document, making official a treaty the goblins had adhered to for two generations.

Battle Begins

The emperor then instructed Deathwielder to begin raiding the Solamnic line—enough to make the Knights' lives miserable, but not enough to make them chase the goblins into the mountains. Gwynned promised Deathwielder that once he and his military advisers had formulated a solid battle plan, his legions would march north to help the goblins smash the Knights.

The goblins resumed their habits of several centuries, focusing their raids against Solamnic watch posts. Gwynned V, however, had no intention of sending an army to support them. But when the Tower of High Sorcery in Daltigoth fell to the fanaticism of the Kingpriest's Ergothian followers in 19pc, Gwynned VI decided the time for all-out war with Istar and her allies had come. Refusing to join Istar's Greatmeld had made the empire weak, though—Gwynned VI had to move very carefully. Enter the goblins.

While Senators and agitators worked to stir up public opinion against Istar, Gwynned VI and his top military advisers carefully conceived their battle plans. Among the emperor's advisers was General Shadowstalker the Younger, Deathwielder's grandson. Over the last fifty years, his people had gathered a great deal of information on the evolution of Solamnic tactics, as well as their strengths and weaknesses—plus they had become familiar with the border region. Diaries of high-ranking Ergothian generals reveal that Shadowstalker had earned their respect.

Adapting the goblins' tactics, the Ergothian legions began harassing Solamnic border outposts. The results so delighted Gwynned VI that he promised Shadowstalker the Younger that when Istar fell he would reward the Sentinel goblins with a province as their homeland. The territory in question would one day become Sikk'et Hul.

When full war erupted in 8PC, the goblin troops were among the most lethal on the northern frontier—so lethal, in fact, that a Solamnic commander chose to violate the Ring-priest's ban on magic and call upon the skills of a wizard. No one knows this spellcaster's identity, but his mighty magic helped Solamnic troops push southwest to the city of Fav, even amid stalemates on all other fronts.

The Cataclysm

In the year of Cataclysm, a Solamnic army stood poised to conquer Fav. The diary of a survivor indicates that this force encountered a combined army of goblins, humans—many just commoners wielding clubs and pitchforks—and kender who crossed the mountains from the Hylo town of Thisway to help defend the city. The ferocity of their resistance worried the Solamnics, who feared they might lose the battle.

Rather than face such disgrace, the commander ordered his wizard to use his most powerful magic to destroy the enemies of Good. The spellcaster obeyed, but something must have gone

wrong with the spell; it devastated entire Fav valley, destroyed his own army almost to a man, and inflicted terrible losses upon the Ergothian defender. Over the next few decades, it would become apparent that the spell had somehow poisoned the land. Never again would it be fertile south of the Sentinels.

While survivors assessed the damages, the Cataclysm struck. At first, the combatants thought it another spell, but when the extent of the devastation became clear, General Shadowstalker recalled the words he had heard priests of Manthus foretell when last he visited Daltigoth: The gods would destroy Istar for its sins. From what his scouts told him, it seemed to Shadowstalker that the gods had destroyed a lot of other people in the process.


Still, Shadowstalker felt an obligation to report to his imperial commanders. So, he gathered the remains of his army and the survivors from Fav (reduced to smoking ruins by the wizard's magic) and marched toward nearby Hillfort. There he discovered the soldiers had abandoned their post, so he pushed on to Gwynned.

Amid the confusion at the death of heirless young Emperor Gwynned VI no one wanted to deal with the goblin and his troops, so the praetor told him to leave. Shadowstalker mentioned that Gwynned VI had promised that once war was over the empire would reward his tribes with what was now the southern province of Northern Ergoth. Was the war over? he asked. Just to get rid of him, the military commander said yes. So Shadowstalker departed to claim his land. Returning to the blasted southern territory, the general sent scouts into the mountains with a message: Their people finally had a land to call their own.

The New Homeland

In the first years after the Cataclysm the goblin land became known as Sikk'et Hul ("The Place," in a northern peasant dialect of Ergot). Goblins descended from the Sentinel Mountains and settled in the cities now





largely abandon by humans. The few remaining humans always fled at the sight of an approaching goblin horde.

In Lusid, Depré and Manic, the goblins found some artifacts of human culture that the Cataclysm had left intact. Most of the goblins heeded the words of Shadowstalker the Younger (who got the idea from the kneder he had fought with in the great battle): Why destroy what you might use?

For more than twenty years, the goblins lived peacefully in Sikk'et Hul. When they grew curious about the books they found in their cities, the kender of Hyllo taught them to read. From books, they learned to mine and slowly began to conceive of a completely different kind of life than what they were used to.

In 23AC as one of his last acts as Lord of Sikke'et Hul, Shadowstalker organized a joint goblin-kender effort to restart the mines near Hillfort and Depré. While achieved great success with the Depré mines efforts at Hillfort failed immediately, as the fortress's new imperial commander chased off the would-be miners. He and his men pursued them as far east as Lusid at which point the decided that having to live in that wasteland was punishment enough for the goblins, as long as they didn't try to plunder his mine again.

The venerable Shadowstalker died in the chase. After fending off challenges from tribal leaders, his son Wolfkin assumed the leadership of Sikk'et Hul. Wolfkin's experience showed him that such obstacles forced a ruler to prove himself worthy to lead, so he declared the lord of the province would hereafter undergo these challenges in an annual event. With the help of tribal shamans, he laid down a set of guidelines to govern the contest.

The primary threat to the fledging goblin nation in these early years emanated from the magic that had saturated the land. In the mountains between Sikk'et Hul and Kenderhome lived wild animals that grew to two or three times their normal size. While the giant game animals proved an abun-

dant food source, the overgrown predators made hunting very dangerous. In the winter, it was not uncommon for Manic to be menaced by giant wolves.

Despite its proximity to these magically mutated animals, Manic grew into Sikk'et Hul's largest settlement. Further, it boasted farmable surrounding land and a favorable coastal location for easy trade with Kenderhome. These factors cemented a relationship that had begun at the Battle of Fav. The kender helped the goblins build docks and even gave them a ship. Using books they had found, the goblins attempted to build more ships, but achieved success only with kender assistance.

In 89AC, Sikk'et Hul faced its first outside threat: A band of Ackalites attempted to invade the province from the sea. They sailed two war galleys into Manic's harbor and stormed the city, but met with such fierce resistance that they never made it out of town. The goblins claimed the war galleys and have used them ever since, repairing them with wood from Hyllo Forest.

Settling In

Over the centuries that followed, Sikk'et Hul became a recognized part of Northern Ergoth. The goblins remained the best guides for travel in the Sentinel range, and the cash-strapped post-Cataclysm emperors found their coffers filled with ogre treasure-tithes from the goblin province.

In 128AC, the goblins finally got around to exploring the still-smoldering ruins of Fav. To their amazement, they found the city inhabited by Aghar. Where they had come from, no one could say, but they clearly intended to stay. The first group of goblin explorers were taken hostage by the gully dwarves, who issued the following demands to Manic: "Two shoos, one pottatoo, two knives, two goblin wimmen, two pretty jems. If not here in two days, goblins die."

The goblin Lord Slasher responded to the ultimatum by leading two hundred of his warriors into the city. As the gully dwarves cowered, Slasher killed

their king (the “Highfav”) as punishment for the extortion attempt, then demanded an annual tribute of two hundred steel pieces in exchange for letting the Aghar live in peace.

To this day, Manic receives tribute ranging from three steel pieces to five thousand steel pieces annually; the amount depends upon how many forgotten caches the gully dwarves discover within their city and whether the Highfav remembers to gather the annual tribute. The Sikk’et Hul goblins, in typical ungoblinlike fashion, don’t seem concerned about the amount of coin they receive.

In 340AC, Nerakan emissaries of Takhisis’s growing dragonarmies arrived in Manic with greetings from the Dark Queen and a request for the province to devote itself to her cause. The ecstatic goblin shamans, who had continued to honor the goddess during her absence, prepared to whip the population into a war-hungry frenzy—until Lord Sunchaser the Steadfast had them imprisoned within his Great Hall.

He then asked his council of advisers for their opinions. All seemed in accord on the issue: The gods almost destroyed the world with their Cataclysm, then turned their back on it. If the gods want to fight, they can do so without Sikk’et Hul. And so, Sunchaser sent the goblin shamans to the emissaries’ ship with the message that Sikk’et Hul and its citizens would not fight in a war expressly geared toward the glory of a deity.

As all in Ansalon well know, the dragonarmies got along quite well without Sikk’et Hul and, had it not been for the actions of a brave few, Takhisis certainly would have triumphed. However, in 352AC, an expedition consisting of hobgoblins and goblins (including some of the shamans that Lord Sunchaser had driven out twelve years earlier) set out for Manic to punish the goblins for not heeding the Dark Queen’s call to arms. However, whether through Fate or divine intervention, a storm blew the attacking fleet north, causing it to run

aground in Ogaral. As the army tried to march south through Hylo, the kender attacked and destroyed it.

The Summer of Chaos

During the Dark Knight invasion of Ansalon not many years later, the goblins of Sikk’et Hul returned the favor and proved instrumental in preventing the Knights of Takhisis from conquering Northern Ergoth.

When the ghost of the Tower (see “Hylo”) alerted the kender that an invasion fleet approached, they sent messengers to warn Ergoth proper and the empire’s three provinces. The Ackal fleet was engaged in raiding, and Ergoth’s forces had their hands full with invaders swarming in from the west. The kender had no vessels capable of defeating the dragon-prowed war galleys looming in the east. Only Sikk’et Hul had a ready fleet.

Lord Fleshrender launched anything seaworthy in the direction of the the warships’ approach. Virtually every combat-able goblin of Sikk’et Hul took to the sea that day, as shown in the illustration on the next page. Sunset over Northern Ergoth found the Dark Knights and their galleys at the bottom of the Straits of Algoni. The Knights made no further attempt at landings on the island’s east or south shores.

Current Happenings

Although the goblins have earned the gratitude of the peoples of Northern Ergoth, the Age of Mortals continues to pose new challenges for Sikk’et Hul.

The influx of refugees from Solamnia and Kendermore threatens the southern province’s friendly relations with its neighbors: When the folk of mainland Ansalon see a goblin, they see an enemy. To make matters worse, recent goblin immigrants to Sikk’et Hul from the south too often prove them right. These savage goblins (by local standards), forced from Southern Ergoth by the White Dragon’s reshaping of the land into a glacier, cannot set



aside a thousand years of ceaseless conflict. The belligerent afflicted kender in Hylo, ironically believing all local goblins in league with the White Dragon, frequently raid northeast Sikk'et Hul, while in the northwest, Solamnian settlers unlawfully seize land to homestead.

The Lord of Sikk'et Hul has appealed to the Imperial Court and issued threats to the kender government. However, the afflicted kender only grudgingly accept sovereignty claims from goblins (who, back in their homeland, serve Malys), and the emperor seems unwilling or unable to control the Solamnian squatters. Already the goblins have threatened to end their centuries-long tradition of tithing ogre gold and steel. The next step will be to attack any Solamnian who attempts to settle in Sikk'et Hul without permission. Such a state of war already threatens in the northeastern part of the province, where the afflicted kender have attacked goblin farms.

Politics

Goblin and gully dwarf political structures closely resemble each other. In both cultures, the strong rule-this element of life in Sikk'et Hul follows the pattern of goblins elsewhere.

As with the Ackalites, the goblin and gully dwarf kings must withstand challenges from clan leaders who would replace them. Unlike the Ackal contestants, however, combatants in Sikk'et Hul do not fight to the death. Instead, those who would challenge the lord must match him in tests of strength, endurance, swiftness, and—most importantly—wits; the goblins of Sikk'et Hul value intelligence and cunning as much as they value force. If defeated, the lord steps aside, though he can join the contest the following year.

Naturally, goblin lordship contests are somewhat more serious than those conducted by the gully dwarves, although the humor in the Aghar challenges is purely unintentional. Last year, at the urging of a visiting goblin, the Highfav announced a wrestling match



to decide the challenge: “Best two out of three,” in the goblin’s words. Unfortunately, it took the combatants several days to deduce the meaning of “three.”

It perhaps goes without saying, but in both the goblin and gully dwarf cultures, contestants have been known to cheat by fighting dirty or utilizing magical aid. In these cases, the victor still receives the lordly title, but he rarely manages to accomplish anything during his tenure—other goblins are too busy watching their backs to cooperate with him on new projects. Although such treacherous creatures would rise straight to the top among the rest of Ansalon’s goblins, in Sikk’et Hul they usually resign at the end of their terms without even attempting to answer challenges. (Among the gully dwarves, though, the strongest and most deceitful kings generally end up ruling the longest.)

Today in Sikk’et Hul

As tension grows from both inside and out, Sikk’et Hul’s goblin leader, Lord Chaosbane (*goblin young adult male, cunning demeanor, Adventurer*), seeks new ways to maintain relative independence for his province. He knows that war on Northern Ergoth would weaken all provinces and nations, making them vulnerable to attacks from the Knights of Takhisis and the dragons. Goblin ambassadors have visited Ackal, Hylo, Gwynned, and even New Winterholm and Fav. They carry messages of peace and urge the island’s leaders to come together in understanding, lest their differences destroy them all. The local cells and circles of the Legion of Steel assist in these attempts to ease discord.

At the same time, rumors hold that Chaosbane has infiltrated the ranks of the goblin refugees—as well as those of the natives fed up with human and kender aggression—to identify their leaders. If he can’t convince them to stop agitating for war, he will eliminate them permanently.

Hylo (Kenderhome)

In the Age of Mortals, Hylo’s secondary name, Kenderhome, seems more meaningful than ever. The Red Dragon’s destruction of Kendermore far to the has brought thousands of kender grants to this land in recent decades.



Important Holdings

Hylo boasts both some of the oldest and newest settlements in Northern Ergoth. Ruins and supposedly mystic sites dot the countryside—and stories of new sites pop up with great frequency.


Noteworthy Settlements

Hylo residents live in quaint, pastoral villages and towns. These settlements look like collections of incomplete dwellings; whether they live in a snug little burrow or a spacious tree house, kender love to rebuild and renovate. Afflicted kender tend to construct wooden palisades or stone walls around their homes, while other kender rely on hedges and gullies for defense. Twisting stairs and rope ladders link the rooftops of buildings to each other and to the ground.

Lemon

Hylo’s northernmost settlement is the port town of Lemon, so named for the orchard of lemon trees that once stood in a valley that the Cataclysm turned into Lemon Bay. The town is home to about two hundred true kender and three hundred afflicted kender. In addition to its harbor traffic, Lemon also has seen some major logging business over the years; Ackalites and others buy wood and miscellaneous goods here.





The afflicted kender recently fortified the town and decided to charge import/export tariffs like human cities do. This move has caused strain between Lemon and area merchants, as the tariffs keep changing. Another new project is the construction of a new warship in Lemon harbor; the afflicted kender hero Nikki Firestopper (*afflicted kender adult female, roguish demeanor, Champion*) has hired a band of thinker gnomes to build the mighty vessel to help Kenderhome defend itself at sea.

Hidal

Southeast of Lemon is the fortified town of Hidal, home to more than one hundred true kender and three times as many afflicted kender. These kender find Hidal particularly attractive for its location atop a steep hill rising from the floor of a broad valley. Caves and tunnels honeycomb the hillside—ancient dwellings of huldrefolk, kender historians like to claim. True kender find the caves a wonderful playground, while afflicted kender see them as shelters from possible air attacks.

Ocean Town

Inland from Hidal is one of Kenderhome's strangest enclaves, the curiously named Ocean Town. The settlement, home to more than one hundred true kender and only two dozen afflicted kender, clings to the side of a mountain right along the Ergothian border.

Shortly after the first Cataclysm, a kender whose mind had been addled by shock and grief had a "vision" that another tidal wave would wash away the rest of Hylo, leaving only the mountains. Frightened of more devastation, many kender followed him into the Sentinel Mountains, where they built Ocean Town. They labored with amazing concentration for kender, and when they were done, they had built a small town with docks from which they could launch fishing boats.

But the disaster never came.

By 5AC, the kender began to abandon Ocean Town, though some remained to

mine for "pretty rocks" in the Sentinels. Merchants who visit Ocean Town call its docks a wondrous sight—not for their splendor, but for the oddity of their placement on a mountainside.

Safehold

Due south of Hidal stands Safehold, a fortress town constructed by afflicted kender. part cave complex, part immense tree house, Safehold surrounds a portion of the Lookit River. Moats, hedges, and stone walls encircle the town's ten or so huge trees, each of which holds a dozen tree houses and many archer platforms built into its boughs. Only the two hundred afflicted kender that dwell here know the safe way past the defenses of their city. Needless to say, they don't interact much with the rest of the realm.

Legup

West of Safehold, pressed up against the Sentinel range is Legup, a small village inhabited largely by relatives and descendants of Kronin Thistleknot, a hero of the War of the Lance. Built around ancient ogre ruins, Legup is one of the realm's most splendid places to play hide-and-seek. It also guards Kenderhome's only mountain pass into the Empire of Ergoth.

The security-conscious afflicted kender have tried to take control of Legup, but the town's true kender residents here (who share Kronin's legendary feistiness) fought them off. This rebuff hurt the afflicted kender's feelings: After all, they'd only had everyone's best interests in mind. Of course, the true kender felt bad about hurting their feelings, so they put their cousins from Kendermore in charge of a nearby iron mine. Today, Legup—home to some sixty true kender and as many afflicted kender—remains Hylo's only settlement where the two subraces coexist without conflict.

Lookit

South along the Lookit River from Safehold stands Hylo's second oldest settlement, Lookit. The town is built along

the banks of the river, on the plateaus of a three-tiered waterfall that creates a complex series of rainbows visible all the way from the center of the town.

Many kender consider Lookit Falls the most beautiful place in all Hylo. As testament to this fact, six hundred kender live here. None of this number are afflicted kender, however; they do not consider the town easily defensible. However, they visit the falls frequently—perhaps even more than others, for the beauty helps dull the constant ache they feel over the loss of their homeland and loved ones to the Red Dragon.

Hylo

Almost due east of Legup, at the end of the realm's only road able to handle wagons and carts, lies Hylo. The kender capital is home to twelve hundred true kender and roughly fifteen hundred of their afflicted cousins.

Hylo was built around the flying citadel that brought the kender to this northern forest three thousand years ago (see "History"). The citadel crashed into a steep hillside, making this area by far the most defensible spot in Kenderhome—which explains why the afflicted kender have settled here in great numbers. True kender stay here more or less out of the inertia of tradition.

The kender have overbuilt the citadel to the point where it resembles the castle of a frothing madman. Homes exist within homes in this architect's nightmare, and stairs and hallways lead nowhere—or to hundred-foot drops. The many hidden tunnels and concealed arrow slits would allow the kender to turn the entire town into a tremendous, exceedingly deadly killing ground, should it ever face invasion.

The Tower

Across the bay from Hylo stands an obsidian structure known simply as the Tower. A wide variety of kender tales revolve around this building, but they all agree it houses the spirit of a powerful sorcerer and the best friend Kenderhome has ever known. Some stories even main-

tain the ghost is the famed wizard Magius, bound to the Tower by a curse that will be lifted only if someone brings him his famous staff. The ghost of the Tower has become an oracle for the kender, warning them of imminent disasters. For example, the spirit alerted them to the approach of the Dark Knights' fleet during the Summer of Chaos.

Three hundred true kender live near the Tower, protecting it from would-be looters while exploring and fingering the items within to their heart's content.

Gobwatch and Thisway

Southeast of the Tower stands the fortress of Gobwatch, a squat stone building constructed by afflicted kender ostensibly to protect Hylo from invasion by the goblins—clearly agents of the White Dragon seeking to expand his realm. But rather than assume a defensive stance, the forty to eighty afflicted kender living here have taken to launching pre-emptive strikes against the "enemy" to the south.


The kender from the nearby village of Thisway have tried to explain that the goblins of Sikk'et Hul are friends, but to no avail. In fact, Thisway's residents have gotten so annoyed by all the unrest the Gobwatch fortress has caused that have begun to abandon their town and build a new one on the far side of the pass, in Sikk'et Hul. About one hundred true kender still live in Thisway.

Major Ruins

The many ogre ruins along the Sentinel range in Kenderhome are assumed to have been long since explored and looted by the exuberant kender and goblins. Of course, the kender seem eager to visit the ruins over and over again, just for fun. So far, no adventurers have visited one of the ruins without running into kender explorers, who cheerfully invite them to lunch.

Hylo also contains a few ruined kender cities as well as ogre sites. Of course, many of them lie beneath the choppy waters of the Straits of Algoni, but the ancient town of Lost sprawls





the length of a valley that still bears the scars of a mighty magical battle.

The original name of Lost has long since vanished down the River of Time, but kender legends still recount how the mighty Magius and two other sorcerers slew two ancient red dragons on that site during the Third Dragon War. The trio had arrived too late to save the town, but they saw to it that those dragons would destroy no more.

Kender occasionally visit the ruins of Lost, but they rarely stay long. The grim air of foreboding hanging over the entire valley subdues even the irrepressible kender spirit. Stories hold that the two red dragons' spirits still linger somewhere in the ruins, unable to find their way to the Abyss and their Queen. The living who visit Lost feel the despair and rage of these spirits, locals say.

Mystic Places

Many kender tales focus on the mystical qualities of the rainbows of Lookit Falls. For instance, gazing upon them supposedly causes the viewer to have visions of the past, present, and future that provide vast insight. However, most mystics and scholars dismiss these claims as flights of fancy—or perhaps kender “visionaries” were so awestruck by the beauty of the waterfall that they just forgot to breathe.

Other apparently mystic places in Hylo Forest include certain rocky groves where a mushroom unique to the realm grows. Once again, those who spend time in these groves reportedly experience visions of a supernatural nature. Most, however, attribute these “visions” to eating the mushrooms.

Main Populace

Both true and afflicted kender dwell in Hylo—usually not altogether peacefully. Most visitors can tell the two groups apart mainly by their attitudes, though Hylo kender tend to wear their hair short, unlike their Kendermore kin. Kenderspeak is the national lan-

guage, though visitors frequently hear Ergot and Goblin spoken as well.

Description

The foundation of kender society is the family—usually consisting of close relatives and two or three children. Sometime around the age of twenty, kender are possessed by an urge to see the world. These youths travel for years, exploring the mysteries of Krynn. Some kender draw maps of their journeys, which become even more detailed and trustworthy after the kender have fiddled with them for years. Once the wanderlust subsides, the kender become rooted to the land and raise their families.

Culture

The folk of Hylo are oblivious to matters of ownership. If a kender needs something that another person is not using, he innocently borrows the item and puts it to use. Curious kender often pick up objects for closer examination and, if distracted, may forget to put them back. But kender do not steal—ask any of them.

While many human realms have turned away from the gods in the thirty years since the Second Cataclysm, true kender continue to honor Bran the Songmaster (known as Branchala to other races) in weekly ceremonies in wooded groves. The afflicted kender refuse to take part in such silliness, blaming the Songmaster—the highest of gods in the kender pantheon—for not protecting them from the Red Marauder. The Hylo kender and their priests still believe they should honor Bran, for while he no longer enables the priests to perform miracles, the music he created for the world still remains.

Trade

The craftsmen of Hylo produce exquisitely carved wooden objects that, together with ebony, wood, flint, and raw gems, provide a thriving trade with Ackal, Ergoth proper, and Gunthar. The kender import metal and

weapons from all three trading partners. They also import gram from the city-state of Caergoth.

Finally, Hylos kender have a long tradition of working as “finders.” Their ability to locate missing persons and objects is renowned throughout Ansalon. With the influx of dark-hearted kender from ravaged Kendermore, the Hylo “finding” business has taken on a vicious taint, in the form of afflicted kender bounty hunters and assassins.

History

Kender scholars have always emphasized the “story” part of “history,” rather than getting bogged down in boring things like “facts.” Of course, this attitude presents a unique problem for outsiders trying to relay the history of Hylo. As local sources are almost certainly unreliable, historians must decide which are true and which are just kender tall tales.

Early Hylo

Hylo Forest was settled in 2600pc, the same time Ackal Ergot fought to sub-

due the Khalkist tribes, by a kender clan serving a group of wizards near Balifor. Kender historians call the members of this clan “trusted advisers” while others believe they were more likely slaves.

The wizards were building one of the early Towers of High Sorcery, intending to make it a citadel that could fly through the air. Somehow, the kender got trapped inside the structure, and in their efforts to find a way out, they caused it to take flight. It traversed the continent and eventually crashed in the foothills of the Sentinel Mountains. The kender named their new land Hylo, because the citadel that had brought them there was first high, then low, and in honor of the high mountains and the low forestland.

The kender lived here, undisturbed by humans, for almost two hundred years. They spread throughout the forest on both sides of the bay near their crashed citadel. They named this body the Bay of Monsters—not because it held an unusual number of beasts, but because they wished it did.





Imperial Hylo

During this early period of Hylo's history, several emperors looked toward the kender land intending conquest, but for some reason, none seemed able to. In 2200pc, Emperor Ackal VII finally annexed Hylo, officially renaming it Kenderhome in all imperial documents.

Their inclusion in the empire introduced the kender to concepts such as taxes and forced conscriptions. However, they never minded sharing their food and goods with all the interesting new people in their land. In addition, they looked forward to meeting exciting new people in faraway places as part of the imperial legions.

Throughout the Age of Dreams, the increasingly brutal nature of the Empire of Ergoth went unnoticed by most kender. In fact, Ackal VII remains something of a legend in Hylo. According to the kender, they taught the empire how to wage war, and in return, Ackal VII saw to it that they traveled to all kinds of new places. Naturally, the kender think they got the better end of the deal.

It's not until 1886pc that the kender grew disenchanted with Ergoth. Too many tax collectors arrived in Hylo with violent and negative attitudes, and the military commanders no longer treated the kender with the respect they felt they deserved. So the kender told the imperial governor (who hardly left his palace and ever let them inside) that they no longer had any use for him and his humorless troopers and tax collectors. The governor responded by executing the kender delegation and hanging their bodies from his palace wall.

After a brief period of shock, all of Hylo rose up in rebellion and waged a fierce guerrilla war against the Ergothian occupation force. Their battles lasted until 1810pc, when Emperor Emann Quisling decided Kenderhome wasn't worth the trouble it cost him to maintain troops there and withdrew to his own borders. Once the Ergothian troops had left Hylo Forest, the kender resumed trade with the empire. Soon Kender-

home was a greater source of revenue for imperial coffers than ever before.

In 1801pc, Hylo officially asserted its independence from the empire. Its residents had watched Vinas Solarrums's rebellion with awe and (not realizing that they had, in effect, done the exact same thing a decade earlier) declared that they too wanted independence. The "Statement of Rebellion" that arrived from Hylo as the eastern provinces were completing their secession bewildered imperial bureaucrats, since the empire had considered Kenderhome an independent territory for ten years.

Free Hylo

In 1634pc, Kenderhome found itself at odds with Solamnia. The kender had long admired the Solamnic Knights, due to their "fancy armor" and "neat ways of doing stuff with swords." However, as the kender did not hail from Solamnia and could not meet the Order's strict behavioral codes, the Knights would not admit them.

So the kender started their own knightly order, the Knights of Balif, named for a kender historic figure. The Solamnic Grand Master at the time, Gregori uth Telan, hailed from the province of Lemish and was unfamiliar with the kender and their ways. He considered their action an attempt to belittle the Solamnic Order, so he sent emissaries to Hylo requesting that the kender stop their mockery. Instead of complying, the kender offered the Knights a chance to join the Order of the Acorn. Grand Master Gregori ordered an invasion of Kenderhome, against the recommendation of his advisers.

The confused kender watched as columns of Knights marched into Hylo and surrounded the citadel at the city's heart. The siege lasted roughly three weeks, although the kender never actually realized their town was besieged. Instead, they swarmed around the "enemy camp," heaping admiration upon the Knights and relieving them of many interesting objects.

Eventually, the commander of the force attempted to explain to the kender what the Grand Master found offensive about the Knights of Balif. The kind-hearted kender realized they had “hurt the Grand Master’s feelings,” and so they disbanded their knighthood, which was beginning to bore them anyway. The Solamnnic force returned home without a single life lost.

The Third Dragon War was far more bloody, however. The kender had managed to gather roughly a dozen of the dragon eggs Thoradin’s dwarves had mistaken for gems. Most of these wound up in underpopulated areas, but three had been taken to the citadel at the center of Hylo.

When these three eggs hatched, the kender tried keeping the dragons—a blue and two greens—as pets. The arrangement lasted for about a century, after which time the two young green dragons went berserk. They laid waste to part of the citadel and a good portion of town, killing hundreds before they were themselves slam. Exactly what happened to the blue dragon is unknown, but kender histories tell that the creature rose up to defend Hylo during the Third Dragon War, saving it from destruction in an attack in 1030PC. In an ending uncharacteristic of kender history, the dragon’s story concludes with his death in 1019PC at the hands of Solamnnic Knights, who failed to realize he was friendly.

The possible death of their pet dragon aside, the kender appreciated Solamnna’s aid during the war. By 1000PC, that gratitude had manifested itself as a formal alliance between Solamnna and Kenderhome. While some assert that only the kender actually benefited from this alliance, the point is arguable. For instance, about that same time, Palanthis was emerging as a major port, its fleet of merchant vessels and warships built with Kenderhome’s wood. With the alliance in place, the production of ships doubled in speed and, by 900PC, the Palanthisian fleet was second only to Istar’s.

Twilight Before Cataclysm

Historians noted that around 350PC kender in Hylo began worshipping deities other than Branchala and Reorx, their race’s traditional gods. These new kender priests and followers of Paladine, Mishakal, and other gods arose due to the influence of Istaran missionaries. By 150PC, however, kender interest in these new gods had waned, as the missionaries made it increasingly difficult for them to stomach religion: The Istarans insisted on ever more rigid ways of honoring the gods, and ever higher tithes to the Kingpriest.


The Istaran presence in Hylo ended once and for all in 123PC, when a visiting priest flogged kender leader Ticklefoot Sunflower for declaring himself the Kingpriest of Kenderhome. A devout follower of Mishakal and a powerful priest in his own right, the kender (like the founders of the Knights of Balif in centuries past) did not understand the offense he had caused. He did understand that he had been attacked. In response, he ordered every Istaran priest driven from Hylo Forest, declaring they obviously were not the holy men they claimed to be.

The Istaran priests went to the High Clerist’s Tower and asked the Solamnnic Knights to invade Hylo, to avenge their honor and set the heathen kender in their place. Records show that the High Clerist and High Warrior guaranteed the priests that they would launch an attack as soon as winter ended. However, when the time came, they neither mustered an army nor conducted any punitive raids or invasion.

In 118PC, Istar issued the Proclamation of Manifest Virtue, which declared the kender, among other races, inherently Evil. By 115PC, Solamnna had an army arrayed on Hylo’s eastern border. However, despite repeated insistence from Istar, the army never invaded.

A variety of songs and stories from this time detail how the Knights and kender would gather on the border during holidays, get drunk, and com-





miserate about the nonsense issuing from Istar. Other tales tell of attempted invasions repelled by brave kender. Records discovered in the High Clerist's Tower after the War of the Lance reveal that no high-ranking Knight really believed the kender Evil.

The biggest conflict along the Hylo–Solamnia border occurred in 83PC, when an Istaran priest convinced a division commander to disobey his orders and launch a direct strike at Hylo. Casualties mounted on both sides but in the end, the kender won the day. They took the Istaran priest to Hylo, allowing surviving Knights to return to Solamnia in disgrace. The priest was locked in a tower high above the city where he had quite a view. “You can sit up there until you get tired of looking at Hylo,” said Sam Half-Finger, Mayor of Hylo, in passing judgment, “or until we get tired of listening to you whine.” In 70PC, the Solamnic High Justice finally managed to negotiate for the priest's release.

As Kenderhome's relationship with Solamnia deteriorated due to Istar's influence, relations with Ergoth improved. The kender's unwillingness to allow Solamnia access to their forest permitted Ergothian loggers to harvest more wood. Additionally, the growing feeling among Ergothians that the gods would soon bring Istar low appealed to the kender. While they wished no one ill, a good many tales from this time feature Reorx beating the Kingpriest with his hammer.

When war broke out between Ergoth and Solamnia in 8PC, the kender stood firmly on the side of Ergoth, skirmishing with the Knights on their border but never engaging in the kind of violent conflicts taking place south of them. Still, if they had not tied down several units of Knights along their eastern border, Gwynned VI's war effort might have proven far less successful.

Of course, the Cataclysm rendered this triumph moot. Kenderhome's eastern border vanished under the sea, as the lush valley there became part of the Straits ofAGONI.

The Shadow Years

The Cataclysm devastated Hylo more than just physically—it scarred the kender emotionally as well. They could not figure out why the gods had punished them along with Istar. For the first century after the rending of their land, the kender seemed very subdued. In addition to mourning their lost friends and relatives, they became fanatically religious. Their days and nights revolved around making offerings at altars that sprang up all throughout the realm. They also defended their borders fiercely from the advances of violent Ackal in the north, and the goblins in the south, fearing it might have been their friendliness with the Solamnic army camped on their border that caused the gods to punish them. Doomsday cults were also prevalent among kender during this period.

Within three generations, however, the folk of Hylo had lost any personal connection with the tragedy of the Cataclysm. By 250AC, the typical, happy-go-lucky kender was once again sticking his nose where it didn't belong.

The War of the Lance

Isolated on their island, the playful kender thrived in relative peace, forging relationships with the provinces of Ackal and Sikk'et Hul. Soon goblins and kender were living peacefully on both sides of Hylo's southern border.

Kenderhome was the site of the only battle of consequence to occur in Northern Ergoth during the War of the Lance. Details are sketchy and, of course, kender tales surrounding this event are plentiful and contradictory.

In 352AC, a dragonarmy expeditionary force of goblins and hobgoblins landed in Ogaral, just north of Hylo. Some kender tales relate that the force was led by Highlord Toede, but more reliable sources identify the commander as Toade, a human so hideous he was often mistaken for a hobgoblin.

The same tales recount that the force had come to punish the goblins of Sikk'et Hul for not heeding the Dark Queen's

call to battle, but that the ship's pilot had lost his way during the night. The famed Solamnic Grand Master Gunthar uth Wistan happened to be in Hylo when the dragonarmy's force marched south toward the kender capital. His journal records how Kronn Thistleknot (*kender adult male, motivated demeanor, Master*), son of the kender who defeated the real Lord Toede near Flotsam, and other kender taunted the Toade and his force into charging at the city in a blind rage, at which point hidden kender forces flanked the goblins and massacred the attackers.

After the War of the Lance, Kenderhome returned to pleasant obscurity. Kronn ruled the land briefly, during which he presided over the "Gnome-talks," an effort to forge Hylo and Mount Nevermind into a united force. However, he got bored with ruling, and handed the "reins of power" to Km Thrashen Windseed, who declared herself Meistersinger of Hylo. She insisted on conducting all government meetings in song. Soon after, she cancelled the Gnometalks, because the gnomes could not carry a tune.

The Age of Mortals

During the Summer of Chaos, Kenderhome went untouched by both Dark Knights and Chaos creatures, thanks to the kender's goblin allies in the south (see "Sikk'et Hul Province").

When word reached Hylo in 45c about the dragon ravaging Kendermore, the realm's new leader, Fallana Windseed (*kender elder female, distracted demeanor, Adventurer*), sent emissaries east to offer her displaced cousins aid and an invitation to resettle in Hylo. Over the next few years, thousands of grim kender—the survivors of Malystrix's fiery scourge of Kendermore—reached Hylo with little more than the clothes on their backs. The last wave arrived in 12AC, just before Frost's transformation of Southern Ergoth made the Straits of Algoni navigable by only the most skilled seamen.

The kender of Northern Ergoth did their best to welcome the newcomers, but the two populations just didn't

relate well to each other. Gradually, the kender population split into two factions. The refugees—called afflicted kender—built walls around the towns they settled and caused strife with the suspicious goblins of Sikk'et Hul.

Windseed tried to open talks with the kender leading the goblin young woman named Belladonna (*afflicted kender adult female, lawless demeanor, Master, 5*). To her surprise, Windseed found herself take captive and forced to surrender the leadership of Hylo to Belladonna.

Current Happenings

Since 135c, Belladonna has encouraged all in Hylo to fortify their settlements and prepare for dragon assaults. Most of the native kender are less than cooperative, thinking that Belladonna's trick on Fallana Windseed was very unfair. Today, Hylo remains a land divided.

Politics

Hylo has seen every conceivable form of government come and go throughout its history—several times, and sometimes in the space of a week. Traditionally, it is an omnigarchy, meaning rulership by everyone. Everybody does as they please, so long as they do not harm each other. However, the afflicted kender find it difficult to let the old ways stand when there are dragons to defeat.

Today in Hylo

Belladonna and her followers constantly attempt to convince the true kender to engage in military drills, build defenses, and otherwise prepare for invasion. However, even afflicted kender do not follow orders unless they find it either amusing or to their clear advantage.

Despite their lack of law, common threats bring kender into quick cooperation. With little preparation, Hylo can field a formidable army or dozens of covert units. As soon as her troops are ready Belladonna reportedly plans to send them against the White Dragon.



Appendix

Ambassador

Ability scores	Ability codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
Any.	Pr "C" min.	Demeanor from red aura card; wealth 7 min.	Trump bonus for negotiation; action to discern thoughts; can adopt role during play.	No trump bonus for RE or PR actions to deal with the lower classes.

Barmaid

Ability scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
Any.	St "C" max. Pr "C" min.	Wealth 3 max.	Eavesdropping; trump bonus to put on false face; can acquire the role during play.	RE action to avoid being recognized outside of work.

Bard

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
SP 4 min. PR 5 min.	Any.	None.	Trump bonus to RE actions to recall details of a place; action to enthral; can acquire role during play.	No trump bonus to PR actions involving those of wealth 8 or higher (other than performances).

Con Artist

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
Any.	Pr "B" min.	Nature from black or red aura card.	Trump bonus for actions to convince a mark; can adopt role during play.	No trump bonus for PR actions involving people wise to his scam (elves get a -3 action penalty).

Displaced Noble

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
Any.	Any.	Wealth 6 max.	Sympathizers; trump bonus to imitate old status; can regain status.	Encounter enemy once per quest; difficult to acquire the role during play.

Pop

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
All must be 5 min.	Four must be "B" min.	Wealth 7 min.	Others let information slip.	Lose advantage if hero's secret gets out; only newcomers can acquire role during play.

Guild Thief

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
Any.	"B" min. in DX or RE or PE	Nature 5 max.; wealth between 4 and 6.	Trump bonus for RE, PE, or DX thief actions; hand talk; can acquire the role during play.	<i>Challenging Reason</i> action to avoid rash behavior to oppose injustice or oppression.

Roles Quick Reference

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
AG 8 min. DX 8 min. EN 6 max. St 6 max. PE 6 min. or PR 6 min.	AG "D" max. EN "D" max. (true) or EN "C" max. (afflicted) PE "B" min.	Kender only; acute eyesight; others by subrace.	Effective wealth 8 and tromp bonus to PR actions with kender who recognize him; handling; trump bonus for sleight- of-hand (true) or sneaky (afflicted) actions.	No trump bonus for PR actions, -2 action penalty, and effective wealth 2 with nonkender recog- nizing role; recognition among foes endangers friends; short concen- tration; "A" code allow only for PE; cannot acquire role during play.

Healer

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
Any.	St "B" max. DX "B" max. RE "C" min. PE "C" min.	None.	Trump bonus to healing actions.	No trump bonus for attacks meant to injure difficult to acquire the role during play.

Legionnaire Scout

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
All must be 3 min.	PE "B" min. PR "C" max.	Demeanor 6 max.; nature from red aura card; Adventurer or better; wealth 5 max.	Trump bonus to hide and to track in nature; no restrictions to false roles; apprentice; can acquire role during play.	No trump bonus for PR actions that involve leadership attempts; death if captured by a Dark Knight; apprentice.

Loyal Servant

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
RE 4 min. SP 4 min.	Any.	Wealth 3 max.	Trump bonus for eavesdropping; can acquire role during play.	RE action to convince others of sincerity.

Merchant

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
RE 3 min. PE 3 min. PR 3 min.	Any.	Nature 4 min.; wealth between 4 and 6.	Owns a business; trump bonus for trade; can acquire role during play.	No trump bonus to PR actions for charitable or selfless goal.

Qualinesti Rebel

Ability Scores	Ability codes	Other Req's	Advantages †	Disadvantages
AG 6 min. ** DX 6 min. ** EN 8 max. ** St 8 max. ** PR 6 min. **	AG "C" max. * DX "B" min. * EN "C" max. * St "B" min. *	Qualinesti elves or half-elves.	Secret signs and codes; resistance acquaintances; can contact other rebels; trump bonus in sword combat and when using PE in forest; can acquire role during play.	Change in nature after two quests that involve fighting elves; full elves get no trump bonus for non-elf-related PR actions while half-elves get no trump bonus for elf-related PR actions (except for resisting mystic magic).

** Listed scores reflect elf requirements. Half-elves take two minimums and one maximum.

* Listed codes reflect elf requirements. Half-elves take one minimum and neither maximum.

† Half-elves enjoy only one of the two advantages



Appendix

River Pirate

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
Any.	Any.	Nature from red aura card; wealth between 4 and 6.	Trump bonus for actions involving river travel.	No trump bonus to PR actions involving other cultures; outsiders can't adopt the role during play.

Spellfilch

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
Dx 4 min.	RE "B" min. or SP "B" min.	Unique thief "signature."	Trump bonus for spells involving thief activities.	Enemy; must have had past roguish role to acquire role in play.

'Staunch Supporter'

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
RE 4 min. SP 4 min.	Any.	Wealth of 7 min.	Trump bonus to deal with lord's servants and minions.	Disadvantages <i>Challenging Reason (Spirit)</i> action to convince others of true sympathies; can adopt role during play only under a new regime.

Street Performer

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
AC 4 min. PR 4 min.	AC "C" min. PR "C" min. SP "C" min.	Wealth 3 max.	Advantages Can play/dance automatically or with a trump bonus; <i>easy Presence</i> action to learn information; heroes with musical skill can acquire role during play.	Disadvantages No trump bonus to PR actions to deal with middle or upper classes.

Street Urchin

Ability Scores	Ability Codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
Any.	Must explain any code beyond "C"	Wealth 3 max.; three quests or less; child.	Advantages Can find hideout in home city; network of friends; eavesdropping; trump bonus to steal.	Disadvantages PR actions to deal with known foes must be <i>daunting</i> or higher; cannot acquire role during play.

Thug

Ability scores	Ability codes	Other Req's	Advantages	Disadvantages
Any.	Any.	Demeanor 6 min.	Advantages <i>Easy Presence (Spirit)</i> action to intimidate foe foe with lower ST (or PH) score; proper personality types can acquire role during play.	Disadvantages Honorable characters will challenge bullying thugs to a duel.





HIDDEN AGENDA SHEET

True Name: _____

Aliases: _____

Nature: _____

True Demeanor: _____

True Role: _____

General Outlook: _____

Allies and Enemies: _____

Special Relationships: _____

False Demeanor(s): _____

False Role(s): _____

Hidden Agenda: _____

Other Secrets: _____

Personal Goals: _____



HEROES OF DEFIANCE

BOOK
TWO





STORM OVER KRYNN

Dragons of a New Age, Part Two



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Author's Foreword



Storm Over Krynn is the second in the five-part adventure series *Dragons of a New Age*. Groups can play it as a stand-alone scenario or weave it into the storyline that began with *The Rising Storm* in the *Heroes of Steel* dramatic supplement. That adventure featured Dhamon Grimwulf, Feril Dawnprinter, and other heroes on a mission from Goldmoon, mistress of the Citadel of Light. During their quest, they discovered a link between the disappearance of villagers from the Blue Dragon's realm and a sinister plot by Khellendros himself. In the process, they learn the horrifying truth regarding the kidnapped town-folk: Through some unknown magical process the Great Dragon transforms them into "dragonspawn", a twisted draconic-human hybrid. This adventure, inspired by Jean Rabe's FIFTH AGE™ novel, *The Day of the Tempest*, provides a group of pregenerated heroes from the novel. Players who do not wish to adopt these Heroes of the Heart can continue using the ones they played in *The Rising Storm* or create new ones.

Adventure Synopsis

Storm Over Krynn not only features adventurous battle with the forces of Evil, it also requires deceit, stealth, and other types of covert behavior discussed in Book one, *Cloak and Dagger*. Heroes must use their wits and their roguish talents to triumph in this scenario of discovery.

The adventure begins when the group stumbles upon the remnants of Dark Knight scouting expedition and learns the locations of a lair of the Blue Dragon and of a key site in the spawn transformation process. The heroes can visit the lair if they dare, then travel to Relgoth, a holding site for captives destined to become spawn. After infiltrating the bizarre stronghold—a magical castle made from black sand—will the group free the prisoners or get captured themselves? The quest also might lead the heroes to Vingaard, where pirates set sail with them up an undead-infested river. At a bend in the river, they come upon a haunted swamp guarded by a sinister black dragon who serves Khellendros. Here, the heroes learn the most horrifying secret about the nature of spawn.

During the adventure, the Narrator can answer one of the DRAGONLANCE® Saga's great mysteries: What happened to Gilthanas, a tragic figure lost after the War of the Lance? Ultimately, the quest ends with some strange revelations from an old scholar and a showdown between the heroes and the Blue

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Mesner".



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ictory rarely comes without a considerable cost," the mariner said, finally breaking the silence.... "I'm going to honor Shaon and Dhamon by continuing the struggle—

whatever the cost."

—Rig's reflections on loss, The Dawning of a New Age

In the Fifth Age of Krynn, Fate calls to the Heroes of the Heart: The mariner Rig Mer-Krel, afraid of nothing—except his true feelings; Ferilleeagh Dawnprinter, Kagonesti elf and foe of

all Great Dragons; Dhamon Grimwulf, a warrior trying in vain to put his past behind him.



These are only a few of the figures featured in *The Rising Storm*, the precursor to this adventure. In that scenario, which paralleled Jean Rabe's novel *The Dawning of a New Age*, each hero found himself tested in ways he'd never expected.

Heroes Old and New

In the course of their fight against the Blue Dragon, the Heroes of the Heart may see new companions take the place of old. This Prologue describes not only the familiar Rig, Feril, and Jasper, it also introduces two new heroes: the Silvanesti elf Ladine and the afflicted kender Pax. Of course, players may continue with the other heroes from *The Rising Storm*, such as Dhamon, Blister, Raph, and Shaon of Istar, if the story permits.



Rig Mer-Krel

Description	Human male (barbarian), mariner role	
Demeanor	Roguish (8 )	
Nature	Clever (5 )	
Reputation	Adventurer (Quests 6, Hand 4)	
Social status	Guildsman (Wealth 5)	
Agility	SC	Reason 5D
Dexterity	6A	Perception 5A
Endurance	9C	Spirit 4C
Strength	7C	Presence 4B
Melee weapon	Sabre of renown (+9)	
Missile weapon	Fang (+2) *	
Additional weapon	Lesser dragonlance	
Armor	Padded silk (-1)	
Shield	None	

* Weapon introduced in *Heroes of Steel*.


"Rig is just a nickname, but it suits me. I picked it up as a kid doing odd jobs on the docks in Sea Reach. I've been a sailor ever since I celebrated my twelfth birthday by sowing away on a ship. The home I left was not a happy one, but I joined a much larger family—the brotherhood of sailors. Now I'm in my mid-twenties and the helmsman on the *Wind Chaser*, which runs between New Ports and the island of Schallsea.

"I've steered a ferry in the New Sea, and I've sailed the open sea as a pirate. A few months ago, I found myself drawn into a fight against Khellendros the Blue, and I haven't felt a deck beneath my feet for some time.

"I'm at my best when I have salt water in sight. If I'd been in my element, I could have saved Shaon, a bright-eyed lass who'd sailed with me for years. Instead, this beautiful girl died at the claws of one of Skie's blue dragons, cut down in her prime. I'll go

back to the sea some day, but not until I've avenged Shaon. The Storm Over Krynn will pay dearly for her death."

Game Information

As a mariner, Rig (8 ) enjoys a trump bonus for any action he attempts involving combat at sea or an act of seamanship. In land combat, however, he suffers a -3 action penalty. (The mariner role appears in *Heroes of Steel*.)

Rig is always ready for a fight. Besides his two primary weapons, he conceals several others: a weighted sash that looks like a bit of normal clothing, two daggers in his boots, and two more hidden under his shirt. He wears a fancy hat with a garrote concealed in the headband and conceals razor-sharp blades in the soles of his boots. He even wears a dagger-shaped earring that doubles as a lockpick.

In a recent trip to Palanthas, the sorcerer Palin Majere retrieved the last piece to the footman's dragonlance once wielded by Sturm Brightblade and gave it to the heroes.

Unless Dhamon Grimwulf remains with them, Rig now carries this lance. The mariner has developed such a strong hatred for blue dragons that he has grown immune to the effects of dragonawe. (This immunity applies only if Shaon appeared as either a hero or a character in the Narrator's campaign and was slain by the blue dragon Gale, as occurred in *The Dawning of a New Age*.)

Rig enjoys acute eyesight and taste—no one will ever get a poisoned meal past him.

Appearance

Tall and muscular Rig has brown skin and short, dark hair that mark him as an Ergothian. He favors bright, flashy clothes.



Jasper Fireforge

Description	Male Neidar dwarf
Demeanor	Decisive (3 ♣)
Nature	Honest (2 ♥)
Reputation	Champion (Quests 8, Hand 5)
Social status	Gentry (Wealth 6)
Agility 6B	Reason 6D
Dexterity 5C	Perception 5B
Endurance 7B	Spirit 8A (64)
Strength 7A	Presence 7B
Melee weapon	Battle axe of fame (+12)
Missile weapon	Crossbow (+5)
Armor	Scale armor of renown (-8)
Shield	Horse shield of distinction (-6)

I'm Flint Fireforge's nephew. That's right: Flint Fireforge, Hero of the Lance, was my uncle. It seems that Fate has cast the Fireforges as saviors of Krynn, or at least of Ansalon. Now it's my time to be a hero, and I'll do my best to fill the role Fate has set for me.

"I've inherited my uncle's tolerance for other races, particularly elves and kender. Don't laugh—Uncle Flint's best friends were Tanis Half-Elven and Tasslehoff Burrfoot. I know elves are a bit full of themselves, so I just let them walk around with their noses in the air. Why should I let myself be offended by their behavior? I also don't understand why other people get so upset when

kender are around—can't they appreciate a kender's quick wit? I'll admit that I seem to 'lose' things more often when there's a kender nearby, but that's no problem, because the kender always find my things for me. It would be rude to call a kender a thief or demand my property back: Harsh words are for enemies, not friends.

"That's a truth I learned from Goldmoon, First Master of Mysticism. I'm a student of hers at the Citadel of Light on Schallsea. Not only is she my spiritual instructor, she's a personal friend of mine. She even saved my life once, back during the Dragon Purge, before anyone even knew what mysticism was. I just might be the first person in Ansalon ever to benefit from mystic healing.

"The world is lucky to have Goldmoon around—she's brought the gift of healing back to a world that has lost it twice now. The power of her spirit has made her an ageless beauty, at least to my eyes (I understand that less enlightened folk see her differently). Goldmoon is a wonderful teacher, and I never tire of working under her guidance. I could happily spend all my days studying with her, but she has reminded me that I have more important work to do and ought not spend all my time at the Citadel."

Game Information

As a dwarf, Jasper (2 ♥) is resistant to poisons and sorcery in the form of a trump bonus to any actions to counter a poison or block a sorcerous attack.

Jasper can employ three spheres of mysticism: healing, mentalism, and sensitivity. In addition, he has an acute sense of smell.

Appearance

Though well into his middle age, Jasper has a jovial nature that makes him seem much younger. He keeps his reddish-brown hair and beard neatly trimmed, as befits a dwarf of his station.



Ferilleeagh Dawnsprinter

Description	Female Kagonesti elf
Demeanor	Curious (2 ☾)
Nature	Wild (7 ☀)
Reputation	Champion (Quests 7, Hand 5)
Social status	Commoner (Wealth 3)
Agility 6D	Reason 7A (49)
Dexterity 6B	Perception 5A
Endurance 4D	Spirit 6A (36)
Strength 7B	Presence 6C
Melee weapon	Broad sword (+6)
Missile weapon	Long bow (+6)
Armor	Leather (-2)
Shield	Kite (-2)

"I'm usually not one to take sides in an argument. Even among my own people, the wild and independent Kagonesti, I've always been a loner. I enjoy solitude, and I admire—even envy—wild creatures. They live free of the constraints of society. Animals have pure motives: They are never treacherous and kill only for food, taking nothing more than they need. And for all their purity, animals also know how to enjoy simple pleasures. Overall, I would prefer a solitary life in the wilderness with them to just about anything else.

"Now, however, I've gotten involved in one of the greatest struggles ever to face Krynn: the battle between mortals and the Great Dragons. I know how to pick enemies, don't I?

"I love the wilderness and would sacrifice anything to save it—even my life, fighting those affronts to nature, the Great Dragons. The White Dragon, Gelidus, has transformed my home isle of Southern Ergoth into a vast glacier: All it took was the touch of Frost to turn a land of temperate plains and forests into a polar desert. I have nothing against polar deserts, but I want them

to stay where they belong: at the poles! Other chromatic dragons have wreaked similar havoc in their territories, but I have made it my job to find a way to thwart their schemes.

"I try not to let my grim task keep me from enjoying the wonders I see around me, however. There is beauty almost everywhere you look, from the simple grace of a butterfly to the crisp geometry of a dwarven building. Whenever I find myself somewhere I haven't been before, I can't help stopping to drink in all the sights, sounds, and smells."

Game Information

As an elf, Feril (7 ☀) is skilled with a sword and perceptive in woodland settings. Any card she plays to resolve an attack with a sword or to resolve a Perception action in a forest becomes automatic trump.

However, like others of her race, Feril can seem haughty to non-elves.

Therefore, she never enjoys a trump bonus for Presence action involving a non-elf. (Cards played to resist magic are an exception.)

This Kagonesti shaman can employ three schools of sorcery: pyromancy, geomancy, and aeromancy. She also can cast spells from three mystic spheres: animism, alteration, and healing. Her two acute senses are sight and hearing.

Appearance

Feril is beautiful, tanned, and wildly exotic. Her brown hair falls in waves to her shoulders, like a lion's mane. Even though she has not recently been among her people, the Kagonesti, she proudly wears the strange and colorful tattoos of this race of wild elves. Feril bears a tattoo of an orange and yellow oak leaf on one cheek and another of a red lightning bolt across her forehead.



Ladine Dralathalas

Description	Female Silvanesti elf, displaced noble role
Demeanor	Bigoted (7 ●)
Nature	Reserved (1 ●)
Reputation	Adventurer (Qurdyd 4, Hand 4)
Social status	Commoner (Wealth 3) <i>Aristocracy *</i> (Wealth 7)
Agility 7C	Reason 8B (64)
Dexterity 9A	Perception 7B
Endurance 8C	Spirit 5C
Strength 6B	Presence 7C
Melee weapon	Long sword (+7)
Missile weapon	Arbalest (+9)
Armor	Leather (-2)
Shield	None

* The social status and wealth score in *italics* are Ladine's standing in Silvanesti.

"I come from the long line of diplomats in House Advocate. Immediately after the War of the Lance I served my queen, Speaker of the Stars Alhana Starbreeze, in negotiations with the Qualinesti and Kagonesti to ensure fair treatment of Silvanesti refugees on Southern Ergoth. Later I worked long and hard to clear up the misunderstanding that led to my liege becoming dark elf-in vain, of course.

"It was a long and distinguished service to the Tower of Stars, and it came to an end twenty years ago when I discovered that I could not return to my beloved Silvanesti, recently restored through the efforts of Porthios of Qualinesti and Speaker Alhana.

"Somehow, someone has encased my homeland in a magical shield that nothing can penetrate. Even my teleportation powers prove useless against the Silvanesti Shield.

"I have spent the past twenty years" trying to unlock this-mystery. Some of my brothers and sisters have sought aid from humans, which I refuse to do. My ears among humans and the Kagonesti savages have granted me an appre-



ciation for these races, but I refuse to show weakness before them. I will stand by them in their struggles against the dragon overlords and even aid them on their personal quests. But my isolation from my beloved land is my plight alone."

Game Information

Ladine has an elf's skill with a sword, which offers her a trump bonus for attacks with that weapon. Likewise, her excellent elven perception in the forest gives her a similar bonus to woodland Perception actions. She remains aloof toward other races, which means she never receives a trump bonus in Presence actions involving non-elves. (Cards played to resist magic are an exception.)

Her role as a displaced noble allows Ladine a trump bonus to imitate her former rank. She has contact with various Silvanesti elves also trapped outside their homeland, who can lend her aid. However, other such exiles know of her loyalty to Alhana Starbreeze and seek her death (once per quest).

Ladine can employ spells from the sorcerous school of summoning and has an acute sense of eyesight.

Appearance

Ladine carries herself with an icy formality, accentuated by her pale gray eyes set within a white, expressionless face. She wears her long, silvery tresses in a series of complex braids, a typical fashion among Silvanesti nobles.

Par Killburn

Description	Male afflicted kender
Demeanor	Domineering (9 🏰)
Nature	Realistic (7 🗡️)
Reputation	Adventurer (Quests 4, Hand 4)
Social status	Commoner (Wealth 3)
Agility 9D	Reason 7D
Dexterity 7B	Perception 8B
Endurance 5C	Spirit 3X
Strength 5C	Presence 7B
Melee weapon	Hoopak (+4) *
Second weapon	Stiletto of distinction (+3)
Armor	Leather (-2)
Shield	None

* Weapon introduced in *Heroes of Steel*.

"You know, I get really tired of the way some people treat kender. But my mother did warn me. She told me that the world outside Hylo was a rough place and that I would spend half my time out here running from stupid humans who consider kender thieves and fair game from their nasty bigotry. Well, in the few short years I've been away from Hylo, I've realized how right she was. I've also decided I'm not going to take it anymore.

"The Great Dragons drove her and my father away from Kenderhome when I was still just a baby. Sometimes when I lay awake at night, I think I can hear the roar of the dragon who destroyed our home. Someday, I'm going to kill that dragon—that's why I took the name 'Killburn.'

"I want to explore the world and I want the Great Dragons gone, and no human, elf, or anything else I meet is going to tell me I can't. I know I'm not going to change the world, but at least I can make things a little easier for any kender who might follow in my footsteps, as my reputation grows.

"Don't get me wrong. I like other people. I really do. Sometimes I get lonely and bored and just want to talk

to someone. I try to be friendly, but more often than not they just treat me like garbage—telling me to get lost, calling me a thief, or even trying to run me out of town.

"But I've taught more than one human to have more respect for kender. And I'll teach the same lesson to all the others who get in my face. If only more people could be like Jasper, we could all band together and fight the dragons instead of each other."

Game Information

As a kender, Pax enjoys a trump bonus for covert actions such as hiding, climbing, and moving noiselessly. He has acute eyesight and a short concentration span, like others of his kind.

Not surprisingly, Pax carries with him a collection of pouches stuffed with the odds and ends he's picked up. Unlike his fellow kender, he does not typically feel a need to check out someone else's pouches and pockets. However, when he does wish to make use of the infamous kender handling ability, any card played for him is trump.

Appearance

Pax favors dark clothing and wears his blond hair cropped close to his head. His face, though as expressive as any kender's, generally stays set in a dour or defiant expression.



ACT ONE

Scene One: The Scouting Party

A new quest begins as the heroes come face to face with a group of Dark Knights.

Overview

While setting up camp for the evening, the heroes hear a woman's scream. Upon investigating, they discover the remnants of a Dark Knight scouting party with one lone prisoner.

Getting Started

The beginning of this adventure finds the heroes just east of the Vingaard Mountains, deep in the territory held by Khellendros the Blue. (See the map on the back of this booklet.) Those who have just concluded *The Rising Storm* have recently traveled from Palanthis, where they retrieved from the sorcerer Palin Majere the final piece to a footman's dragonlance—the one carried by the legendary Sturm Brightblade during the War of the Lance.

For those just joining the *Dragons of a New Age* cycle, Narrators should explain that the heroes have ventured into the dragon's realm to investigate villagers' disappearances—reportedly kidnapped to further a sinister scheme of Khellendros and his Dark Knights. One hero has a lesser dragonlance with them (a family heirloom or a treasure acquired on a previous quest).

First Impressions

A windswept, arid plain unfolds eastward as far as the eye can see. No signs of civilization break the landscape's monotony, but here and there, small hills jut from the dry ground. You have begun making camp on the leeward side of one such hill. In the west, the Vingaard Mountains rise into the darkening sky.

The Story Begins

As the heroes finish setting up camp, the Narrator should read the following:

A scream echoes across the countryside. It's hard to tell where it came from, but it sounded like the voice of a woman in great pain. The scream rises again, this time followed by sobs, as though from one pleading for mercy.

Then, as suddenly as it broke the still of the evening, the sobbing stops.

A search reveals that the scream came from behind a slight ridge west of camp. Heroes who investigate find that other travelers have been set up camp nearby—sinister travelers, from the looks of them. Below, a Knight of Takhisis in ornate plate mail stands over the form of a young woman sprawled on the ground, dead or unconscious. Nearby stands another woman, clad in leather armor and grinning widely. In a sarcastic tone, she says to her comrade, "Nice going, Knight-Warrior. I'm confident she'll talk now."

"Quit your silly act," the Knight barks at the prone figure, "or I warn you, your blood will flow freely!"

The Battle

As heroes, the group members should want to protect an innocent prisoner from harm. They might try a sneak attack or rush the warriors, in which case they gain surprise—the two had not expected trouble. Both warriors fight to the death when attacked but, should the heroes try to subdue rather than kill them, they can be captured.

The Terrible Tales

If the heroes capture the Knight, his fanatical devotion to the Dark Queen prevents all coercion to talk, magical or otherwise. The woman in leather armor, a tracker named Ainia, proves more talkative.

IT BEGINS

Ainia tells the heroes that a talon of Dark Knights hired her to track down villagers in the area who escaped earlier sweeps. Her scouting party was assailed at dusk the previous night by a strange dragon-shaped beast that swooped down upon their blue dragon mount. The mount and the rest of the talon died in the terrifying assault – she says the attacker looked like a wyrm made of pure shadow and breathed a cloud of blinding blackness. They were on their way to report the attack to the Knight’s superior (she can offer directions).

A splash of water on her face brings the prisoner around: a dark-haired, dark-skinned barbarian wearing a halter top and colorful, multitiered skirts. A bruise darkening on her face shows where the Knight struck her. This tired, hungry young woman tells the heroes her name is Marda, but seems distant. She can confirm Ainia’s story about the dragon attack, adding that she had escaped with the other prisoners during the onslaught but was apprehended earlier today. Tearfully, she offers the heroes only this tale about herself:

“Some time ago, my clan was destroyed by Sable the Black. Only my little brother and I survived. I was captured by the trustees of her zoo and tortured, but Willie helped me escape. For the last few years we’ve traveled from city to city telling fortunes. In Palanthas, a Dark Knight bound for Vingaard Keep decided he needed a personal slave. He took my brother and tried to lock me in jail, but I escaped, only to be captured again by this group. Without Willie, I am all alone.”

Atmosphere

It is early evening. The setting sun has turned the cloudy sky into a brilliant sea of fire slowly dying over the mountains in the west. Narrators should emphasize the serene surroundings in contrast to the sharply pained scream.

Actions

Determining where the scream came from is an *average Perception* action for those with acute hearing, but *challenging* for other heroes. Before launching a surprise attack on the camp, the heroes might attempt *average Dexterity (Perception)* actions opposed by the scout to move to a more favorable position.

On hearing Ainia’s story, a hero who succeeds at a *daunting Reason* action can guess that the scouting party ran afoul of one of the legendary shadow dragons.

Characters

The uncommunicative Knight of the Lily seems surprisingly encouraged if the heroes decide to pay a visit on his superior by following Ainia’s directions.

❖ **Knights-Warrior Ruanall:** *Human adult male, fierce demeanor, Champion.* Co 9, Ph 7, In 7, Es 5, Dmg +6 (broad sword), Def –8 (target shield and plate mail).

❖ **Ainia:** *Human adult female, cynical demeanor, Adventurer.* Co 8, Ph 5, In 6, Es 7 (49), Dmg +5 (scimitar), Def –2 (leather), also mysticism (alteration).

❖ **Marda:** *Human adult female, reserved demeanor, Adventurer.* Ag SA, Dx 9B, St 5C, En 5B, Re 8X, Pe 7C, Sp 9X, Pr 7A, Dmg +2 (dagger or sling), Def 0 (common clothing), also uncontrolled mystic power (see Act Three, Scene One for details).

Outcome

After thanking them for their aid, Marda begs the heroes to help locate her brother. Regardless of their decision, Ainia uses her alteration magic to slip free later that night, leaving no sign of her trail.

❖ Heroes who agree to seek Marda’s brother in Vingaard, more than a week’s travel away on the shores of the Vingaard River, begin their search in Act Three, Scene One.

❖ A trip to see the Knight’s superior, according to Ainia’s directions, takes the heroes to Scene Two.



Scene Two: The Dragon's Lair

The heroes may have thought the scout's directions would lead them to a senior Dark Knight. Actually, this "superior" is not a Knight at all; the heroes' trip takes them to one of the Blue Dragon's lairs.

Overview

Khellendros is absent, giving the heroes the chance to steal several items from his hoard and learn a valuable secret about the dragon's stronghold. First, however, they must bypass various traps and fight a couple dragonspawn and a semi-intelligent wyvern.

Getting Started

Information about the items of magic mentioned in this scene appears in the *Book of the Fifth Age*, Chapter Five.

First Impressions

As you crest yet another sandy hill in the Blue Waste, you come upon an immense cave mouth hidden mostly in the shadows of the surrounding dunes. The area seems just as desolate as the miles of arid terrain you have already crossed—certainly not a bustling Dark Knight center of operations.

The Story Continues

As they enter the cavern, heroes can easily make out a number of claw marks on the floor. Some are the size of large lizard tracks, while others are immense. Clever heroes might deduce that they were formed by the cave's resident dragon and his servants.

A cavern just off the cave entrance holds the dragon's hoard. Braziers light the area enough for the heroes to make out a large selection of coins, jewels, weapons, armor, and other items. This collection includes the following magical trinkets, treasures, and artifacts:

- Three rings of distinction offering their wearers -2 defense bonuses.
- Two short swords of renown.
- Two suits of Solamnic plate armor of fame and one suit of Dark Knight plate armor of fame.
- One horse shield of glory that all recognize to be the Shield of Huma.

Although the items of magic appear unguarded, they are in fact protected by three wards. First, a unique form of lichen covers the floor around the display. This magical growth, which Khellendros discovered while exploring the Gray and the vast Abyss beyond Krynn, causes anyone who steps on it to risk falling victim to total amnesia.

Second, an enchantment upon the items alerts one of Khellendros's magically enhanced wyvern servitors that someone has touched them.

The third and most subtle enchantment of all is that the Great Blue can sense the location of each of these items at will. Further, by concentrating on one of them, he can see through the eyes of the individual carrying it.

Once someone has touched or recovered one item, a voice calls from the darkness, "Master! You're home!" and a large wyvern comes bounding from the darkness. It looks at the heroes with a quizzical expression and mutters, "Nope, nope, nope. None of you little ones is my Master! You look more like prisoners. Why aren't prisoners at the stronghold?"

With proper cajoling, the dopey wyvern sentry reveals the following:

- He serves the Storm Over Krynn.
- The "stronghold," called the Bastion of Darkness, is located in the town of Relgoth, several days' journey from their current location.
- Someone named Lord Sivaan oversees the captive villagers brought there for "spawning" by the Master's Dark Knights.

The dim wyvern answers a few such questions before noticing that the heroes have taken items from the dragon's

hoard. “Thieves!” it yelps. “Spawn, spawn! Help me catch little thieves!” Not waiting for help, the creature attacks.

All appearances to the contrary, Khellendros has received word that the heroes have interfered with his plans; the dragon fully expects the heroes to visit his lair at some point. In fact, he actually *wants* them to abscond with some of the items of magic from his hoard—he just doesn’t want to make it too easy. Once they have the treasures, he can use them to spy on the heroes as they continue to oppose his spawning efforts.

The Battle

The wyvern attacks the heroes with its claws and poisonous stinger. The commotion draws the attention of two blue dragonspawn, horrifying lizard-men hybrids almost seven feet tall, with enormous wings and wicked claws. The enraged spawn launch themselves at the strongest individuals in the group.

Atmosphere

The dragon’s lair should give the heroes the feeling of impending doom, even though Khellendros does not appear.

Actions

Heroes can spot the claw marks in the cavern automatically, but deducing their origin requires a challenging Reason action. Succeeding at a *desperate Reason* action tells a hero that only one blue dragon on Krynn could make tracks this large—Khellendros himself.

When the group goes to loot the hoard, the Narrator should permit heroes with acute eyesight, or those who mention a concern over traps, to attempt a *challenging Perception* action. If they succeed, they notice the cave floor around the pile has a different texture than the rest of the sandy floor. To get the items without stepping on the floor, the group needs to use a lasso, a hook on a rope, or perhaps summoning magic.

If no hero has acute eyesight or thinks

about traps, the alien lichen Khellendros has planted around his hoard sucks mental energy from any hero who steps on it. As soon as a hero is about to take an item, the Narrator should call for a *challenging Reason* action. Success means that nothing happens to the hero at the moment, but he must make another similar action for each item he tries to take. Failing at any of them makes the hero forget who he is and why he is on this quest. The amnesia lasts for a number of days equal to the total action score value of all cards played that minute—a bad situation if all the heroes just rush up to the artifacts. A mishap means the hero permanently forgets who he is.

An *average Presence or Spirit (Reason)* action convinces the wyvern to talk.

Characters

In addition to the creatures the heroes battle in this scene, they may interact with the Dark Knight from Scene One.

♣ **Intelligent wyvern:** *A monster.* Co 12, Ph 28, In 7 Es 7, Dmg +11, Def -4, also dive, poison.

♣ **Two blue spawn:** *Hostile nonhumans.* Co 8, Ph 12, In 5 (25), Es 8, Dmg +10, Def -5, also dragon breath, sorcery (electromancy), dissolves into an electrically charged cloud at its death.

Outcome

If the heroes have learned about the Relgoth stronghold from the wyvern, they find a set of orders (on the body of one of the spawn or tucked into a leather satchel in the hoard) naming the city as a major holding site for captive villagers destined to become spawn.

- ♣ Of course, Marda urges the heroes to help her seek her brother in Vingaard. If they agree, the adventure continues in Act Three, Scene One.
- ♣ Heroes deciding to visit Relgoth can go on to Act Two, Scene One. Marda concedes that rescuing the prisoners is a noble goal and decides to join them, hoping to get to Vingaard later.



ACT TWO

Scene One:

Arrival

It is several days after the end of the previous act. The heroes have had an uneventful trip to Relgoth, a city in Skie's realm occupied by Knights of Takhisis.

Overview

In this scene, the heroes stealthily enter Relgoth—a major collection point of human spawn fodder. The poor folk left here serve as Dark Knight slaves.

Getting Started

The Narrator can check *Dusk or Dawn*, Chapter Three, for details on the Dark Knights. In case the heroes meet a guard while trying to enter the city.

First Impressions

AS the scene begins, the heroes stand atop the crest of a dry, bowl-shaped valley, looking down upon a walled town from a mile or so away. It is noon.

The feature dominating Relgoth is a towering, misshapen structure that looks like some form of castle. From your vantage point, it resembles a giant black anthill rising from the sandy ground, its highest peak soaring at least one hundred fifty feet into the air. This sprawling dark fortress spills over and around the walls of city, covering a sizable section of town. The bizarre structure seems lowest to the south, and there you can see the top of a tower rising from the curious structure.

"The Bastion of Darkness," Marda whispers, "one of the strongholds of Khellendros. My captors said it took a talon of Thorn Knights a year to build it, even with a huldre to bolster their magic. I had no idea what they were talking about at the time."

The Story Continues

After they have taken in the sight of the Bastion of Darkness, the heroes can observe the rest of Relgoth from their vantage point. The dirty walls are heavily patrolled, and Dark Knights stop everyone entering or leaving the city through the gates on the southwest and southeast walls. Perceptive heroes can even see that the Knights search and question each individual.

The heroes need to formulate a plan to get into the city. They can try:

- Bluffing their way through the gates;
- Scaling the wall after nightfall;
- Stowing away in an arriving merchant caravan; or
- Creatively employing magic.

Should the heroes try to pass through the city gates, the guards ask their business in Relgoth. The heroes need a convincing story. Marda might suggest that nonhuman heroes pretend to be bounty hunters delivering prisoners to Lord Sivaan, overseer of this spawning site (if the heroes learned of him in Act One), and that the humans pose as their prisoners. The heroes also could disguise themselves as locals to get in, but the guards will not let them enter without giving a password.

If the heroes try to climb the twenty-five-foot city wall, they must avoid the notice of the Dark Knights patrolling it. Of course, if the guards spot the heroes, they will try to apprehend them.

In any case, Marda conceals herself outside of town, explaining that if she's captured again, she'll never find Wilie.

The Battle

Three Dark Knight guards stand duty at Relgoth's gates at all times, and Knights also patrol the city walls in groups of two. Should a fight break out, ten more will arrive within five minutes. Heroes who fail to act fast in a fight soon become hopelessly outnumbered.

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Although the guards remain alert, they can't possibly account for every contingency the heroes might dream up. If the group has a solid plan for getting into the city, it ought to have a chance to succeed—as long as the heroes don't botch the job. Should the worst happen and one or more of them get captured, the others can stage a rescue attempt.

Atmosphere

The Narrator should strive for a feeling of tension in this scene, making the heroes feel as though they are about to be discovered any moment.

Actions

An *average Perception* action lets the heroes see the Dark Knight guards questioning and searching everyone they stop. Marda can confirm this fact, should the heroes fail to detect it.

Other actions needed in this scene will depend on how the heroes choose to enter the city. Descriptions of two possible scenarios follow.

Through the Gate

The guards will accept the bounty hunter story if the hero posing as the lead bounty hunter succeeds at an easy *Presence (Reason)* action.

Heroes wanting to enter Relgoth undisguised can obtain the password by intercepting peasants or merchants leaving the city. Threatening or bribing them for the password requires a successful *average Presence (Reason)* action, but a mishap means the character gives the heroes a false password.

Disguising themselves as locals is an *easy Presence (Reason)* action for human heroes, but *challenging* for non-humans. Failure means the guards turn the hero away, believing him a beggar or errant adventurer. However, a mishap arouses their suspicions and leads them to attempt to capture the hero.

Convincing a merchant to hide the heroes is a *challenging Presence (Reason or Spirit)* action; stowing away in a caravan proves an *average Reason* action. In either case, a mishap means the merchant sends someone for the guards.

Over the Wall

Climbing the wall requires each hero to perform a successful *average Dexterity* action. A mishap means he falls, suffering 3 damage points. At night, a hero climbing must make a second *average Dexterity* action to avoid detection by the guards (*daunting* in daylight). Either way, a mishap means the hero falls from the wall and incurs 5 damage points. If the mishap action card had an odd-numbered face value, he tumbles to the outside; if it was even, he falls into the city.

Characters

In addition to Marda, this scene also involves Dark Knights and locals.

- ❖ **Marda:** *Human adult female, reserved demeanor, Adventurer.* Ag 8A, Dx 9B, St 5C, En 5B, Re 8X, Pe 7C, Sp 9X, Pr 7A, Dmg +2 (dagger or sling), Def 0 (common clothing), also uncontrolled mystic power (see Act Three, Scene One for details).
- ❖ **Dark Knight guards:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 7, Es 6, Dmg +8 (two-handed sword), Def -5 (plate mail), also missile weapons (crossbow/+5).
- ❖ **Townfolk or merchants:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Unknown and Rabble.* Co 5, Ph 5, In 6, Es 4, Dmg 0 (unarmed), Def 0 (common clothing).

Outcome

This scene's outcome depends on whether the group managed to enter Relgoth without being caught.

- ❖ Once inside the city, free heroes (even those pursued by Dark Knight guards) can begin Scene Two.
- ❖ Captured heroes go to Scene Three.





Scene Two: The Streets of Relgoth

This scene begins as the heroes get their first close-up look at Relgoth and meet some of the people who live there.

Overview

This scene gives Narrators a quick look at the city's different quarters and personalities. It is by no means a complete or exhaustive description, but it offers threads the Narrator can use to weave side adventures for the heroes as they head toward the Bastion of Darkness. Narrators also can use the information in this scene as foundations for action and intrigue of their own devising, should the heroes ever return here—perhaps in an effort to liberate the city.

Getting Started

Narrators should review the sidebar starting on page 18 and the map on page 19 for details about specific areas in Relgoth. If the heroes meet a draconian during their visit to Relgoth, Narrators can review their powers by turning to Chapter Six in the Book of the Fifth Age.

First Impressions

Narrators should read the appropriate text aloud as the heroes enter each section of Relgoth, a city once home to far more people than currently dwell here.

Heroes entering Relgoth through the gates pass into the New City.

Most of the buildings here stand vacant and ruined, their windows and doors gaping toward the cloudy sky. All around you see sickly, crippled beggars, rail-thin street urchins, and Dark Knight patrols.

After walking through the New City (or climbing the north or northeast sections of the city wall), heroes find themselves in the Old City.

The Old City seems quite populated, although many of the buildings here appear to have been turned into barracks for Dark Knights, mercenaries, draconians, brutes, and other unsavory types. Civilians in this area include street performers and merchants running open-air stalls. These haggard folk give the heroes frightened glances and shrink from the gaze of the Knights.

The Story Continues

Most of Relgoth's population lives in the Old City, once the merchant and noble quarter. Today, weary townsfolk of all social levels share the manors and stores. They exist in the shadows of Castle Rel, home to the Knight of Takhis who administers the city, and the Bastion of Darkness, a strange, otherworldly stronghold overseen by Lord Sivaan. Heroes can find most kinds of stores in this area, although they cannot openly buy weapons or armor.

The heroes, fearing that dallying will only endanger them, may decide to head straight for the Bastion of Darkness to save the prisoners. On the other hand, they want to look around the city before heading into the stronghold. The sidebar starting on page 18 examines Relgoth in greater detail for explorers.

Atmosphere

Relgoth exists under a heavy weight of oppression. Its people, unwilling slaves to the minions of a Great Dragon, have served as a source of spawn for several years. However, the Knights have drawn fewer and fewer victims from the populace of late, as if they seek to preserve the servitor population.

The locals exude an aura of fear and despair so strong as to seem almost tangible. Most of them know their days are numbered—sooner or later they will fall victim either to the pique of a short-tempered Knight or to the Blue Dragon's need for spawn.

Actions

Heroes moving about the city in disguise should attempt periodic actions to maintain their facades: *easy Presence (Reason)* actions for human heroes, average ones for nonhumans. Failure causes suspicion in locals and leads guards to attempt to seize the hero.

Characters

Heroes wandering the streets of Relgoth may meet a variety of characters.

The spirit of most Relgoth citizens, and perhaps even their will to live, has been broken (giving them a low Spirit score). They scurry through the heavily patrolled streets, trying to avoid attention from anyone. They act fearful of the heroes, believing them mercenaries.

🔱 **Townsfolk:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Unknown and Rabble.* Co 5, Ph 5, In 6, Es 4, Dmg 0 (unarmed) Def 0 (common clothing).

Tall, blue-painted brutes travel the streets in groups of three, usually under the command of a Dark Knight. They serve as the Blue's muscle.

🔱 **Two hundred brutes:** *Hostile non-humans.* Co 6, Ph 11, In 6, Es 8, Dmg +8, Def -5, also missile weapons.

Knights of Takhisis patrol the city streets in groups of ten. Should a fight break out, a second patrol arrives within five minutes. Other Knights guard the gates in threes and patrol the city walls in pairs. All guards carry crossbows.

Few Dark Knights here know anything specific about Khellendros's plans, nor do most realize what he does with prisoners brought into the Bastion of Darkness (they assume he eats them). When the heroes question a Dark Knight about matters involving the prisoners, spawn, or artifacts, the Narrator should turn a card from the top of the Fate Deck. Only if the resulting card belongs to the Suit of Dragons and has a value of 5 or higher does the Knight know the truth.



Only an *impossible Presence (Spirit)* action and threats of violence or use of magic can penetrate a Knight's fanatic loyalty to his Order and the dragon.

🔱 **Dark Knights:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 7, Es 6, Dmg +8 (two-handed sword), Def -5 (plate mail).

A Dark Knight officer walks with every brute patrol and often stays with the guards at the gates between the various quarters. (Picking a card with a black aura in a random draw might mean an officer is present.) All Presence actions the heroes attempt involving lies or con games become one degree more difficult when an officer is around, even if the heroes don't speak to him directly.

🔱 **Knight-Officer:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 7, Es 7, Dmg +8 (two-handed sword), Def -5 (plate armor).

Throughout Relgoth, Baaz draconians enjoy terrorizing townfolk just because they can. Sivaks, in turn, bully the Baaz.

🔱 **Forty Baaz:** *Draconians of varied demeanors, Novices.* Co 8, Ph 6, In 6, Es 7, Dmg +4, Def -3, also can glide, turn to stone on their death.

🔱 **Forty Sivaks:** *Draconians of varied demeanors, Novices.* Co 10, Ph 12, In 7, Es 7, Dmg +12, Def -5, also can fly, shapechange, explode on their death.

Outcome

When the heroes have tired of exploring the city, they can approach the Bastion of Darkness in Scene Three.



Areas of the City

The following pages offer description for heroes who explore Relgoth instead of heading straight to the Bastion of Darkness. The locations refer to sites marked on the Relgoth map opposite.

The Gates

Except for farmers on their way to till the dry fields outside the city walls, most townfolk stay away from the gates—it's too easy to unknowingly break one of the Knights' many rules, with dire consequences. Three Dark Knights guard each gate, possibly overseen by an officer (see "Characters" on page 17).

The New City

In the years following the War of the Lance, Relgoth experienced a boom. Locals had discovered mineral deposits nearby, and the city's proximity to the Vingaard Road made it an ideal resupply point for caravans, since ruined Vingaard was occupied by river pirates. Seeing nothing but a bright future ahead, the optimistic city lords began expanding. Although the job nearly bankrupted them, it paid off; by the Summer of Chaos, merchants, farmers, and other newcomers packed the New City.

Then came the Chaos War. Shadowwights wiped out many of Relgoth's citizens, their names now forever lost to memory. A few years later, draconians and Dark Knights arrived, in the service of Khellendros the Blue.

Now, the city that supposedly once rivaled Palanthas in beauty lies mostly deserted, its buildings slowly falling to ruin. The Dark Knights and brutes patrol this New City only lightly, relying upon the guards at the gates and on the walls to spot any trouble.

As the Knights have forced all abled-bodied citizens into the Noble Quarter, the New City now holds only the old, the crippled, and the orphaned. Heroes passing through the New City will have to contend with swarms of filthy, emaciated folk begging for food. (However, anyone

on the run can rest for days in one of the New City's abandoned buildings with little risk of detection.) For food or clothing, these poor souls will tell the heroes the New City's tragic history.

Cripples or beggars: *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Unknowns.* Co 4, Ph 3, In 6, Es 4, Dmg 0 (unarmed), Def 0 (common clothing).

Heroes spending any time in the New City should make random draws to see whether local street urchins make off with any of their possessions. A black aura on the resulting card means they've fallen victims to the little thieves.

Street urchins: *Human children, varied demeanors, Rabble.* Co 7, Ph 4, In 5, Es 4, Dmg 0 (unarmed), Def 0 (common clothing).

The Old City

Relgoth was founded in 940PC by the third son of a lord of Vingaard who, knowing he would not inherit much from his father, struck out with several other younger children of nobles and, with serfs given to them by their parents, founded a new farming community near the Vingaard Mountains.

The "Old City" was the entire city until after the War of the Lance, and it had more or less grown to capacity by 250PC when the city wall was built. The lord who ordered the construction of this circular, towerless wall died during its construction. Legend has it that his spirit became part of the wall and ensured that the city would never fall to invaders. The legend held true until Khellendros came. Now, the Dark Knights administer Relgoth for the dragon and have buried a third of the Old City beneath the Bastion of Darkness.

Today the Old City primarily contains barracks for Dark Knights and mercenary forces in the area. Three hundred fifty Knights-in addition to human and elf mercenaries, draconians, brutes and a few goblins-live in this section. The townfolk who also

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live here fill the soldiers' entertainment and mercantile needs. However, these are an oppressed people. The dances of Relgoth's street performers hold no joy-many of these folk even sport bruises, evidence of their hard lives.

It might surprise some to learn of elf mercenaries working alongside Dark Knights-the fact would surely disgust other elves. However, the elves in Relgoth are the remainder of a fighting force stranded outside Silvanesti's enchanted forest when the magical shield was raised. This crew, bitter that they had heard no call to come home before the raising of the barrier, cut a deal with Khellendros the Blue. The dragon promised that if they would agree to defend Relgoth from attack, he would bring down the Silvanesti Shield and permit them to go home.

These mercenaries know nothing of the dragon's spawning efforts. They are not at all happy about serving a dragon, but considered the alternative-losing all Silvanesti fellowship-much worse.


 **Fifty elf mercenaries:** *Silvanesti adults of varied demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 6, Ph 4, In 5, Es 5, Dmg +7 (long sword), Def -2 (leather), also missile weapons (self bow/+2).

The Silvanesti mercenaries follow Alor Lightleaf, a handsome elf who has led them since the War of the Lance, when he formed part of the delegation that negotiated peace between the Silvanesti, Qualinesti, and Kagonesti on Southern Ergoth. Alor seems aloof and rather racist, frowning upon such things as half-elves and mixed marriages. Yet he burns with anger toward the people who abandoned him.

 **Alor Lightleaf, a mercenary leader:** *Silvanesti adult male, bigoted demeanor, Master.* Ag 9A, Dx 9B, St 6C, En 6C, Re 5D, Pe 7C, Sp 6X Pr 7A, Dmg +4 (long sword), Def -7 (chain mail, ring of renown), also missile weapons (self bow/+2).

Unlike the elves, Relgoth's human mercenaries are drawn from the basest

of riffraff. These men and women conduct kidnapping raids to secure spawn. Most of them assume the captives serve as food for the dragon, though they really don't care what happens to their prisoners-as long as they get paid.


 **One hundred human mercenaries:** *Human adults of varied demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 6, Ph 6, In 5, Es 5, Dmg +6 (broad sword), Def -4 (scale).

The Noble Quarter

In the Noble Quarter, Relgoth's oldest neighborhood, citizens live in gilded cages. Roughly fifteen hundred men, women, and children here reside in the homes that once belonged to the privileged class.

One individual who has thus far managed to escape the Dark Knights' notice is Shen Korras, a half-elf merchant and sorcerer. He dresses in blue robes and wears a mustache similar to those popular among Solamnic Knights.

Korras alone among the townfolk still has spirit left. Should the heroes end up on the run in the Noble Quarter, he can provide them with a place to hide. He will seem impressed by heroes seeking to rescue the prisoners in the Bastion of Darkness and tells them that a Sivak draconian named Lord Sivaan is directly in charge of the prisoners in the Bastion. He adds that the Bastion's entrance lies in this quarter and will even offer them food and weapons.

 **Shen Korras:** *Half-elf adult male, shrewd demeanor, Hero.* Ag 9A, Dx 8B, St 10A, En 8C, Re 10A (100), Pe 8B, Sp 8B (64), Pr 7A, Dmg +8 (great sword), Def -3 (chain mail), also sorcery (spectramancy, electromancy, aeromancy) and mysticism (animism).

Locals know Korras as a merchant who fled to Relgoth when Palanthas fell to the Storm Over Krynn. He speaks little of his past and isolates himself in his home for weeks on end, conducting research into sorcery and mysticism. Many believe he seeks to drive the Great

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Dragons and Dark Knights from Ansalon, but no one—especially the Dark Knights—has ever been able to prove his involvement in subversive activity.

Korras's name is familiar to Jasper or any other Citadel hero. Korras was one of the Citadel of Light's early supporters, even if he never studied there. He helped supply food to the dwarf craftsmen building the Citadel, paid for much of the ornamentation inside the structure, and purchased the ferry that services the island. His money also paid for the War of the Lance monument raised on Schallsea in 16SC. Korras says his family died in a battle on that site, and he wanted to mark their passing. He has a home on the island as well as in Relgoth.

If anyone asks Korras why he lives in Relgoth, the merchant explains he came here to learn more of Skie plans, as well as to assist any brave souls who dare stand up to the dragon. He has not yet uncovered what the Blue intends to do with his spawn, but he does know that the dragon sends them out to do his bidding all across his realm.

Castle Rel

A bulky fortress called Castle Rel crouches on a small hill between the Noble Quarter and the Old City. Once impressive, the castle is now dwarfed by the otherworldly Bastion of Darkness. Ranking Dark Knights dwell here with their personal guard, a few dozen young people training for entry into the Knighthood, and their instructors.

The identity and gender of the Lord Knight in charge of Relgoth remains unknown, although folks think him a Knight of the Lily. He often is accompanied by two equally enigmatic Commanders: a Skull Knight and Thorn Knight. No one has yet seen this trio in public without full armor. The secrecy surrounding these three remains a subject of discussion among Solamnuc Knights, Legionnaires, guild thieves, and others who offer organized resistance to the Dark Knights. So far, no one has been able to discern the reason

for the secrecy or penetrate its veil.

The truth is that all three ranking Dark Knights in Relgoth are dark elves of Silvanesti stock. When Mirielle Abrena began rebuilding the Order shortly after the Second Cataclysm, they promised to assist her in an invasion of Silvanesti in return for the opportunity to join the Knighthood as adults. Before they could enact this plan, however, the Silvanesti raised their mysterious shield.

These three govern the Knights in Relgoth at Khellendros's request. They must keep their identities secret, lest they lose the respect of those they command—after all, no elf may normally wear the austere armor of a Knight of Takhisis, and all other Knights must join the Order as children, not adults. Eventually, as these three oversee the training of more and more young Knights of Takhisis, they may admit more and more dark elves into the ranks to pursue world domination in the name of Takhisis.

Although dark elves, these three—who will never give their names, even if captured, as they do not wish to dishonor their families further—retain the traditional Silvanesti attitudes and outlooks ingrained within them.

The Lord Knight, Order of the Lily:

Silvanesti adult, scheming demeanor, Master. Co 8, Ph 6, In 7, Es 8, Dmg +8 (two-handed sword), Def -5 (plate).

Thorn Knight Commander: *Silvanesti adult, opinionated demeanor, Master.*

Co 8, Ph 6, In 8 (81), Es 8, Dmg +6 (broad sword), Def -5 (plate armor), also missile weapons (self bow/+2), sorcery (divination).

Skull Knight Commander: *Silvanesti adult, grandiose demeanor, Master.* Co 8, Ph 6, In 7, Es 8, (64), Dmg +7 (long sword), Def -5 (plate armor), also mysticism (animism, mentalism, necromancy).

The Bastion of Darkness

This structure is described in Scenes Three and Four.





Scene Three: Into the Darkness

By now, the heroes have made their way to the entrance to the Bastion of Darkness in Relgoth's Noble Quarter—either freely or in an elephant-drawn prison wagon (if captured in Act Three).

Overview

To find the prisoners, the heroes must either bluff or sneak past the Knights at the stronghold's entrance. Of course, if the heroes themselves are captives, they will be herded right into the Bastion—they might see a chance to escape.

Getting Started

Narrators may wish to refer to the Relgoth map on page 19 during this scene.

First Impressions

From near the entrance to the Bastion of Darkness, Relgoth's dominant feature, the heroes can see the following:

The immense black stronghold towers over the city. It looks bizarre, like a giant anthill. It spills over a third of the Old City, absorbing everything it touches. It looks as though the fortress has somehow pushed its way up from below.

The sprawling walls, which appear to be made of black sand, are dotted with openings of various sizes. The largest rests at ground level, a great, gaping maw opening into darkness. This portal looks wide enough for two wagons to enter side by side. Dark Knights guard it vigilantly, stopping all who approach and questioning them thoroughly before letting them enter.

The Story Continues

The heroes discover, as they approach the walls (or once they're inside) that the Bastion of Darkness is made up of normal sand held together by magic.

Although the structure appears solid, heroes can scoop handfuls of sand from the floors and walls. The feat of creating such an effect should disturb sorcerers even as it makes them marvel: Apparently Khellendros, like the Silvanesti elves with their shield, discovered how to create permanent magical effects using the new magic of the age.

Dark Knight guards order captive heroes out of their wagon and usher them into the gaping maw of the citadel. If the heroes decide not to go along quietly, they could use magic or muscle to make a break for freedom.

Free heroes must formulate a plan to get into the citadel. For instance, they might try using the same ruse that worked for them at the city gates: pretending to be bounty hunters returning with prisoners for Lord Sivaan. The Narrator should let them work through their many options with minimal input.

As players formulate their plan, the Narrator should think about the defenses the Dark Knights may have in place to prevent someone from stealing into the stronghold that way. The guards at the gate might ask all who try to enter for a password and their business within. They also might have additional guards posted near the windows in case someone should try to climb the walls. But are they prepared for trespassers who make creative use of spells?

The options below describe a few of the ways free heroes might try to enter the Bastion of Darkness. As always, the Narrator must keep in mind that his primary duty is to challenge the group with a fun and interesting series of events—getting into the Bastion should not be impossible, but it's no cakewalk, either.

Through the gate: The heroes can try passing themselves off as merchants or as mercenaries with their prisoners again. As long as they mention Lord Sivaan, the password that got them into the city will get them into the stronghold, too. If they fail to mention Sivaan, the guards turn them away. Once the heroes are admitted, a Dark Knight escorts them to Lord Sivaan;

those who want free run of the citadel must dispose of this escort.

❖ **Climbing the wall:** Anyone trying to climb the exterior wall of the sandy structure finds the exercise much like scaling a vertical sand dune: He has next to nothing to grab onto or to give him a foothold. Heroes who manage to climb fifty feet up the wall (or otherwise gain access on one of the upper levels) can enter the fortress through a window.

❖ **Digging:** Once the heroes discover this citadel's sandy consistency, they may attempt to tunnel in. Unless they wield geomancy, though, any tunnel collapses before they can use it.

Atmosphere

An air of menace hangs over this otherworldly black structure. Armored warriors patrol ledges that jut from oddly angled openings. The looming stronghold dwarfs these figures, as well as the guards at the entrance, even while it strengthens their malevolent appearance. And who can say what fell creatures might emerge from the Bastion of Darkness to defend the fortress?

Heroes standing in the shadow of this dark citadel should experience a feeling of foreboding and insignificance. Narrators can also mention that lightning plays in the dark clouds overhead and thunder rumbles far away.

Actions

Once let out of the prison wagon, a captive hero can bolt for freedom with a successful challenging *Agility* (*Perception*) action, running either into the Bastion or away from it into town. Three Dark Knights immediately give chase.

Using the bounty hunter or merchant story to win through the Bastion's gate is harder than it was to enter the city: The group's leader must succeed at an *average Presence* (*Reason*) action. The heroes might obtain a necessary password by bribing or threatening townsfolk, as described in Scene One. Passing them-

selves off as locals to get in requires the leader to make a successful *average Presence* (*Reason*) action for human heroes, but a daunting one for nonhumans. (The Narrator can alter the difficulty based on the credibility of the heroes' story.)

Heroes must attempt a *challenging Agility* action to begin scaling the wall (a *daunting* action for centaur heroes). They must then perform an additional *challenging* (or *daunting*) *Agility* action to keep from sliding down the side of the fortress in a cloud of sand. Heroes incur no damage from this gradual fall, but they do attract the guards' attention. If a hero suffers a mishap while climbing, the wall suddenly gives way and sucks him in like quicksand, smothering him into unconsciousness. The others may try to rescue him, but anyone who gets too close risks being sucked in, too: A black aura on a randomly drawn card means the would-be rescuer shares this fate.

Characters

The Dark Knights around the citadel patrol and guard in groups of three.

❖ **Dark Knights:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 5, Es 6, Dmg +8 (two-handed sword), Def -5 (plate armor), also missile weapons (crossbows/+5).

Outcome

From this scene, the adventure could veer off in one of several directions.

❖ Heroes who bluff their way into the citadel and go to Lord Sivaan continue with Scene Four.

❖ If the heroes scale the wall, ditch their Knight escort, or break free of their guards and run into the Bastion, the story moves to Scene Five.

❖ Should captive heroes escape their guards and run from the Bastion, they are pursued through the streets of Relgoth in Scene Two.

❖ Heroes captured or recaptured are knocked unconscious by the guards. They, as well as anyone drawn into the sandy wall, awaken in Scene Six.



Scene Four: A Talk with Lord Sivaan

After bluffing their way into the Bastion of Darkness in Scene Three, the heroes come face to face with one of Khellendros's chief henchmen.

Overview

Their escort leads the heroes to Lord Sivaan, a Sivak draconian. After a brief conversation, the Sivak has Dark Knights attempt to subdue the heroes and throw them in with the potential spawn.

Getting Started

The Narrator can reference the *Book of the Fifth Age*, Chapter Six, for background on Sivak draconians.

First Impressions

From the entrance, the heroes follow their Dark Knight escort into a twisting maze of tunnels that exist—almost impossibly—within the loose black sand.

The floor beneath your feet shifts like the sand on a beach—some of it even finds its way into your shoes. Flickering braziers provide dim light in the upward-slanting hall. Every so often, you pass openings guarded by a trio of Dark Knights, beyond which beckons open sky. More frequently, you pass closed doors that somehow manage to stay upright, despite the fact the walls around them are barely solid. Muffled cries sound from behind the doors.

Eventually, your escort stops outside a wide door. He knocks twice, and a sibilant voice bids him enter. Inside, a Sivak draconian—arge even compared to other members of his race—its behind a hulking desk. His wings slowly beat, stirring the air in the room. The office contains decorative stonework on the walls, a rich rug covering the floor, and several mounted human and elf heads.

The Story Continues

The draconian introduces himself as Lord Sivaan, overseer of the Bastion of Darkness. If the heroes try to bluff their way through this meeting, he asks their names, their business with him, and/or how they came to be in his employ—he has no memory of hiring a band of their description. Sivaan appears to accept any explanation with a toothy grin. However, the suspicious draconian doesn't really believe a word of the group's story: He just wants to toy with the heroes before calling the guards.

If they claim to have brought him captives, he congratulates the “bounty hunter” hero(es). “Someone made a wise choice in securing your services. But it seems you have not been fully instructed: I want the prisoners subdued. Guards!” Answering Sivaan's call, Dark Knights pour into the room.

Should *all* the heroes pose as bounty hunters, merchants, or other subjects reporting to him, Lord Sivaan listens politely to their stories and asks questions until they have grown obviously uncomfortable. Then, with a wicked, lizardlike grin, he calls for the guards and attacks.

The Battle

The Knights of Takhisis who rush into the office attempt to beat the heroes with clubs, continuing the assault until they have rendered all of them unconscious. If two of the Knights fall, they switch to their far more lethal swords.

Sivaan hangs back, letting his guards do the fighting for him, until the heroes appear to have the upper hand. When he wades into battle, he focuses on the particularly strong heroes, though not as gently as the Dark Knights: The draconian counterattacks to kill.

Atmosphere

The Narrator should strive to convey the strangeness of the Bastion of Darkness by describing the sand running down the walls and the dancing shad-

ows that twist their way across the surfaces. Distant screams rise and fall from various directions.

Once the heroes confront Sivaan, however, the atmosphere should change to one of immediate danger. Sivaan will seem cordial even after he orders the Dark Knights to subdue the heroes, but the mounted heads staring blankly down at the group should prove that his friendliness is only a facade. Sivaan hates humans just as much as most other draconians do, if not more.

Actions

Ultimately, the heroes' only viable course of action in this scene is to flee, fight, or cast spells. No attempt to bluff the savvy draconian can succeed. Should the heroes surrender then attempt to escape, a successful *challenging Agility (Perception)* action allows them to break free of their captors. The guards immediately give chase.

Characters

When called, two Knights appear for each hero and character in the party.

❖ **Dark Knights:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 5, Es 6, Dmg +4 (cudgel) or +7 (long sword), Def -5 (plate armor).

❖ **Sivaan:** *Sivak draconian, treacherous demeanor, Champion.* Co 10, Ph 12, In 7 Es 7, Dmg +12 (two-handed sword with serrated blade), Def -5, also can fly, shapechange, explodes upon death.

Outcome

This scene has a variety of outcomes.

- ❖ Heroes who escape Sivaan's office or vanquish their foes there will be on the run in the dark fortress, as described in Scene Five.
- ❖ The story also moves to Scene Five if the heroes break free of their escort before they reach Sivaan's office.
- ❖ Heroes who become prisoners in this scene are knocked unconscious, to reappear in Scene Six.



Scene Five: Dark Wanderings

The heroes wander the Bastion after either entering through stealth, dispatching their Dark Knight escort, or fleeing the battle in Lord Sivaan's office.

Overview

This scene takes the heroes through the twisting halls of the black fortress, where they may chance upon interesting—but potentially deadly—individuals.

Getting Started

The Narrator can plan which characters the heroes might meet in the stronghold's sandy halls, or he can make a random draw from the Fate Deck and consult the card's value: If he draws a One, the heroes meet the first character listed at right. If he draws a two, they meet the second, and so on. If the Narrator draws the Ten of Dragons, the heroes move on to the next scene.

First Impressions

If the group has not played Scene Four, Narrators should read the text below.

The floor beneath your feet shifts like the sand on a beach—some of it even finds its way into your shoes. Flickering braziers provide dim light in the sloping hall. Dotting the passages are openings guarded by trios of Dark Knights, beyond which beckons open sky. You also spy closed doors that somehow manage to stay upright, despite the fact the walls around them are barely solid. Muffled cries sound from behind the doors.

The Story Continues

Should the heroes try to open some of the doors in the hopes of finding the prisoners, they'll have to get through some tough locks (see "Actions"). Some of the rooms serve as storage space (a

red aura) or offices (a black aura on a random draw; a Dragons card means the office is occupied by three Dark Knights). A white aura card, however, lets the heroes find a dank prison cell with a number of captives equal to the card's value. One of these frightened, starving folk tells the heroes that dozens of other prisoners are being held elsewhere in the Bastion.

This section suggests some of the characters the heroes might meet as they wander the dark citadel's mazelike halls. Their game information appears in the "Characters" section at the end of the scene. The Narrator can include as many such meetings as he desires.

- 5 **Wench** (*noncombatant*): A young woman, the mistress of a brutal Dark Knight, walks to her lover's quarters carrying food and drink for him.
- 5 **Scribes** (*noncombatants*): A pair of local functionaries has come to perform a count of prisoners on behalf of the Lord Knight of Relgoth.
- 5 **Mercenaries**: A group of sellswords has just gotten done delivering prisoners to one of the holding pens. One appears for each hero.
- 5 **Dark Knight patrol**: Knights patrol the corridors in groups of three.
- 5 **Inductees**: A group of black-clad children about twelve years of age are on their way to weapons practice.
- 5 **Torturer**: As a scarred man in black leather closes a door behind him, the heroes can hear voices in the room pleading for mercy. Moments later, screams drift into the hallway.
- 5 **Squire**: A young member of the Knighthood is running an errand for his liege. Eager to please his master, he will be suspicious of the heroes.
- 5 **Baaz**: Five draconians have lost their way in the twisting corridors. They will try their best to get directions to the holding pens without letting the heroes know they are lost.
- 5 **Servants** (*noncombatants*): Alone or in pairs, these characters are performing menial tasks for the Dark Knights and draconians.

When staging these encounters, the Narrator might decide based on the situation how a character reacts to the heroes' presence (if he sees them). He also can use the inscription on a randomly drawn Fate Card to determine an individual's attitude, or even try checking its aura:

- 🔥 **White aura:** The character seems helpful and friendly.
- 🔥 **Red aura:** Distrustful of the heroes, the character demands an explanation for their presence. He turns hostile if he finds them unconvincing (determined by another random draw), but might become helpful if the heroes offer a persuasive story.
- 🔥 **Black aura:** The character either attacks the heroes, attempts to betray them, or calls for reinforcements to help capture or kill them.

Characters listed above can feed the heroes information, too. For example, a friendly person might reveal the way to the prisoners in the holding pen (Scene Six) or tell the heroes that Knight-Officer Nikoles—the officer who has Marda's brother—is assigned to the Knight's Spur encampment on the Vingaard River (detailed in Act Three). The Narrator can even give the heroes clues leading to adventures of his own devising.

When the group has played through the desired encounters, the Narrator should go to the "Outcome" section.

Atmosphere

The atmosphere in this scene can vary from tense and otherworldly to hectic and nightmarish. If the heroes are being chased, the mood should be one of non-stop action. And all the while, the Narrator should emphasize the alienness of the sandy hallways and the many unsettling sounds coming from all directions.

Actions

The variety of actions the heroes might attempt during this scene are too varied to mention. If they have gotten into the

stronghold undetected, many encounters may revolve strictly around role-playing. However, for heroes on the run, the meetings will lead to combat.

In general, heroes likely will attempt Reason and/or Dexterity actions to move through the halls undetected. Additional Reason actions might allow them to find hiding places, while Presence actions can let them bluff their way past characters. Picking a lock on a door requires a *challenging Dexterity* action, while breaking the lock is a *challenging Strength* action.

Characters

The characters on the previous page fall into one of the following categories:

- 🔥 **Baaz:** *Draconians of varied demeanors, Novices.* Co 8, Ph 6, In 6, Es 7, Dmg +4, Def -3, also can glide, turn to stone upon their deaths.
- 🔥 **Dark Knights:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 5, Es 6, Dmg +4 (cudgel) or +7 (long sword), Def -5 (plate armor).
- 🔥 **Noncombatants:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Unknowns.* Co 5, Ph 4, In 6, Es 6, Dmg +2 (dagger), Def 0 (common clothing).
- 🔥 **Mercenaries/Torturer:** *Human, elf, and half-elf/adults of varied demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 6, Ph 6, In 5, Es 5, Dmg +6 (broad sword), Def -3.
- 🔥 **Inductees/Squire:** *Human youths of varied demeanor, Unknowns.* Co 5, Ph 4, In 6, Es 6, Dmg +2 (dagger), Def 0 (common clothing).
- 🔥 **Prisoners:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Unknowns.* Co 6, Ph 5, In 5, Es 5, Dmg +2 (rocks) or by captured weapon, Def 0 (common clothing).

Outcome

Eventually, the hallway the heroes are following ends in an unlocked door. Opening it, they find themselves overlooking a scene of misery: a holding pen for those slated for spawning. (Due to the mazelike effect of the twisting halls, they end up there no matter where they were heading.) Now, Scene Six can begin.



Scene Six: The Prisoners

This scene opens in one of two ways: After roaming the citadel in the previous scene, the heroes step through a door that leads to a balcony overlooking a holding pen. Heroes captured earlier find themselves led here to take their place among the prisoners instead.

Overview

Here, the heroes witness the first step in the spawning process and perhaps free two hundred captives—a group that may include several of their comrades.

Getting Started

The *Book of the Fifth Age*, Chapter Six, offers background on Baaz draconians, featured in this scene.

First Impressions

The Narrator should read the text below aloud to players of free heroes:

From your vantage point on the balcony, you can see in the center of the rocky, open-air courtyard below a two-story house, its windows equipped with bars. Similar structures ring the courtyard, partially crushed and absorbed into the sandy black walls.

A pair of heavily armored Dark Knights enters the house, while several others remain outside with a handful of Baaz draconians. They all appear watchful, as though they expect trouble. The haggard faces of men and women press against the windows of the building's top floor, despair reflecting deeply in their eyes and features. After a few moments, the Dark Knights emerge from the building herding a dozen men and women.

Captured heroes arrived at the holding pen some time ago, unconscious, and were thrown in the house. Their players should now hear the following text:

You awaken armorless and weaponless as a pair of Dark Knights raps you with the flat of their blades, ordering you to get up. Around you, inside what appears to be a small house, stands a collection of downtrodden, broken-spirited townsfolk and adventurers. Some of them look like they've been kept prisoner for weeks. A handful of these captives are ushered outside with you into a rock-strewn courtyard. The high sandy black walls of the fortress surround a tiny spot of sky high above.

This final passage applies to all heroes:

One of the Dark Knights announces to those in the courtyard, "I am Knight-Warrior DeValier. Do not bother asking why you are here or why this is happening to you. All you need to know is that some of you can leave this place alive. How? By fighting your fellow prisoners and surviving until I call a halt to the combat. Those who refuse to fight will be executed immediately."

The other Knights and the draconians take up positions in a wide half-circle that curves along the courtyard wall. "You make the choice," the Knight continues. "You can fight bravely and possibly die honorably. Or you can die like cattle in a slaughterhouse."

A brief silence falls over the courtyard. From far above the sandy walls comes the cheery chirping of a bird. Then a thin woman in ragged clothes lets out a shriek and launches herself at one of her fellow captives.

The Story Continues

The Knights and Baaz force the dozen selected prisoners to fight each other to the death with their bare hands. Any heroes captured earlier in this adventure are among those brought outside to fight. Should the heroes refuse to fight the prisoners, they come under attack from one Dark Knight and one Baaz.

Heroes chased onto the balcony at the start of this scene are captured, relieved of their equipment, and marched down

to take their places among those chosen to fight. If no heroes are prisoners, they can watch as a bloody brawl ensues beneath the grim stares of the Knights and the reptilian grins of the Baaz.

The Battle

If possible, the ragged woman mentioned earlier assails the hero with the lowest Strength score and attempts to claw out his eyes with her fingernails. The other captured heroes shortly find themselves attacked as well.

Narrators can consider that characters fighting characters kill each other at the rate of one every two minutes. Once a character knocks a hero (or another character) unconscious, he grabs a rock to bash the victim's head in.

From the balcony, the heroes can get off one surprise near-missile range attack against the draconians and Dark Knights (if they weren't pursued). Once they peg a couple guards, the fighting characters realize that they need not kill each other and turn on their captors instead. Heroes on the balcony who want to attack at melee range can jump down to the courtyard.

In any case, heroes among the prisoners or on the balcony should involve themselves in the battle; the captives cannot defeat the Knights and Baaz alone.

Atmosphere

Initially, a mood of crushing despair and oppression hangs over this scene. Once the fight begins, however, the Narrator should pick up the tempo and create an atmosphere of desperate madness. Spectating heroes should feel compelled to join the combat.

Actions

Jumping from the balcony requires a successful *average Agility* action. If the hero fails, he stumbles and cannot attack for two minutes, though he can defend himself normally. A mishap inflicts 1 damage point on him as well.

Characters

Aside from those forced to fight for their lives, one hundred eighty more captives wait locked in the building in the center of the courtyard. If freed, they will all grab rocks and weapons from the ground, kill the Knights and Baaz, then rush into the citadel in fury.

5 **Prisoners:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Unknowns.* Co 6, Ph 5, In 5, Es 5, Dmg +2 (rocks) or by captured weapon, Def 0 (common clothing).

5 **Baaz:** *Draconians of varied demeanors, Novices.* Co 8, Ph 6, In 6, Es 7, Dmg +4, Def -3, also can glide, turn to stone upon on their deaths.

5 **Six Dark Knights:** *Humans of varied age and demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 5, Es 6, Dmg +4 (cudgel) or +7 (long sword), Def -5 (plate armor).

5 **Knight-Warrior DeValier, a Knight of the Thorn:** *Human adult male, fierce demeanor, Champion.* Co 9, Ph 7, In 7 (49), Es 8, Dmg +8 (broad sword), Def -8 (plate/target), also sorcery (aeromancy, electromancy, hydromancy).

Outcome

Before rushing off, one of the rougher-looking prisoners pauses to tell the heroes that the Knights hold a group of elves prisoner in a cell down the hall from the balcony entrance. (Narrators can disregard this message if the heroes already rescued elves in Act Three.)

As they make their way back through the Bastion, the heroes and prisoners may meet up with several of the characters mentioned in Scene Five.

5 Should the group manage to escape the Bastion, they can wander Relgoth a bit (Scene Two) or depart (Act Three, Scene One), finding Marda waiting where they left her.
5 Heroes wishing to free the elves now can go to the Epilogue, Scene One.
5 For those who have already rescued the elves *and* played Act Three, the Narrator should move on to Scene Two of the Epilogue just as the heroes are exiting the Bastion.



ACT THREE

Scene One: Marda's Vision

The scene, which details a key event on the trip to Vingaard, occurs either directly following Act One or after the heroes have left Relgoth at the end of Act Two.

Overview

While traveling toward Vingaard Keep, Marda, the heroes' barbarian companion, seems gripped by a strange seizure. This episode may teach the group something about the spawning process.

Getting Started

The map on the back of this book shows Vingaard's location. The Knight's High Road, several leagues north of Relgoth (or the heroes' camp) offers the most direct route. Of course, the group may wish to avoid commonly traveled roads, fearing Dark Knight patrols.

First Impressions

Unless the Narrator wants to create other events to further a subplot of his own devising, the journey unfolds uneventfully until the party is one day from Vingaard. Just before it becomes time to camp for the night, Marda experiences some form of attack.

As another splendid sunset lights the heavens of Krynn ablaze, Marda suddenly lets out a shriek and tumbles to her knees. She scrambles across the dry ground in apparent terror and panic, entangling her thrashing legs in her voluminous skirts. Finally she manages to get to her feet, then dashes off, running full tilt across the countryside and screaming hysterically.

The Story Continues

Presumably, one or more of the heroes will pursue Marda, who has run over the crest of a hill, collapsed, and curled into a fetal position. She lies shivering violently and sobbing softly, making no response if anyone calls her name or touches her. Heroes with a Spirit code of "A" or "B" can sense the turmoil within her. Even without casting a spell, those practiced in the mentalism or sensitivity can feel her terror as a physical ache in their own bodies. It's as though Marda exudes psychic pain.

A Citadel mystic may have once seen a comrade help someone in a similar state. Another hero might attempt to assist Marda by using mentalism or sensitivity to see into her mind, find out what has terrorized her, and calm her. In doing so, however, the hero opens himself up to an involuntary response from Marda's latent mystic powers: As mentioned in Act One, she is a powerful spiritualist, but has no control over her abilities.

Marda's Story

In time, Marda regains her senses, but remembers nothing of what set her off. She had no idea she was conveying her pain to anyone else, she moans.

At the heroes' urging, Marda tearfully reveals that when the Dark Knight who abducted her brother imprisoned her, draconians subjected her to a variety of tortures, claiming they wanted to "harden" her. If she hadn't managed to escape when she did, she'd have gone insane, she says—she had begun seeing and hearing things that weren't there.

Atmosphere

As this scene unfolds, the Narrator should shift the mood from serenity to confusion to terror to sympathy for Marda's plight. The final act of *Storm of Over Krynn* will only get darker, and this scene sets the stage.

VINGAARD HORRORS

Actions

Pursuing Marda automatically succeeds, assuming the heroes chase her immediately. If not, the Narrator may call for an *average Perception* action from those who attempt to track her.

Should a mystic wish to reach out and touch her mind in an attempt to soothe her or determine what is happening to her, the Narrator should require a random draw. What happens next depends on the aura of the card drawn.

♣ **White aura:** Marda's uncontrolled power of the heart has drawn the hero into a vision of the events that awoke these powers and continue to disturb her. The hero experiences the events recounted in "The Vision," below, as though he has been transported to that very time and place. When the vision ends, he finds himself lying on the ground, surrounded by concerned friends.

♠ **Red aura:** The hero, locked in a fight with Marda's subconscious will, sees a vague impression of the vision described below. (The Narrator chooses what to reveal.) Then he feels a stab of pain and falls unconscious for a number of minutes equal to the card's face value. He awakens disoriented, with terror filling his heart.

♣ **Black aura:** The hero brings Marda back to consciousness but he could gain no clue to the cause of her seizure.

The Vision

The smells of fear, human sweat, and rotting flesh assault the hero. He feels the tight leather restraints keeping him tied to a hard, wooden plank, and the cold metal of the brace that prevents him from turning his head.

The horrid fanged visage of a Sivak draconian comes into view. "My lord wants to see how this little beauty affects you," it hisses. "You are not a

warrior, but perhaps we may harden you in a different way."

A clawed hand comes into view. It holds a writhing creature that looks like an earthworm with tiny barbs all over its body and a stinger on its tail. With the other hand, the draconian forces the hero's mouth open and drops the creature in. Pain sears the hero as the barbed worm slithers down his throat. Then he tastes blood in his mouth....

Characters

Marda plays an active part in this scene, although the elves from the Epilogue, Scene One, may be along if the heroes rescued them in Act Two.

♣ **Marda:** *Human adultfemale, reserved demeanor, Adventurer.* Ag 8A, Dx 9B, St 5c, En 5B, Re 8x, Pe 7c, Sp 9x, Pr 7A, Dmg +2 (dagger or sling), Def 0 (common clothing), also uncontrolled mystic power.

Outcome

The adventure continues in Scene Two.



Scene Two: Vingaard

About a day after the events of Scene One, the heroes reach Vingaard.

Overview

This scene describes a pirate haven on the Vingaard River, as well as meetings with some potential allies there.

Getting Started

The “river pirate” role in Chapter One of *Cloak and Dagger* offers insight into the local character.

First Impressions

Most of Vingaard was destroyed in the War of the Lance. When the Blue Dragonarmy withdrew, pirates claimed what was left. From a small rise nearby, heroes can get a look at this river town.

Not much remains of Vingaard’s former glory: once grand neighborhoods fallen to rubble, shadowed by the battered, fire-blackened hulk of Vingaard Keep perched high on a hill. It looks like new buildings have sprung up near the docks on the shore of the Vingaard River, but they are little more than shacks. “I’ve heard this called a pirate town,” Marda says. “They live and die on their boats, not on land.”

The Story Continues

While in town, Marda hopes to find Knight-Officer Nikoles, the Knight who took her brother. Asking the right people reveals that he and his talon recently took passage upriver to their camp, the Knight’s Spur—with the lad a slave among their prisoners. The sidebar on pages 34 and 35 explains how the heroes come by this information.

The fiercely independent pirates love to harass outsiders, be they dragon minions or freedom fighters, by sub-

jecting them to verbal abuse and challenges. However, if an outsider offers witty retorts or bravely stands his ground, the hostile facade melts and the pirates welcome the newcomer.

Atmosphere

This port has the rough-and-tumble air of a pirate town like those portrayed in the movies *Against All Flags*, *Cutthroat Island*, and *Captain Blood*.

Actions

An *easy Presence (Spirit)* action lets a hero with a wealth score of 5 secure river passage for the party from a pirate captain.

Characters

Pirates’ flamboyant personalities make them brash, demonstrative folk but, oddly, they dress in practical styles and subdued colors. Ship and family remain the most important things to them—if a hero really wants to insult a pirate, those are the prime targets.

Heroes may meet pirates, both men and women, almost anywhere in town. Typical crews consist of adult and teenaged members of the same family, as well as spouses of children who have yet to secure a ship of their own. These tight-knit groups follow their captain-head of ship and family—in all things.

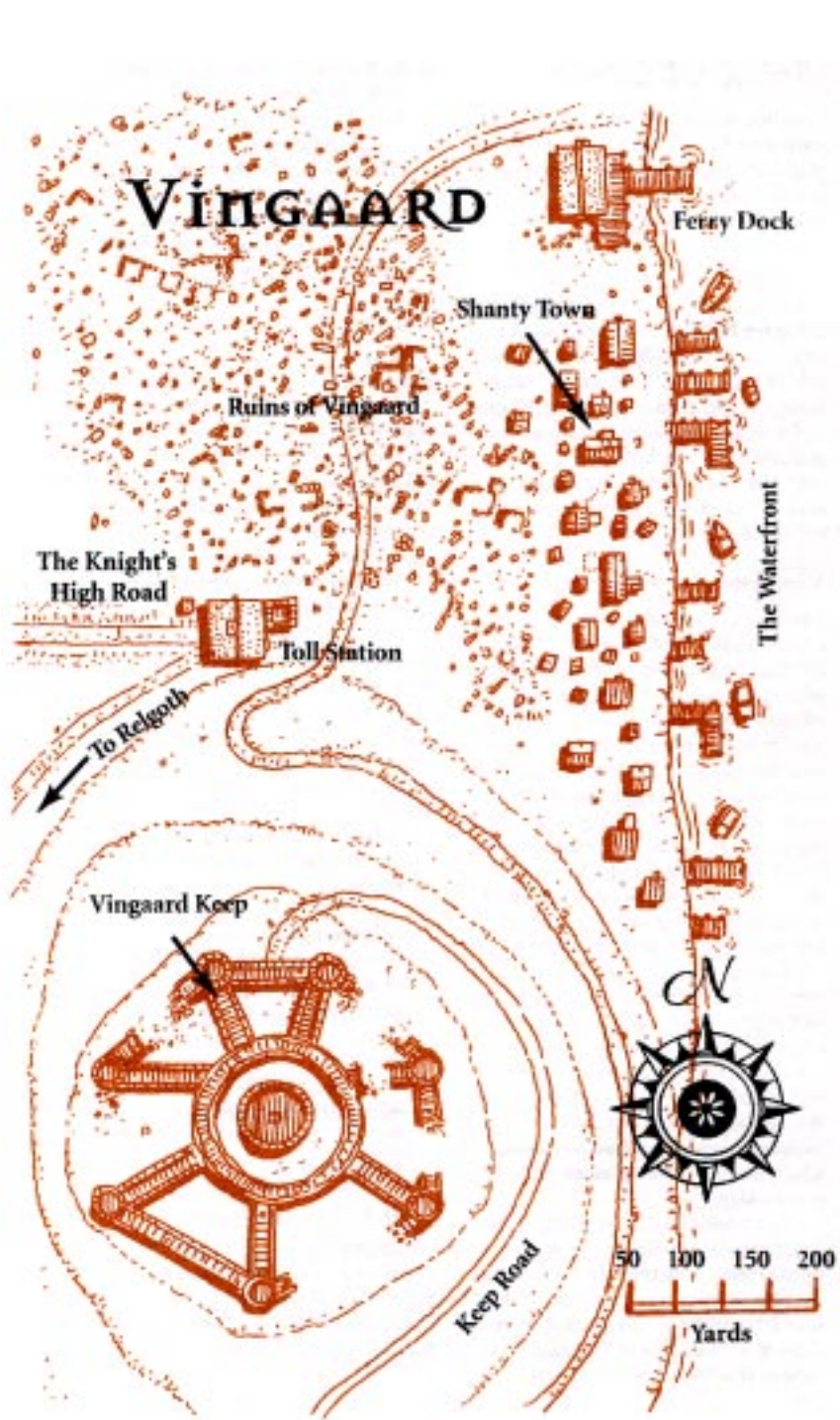
♣ **Ship’s captain:** *Human adults, independent demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 6, Ph 7, In 7, Es 6, Dmg +5 (sabre), Def –2 (leather).

♣ **Ship’s crew:** *Human youths and adults, loyal demeanor, Novices and Adventurers.* Co 6, Ph 5, In 5, Es 6, Dmg +5 (sabre), Def –2 (leather).

♣ **Marda:** *Human adult female, reserved demeanor, Adventurer.* Ag 8A, Dx 9B, St 5c, En 5B, Re 8x, Pe 7c, Sp 9x, Pr 7A, Dmg +2 (dagger or sling), Def 0 (common clothing), also uncontrolled mystic power.

Outcome

When the heroes have secured passage upriver, they continue with Scene Three.



Areas of Town

This sidebar, divided into sections that correspond to the map on the previous page, can help Narrators create the heroes' visit to Vingaard based on where they decide to go first.

Toll Station

Prior to the War of the Lance, those using the Knight's High Road would enter town at a small fort on the west side of town. At this toll station, tax collectors would ask a fee from merchants and travelers to maintain town coffers and contribute to the Solamnian treasury. The river pirates have dispensed with the practice, however, leaving the toll station abandoned.

Vingaard Keep

South of the toll station lies the great fortress called Vingaard Keep. It fell to the Blue Dragonarmy during the War of the Lance, early in the Blue Lady's efforts to conquer Solamnna. While it was an important strategic goal, some said that taking the keep settled a personal score for the Highlord. Raderic Tankreed, then lord of Vingaard, reportedly surrendered the keep to the Blue Lady without a fight, but she set it ablaze nonetheless, tore down parts of its walls, and hung Tankreed and his immediate family along the Keep Road.

A secret group of Solamnian Knights operates out of the mostly-ruined keep, by the grace of the river pirates who keep their presence secret from Skie's minions. These Knights watch Nightlund's unnerving shadows across the river for clues to explain the increase in roving undead monsters, which plagues travelers along the Vingaard today.

Sir Connor Heth, this group's Sword Knight leader, dislikes the rambunctious pirates. If he thought he could do so without incurring the wrath of the Blue Dragon, he would attempt to drive them from the ruins of Vingaard and reclaim this former Solamnian river port.

♦ **Sir Connor Heth:** *Human middle-aged male, determined demeanor, Champion.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 5, Es 6 (36), Dmg +8 (two-handed sword), Def -9 (plate/horse), also mysticism (healing).

♦ **Twenty Knights:** *Human adult males, various demeanors, Adventurers.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 5, Es 6, Dmg +8 (two-handed sword), Def -8 (plate/target).

Ruins of Vingaard

Most of the town that once stood at the base of the Vingaard Keep was destroyed during the War of the Lance. Here and there in the section north of the toll station, archways and corner towers once belonging to mansions still stand. But for the most part, the stones—and even some of the dead—lie where they fell more than fifty years ago.

While the pirates initially spent a good deal of time searching the ruins for treasure overlooked by the dragonarmy during the war, the lurking undead there soon discouraged that practice. Hideous creatures such as ghouls, wights, and shadows still populate these ruins. The promise of undiscovered treasure continues to lure enough adventurers here to keep the creatures adequately fed without bothering the folk on the waterfront. The pragmatic pirates even encourage adventurers to explore the ruins. (Chapter Six of *The Book of the Fifth Age* further details undead creatures.)

♦ **Ghoules:** *Undead creatures.* Co 5, Ph 6, In 3, Es 6, Dmg +6, Def -2, also paralyze.

♦ **Shadows:** *Undead creatures.* Co 6, Ph 10, In 3, Es 4, Dmg +3, Def -3, also drain Strength.

♦ **Wights:** *Undead creatures.* Co 6, Ph 12, In 5, Es 7, Dmg +4, Def -2, also drain Presence.

Shanty Town

A collection of poorly constructed houses built from rubble stands along the river. Visitors who have seen Palanthis or Caergoth find this pirate town laughable and pathetic.

Continued on page 35

Despite their haphazard appearance, most of the shanty-homes are large and well-appointed within. Many contain enough rooms and beds to play host to several families, if need be.

Young pirate crew members patrol the shanty town in groups of three, guarding against the rare wandering undead from the ruins or outsider thieves who might try to take advantage of the pirates' hospitality by mugging citizens or robbing homes. Heroes asking about a recent visit from Knight-Officer Nikoles—or merely Dark Knights with a load of prisoners—are directed to the ferry dock (see below).

The children of Vingaard who are too young to serve aboard ship often hang about the shanty town and waterfront (at right). They look ragged but well fed and well loved: Every child in Vingaard has an adult to care for him. These children will subject heroes to attempts at begging and stealing in an effort to imitate their parents' treatment of outsiders.

👉 **Pirate children:** *Human children of varied demeanor, Unknown and Rabble.*

Co 8, Ph 4, In 5, Es 4, Dmg +1 (improvised weapons), Def 0 (common clothing).

Ferry Dock

One Vingaard mainstay that predates even the nation of Solammia is an ancient waystation at the north end of the shanty town, for passengers crossing the river via ferry. The local ferry still provides one of the few ways for wagons and riders to cross the river, which measures one hundred yards wide at this, one of its narrower points.

The operators of the ferry are an odd pair: an elf and an aging gnome. The gnome, Gnatch, is a surprisingly skilled cook. Unfortunately, he's no thinker gnome—the oven and stove he built take up roughly half the space inside the Ferry Dock Inn. Pirates come to eat Gnatch's cooking and watch the stove in action, hoping it'll blow up while they are present. So far, the oven has worked flawlessly.

The elf, Kalthanan, seems dour and standoffish, even to other elves. Actually, he is a loving father who raised his twin daughters alone after his river pirate wife died in childbirth. If he hears that the heroes seek a group of Dark Knights with prisoners, he directs them to his daughters. They captain a small vessel, *Myrella's Heart*—one of the few ships that can get the heroes safely upriver to the Dark Knight camp, the Knight's Spur.

👉 **Gnatch:** *Tinker gnome elder male, innovative demeanor, Rabble.* Co 7, Ph 6, In 6, Es 4, Dmg +3 (wind-driven club), Def 0 (common clothing).

👉 **Kalthanan:** *Qualinesti adult male, distant demeanor, Novice.* Co 9, Ph 8, In 8, Es 5, Dmg +4 (cutlass), Def -2 (leather).

The Waterfront

The waterfront remains the center of life in Vingaard, although each year it becomes less so. More and more, ships set out looking for merchant vessels to raid, only to return with their crews transformed into ravenous, flesh-eating undead creatures.

As the pirate clans attempt to formulate a course of action, they look increasingly to the half-elf sisters, Myrelana and Leana for leadership. Their ship is one of the few that has successfully fought the undead crews north of Vingaard, whose numbers continue to grow.

Not long ago, the sisters sailed ten Dark Knights and their prisoners (including Marda's brother) to a camp on the edge of the swamp at the Maelgoth delta. The Knights were all hands during the journey, the sisters recall. If the heroes explain that the prisoners included Marda's kidnapped brother, Wilie, the two captains will be happy to sail the party upriver to the Knight's Spur free of charge—so long as the heroes agree to help defend the ship against possible attack.

👉 **Myrelana and Leana:** *Half-elf adult females, capable demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 9, Ph 8, In 8, Es 7 (49), Dmg +3 (short swords), Def -2 (leather), also mysticism (mentalism for a continual telepathic link with each other only).



Scene Three: Up the River

The heroes head up the Vingaard River aboard *Myrella's Heart*, or another ship of their choosing, for the three-day journey to the Knight's Spur.

Overview

The lookout sights a ship captained by an ally. As the ship draws closer, however, it becomes clear that the vessel is now a ship of the dead, and the heroes must battle for their very lives.

Getting Started

Although this scene is written assuming the heroes are aboard *Myrella's Heart*, the Narrator can adjust it easily to suit a ship with only one captain.

The map on the back of this book shows the span of river between Maelgoth and Vingaard, where this scene takes place.

First Impressions

The Narrator can improvise some role-playing interaction between the heroes and the crew members to fill the first and second days of the trip, or possibly introduce a subplot or two of his own devising.

Initially, the journey up the Vingaard just feels odd. Over the eastern side of the river hangs a persistent twilight, even when the sun is shining in a clear sky. It's as if the shadow of some immense creature has fallen over the entire land across the river. And at night, even under the silvery light of a full moon, the Nightlund shore sinks into an impenetrable darkness.

On the third day, the action begins, when the watch lets out a cry of alarm. As the heroes emerge on deck, the Narrator can read the following text aloud:

In the predawn gloom, the ship's two captains consult with a couple crew members on deck as another pirate boat draws closer. One crew member signals the other ship by raising and lowering a lamp, and you can see the other ship echo the signal.

"The *Dragon's Fear* returned the signal," Myrelana tells Leana. "The crew must be alive and well."

As the ship draws closer, however, you can make out the faces of the crew, and it's clear they are no longer alive: Horrid flesh peels from their bones, and their lips are drawn back from needle-sharp teeth. The sisters order their ship brought around, but the *Dragon's Fear* has drawn too close. It looks like undead pirates will board *Myrella's Heart* in moments.

The Story Continues

The undead pirates outnumber the crew of the *Myrella's Heart* and the heroes two to one. If the heroes can't react instantly, the creatures pour on deck and begin the attack.

The Battle

When combat begins, each hero must fight two undead pirates. During the battle, it becomes clear that the creatures paralyze their victims with their taloned hands. As soon as one of them scores a hit, the injured character or hero has time for one more action before falling to the ground, twitching. The undead creature then throws the paralyzed hero overboard, unless someone stops it.

Marda stands back from combat and slings rocks at any undead pirates attacking the heroes, a look of intense concentration on her face. She defends herself with her dagger as needed.

The twin captains of the ship fight back to back, so well coordinated that one might think they have one mind split into two bodies. However, at the height of the battle, Leana gets raked across the face by the lethal claws. Myrelana goes into a berserker rage in

defense of her sister, but unless a hero comes to her aide, she too will fall.

Atmosphere

This scene starts out eerie but confusion and panic sets in with the attack of the blood-chilling undead foes. The Narrator should let his voice and gestures evoke the unnatural appearance of the walking dead.

Actions

Heroes might try a number of actions to prevent the undead pirates from boarding, but in only one combat minute they are overcome and must attempt to defend themselves.

The ripping claws of the undead pirates inject a paralytic poison into the blood of their opponents. Once hit, the victim has time for only one more action before he collapses for a number of minutes equal to his Endurance score subtracted from twenty minutes.

Anyone who succeeds in an *average Perception* action during the battle notices that Leana is down and can move to assist her.

Characters

On the first two days of the trip, Myrelana and Leana seem friendly, outgoing, and very interested in hearing about the heroes' experiences dealing with undead. Their crew members, the captains' cousins, likewise act congenial, although they steer the conversation toward more conventional topics.

- ❖ **Pirates:** *Undead creatures.* Co 5, Ph 5, In 3, Es 1, Dmg +2, Def -2, also poison claws.
- ❖ **Myrelana and Leana:** *Half-elf adult females, capable demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 9, Ph 8, In 8, Es 7 (49), Dmg +3 (short swords), Def -2 (leather), also mysticism (mentalism for a continual telepathic link with each other only).
- ❖ **Four crew members:** *Human adults, various demeanor, Novices.* Co 6, Ph 5, In 5, Es 6, Dmg +3 (short swords), Def -2 (leather).

- ❖ **Marda:** *Human adult female, reserved demeanor, Adventurer.* Ag 8A, Dx 9B, St 5C, En 5B, Re 8x, Pe 7c, Sp 9x, pr 7A, Dmg +2 (dagger or sling), Def 0 (common clothing), also uncontrolled mystic power.

Outcome

The battle's conclusion finds three crew members dead. If the heroes managed to save Leana, the twins agree to continue the journey to the Knight's Spur. Additionally, the group will have earned a pair of loyal allies emerging as leaders among the river pirates.

If the heroes could not save Leana, the surviving twin falls into a state of catatonia. The last crew member is unsure of the camp's location and wants to turn back. The heroes can demand to continue the trip, but will have to walk the last leg, searching the countryside for the Knight's Spur.

After defeating the undead pirates, the heroes can board the *Dragon's Fear* but a search reveals no valuables.

- ❖ Going on with the trip to the camp takes the adventure to Scene Four.
- ❖ Turning back to Vingaard (against Marda's strenuous protests) sends the heroes back to Scene Two.
- ❖ Groups that did not meet Gilthanas in Act Two find him held prisoner with five other elves in the hold on the undead pirate ship, as described in the Epilogue, Scene One. (The last surviving crew member suggests searching the vessel, if no one else does.)





Scene Four: The Valley of Lost Souls

This scene takes place roughly fifteen hours after the undead pirates attacked the heroes' ship.

Overview

Having left *Myrella's Heart* behind, the heroes head for the Knight's Spur camp. Wisps of mist drift across the swampy ground as they come upon a Dark Knight sentry post. While dealing with the sentry, they realize that the mist is actually made of human spirits and from them, the heroes discover the most tragic and horrifying aspect of the spawning process.

Getting Started

The special abilities of the ghosts the heroes meet here are described in the *Book of the Fifth Age*, Chapter Six.

First Impressions

If both twins survived the river battle, *Myrella's Heart* drops the heroes at the edge of a dense swamp, and Leana points them in the direction of the Knight's Spur. If one or both of the sisters are dead, the heroes must wander the swamp for the better part of a day before finally finding the first sign of the Dark Knights.

A sentry post stands at the edge of a narrow valley. Beyond it lies a large camp and a ring of standing stones. The ridges along the valley have been cleared of vegetation, and you see signs that someone is making an effort to clear the valley as well.

Standing on a mound at the edge of the valley are three sentries: a Dark Knight, a goblin, and a misshapen winged creature that bears a faint resemblance to a Sivak draconian—except that it has blue scales.

The Story Continues

If the heroes move carefully through the swamp, they might be able to avoid the sentries—the foes' vantage point would allow them to spot the approach of a large force or flying creature, not prevent small groups like the party from sneaking past. Unfortunately, though, the sentries have an advantage. The draconianlike creature is a blue spawn with an exceptionally fine sense of smell. Anyone who has seen a dragonspawn before recognizes it at once.

The heroes may decide to attack the sentry post, but if they play it safe and try to sneak past, the spawn may catch their scent in the air (see "Actions"). In that case, it sounds the alarm by sending a blast of lightning into the sky. This warning alerts the eight Knights and one other powerful guardian waiting in the camp: An important ritual is about to start, and everyone knows that if anything disrupts it, they will face the wrath of Khellendros.

If questioned after a battle, the goblin sentry, named Nark, reveals that the Knights in the camp are about to perform a ritual to create more spawn. He's not sure what it entails, as the Knights have never let him in the camp; they ordered him to remain on the knoll, and brought food and supplies out to him and the other sentries. He saw Marda's brother when he arrived and thinks he is in the camp. This revelation horrifies Marda, who insists the party head there immediately. The heroes can calm her somewhat, but she still wants to rush into the camp.

As the heroes talk with the goblin (or as they begin making their way through the valley), the mists at their feet rise and swirl around them. Several strands pass through the dead or unconscious Knight and spawn and issue soft moans. At this point, it should be clear that these are no ordinary patches of mist. In fact, one of the group may find himself taken over by the spirits (see "Actions").

“They stole my body,” your companion moans in a voice not his own. “The Dark Ones forced the spirit of a monster into my body, then bound my spirit to this place. I did horrible things in my life, but I don’t deserve this end. No one deserves this. You must stop them. They are about to deal this fate to others. Stop them. Stop them!”

After so exhorting the group, the spirit releases the hero.

The Battle

If the heroes attack the sentries, Nark surrenders immediately and begs for his life. The others fight to the death, the Knight employing her sword while the spawn hits the heroes with electromagnetic spells and his lightning breath.

Atmosphere

The swamp should exude despair, inspiring a strange, undefinable sensation of dread in the heroes.

Actions

Should the heroes try to sneak past the sentries, the Narrator can make a random draw from the Fate Deck. If the card’s aura is white or red, the heroes pass without incident. However, a black aura means the spawn smells them coming and sounds the alarm.

When the mists begin to swirl up around them, the heroes may attempt an easy Perception action to determine that the wisps of fog are moaning softly and look vaguely humanoid in shape (automatic success for heroes with acute hearing or vision).

Moments after a hero makes this realization, a spirit tries to enter one of their bodies. One at a time, in order of ascending Spirit score, the heroes must attempt an *average Spirit (Spirit)* action, opposed by the ghost. The first one to fail becomes temporary taken over by the spirit. (If they all succeed, the ghosts seize control of Marda instead.) A

mishap means the hero gains the “shared body” secret described in Chapter Three of *Cloak and Dagger*. The spirit is either that of a hard-bitten, violent mercenary or a psychotic killer (Narrator’s choice).

Heroes who can cast spiritualism spells may lay the spirits to rest with *daunting Spirit* actions. Each success lays only one spirit to rest. Should a hero embark upon this course, he soon finds himself mobbed by well over one hundred displaced spirits who desperately want release. They eventually get angry in their impatience and attack the hero.

Characters

The following characters appear in this scene, as do the six rescued elves:

- ❖ **Marda:** *Human adult female, reserved demeanor, Adventurer.* Ag 8A, Dx 9B, St 5c En 5B, Re 8x, Pe 7c, Sp 9x, Pr 7A, Dmg +2 (dagger or sling), Def 0 (common clothing), also uncontrolled mystic power.
- ❖ **Countless displaced spirits:** *Ghosts.* Co 5, Ph 6, In 7, Es 8, Dmg N/A, Def N/A, also fear aura and drain Spirit.
- ❖ **Nark:** *A goblin.* Co 4, Ph 3, In 4, Es 5, Dmg +3, Def -2, also missile weapons.
- ❖ **Dark Knight:** *Human adult female, authoritative demeanor, Adventurer.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 7, Es 6, Dmg +8 (two-handed sword), Def -5 (plate mail), also missile weapons (crossbow/+5).
- ❖ **Blue spawn:** *A hostile nonhuman.* Co 8, Ph 12, In 5 (25), Es 8, Dmg +10, Def -5, also dragon breath, sorcery (electromancy), dissolves into an electrically charged cloud at its death.

Outcome

The scene has two possible outcomes.

- ❖ Should the heroes go to the ritual, the adventure moves to Scene Five.
- ❖ Heroes who turn back can hike back to Vingaard, then travel to Relgoth (if they haven’t been there), continuing with Act Two. Those who have already played that act go to Scene Two of the Epilogue. In either case, Marda refuses to leave her brother and head for the camp alone, if she must.





Scene Five: The Spawning Ground

This scene takes place at the Knight's Spur, immediately after Scene Four.

Overview

In this scene, the heroes may witness the beginning of a spawning ritual and rescue Marda's brother.

Getting Started

The Rising Storm adventure in *Heroes of Steel* offers a detailed description of the transformation to spawn.

First Impressions

As the heroes sneak up to the Knight's Spur camp, the Narrator should read the following text aloud.

The place looks like what one might expect from a Dark Knight camp: a dozen identical tents lined up in perfect rows, each row with its own cooking area. At the center of the camp sit several large steel cages—large enough to hold man-sized prisoners. However, these cages are presently empty. It looks virtually deserted, but beyond it rises a circle of standing stones. Several draconians and Dark Knights stand at the edge of the circle, facing away from the camp. A strange chanting drifts toward you on the breeze.

Continuing the Story

If the spawn sounded the alarm in the previous scene, the Dark Knights in the standing stone circle are ready for trouble. The heroes can either search the camp or head straight for the ritual site. If they split up, they can do both at once.

Although the tents all look similar on the outside, ten of them are so neatly arranged inside that one might wonder whether anyone has used them. The blankets on the cots are spread neatly, the spare boots carefully positioned at

the foot of the cots, and weapons and other gear arranged in an orderly fashion. The other two tents look like mere collections of clutter. The first ten belong to the Dark Knights, of course, and the other two to the draconians.

One Dark Knight tent holds Marda's brother. (The Narrator can make a random draw from the Fate Deck to determine how many tents they search before they reach his.) The boy is chained hand and foot and is polishing boots. Brother and sister are elated to see each other and will converse excitedly in their own language as soon as Marda has asked the heroes to find a way to remove the chains.

The boy, Wilie, explains that Knight-Officer Nikoles has kept him like a slave and treated him like an animal. Marda immediately wants revenge on the officer, but Wilie says that he went with the other Knights and the draconians to the spawning ritual by the standing stones some time ago.

At this point, the heroes could simply try to sneak away again, against Marda's urging. If they have already played Act Two, Wilie tells them that another tent holds an old man also kept as a slave and urges the group to rescue him, too. The old man is Raalumar Sageth, a scholar from Palanthas (see the "Characters" section). If they have not yet played Act Two, Wilie tells the heroes of a stronghold in the city of Relgoth, where these spawning subjects had been held captive until their arrival here. Wilie saw the Bastion of Darkness when he passed through Relgoth with Nikoles and heard that hundreds of prisoners were held there.

If the heroes manage to sneak away from the camp, the Narrator can turn to the "Outcome" section. However, the heroes most likely will want to scout out the ritual with Marda—a simple task, if no one has sounded the alarm.

Before you is a chilling sight. At the center of the stone circle stands a group of twenty bruised and battered men and women in chains. Ringing them around

the edge of the circle, eight Dark Knights repeat a foul chant, horrible to hear. Four draconians stand motionless as wispy arcs of energy reach from them to each of the prisoners. The screaming captives writhe in pain.

At that moment, an enormous black shape emerges from the shadows of the swamp before the stone circle, its yellow eyes glinting menacingly. “More spawn fodder,” the dragon hisses, arcing its long neck down to be level with the heroes. “Khellendros will be pleased.”

The Battle

If the heroes disrupt the ritual, the black dragon attacks with an anguished cry and a wide spray of its acid breath. The Knights fight to subdue the heroes, knowing they could serve as more spawn, but the draconians are too dazed to join the fight. If the heroes have not yet played Act Two, the battle ends with the heroes taken prisoner.

Atmosphere

To create a creepy mood, the Narrator should focus his descriptions on the swamp’s spooky shadows, the eerie chanting, and the sudden appearance of the black dragon from the dark swamp.

Actions

If the alarm was sounded, the heroes need to succeed at *easy Dexterity* (Perception) actions to sneak past the Dark Knights and into the circle. In the event they haven’t realized they are witnessing the creation of dragonspawn, the party leader can attempt a Perception or Reason action to figure it out.

Characters

The following characters appear in this scene, in addition to the elves from the Epilogue. The unfortunate prisoners are wounded and very hungry.

🔥 **Cauxillor:** *A young black dragon.* Co 9, Ph 30, In 8 (64), Es 8 (64), Dmg +12,

Def -8, also dragon breath, swallow whole, dragonawe, sorcery (hydromancy, aeromancy geomancy), mysticism (animism).

- 🔥 **Twenty prisoners:** *Human adults of varied demeanor, Unknowns.* Co 6, Ph 5, In 5, Es 5, Dmg 0 (unarmed), Def 0 (common clothing).
- 🔥 **Eight Dark Knights:** *Human adults of varied demeanor, Adventurers.* Co 7, Ph 8, In 7, Es 6, Dmg +8 (two-handed sword), Def -5 (plate mail).
- 🔥 **Marda:** *Human adultfemale, reserved demeanor, Adventurer.* Ag 8A, Dx 9B, St 5c, En 5B, Re 8x, Pe 7c, Sp 9x, pr 7A, Dmg +2 (dagger or sling), Def 0 (common clothing), also uncontrolled mystic power.
- 🔥 **Wilie:** *Human young male, resourceful demeanor, Rabble.* Ag 5c, Dx 9B, St 3D, En 8B, Re 7D, Pe 8B, Sp 3c, Pr 6c, Dmg +2 (sling), Def -0 (common clothing).
- 🔥 **Four Baaz:** *Draconians, belligerent demeanor, Novices.* Co 8, Ph 6, In 6, Es 7, Dmg +4, Def -3, also can glide, turn to stone on their death.
- 🔥 **Raalumar Sageth:** *Human elder male, eccentric demeanor, Unknown.* Co 4, Ph 4, In 8, Es 7, Dmg 0 (unarmed), Def 0 (common clothing).

Outcome

If heroes rescue Wilie and sneak away, they escape the camp without incident.

- 🔥 They can then go to free the prisoners in Relgoth, if they have not yet done so, by continuing with Act Two.
- 🔥 Assuming they have been to Relgoth and also rescued the old man in this scene, the story concludes with the Epilogue, Scene Two, as Khellendros arrives to perform the climax of the spawning ritual.

Other heroes may attack the Knights, giving a Narrator two different options:

- 🔥 If the group has played Act Two, he should let the battle run for several exchanges, then turn to the Epilogue, Scene Two while the fight rages.
- 🔥 However, heroes who have not yet been to Relgoth are taken captive and regain consciousness in a prison wagon approaching the Bastion of Darkness (Act Two, Scene Three).



EPilogue

Scene One: Meeting Gilthanas

This scene can take place after either Act Two, Scene Six or Act Three, Scene Three.

Overview

Here, the players witness the return of Gilthanas, a Qualinesti prince who has been missing since shortly after the War of the Lance.

Getting Started

Before the heroes arrive at this scene, the Narrator should review Gilthanas's description on the page opposite.

First Impressions

on board the pirate ship) can be easily opened. The text below describes them.

In the dim light ahead, six elves languish in a steel cage. They look bruised from repeated beatings, and most of them have an air of despair about them. Only one appears to have an unbroken spirit, a golden-haired elf who carries himself like a born leader.

The Story Continues

As the heroes approach, the blond elf glares at them defiantly. If he sees an elf with them, he says, "We have nothing to say to traitors of our race or their allies." Elves know him as a Qualinesti by his accent and coloration. He refuses to give his name, but elf heroes might recognize him as Gilthanas (see "Actions").

Once Gilthanas knows the heroes aren't enemies, he introduces himself and explains that he and his comrades were betrayed by elves serving the Blue

The elves' long swords and leather armor lie in a pile nearby.

Atmosphere

The atmosphere of this scene matches that of its location, but the mood lightens considerably when the heroes realize they have just rescued a living legend.

Actions

Reaching the elves requires an *easy Dexterity* action to pick the lock or an *easy Strength* action to break it.

Qualinesti elves more than seventy-five years old or Silvanesti with a social status of Aristocracy or higher may *challenging Reason* actions to recognize the elf who carries himself like royalty. Those who succeed realize he is Gilthanas, long-lost uncle and namesake of Qualinesti Speaker Gilthas. (A mishap leads the hero to think he *is* Gilthas.)

Gilthanas does not immediately trust the heroes. Any elf hero who wants to convince him of the party's sincere intentions may make an *easy Presence (Reason)* action to gain his trust (*average* for non-elves).

Heroes can pick the lock on the cage with a *challenging Dexterity* action, assuming someone has the proper tools. Without them, the action is *daunting*.

Characters

In addition to Gilthanas, the heroes meet:

- ☛ **Five elf prisoners:** *Qualinesti and Silvanesti of varied age and demeanor, Novices.* Co 7, Ph 6, In 5, Es 5, Dmg +0 (unarmed), Def -0 (common clothing).

Outcome

From here, the story moves to either Scene One or Scene Four of Act Three. If the group has played both of these,

Epilogue

Gilthanas

Hazel-eyed Gilthanas is the second child of Solostaran, former Qualinesti Speaker of the Sun. His older brother Porthios was to inherit the throne, and Gilthanas looked forward to serving as his aide and loyal supporter. But his life, like that of so many others, was irrevocably changed by the War of the Lance.

While in exile with his people in Southern Ergoth during the dragon-army occupation of Qualinesti, Gilthanas fell in love with Silvara. This silver-haired beauty was a Kagonesti shaman—or so he believed.

When Silvara revealed herself to be a silver dragon named D'Argent, the young Gilthanas felt as though he had been tricked into loving someone that did not really exist. Even though the dragon returned his feelings, his hurt and resentment ultimately drove her away.

It took Gilthanas two years to realize that the emptiness and depression he felt was his longing for Silvara, his only true love. But by the time he had outgrown his prejudice, she was long gone. So the elven youth set out to find her.

For years he remained a prisoner in Silvanesti (the younger Qualinesti heir was captured shortly before the Chaos War, as was his older brother, Porthios). When he finally escaped, Gilthanas searched for Silvara all across Ansalon. He has seen more turmoil and had more misadventures than most elves do in a lifetime.

These adventures have left their scars—both physical and mental—upon the handsome blond elf. And Silvara remains ever elusive.

Gilthanas has always believed that Silvara survived the Summer of Chaos, but recently he has uncovered evidence that she

might have returned to Southern Ergoth. He was on his way there when elves in the service the Dark Knights betrayed and imprisoned him.

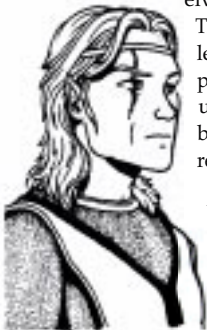
These days, the elf favors practical clothing—his long years away from his family and his native land have taught him to dress like a human adventurer. Although he has but commoner status now, he would regain his position as a member of the royal family if he ever chose to return to Qualinesti.

Gilthanas can employ three schools of sorcery: divination, enchantment, and aeromancy. He also owns an item of magic known as the Amulet of Healing Hands, a gift from Silvara. It can:

- Create bright light once each day.
- Prevent him from succumbing to disease, helps him resist poison, and lets him heal from wounds at twice the normal rate.
- Allow him to heal others by touch four times per day, restore a poisoning victim to life (if dead only five minutes), and remove a disease from a victim once per day.
- Create a barrier between the wearer and magically summoned or created creatures.
- Form a circle of protection around the wearer and four others, keeping them safe from melee and personal attacks from those outside the circle.
- Offer a trump bonus to Presence actions to promote harmony with others (Gilthanas even enjoys this magical effect against non-elves.

(*The Last Tower* dramatic supplement contains additional details on this and other magical items.)

- **Gilthanas:** *Qualinesti adult male, capable demeanor, Legend, 4* Ag 8C, Dx 6A, En 7C, St 6B, Re 7A (49), Pe 8B, Sp 7D, Pr 6B, Dmg +7 (long sword) Def -3 (chain mail), also missile weapons (long bow/+6), sorcery (divination, enchantment, aeromancy), Amulet of Healing Hands.





Scene Two: The Storm Descends

This scene can open with the heroes: battling the Knights from the end of Act Three, having just escaped the Bastion of Darkness with the prisoners, or sneaking away from the Knight's Spur.

If this adventure is not being played as part of a *Dragons of a New Age* campaign, the Narrator can replace Khellendros here with another dragon (perhaps Cauxillor from Act Three).

Overview

As part of a multilayered plot, Skie intentionally fails in an attack on the heroes. Not only does he want them to have the treasures they may have stolen from his lair in Act One, he wants to give them the confidence to stand up to a Great Dragon- for only then can he use them as his pawns.

Getting Started

Narrators can read more on dragon combat and the effects of dragonawe in Chapter Six of the *Book of the Fifth Age* and about dragonlances in Chapter Five.

First Impressions

The Narrator should adjust the passage below if the heroes face a dragon other than Khellendros. (For example, replace the thunder and lightning with another type of dragon breath attack.)

Suddenly, the sound of thunder rolls toward you. Then, what can be only Khellendros, the Storm Over Krynn, swoops down before you in all his terrifying glory, lightning arcing around his body. His voice booms, more powerful than the thunderclaps. "You insignificant nothings!" he bellows. "You dare stand in the way of my goals! Now you shall pay for crossing a dragon!" Lightning's acrid scent touches your nostrils, as though heralding your death.

The Story Concludes

After this threat, the dragon lets loose a blast of his lightning breath. For show, the Narrator can turn a card from the top of the Fate Deck, but the result is moot: the heroes all manage to leap out of the way or otherwise miraculously avoid injury. However, all surviving foes in the area are incinerated as massive lightning bolts slam into their bodies (or they get washed away in steaming streams of acid, in an assault from the black dragon).

Then the dragon prepares to dive.

Arcing toward the heavens, the dragon bellows, "Run, puny creatures! Or pray to the gods that have turned their backs on you! Nothing can save you!"

"The dragonlance!" Marda cries, "Use the dragonlance! He may kill you, but at least you'll take him with you!"

It will take nerves of steel to do as Marda suggests, but unless the heroes attempt to attack the dragon with their lance or other magic, it pursues them. As long as the group fails to face him, the beast lays waste to the countryside, then kills their allied characters, and finally exterminates the heroes themselves.

The Battle

The dragon barrels toward the party, seemingly oblivious to the lethal dragonlance pointed at it. It narrowly misses the heroes with its dragon breath attack as it dives. The Narrator should call for Agility actions to resist the assault but, regardless of the results, it causes a mere 10 damage points to each hero. The lightning injures the characters as well, though not to the point of unconsciousness. Skie was just putting on a show.

If the heroes continue to face the dragon bravely with their magical lance, he actually lets them drive the ancient weapon deep into his chest. Letting out a roar that causes the heroes' very bones to shudder, the beast breaks off the haft of the lance. Then he swings up into the sky again, his blood raining down upon the landscape.

Atmosphere

Narrators must present this scene at an incredibly rapid pace: The attacking dragon rushes at the group like a freight train. The beast's fierce demeanor, fear-some attacks, and booming threats should also tell players they face certain death: Only heroes of legend can stand against a dragon and live.

Actions

As the scene opens, the heroes all must attempt normal dragonawe actions. To strike with the dragonlance, a hero must make a *challenging Spirit* action (Khellendros does not oppose the attempt). Should the hero fail, the lance slips from his grasp and another hero can rush forward to pick it up. Once he has stabbed the dragon, the hero holding the lance may attempt to hang onto it with an *impossible Strength* action—a highly unlikely success. Of course, a clever group may use magic against the dragon instead of the lance. Inflicting some degree of

harm on the Blue with a big flashy spell causes him to flee as described above.

Characters

This scene lists no game characteristics for Khellendros, as this Great Dragon surrounds himself in mystery.

❖ **Marda:** *Human adult female, reserved demeanor, Adventurer.* Ag 8A, Dx 9B, St 5c, En 5B, Re 8x, pe 7C, Sp 9x, Pr 7A, Dmg +2 (dagger or sling), Def 0 (common clothing), also uncontrolled mystic power.

❖ **Wilie:** *Human young male, resourceful demeanor, Rabble.* Ag 5c, Dx 9B, St 3D, En 8B, Re 7D, Pe 8B, Sp 3c, Pr 6c, Dmg +2 (sling), Def -0 (common clothing).

❖ **Raalumar Sageth:** *Human elder male, eccentric demeanor, Unknown.* Co 4, Ph 4, In 8, Es 7, Dmg 0 (unarmed), Def 0 (common clothing).

Outcome

The next section offers a wrap-up for the adventure and suggestions for the heroes to continue the quest.



Afterword

Assuming the heroes both rescued the prisoners in Relgoth and recovered Marda's brother, they have completed one quest. Of course, if they picked up any of the Blue Dragon's treasure in Act One, he can now track their future actions!

After the climactic final scene of *Storm Over Krynn*, the Narrator should not tell the players that Khellendros purposely allowed the heroes to injure him and spared their lives (in Skie's absence, another dragon may have pursued a similar tactic in the overlord's service).

Once the smoke has cleared, an old man clutching a clay tablet shakily approaches the heroes. The heroes just rescued this frail-looking fellow in gray robes—either from imprisonment in the Bastion of Darkness (if they played Act Two last) or from his slavery at the Knight's Spur encampment (if they played Act Three last). After congratulating them for their performance against the dragon and thanking them profusely for releasing him, he asks to speak to them in private.

The Scholar's Story

The old man, dressed in the gray robes of a Palanthian scholar, seems shaken but in fair health. He introduces himself as Raalumar Sageth and seems a bit daft—he carries a clay tablet that he refers to often. However, he desperately wants to talk to the heroes.

🔥 **Raalumar Sageth:** *Human elder male, eccentric demeanor, Unknown.* Co 4, Ph 4, In 8, Es 7, Dmg 0 (unarmed), Def 0 (common clothing).

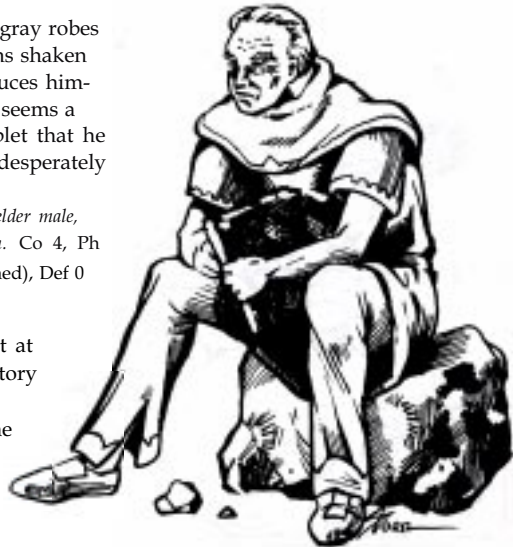
Although the colored text at right presents the scholar's story as running run text, Narrators should try not to make the tale sound like a speech. Instead, they should

let the character reveal his story in conversation with the heroes. This story can provide the foundation for a short expository scene that can serve as a bridge to the heroes' next quest in the *Dragons of a New Age* series.

"Years back, I studied at the Great Library in Palanthas. I was there when someone magically seized most of the books in the Library, you see, and I was there when the Tower of High Sorcery was laid low.

"Then Khellendros came, and the Dark Knights soon after. Some of the other scholars fled, cowards that they were. Me, I stayed behind. Seemed clear to me that the dragon wanted something from the Tower and the Great Library—something he'd have to look for elsewhere now.

"Of course, the Knights don't have much patience for men of learning, particularly when we go poking our noses into their affairs. But that's what a historian has to do if he wishes to get the facts of a situation right.



“After one too many such offenses, I had to flee the city. But the stars must have been against me, for the first stop on my flight turned out to be a village the Knights had targeted to serve as a source of raw material to create those hideous blue-skinned spawn. May the gods give their poor souls rest.

“Before you rescued me, I learned something else—something less tragic than the dragonspawn, but potentially just as dangerous for the free people of Krynn. The great Skie is collecting magical artifacts from yesteryear. He has ordered a special talon of the Dark Knights to gather every single one they can track down. I don’t know why he needs the artifacts, but, in my humble opinion, no Great Dragon ought to possess that much concentrated magic.

“Perhaps adventurers such as yourselves could, well... liberate a few of the items and, with luck, foil whatever that dragon is up to.”

Consulting his tablet, the scholar can describe the artifacts he learned the Dark Knights had been dispatched to recover:

- 5 The necklace of an old but young woman who lives at the base of an ancient stairway.
- 5 A ring, once worn by a dark elf, now at home on the finger of another in a place that calls no land home.
- 5 A jeweled scepter that rests in a fortress at the heart of the Green Peril.
- 5 A crown that waits beneath the waves, guarded by elves kept prisoner in their own land.
- 5 The weapon of an ancient hero of song and story. It was crafted to fight dragons but now lies in a grave as white as the land that surrounds it and the master who rules it.

Of course, these cryptic descriptions refer to: Goldmoon’s medallion of faith, located on Schallsea; Dalamar the Dark’s golden ring of healing, now at the Tower of High Sorcery at Wayreth, the scepter known as the Fist of E’li,

which once belonged to Silvanos himself, now hidden deep in the Qualinesti Forest; the Crown of Tides, sacred to the elves of Dimernesti; and the famed lance with which Huma Dragonbane impaled the Dark Queen and ended the Third Dragon War, secreted away at Huma’s Tomb in Foghaven Vale.

Should anyone wonder how the scholar learned the details of his story, he smiles and replies that, as a man of learning, he’s trained to report what he sees and hears—even while a prisoner. If asked, he urges the heroes to make visiting the Tomb of Huma their top priority—that’s where he believes the Dark Knights are headed first.

The Real Story

Of course, when dealing with a dragon, nothing is exactly as it appears.

The events of the previous adventure in this series, *The Rising Storm*, made the Blue Dragon aware of the heroes’ work to uncover his plans. Khellendros actually allowed their trip to Relgoth and permitted them to glimpse the true nature of dragonspawn as the initial stages of a complex plan involving the other dragon overlords and his search for the spirit of his former partner: the Blue Lady, Kitiara uth Matar.

In addition, Skie decided to send one of his agents to infiltrate the heroes. The scholar, Raalumar Sageth is the mouthpiece of this agent: a huldrefolk named Fissure. This ally of Khellendros, one of Krynn’s Lost Folk, has used his inborn geomantic magic to take the form of the scholar’s clay tablet, which allows him to secretly tell the scholar what to say.

Fissure means to use the heroes as pawns as part of Skie’s complex, long-term scheme to get them, ultimately, to challenge Malys. The details of this plan will become clear over the course of the next installments of *Dragons of a New Age*. For now, suffice to say the heroes have been drawn into a plot that will affect the future of Ansalon, although they might not realize it right away.



The Story Unfolds

The next adventure in this series, *A Killing Frost* (part of the *Heroes of Sorcery* dramatic supplement), advances Khellendros's sinister plot as well as the story of Gilthanas and Silvara

However, before beginning that adventure, Narrators might choose to develop some of the story elements introduced in *Storm Over Krynn*. For instance:

- ❖ The heroes can join Myrelana, Leana, and the other Vingaard river pirates to discover who (or what) in Nightlund is creating the undead Vingaard river pirates.
- ❖ Marda needs help with her uncontrolled mystic abilities. The masters at the Citadel of Light might be able to assist her, if the heroes can convince her to go there. At the same time, they could attempt to warn Goldmoon about the dragon's desire to put her medallion of faith to use in his foul scheme.
- ❖ A return trip to Relgoth might be in order—a little well-placed effort on

the heroes' part could foment rebellion among the slaves in that beleaguered city.

- ❖ The heroes could travel to Wayreth Forest and seek information as to the whereabouts of Dalamar's golden ring of healing. (*The Lust Tower* dramatic supplement includes a wealth of information about adventures in and around the Tower of High Sorcery.)
- ❖ Gilthanas needs a group to accompany him to Southern Ergoth and help in his search for Silvara. Of course, the heroes should first report their findings to Palin Majere at the Academy of Sorcery.

The last of the above plot elements dovetails straight into *A Killing Frost*, which features the heroes' search for the dragonlance of Huma. (The search for the previously mentioned Crown of Tides is the subject of a subsequent adventure, part of the *Heroes of Hope* dramatic supplement.)





FIFTH AGE

STORM OVER KRYNN





ACKALITE MARKETPLACE



THE ISLE OF NORTHERN ERGOTH

CIRCA 31 SC

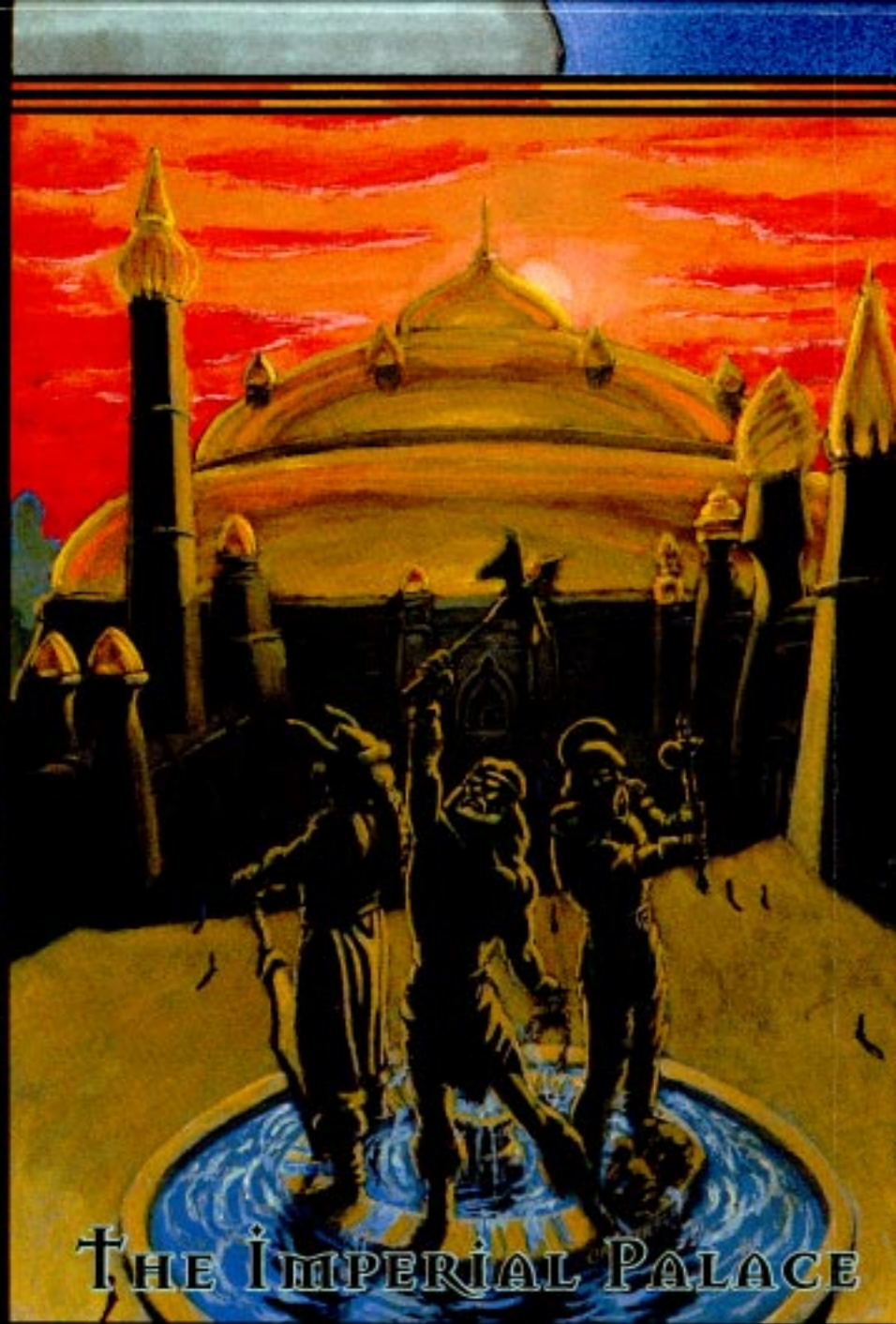
Serpent

Fort Ogara





LOOKIT FALLS



THE IMPERIAL PALACE



Capital



Walled City



Village



Fortress



Castle/Tower



Barbarian Settlement



Ruins



Mystic Site



Huldrefolk Site



Mine



	Battle Site		Rivers
	Forests		Ocean
	Mountains		Trail
	Badlands		Pass
	Plains		Border





MANIC HARBOR

DRAGONLANCE

9517

FIFTH AGE™
DRAMATIC SUPPLEMENT

HEROES OF DEFIANCE

BY
STEVE MILLER

THE UNSUNG HEROES OF ANSALON



o one knows their names. There are no Sturm Brightblades or Tanis Half-Elvens among them. Yet for as long as Good has struggled against Evil, they have fought alongside the heroes famed of song and story.

They are the rogues, spies, diplomats, and scouts of Ansalon, the heroes whose coming goes unheralded and whose passing goes unnoticed. Although the generations will never rally around their legends, these secret freedom fighters remain vital to the struggle. All too often, heroes whose names we know would have failed without the efforts of men and women whose names are lost to all.

Heroes of Defiance offers background on these heroes and guidelines for playing them in the DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ setting. The handbook in this box, titled *Cloak and Dagger*, includes:

- Roles for playing bards, guild thieves, kender handlers, rebel elves, and more!
- Guidelines for creating adventures full of intrigue and mystery, as well as an introduction to some of the kingpins of "underground" Ansalon.
- Optional rules for playing gully dwarf heroes and for creating the mysterious personalities and hidden agendas that rogue heroes thrive upon.
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This boxed set also features *Storm Over Krynn*, a quest to uncover the truth behind the origin of the terrifying dragonspawn and learn the secrets of the Blue Dragon's latest scheme. Groups can play the adventure as Part Two of the *Dragons of a New Age* cycle or as a stand-alone scenario. This adventure links with events in the second FIFTH AGE novel, *The Day of the Tempest* by Jean Rabe.

Heroes of Defiance uses the SAGA™ dramatic adventure rules introduced in the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE boxed set.

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