

EPIC HIGH FANTASY

Shandar

GUIDEBOOK



ELVISH NATION

GUIDEBOOK : ELVISH NATION

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version 151125

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SUN, MOON AND STAR

"It is known to me that you are a servant of the Flame, and no matter your power, you will perish on this day here in the forest. I have been hunting you for a long time, demon." ~ Ashanti Silverbranch, Evensong Ranger

THE ELVISH NATION OF SHAIN TAR

Welcome to the sourcebook for Shaintar's elves. Elvish Nation takes you deep into the forests of these proud and magical people. Here you will find details and an overview of the Alakar and Eldakar, their recent schism and the subtle war between old and new traditions as many of the younger fae begin to cast off what they see as cultural shackles.

As the oldest race in Shaintar, they have amassed a wealth of knowledge, a deep understanding of the natural world, and an incredible mastery of the forces of magic. You'll get a deeper glimpse into the home life of the elves, their beliefs, their relationship with the forces of Nature and Life in this book, as well as a closer look at a city of the elves known as Evensong.

You'll also glimpse some more information about the elves' greatest forest, Landra'Feya, and discover their deeper connection to the natural world through it.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ELVES

At once both benevolent guides and haughty teachers, the elves of Shaintar can be classified into two branches from their family tree. The Alakar or 'New Blooded' as one might say in Galean are the younger of the two, the Eldakar 'Old Blooded' are the oldest, wisest, and most learned of the fae races in Shaintar. The Eldakar gave Shaintar much of the culture, language, and customs which have been adopted, altered, or otherwise used by many of the other races to this day.

Most elven folk are attuned to magic, making them some of the most skillful practitioners thereof in Shaintar. Coupled with their grace, beauty, and impeccable manners, their skill as hosts is without peer. Visitors to their kingdom soon find themselves transported into a realm where their needs are catered to in abundance.

The Elvish Nation contains settlements, villages, towns, and cities including the jewel of Eldara, the capital. New communities swiftly grow, becoming part of the Elvish Nation as a whole yet remaining separate with each containing its own elders, laws,

The Exodus of the Alakar: Tradition vs. Transition

The Elvish Nation seems to be in decline, it's a sad fact the elves try their very hardest to conceal from everyone - the most observant outsiders might spot the tension in the elves' genial façade when visiting an elven community. The younger Alakar are at loggerheads with the older Eldakar over tradition, and while the younger elves won't actively do anything to harm the older or their traditions; they're beginning to leave the established ways behind and forming their own communities that are further and further afield or joining established non-elven ones. In the opinion of most Eldakar this is odd behavior for those who are so in tune with Nature and Life, and it could require investigation about who - or what is influencing the younger Alakar.

government and boundaries - so it's possible for new fragments of the Elvish Nation to appear almost anywhere in Shaintar and not just the Southern Kingdoms and the forest of Landra'Feya. Once the elves establish a new community, they usually use diplomacy to keep on good terms with nearby communities surrounding them, though of late they've found themselves more embroiled in conflict from the war in the north as battles can spill over into their lands.

While external war threatens the elves; there's a cultural skirmish brewing which erupts between the Alakar and the Eldakar, the perceived new and old traditions, causing them to butt heads more and more as time passes. The argument at its heart is about which race contains the most purity - who is more elven? Their positions have become set and some have been known to indulge in theatrical display in order to further some point within the overall argument. Once, many elven scholars, almost exclusively Eldakar of course, suggested that their dissention may well see the doom of the whole race. They pointed to the population disparity (80% Alakar and 15% Eldakar) as a sign of this decline in a population of nearly 1 million. This tension is something that the current Quo-Unias (the elven ruler) is keen to abate and could provide a whole sub-set of interesting roleplaying opportunities as heroes become embroiled in events surrounding the potential of an Alakar exodus from Eldakar society.

BLOOD AND IRON

All elves are deathly vulnerable to Black Iron and Blood Steel, though the Alakar are less affected than the Eldakar. Consider it an allergy that causes a variety of painful symptoms that can lead to death if the person is not removed from the vicinity of

the Black Iron or Blood Steel. A more severe case would require the druids to perform a healing. Many scholars have postulated that perhaps because the Alakar are slightly farther from the true fae bloodline compared to their longer-lived cousins the powers of Darkness and Flame do not affect them quite as much as they do the other. It's true the Eldakar have a stronger connection to Shaintar and the powers of nature; perhaps this is why Blood Steel and Black Iron cause them so much more pain.

ARCHITECTURE

The elves are not like the other races when it comes to building things, they take craft work to a whole new level. They're incredible artisans, creating wonderful objects of art and combining their patience, flair, and understanding of design with peerless form to create cities, villages, towns, and settlements within the forest or other natural elements. These living places are designed to be a part of nature while set apart.

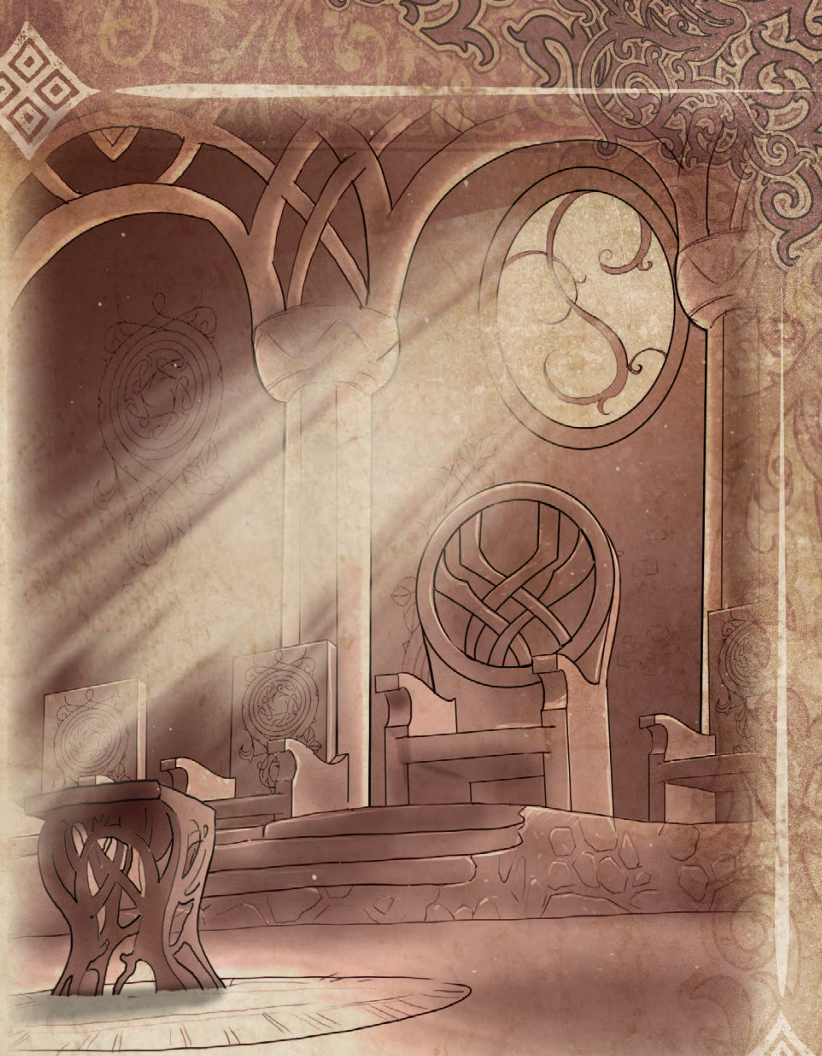
Beauty has her way, so an elven saying goes.

The elves ensure they build their cities to a design which includes nine separate sections, each one functioning as a hub for its various inhabitants and groups. Nine is a mystical number of great significance to the elvish folk, with nine drops of sap to consecrate the lintel of a new dwelling, and nine councilors in most elven councils. At the center of each city is always an important building, usually given to Quo-Unias or Unias of the elves, the rulers of the community in the case of the former, or the oldest and wisest elf in the case of the latter.

There are usually nine windows in an elvish house, or multiples of nine for larger buildings. Elves have an understanding of form and function, with their buildings composed of gentle curves and smooth dome-like structures grown around the cores of large trees, or in and around the path of a burbling stream.

Intricate wooden platforms allow easy access to the upper tiers of the settlement and provide a quick means to transport people. The platforms also offer a superlative view of the surrounding forest and provide a great platform for elven stargazers to study the heavens.

Various symbols of nature also find their way into the architecture, cut into the glass of a window or formed into the surface of a table for example. Alakar communities may still share this design philosophy or they might fly in the face of tradition to adopt more human-style designs, with an elven flair of course.



NAMES

The elves have a habit of taking names which have softer sounds, such as S, J, V and N. They are fans of multisyllabic names, with much in the way of fancies and curlicues. If you're after a couple of watchwords to use when making elven names, graceful and fancy should be at the top of the list. You can also add flowing and ethereal to many of the names as well.

Some of the more rebellious Alakar have begun to eschew the traditional naming conventions of their people and begun to take names from those cultures around them, so sometimes you'll encounter elves with decidedly human names, there are also rumors of a few elves who've taken human surnames as well.

The Eldakar and more traditional-minded Alakar take surnames which are often descriptive, Starborn, Starseeker, and Willowbark.

Male

Andalius, Arverian, Cenessus, Cendrellien, Darjian, Develian, Elosius, Evoran, Favendolas, Ferriander, Gailus, Hallivander, Inniseleran, Jentellian, Joliaster, Jovander, Leandron, Levonnes, Maressione, Melessian, Nessius, Novassian, Ophellianus, Ovestros, Phaidus, Quentian, Quissantrus, Rendolan,

Rhovelius, Sojornios, Seremela, Therellen, Tar-jai, Ursanistrel, Vallindran, Vesserian, Yaverrandros, Zerustra, Zolovian

Female

Aleressia, Arianna, Clairen, Cyria, Dessevia, Doreena, Elodia, Estellia, Faesa, Failia, Fayshona, Guvellia, Havelissa, Illandria, Isalinnia, Jenessa, Julania, Lavillia, Lisennia, Majelisia, Monallia, Natheriah, Nelenna, Ovessiana, Perelessa, Quisella, Ralinessa, Rhocad, Sajerialla, Sulevissa, Tanavienna, Thelissa, Urelianna, Valessia, Vielannia, Yaserra, Zerenelia

Surnames

Dimerian, Eridor, Falassion, Hawkclaw, Mohdri, Moonsinger, Silvermist, Starborn, Thaythia,

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Alakar are shorter than their Eldakar cousins, slightly shorter than an average human with skin tones that are similar to those found on humans. The Eldakar are the opposite in height, taller than an average human and willowy. Alakar hair and eye color can be quite dramatic and with tones not found among the non-fae races; while the Eldakar have a more alien cast about them, with a more vibrant variety of different colors for their hair and eyes, and range from moon-white to deep forest brown for their skin.

The M'adukar and Korindians tend to have more muted hair and eye colors than the Alakar and can even be mistaken for human if they cover their ears, but you'll find out more about them in the upcoming Korindian guidebook.

The Alakar mature at the same rate as humans, living around twice as long as their human counterparts. The Eldakar are true immortals, old age takes a long time to come to them and most die of other causes well before a thousand years even begins to show on their perfect complexions. A few crow's feet on an Eldakar can take a couple of thousand years to appear, and even then one would have to look so closely to see them they'd be able to see their own reflection in the elf's eyes.

Many elves, male or female have come to rely on subtle shades for their faces, using natural cosmetics made from a variety of local sources. A Kohl-like substance is quite popular for the women who have paler skin, especially around the eyes and mouth. They also cultivate a wide array of elegant and graceful hairstyles, usually kept quite long and flowing like a river of gold, silver or copper.

Some of the younger Alakar have begun to experiment with shorter, partially shaved hair or even tree-resin to spike and style it more akin to the humans. This upsets some of the Eldakar, but they know their words will have little effect as the discussion of whether tradition really matters subtly continues.

CLOTHING

The elves love grace and beauty when they're not fighting or hunting, so their garments reflect the nature of the work they do. If they are engaged in government, social, or otherwise formal occasions then they wear incredibly detailed garments sewn with silver and gold thread, set with tiny gemstones, and designed to create a balanced appeal to any onlooker.

They choose to avoid displays of skin, preferring to seem modest at all times though a lady might display a bare arm or neckline with a formal gown. The same is found with her hunting attire, form and function are paramount to elves even when designing their clothing and like their names, graceful, ethereal and flashy come to mind.

Elven clothing comes in many shapes and sizes, for the men it's usually long flowing house-coats and for the women, highly embroidered and detailed gowns. Of course, the elves also spin this concept 180° and the women attire themselves in the same garments as the men, wearing the trousers, tunics, and cloaks of a hunter with just as much style as their male counterpart. You'll find there's no gender differentiation with their clothing styles as they're not bound by human morals and hang-ups.

Bearing in mind the elves predilection for the number nine it's often possible to count the number of adornments on their dresses and outfits. Gemstones are placed in patterns which echo this cultural design philosophy.

You'll also find symbols of nature in elven clothing designs, stars, moons, leaves and various vine designs are popular among both Alakar and Eldakar, though for reasons of the cultural civil war more with the latter than the former. The more rebellious (like human teenagers) of the Alakar may eschew these designs completely, wearing clothing which is fit for humans or compatible races.

Children's clothing tends to the simple as the Eldakar maintain that as the child matures, so does their understanding and connection to the mystical number - so their growth will reflect this and their clothing will change as they do spiritually.

FOOD

Food is a rather formal affair to the elves. They love the presentation and the art behind cooking is as much a joy to them as the cooking itself. To this end they have a complex relationship with the culinary arts and love to create incredible dishes for their guests to enjoy. They prefer meals themed around fish and vegetable dishes, though they have been known to put game on the menu.

They have also created systems, both mundane and magical, for getting the best out of their crop farming methods - some of these crops are grown high in the trees and exposed to sunlight and moonlight, the elves claim the latter is a great way of enhancing the flavor of certain seed pods which grow in their forest gardens. There's usually at least one very large greenhouse platform set aside in their settlements for growing and maintaining crops.

DRINK

When you live as long as the elves you can take your time on things, wine and spirit creation is as much of a craft to the elves, as making fine beer is to dwarves. The long life of the elves allows them to watch their creations mature as time passes, carefully husbanding the product until it's reached peak perfection, maturing to something which is both a delight to the eye and a glorious taste upon the palette.

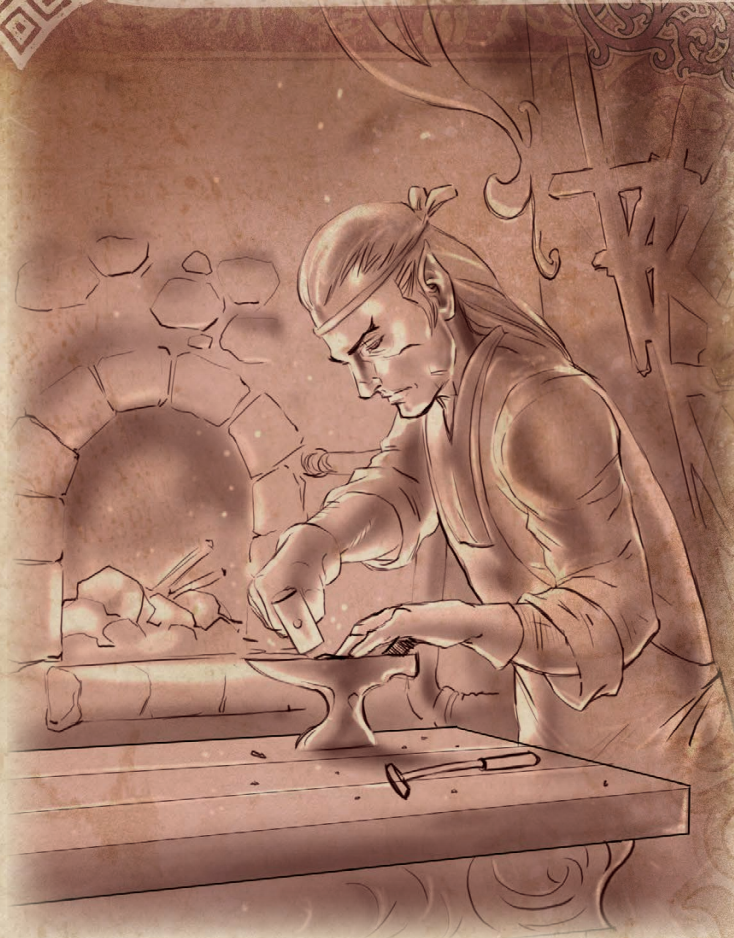
The elves have become expert vintners and produce some wonderful wines, heady meads, and spirits which echo their homelands. They pick from the best fruits and keep a careful eye on their honey bees so they produce honey to exacting standards. Again, the elves view all this as just another part of a beautiful circle of existence, the true wonders of a natural life.

With their mastery of magic they've also created some magical wines, some of which sparkle under moonlight and others which can induce pleasant dreams. Rumors of other more powerful wines exist but are denied by all when confronted directly.

SOCIAL LIFE

Beauty and Life are paramount in this culture, so formal meals and gatherings have become the lifeblood of their society as a way to display such beauty. These occasions can happen between family members, groups of family and friends and large scale celebrations which are usually officiated by the Unias (One) of the settlement.

In times of great celebration in the capital city of



Eldara, the Quo-Unias (High One) leads the people there at the beginning of these celebrations, which is truly a sight to behold and one of the most magical things one can view in any of Shaintar's cultures.

Outside of the formal meals, the elves indulge in elaborate social parties, where the high born of the society, the Eldakar, truly shine. Alakar still attend these functions, but some of the younger and more rebellious of the society are finding them increasingly tedious. The best way to describe many elven gatherings is by considering them performances, they're elaborate social plays which gain even more flourish when outsiders are involved, the elves desire to reinforce their superior social and cultural status comes through subconsciously here.

ART AND CULTURE

The elves are creators, the Eldakar are true masters of the craft of art, sculpture, song and more - their creations have a mystical life all of their own, working with many natural materials and incorporating magical methods they've honed over thousands of years of study and craft work - has given birth to some of the greatest cultural landmarks in Shaintar, physically, linguistically, and socially.

They prefer working with wood, and other

natural materials, honing and refining a design over centuries to produce a one of a kind pieces. No two elven artworks or creations are the same. To the elves each is beautiful; even those which have a blemish or are considered beautiful in their own way. Humans may look at an old man or woman and see the imperfections, the age and the decay, but elves see beyond the superficial to the light and beauty still there.

As long as you can understand the concept of Beauty in All Things, you can get along with an Eldakar or Alakar and be thought an ally to the fae. Elves see the beauty in a child's smile for example, or the dazzling smile of a gorgeous person. They see the beauty in the beaming smile of a nearly toothless old human woman when her grandchildren visit.

Life is Beauty, Beauty is living and so the tree grows. Elves have come to see dance as graceful, but a dance between two lovers under the bright moons after taking the Life Bond is Grace defined. Another well-known saying is: Moments of Beauty which cannot last are treasures to cherish in the heart, whilst truly beautiful pieces of art are shrines to defend against all who would tarnish them.

The elves' greatest strength in this Beauty is also their greatest weakness; for they fear Beauty is leaving the world and fading away. Like a star which no longer shines as bright in the heavens (and elves have seen these stars fade away to dim lights) they witness their natural world being eroded. This tarnishes the Eldakar's soul; they feel their very culture suffers for it.

The elves find gender inequality amongst the other cultures ludicrous; the fae are not bound by such things and impose no restrictions upon how any elf may serve his or her nation or community. They find the differences between the genders to be celebrated as part of the wonderful diversity of Life. Families often had children who followed in the quiet footsteps of their parents, never faltering from the path. Over the last couple of centuries this has, perhaps brought on by the younger elves' rebellious natures, changed and continues as a trend which seems unlikely to reverse, more and more children step away from the direction their parents followed.

THE ONE TRUE ELF

Central to the society of the elves is their hierarchy, not only of government and rule, but of the racial purity. This value is held more by the Eldekar, who believe in the *sulur-neh* "trueness" of the blood. Rather than just a matter of cultural understanding, the quality is something which can be sensed by all

Eldakar innately, though those of the Alakar blood will eventually develop the ability. They'll get it quicker if they train in spiritual or arcane arts.

The Eldakar have seen to it that only those with a certain level of *sulur-neh* can serve in the higher leadership roles of the Elvish Nation. In times past they also constructed barriers to other areas of fae society thanks to "trueness" of the blood, such as the trade guilds, artistic groups, and military. The Alakar balked against this and have thoroughly shattered these barriers, overturning the various practices and forcing sweeping cultural change. There are a few Eldakar who hold to the old ways in that regard, but they are widely regarded as throwbacks to a prejudiced era.

The road to leadership in government, however, remains firmly in the grip of the Eldakar, who refuse to budge on this last 'great' tradition of power in their society.

BELIEFS

Nature and Life are at the core of all elven belief systems in the modern day, revering Landra the Soulfinder (sister to both Vainar and Saiderin) above the rest of the Ascended, regardless of their connection to 9 and its mystical influence in their lives. They see Landra's touch in all things natural, from the veins in the smallest leaf, running like rivers throughout the green surface, to the symmetry in a snowflake upon a frosty winter's morn.

An elf could spend years in contemplation of these and how they reflect upon Landra, and her realm of the Eternal Forest within Corelisia. Even the sound of a quietly babbling brook is of intense interest to elves, for within the sound is the harmony and key of natural magic for them. It's no surprise then to find their rituals are derived from their understanding of the natural world, the balance within it, and the connection they have to Shaintar.

Those elven druids who have the deepest connection with Landra, with the *essans-vold*, and the world around them are often granted a glimpse at Landra's realm. They witness a forest so beautiful, so perfect, and so lovely it can take them years to recover from an encounter like this – if they recover at all, those touched by this vision often go on to become the leaders, teachers, and guides of their people.

The elves also have a wide array of ceremonies in their culture which share these natural motifs; a few of them are outlined as follows, amber is a common material used in many elf rituals.

THE LIFE BOND

Essania, in the fae tongue.

The Life Bond, two minds, two hearts, two souls as one. It's a beautiful druidic ritual which replaces the human concept of being wed. The Life Bond is truly spiritual connection which binds each fae to each other, to Nature and to Life. In the old days there was a taboo which forbade marriage between the fae and other races, because once a fae's shorter lived mate passed, they followed soon after. This taboo still exists, at a lesser degree, yet many fae ignore this, which adds more fuel to the cultural schism's fire, the seeds of which were sown back when Solange Elswyth, a Faelakar, so bonded with her beloved Zemos Al'astur, a human.

The Life Bond is one of the most beautiful gifts of Life to the fae; this is where the heart, the mind and the soul shines brightest. As bright as any star in the heavens and touches the hearts of all who are gathered to witness the ceremony. They also know of its dangers, so they don't enter into this bond lightly.

They are not limited to just one partner either, eschewing human-like morals in regards to marriage and so forth; they can take more than one lover at the same time. Fae hearts are too open to be bound to such concepts and shine more brightly than any single being can contain.

Note: this text assumes the Alakar version of the Life Bond, which tends to be performed without the blessing of powerful leaders such as a Unias, or even the Quo-Unias - who placed the taboo on marriage in such a way.

The Eldais stood before the trio; he smiled with a serene expression and touched them once upon the brow, a soft silver light at the tip of his finger.

"I bind you now, and forever, for eternity to each other. Your hearts, minds, and souls bonded. You are linked, so it shall be always. The risks are known to you." He said with a reverent bow which followed, robes shuffling in the wake of his motion.

Elora Aelvaras turned her bright eyes onto those of her beloved ones and her heart fluttered like a gentle swallow, she smiled in turn and bowed her head. Her beloved ones followed her reaction, and a quiet sense of approval flickered across the gathered crowd of Alakar in the grand hall.

DEATH

Elven death rituals are beautiful, solemn, and totally in keeping with their connection to the natural world. They create their caskets out of carefully woven thin vine-line branches, covered with leaves taken from the forest around them. Several gems of amber are placed around the coffin, usually in a pattern of nine, but this isn't always the case.

Upon the coffin are laid specially treated leaves, these leaves have been covered with a sap which hardens to the strength of oak or ash wood. Once the casket has been prepared, it's allowed to sit for one day in a specially prepared clearing in the elven settlement; here it is bathed in the natural forces of Life and Nature.

The family and friends of the departed can come to view the coffin at this point, offering memories and gifts, lamentations and even works of art, music or poetry. After a day, or a specified amount of time based on family wishes and requests, the casket is borne by the elf's closest friends, family, or pallbearers trained for such an occasion to a final resting spot in the forest.

On the way the casket passes through a pathway, modeled to represent the essans-vold, with a carpet of silvering leaves upon the ground and trees which create archways through which the procession may pass. At the end of the journey the casket is laid into the ground at the base of a large tree.

Thus the body eventually breaks down and nourishes the surrounding forest, as the forest eventually takes back the corpse and the casket.

BIRTH

The celebration of birth is just as important to elves, with their time spent celebrating the new life which has been brought into the cradle of nature by holding gatherings for friends and family. The closest friends to the lucky family bring forth a specially crafted blanket made of woven vines, leaves and lined with silk or fur. The child is laid into a naturally made crib, usually created from wood from the settlement's forest, carved and shaped with care by both parents.

These birth celebrations can last a day, a few days, a week, or in some cases if the child is especially celebrated, longer. During the celebrations many gifts are left for the child by others, usually for when they're older. Songs are sung, feasts are held and the community bathes in the life which has been given to them.

The Quo-Unias may even call upon the family and give them a blessing or leave a gift, though this is extremely rare and has transpired only a few times in current elf history.

THE CONSECRATION OF HOME

When a new building is made the elves are pleased with what they've done, their art has been made into something even more tangible, and they have constructed a dwelling where they can live, love, laugh, play, and create. They gather tree sap from the very tree which they have chosen as their support, taking nine drops of it they consecrate the lintel of their new home with the liquid.

As a blessing, part of the very magic which binds them, the tree sap forms into nine gems of amber. These are then set into the lintel and never removed; to remove them is a sign of great misfortune and carries a harsh punishment in elven law.

FESTIVAL OF ASHRAYA

The Honored Ones of fae societies (the Ashraya) are presented to the assembled people, given tokens of appreciation and mantles which show their new status.

GOVERNMENT

Elven society is a strict and regimented hierarchy of power, with the Eldakar (unfairly) at the top of the power pyramid, the Alakar beneath them, along with the winged Aevakar, and the poor, misfit M'adukar lowest of all. It has been this way for thousands of years; it's unlikely to change and the Eldakar will do all in their power to see the status quo maintained.

QUO-UNIAS (HIGH ONE)

It's the Quo-Unias who guides and speaks for the elves, the king or queen if one wishes to use human terms (Galea certainly does). The current Quo-Unias of the fae is none other than the son of Cyria Eridor, a powerful fae sorceress and the woman who elevated Vol Al'Daya as the king of Galea (a new nation at the time). Her son, Cyradis Eridor has served as Quo-Unias for almost a century, with great distinction and foresight, though his rule is now troubled by his people's internal schism.

UNIAS (ONE)

When the elves gather in communities, be they made up of small or great numbers, they always turn to their elders to lead and guide them - it's their way. The oldest of their elders is the Unias, the One; he or she leads the community and becomes a figure worthy of respect.

ELDAIS (ELDER)

The elder ones of the community; be this community a family group or a large town or village, even a military unit or business. The Eldais are responsible for speaking on matters of law, leading in matters of trade, politics, military, culture and arts.

The young feel as if they've a voice usually because the Eldais delegate extremely well, reserving the right of final say-so in all matters. A family unit which bloodline-derived Eldais lead is called Etrans, they can be as small as the immediate parents and their children living in a single home, or as large as a true extended clan. This is influenced more by individual family traditions than any wider and broader cultural norm.

ASHRAYA (HONORED SERVANTS)

Ashraya, or Honored Servants, are those beings who have achieved some form of notoriety or greatness in fae culture. This is not a leadership role; this role is supposed to convey that the person has performed some great service to the fae, or even the whole of the land. Many Ashraya can rise to positions of leadership, merely from being beloved by their people. A non-elf can be elevated to Ashraya status - though it is rare.

NOTABLE FAMILIES, CLANS, LEADERS

A quick overview follows of some of the most influential elvish families in Shaintar's history.

THE ERIDORS

The Eridors are a famous elven family, responsible for shaping the Southern Kingdoms and more. They are spoken of by others, often as guides to the future, or destroyers of the past if one believes those Eldakar who curse Cyria's name for causing the supposed fall of their society's influence and power. Her actions led to the South's rise and powerful opposition to the North, something she foresaw long ago.

Her son is the Quo-Unias of the elves.

THE QUE'KASAARS

The Que'kasaars are the masters of diplomacy and magic, their accomplishments in both fields have given them great renown amongst their race. They have created some of the finest texts used in the study and teaching of sorcery, in fact the current master of the Towers, the venerable school of sorcery and alchemy in the heart of the Elvish Nation, is Chandra Que'kasaar.

THE SHAY'VONS

The Shay'Vons are the true artisans of the fae race, they are incredible masters of weapons and armor along with other art and craft forms. Sculpture, paintings, carvings, and weavings throughout history have all born the mark of Shay'Von. Bards, minstrels, and entertainers all sing songs and play melodies composed by Shay'Von bloodline masters.

The Shay'Von bloodline also makes special leather armor, imbued with secret alchemical components and runic etchings, the construction details of which they guard jealously.

THE THAY'THIAS

The Thay'thias are the finest non-dwarven historians and scholars in Shaintar's history. They have authored hundreds and hundreds of important texts over their lives, which can be found in any library of substance and learning. The Thay'thias bloodlines are well known for exploring the world and experiencing the history and subjects they write about first hand.

Over the course of history more than one of this bloodline has made a significant contribution to scholarly understanding, advances in sociology, geography, and mathematics to name but a few things.

LAW

The true arbitrator of law is the Quo-Unias, and the council, made up of Unias and Eldais. All major decrees come through the chain of government to each leader and are dealt with accordingly. Most communities have their own Unias and Eldais responsible for local matters, and many matters of law are dealt with on a case by case basis, through a council of Eldais who number nine. Nine Arbitrators of Law sit in deliberation and hope to reach a consensus.



THE BECOMING

Like the dwarves, the elves prefer exile or imprisonment as punishment for most crimes. Yet, there are those crimes which are too severe for imprisonment or exile. For the worst offenders the elves reserve a harsh but fitting punishment. Rather than taking a life, they take the person to a little used part of Landra'Feya and employ a powerful ritual to transform them into living trees, so they may still be part of the essans-vold rather than cut from it entirely. It's the elves' hope the soul learns from its mistakes and in time can return to the elves anew. This is the Becoming.

Theft, fraud, and other crimes are dealt with in similar ways to humans. Outsiders who commit such acts are punished more severely, for they have betrayed the elven trust. Murderers from other races are summarily executed and their bodies taken far away from the elf community.

EXILE

Rather like the Dwarves, the fae exile is a ritual thing which consists of the Path of Leaving. The offending elf walks through an arch of eight trees with no leaves, which leads out of the elf community. At the end is a single tree standing alone from the others, symbolizing the elf's shame and disconnection from the nine. As they walk the Path of Leaving, the lamps are extinguished in pairs until they reach the final lamp, once they pass that threshold they are forbidden, lest they be punished severely, from ever returning.

A CALL TO BATTLE

The elves do have formal scout units and rangers but no real army; there are war leaders, rogues, and sorcerers who can be called upon when needed, but the forests require scouts and rangers to patrol and maintain.

The forest Druids and rangers and scouts ensure the safety of the forest and protect visitors traveling the marked paths. They are also there to ensure that word is carried to the cities if trouble comes. They're incredible guerilla fighters, especially on their home ground. They are extremely adept at hit and run tactics, countering their enemies' plans quickly and efficiently, whilst leaving their foes in complete disarray. It's said of the elves, that twenty well-placed rangers and scouts in the forest can eliminate a force ten times their size, with minimal to no losses.

This is due in part to their skill with magic as well as the blade and bow; the elves are known to have the highest proportion of magically-capable warriors of any given military force. This often forces other races who war against the fae to try to send skilled assassins to strike at well-known magically-capable threats before a battle.

ESSANS-VOLD, THE FONT OF ESSENCE

Essans-vold: the Font of Essence, the spiritual river that is the soul of Shaintar, from whence all magic springs. The elves are magic, and they know it. They smile knowingly and attempt to explain that it is not a specific place or thing, located somewhere in the depths of Corelisia. All natural existence shows it to exist and all of Life is part of it.

The essans-vold is the reason elves are so opposed to the powers of Darkness and of Flame. These powers seek to corrupt, to destroy, and to sever the

connection of all living things to the essans-vold, denying living beings the right to their eternal life.

If you want to see a master of magic, try to meet one of the Que'kasaar bloodline.

LANDRA'FEYA

No look at the fae would be complete without taking a stroll amongst the leaves and trees of the forest of Landra'Feya. This forest is a shining example of the elves' complete synthesis with nature and Life. It is truly a living, breathing, spiritual land and it welcomes friends and allies with relish.

Landra'Feya does not suffer evil lightly. Only those with the strongest will can continue. If you're supernaturally tainted, you'll get a sense of palpable discomfort and decide that leaving is a good idea. If you revel in the green, as they say, you will know joy and peace unbounded as the forest welcomes you with open arms, er, branches.

When traveling through Landra'Feya the synergy of nature and construction is everywhere, roads and structures are integrated into the environment, enmeshed in such a perfect manner as to sometimes seem invisible unless one knows where to look. If you seek a road or path, it will move in harmony with the land, rather than slash across it.

If you're looking for homes, it depends on the community. Some build on the ground while others use the trees and have several levels of home leading up to the platforms. Within Landra'Feya there's also one semi-nomadic tribe of brinchie, a couple of gobliness gathers, and human settlements.

ELF CITIES

I beheld a city like no other I'd ever seen, a city I could not put into words, one that and stole my breath away. As my eyes widened, and I looked upon each new branch of their structure, the form and function began to make a curious sense and I understood the greater pattern behind it. I am no elf of course, I could never claim to be so blessed as to understand the connections of the essans-vold, or touch nature the way the fae have done.

I am simply a guide, a Wanderer, and a man who appreciates the finer things in life. Some might call me a rogue, perhaps unkindly, but each time I come to Eldara and behold the wonder and splendor of such a place - my spirit soars and I begin to dream of a time before time, of stars and of moons. I feel blessed, though,



to be able to view this place as a friend, an ally, to be able to feast and spin tales with those of the Eldakar and Alakar who honor me by calling me friend and inviting me into their homes.

I may be a rogue, but I would never steal from these people, they have already stolen something important from me - my heart. ~ Damon Alard, rogue, wanderer, scholar.

THE CITY OF EVENSONG

Eldara is an incredible city. Outsiders speak of it in reverent tones of wonder, and it's not the only city of the elves of course. They have many cities, towns, settlements and villages within Landra'Feya. Describing Eldara would likely require a full treatise all to itself, and who knows what the future might bring, but here's a city which follows many of the elven design principles and can be used to help spark the light of adventure in the true spirit of Shaintar.

WHERE IS EVENSONG?

An excellent question traveler and one which can be answered with a simple answer: Evensong is where you'd like it to be, pick a spot in Landra'Feya, that's where it is.

WHAT DOES EVENSONG LOOK LIKE?

You enter the main city area from a forest path; the branches of the Landra'Feya trees form a gateway into a clearing where buildings seem fully integrated into the forest, where the elves watch you with wary but friendly eyes and expressions. This is but the first step into a larger world, a tree-top city with gorgeous domes and curves, towers formed from the very trunks of the great trees and sparkling lights cast by orbs of starlit-magic. At night it takes on a truly spectacular appearance, afire with the glow of elven sorcery and dancing with guiding lights, tiny orbs which serve to show visitors the way from ground to platform.

When you get amongst those treetops there are nine platforms of splendor to behold, each with a silvery-wood bridge linking them and perfectly created to harmonize with the natural world around it.

GOVERNMENT PLATFORM

The highest platform in the elf city, the government of Evensong resides here and so does the home of the Unias, Julania Shay'Von, one of the daughters of the great artisan bloodline of the fae. It is here that all laws which govern the city are passed, here where the

Nine Speakers of Evensong, nine appointed Eldais meet in council and matters of rule are decided. It's also here where judgement is passed on criminals and outsiders who dare to flout the elves' law. Many of the noble homes and houses also make up part of this sprawling platform.

SCHOOL OF SORCERY PLATFORM

The large double height tree-tower which dominates this platform is none other than the Tree of Song. This large building is the school of sorcery in Evensong, a dramatic sight both night and day, replete with mysterious flamboyantly robed elves and crackling with pure magic. The Tree of Song is a bustling hub of sorcerous learning. The Master of Sorcery for the tree is Rendolan Starborn, a distant cousin of the Que'kasaar family.

THE HUNTERS' LODGE

A series of long buildings arranged on a semi-circular platform (nine in all) provides a barracks, common meeting place, and gathering for the elven archers and fighters of the city. They are currently led by a woman called Ashtanti Silverbranch; this dusky-skinned Alakar has risen to a prominent position of power in the military of Evensong and leads her soldiers with a fair and just hand, and she's one of many who will dive into the fray without a second thought if her folk are in danger.

One can also find farms and gardens on the platforms and the forest floor here where the elves cultivate their produce.

THE GATHERING PLACE

This is a large double-sized platform located near the Government Platform. Outsiders are given access here to the wider forms of hospitality, and festivals which are not conducted on the Ritual Platform and more. There are dozens of shops, businesses, inns, and taverns dotted around the place. The Golden Acorn is the best of the taverns, whilst the Silver Moon is the most welcoming of all the inns in Evensong. There's also the Brightbranch Inn, the Swallow's Rest, and the Morning Song tavern for visitors to sample the finest cuisine and drink the elves have to offer.

THE TRADE PLATFORM

Those shops which can't fit on the Gathering Place are found here. Those trade houses of the elves which deal with import and export are also to be found in this spot. It's a bustling hub of people and goods,

using magical methods to ensure that the products reach the right place. After all, it's a tricky thing to get goods moved from high in the trees to the ground if you don't use a bit of magic now and then. The Starsinger Trade Coster is the most prominent of the Evensong Trade Houses; it's operated by the young Alakar known as Arianna Moonsinger she deals with the day to day running of the Coster and meets/greets visitors with a friendly smile.

THE RESIDENCES

A vast collection of smaller interconnected platforms form a cohesive whole here, and this sprawling maze of bridges and walkways is the Residences. Here the elves live, those Alakar and Eldakar who aren't lucky enough to have a home on the Government Platform have modest to expensive houses here, even the modest housing looks fit for a king or queen given the elves eye for pleasing architecture.

CRAFTERS PLATFORM

The elves are masters of art and craft; in Evensong this is also true, where the various elven crafters and artisans ply their trade upon the Crafters Platform to create wonderful objects of art and magic. There are dozens of craft buildings which flow with color, vibrant sound and energy. Visitors are allowed to watch some of the more mundane crafting rituals, but are kept away from the secret ones belonging to the more influential crafters of the elf people.

TEACHING PLATFORM

A collection of smaller arched buildings forms around a larger domed structure, replete with vines and leaf motifs. This is one of the elf colleges in the city, teaching mundane arts and histories alongside the lore of the fae. Outsiders are permitted in certain places, but kept from the Great Evensong Library where the storied history of the elves has been carefully cataloged, recorded, and kept by the caretakers of knowledge there.

RITUAL PLATFORM

Unless invited, the Ritual Platform is off limits to outsiders. It's here the most secret and precious rituals and ceremonies of the fae are performed. There are many gardens, gazebos and tall tower-like observation platforms which reach up out of the tree canopy here, allowing moon and starlight to filter into the ritual areas and provide even more of a connection to the forces of the natural world.

UNIAS

Julania Shay'Von, Unias of Evensong rules here assisted by her closest advisors and confidants amongst her Eldakar peers. Her Council of Nine speaks with her voice and is made up of her most trusted Eldais, including her two sons and daughter, all of Eldakar stock, as it should be. Julania is a traditional fae in many respects and reveres all things which make her people great.

She is more tolerant of the Alakar than her peers, but not foolishly so. Her word is law. She is not married to any one man, and has a small trusted group of friends who benefit from more closeness than normal. Of late she has begun to keep a watchful, careful eye on a man known as Shen. He's Korindian and quite mysterious, a member of Grayson's Grey Rangers. She finds him quite delightful and some of her peers are worrying she may be smitten.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Healing d8, Intimidation d10+4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Cosmology) d8, Knowledge (History) d8+2, Knowledge (Politics) d10+2, Notice d10 (+2), Persuasion d12+8, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6 (+2), Survival d8+2, Swimming d4, Tracking d8+2

Pace: 8 **Parry:** 10 (4) **Toughness:** 9 (4)

Edges: Attractive, Charismatic, Dodge, Elan, Extraction, Fast Talker, First Strike, Fleet-Footed, Impressive, Level Headed, Noble, Pattern Sight, Scholar, Spirit Singer, The Forest Talks, Venerable, Woodsman

Gear: Enchanted Shay'Von Leather (+4, -5 Coverage; +4 to Soak, -2 *deflection*, Slow Regeneration), Enchanted Elvish Longsword (+2 Fighting, Str+d8+3, AP 2, +2 Parry), Enchanted Bracers (+2 Parry)

Special Abilities:

- **Keen Fae Senses:** +2 Sight-based Notice checks.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Magically Sensitive:** *Detect arcana* at will, using Spirit.
- **Unearthly Fae Beauty:** +2 Charisma.
- **Weakness:** +4 damage from Black Iron and Blood Steel.

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

The elves of Evensong import various foods and drinks which they know local people find flavorsome, allowing them to cater to palettes of a wide variety of people. They regularly entertain Brinchie and Dwarves for example, so they make sure to stock their larders with goods those folk are likely to find tasty. They also import textiles and other goods not found in their lands.

For exports they deal in craft goods, fine elven weapons and armor, intricate jewel-encrusted bracelets and necklaces. They also export their wines and some elven foods, as well as art, song, and even plays.

FRAGMENTS OF THE STARS

These are adventure seeds which can enliven and enrich any elven campaign; they can be used as one shot adventures or springboards to a whole scenario.

SONG OF THE MOURNING

The elves of Evensong invite the heroes to attend the passing of one of their own, a great warrior known as Feyshona Dimerian. She was killed in battle against servants of Shaya'Nor and through the heroes' connection to the elves of the city they are given front row seats to this funeral. During the funeral feast one of the dignitaries is poisoned. The heroes are tasked by the Unias to find out who did this and why. What follows is an investigation which will lead the characters outside of the city and to a secret meeting between spies and assassins.

MAGIC UNLEASHED

Something bad has been accidentally unleashed at the Tree of Song, the magic is out of control and the elves have sealed off the Tree for now. They're about to mount an expedition to venture beyond their magical barrier to find out what happened and what caused this sudden uncontrollable surge in magical energy. What the heroes will find is anyone's guess, but a monster formed of wild and dangerous magic would make a good enemy for the heroes to face. They'll have fun investigating what happened and why, especially if it leads to a greater conspiracy and darker shadow.

The Thorn Golem

Curiosity and ambition drew someone to an ancient scroll held in the forbidden lore section of the academy. Subsequent experimentation unleashed a

corrupt force that inhabited a large mass of brambles, and the Thorn Golem shambled to life.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 10 (d8 "Run") **Parry:** 7 **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Edges: Counterstrike, First Strike, Improved Sweep

Special Abilities:

- **Corrupt Animated Form:** +2 Toughness, +2 to recover from being Shaken, immune to poison and disease, no additional damage from called shots, Slow Regeneration
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing this horrid creature must make an immediate Spirit check versus Fear.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation
- **Infravision:** Halve penalties for Dark lighting against living targets (round down)
- **Size** +2
- **Swarming Vines:** Constantly in motion, random vine-like tentacles give the creature a -2 *deflection* effect
- **Tentacles of Vine:** Mass of swarming vine tentacles; +2 Reach, 3 attack actions a turn at no multi-action penalty
- **Thick Wooden Form:** +3 Armor
- **Thorny Vines:** Str+d6; on a raise, attacks the most unarmored area on a target
- **Vine Coils:** *entangle*, using Fighting
- **Weakness:** +1d10 damage from fiery attacks
- **Weakness:** +2 damage from White Silver and Everwood

RUMORS OF SHADOW

There are rumors, whispers, and echoes in the shadows. Agents of Shaya'Nor are abroad and the Unias hears something which disturbs her, so she decides it's time to entrust the heroes with a great responsibility. They must follow the threads of this story, they must learn the truth, and they must find out if Vainar is truly seeking a return from his prison. If he steps from his prison, will he head right for the void?

BLOODY HUNTER

Ashanti Silverbranch of the Evensong rangers has a proposition for the heroes. One of her young ranger charges is due to embark on his first hunt; with permission from the spirits of Landra'Feya he can hunt the marked stag. He must firstly find the correct animal's tracks in the forest, and then find its heartbeat to follow it for a day. Only on the second day is he allowed to mark the animal, he must not kill or injure it, he needs to get close enough to daub it with a special dye made from berries in the forest.

She would like the heroes to accompany her and her charge on this hunt, so they can fully understand this unique opportunity. Along the way they can expect to gain the interest of more than just wild animals, as a darker, stronger threat lurks nearby.

Ashanti Silverbranch

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Healing d6, Notice d10 (+2), Shooting d10, Stealth d8 (+2), Survival d8 (+2), Swimming d6, Tracking d8 (+2)

Pace: 8 (d10 "Run") **Parry:** 8 (1) **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Edges: Archer, Battle Hardened, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, First Strike, Fleet-Footed, Forest-Born, Marksman, One With the Arrow, To Touch the Canopy, Trademark Weapon (Elvish Longbow)

Gear: Long Sword (Str+d8), Elvish Longbow (Range 18/36/72, 2d6+1, Everwood), Full Chain (+3, -4 Coverage), Bracers (+1 Parry)

Special Abilities

- **Enemy:** All creatures of Darkness and Flame see the Alakar as a racial enemy and will attack them first if possible.
- **Fae Beauty:** +1 Charisma.
- **Keen Fae Senses:** +2 to sight-based Notice checks.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Weakness:** Vulnerable to Black Iron and Blood Steel (they suffer +2 damage from those sources)



ELVEN EDGES

The elves have a deep rooted connection to nature; their Edges give them some incredible powers to use their natural environment to the best advantage, from moving swiftly through the tops of trees to hearing words spoken in one forest echoed in the next. These are truly the gifts that Landra bestows.

To Touch the Canopy

Requirements: Alakar, Forest-Born, Agility d8+, Climbing d6+

High above the tree-tops, above the city of Evensong and every other fae realm, lies the canopy of the great forest. The elves can move with such surety of foot and speed, they become like a wind in the trees. Flowing gracefully from one leaf to the next, they leave only the vaguest hint of their passing.

An elf with this Edge can use the canopy atop the forest as easily as a human walks upon the ground. They retain their Pace and the ability to Run at full speed across the highest part of the trees in a contiguous forest or woodland area. The GM must decide if there are enough trees close enough for this to work in a given area, and may require regular Agility rolls in particularly difficult circumstances (such as running across treetops during the fall and winter months).

One With the Arrow

Requirements: Aevakar, Alakar, or Eldakar; Trademark Weapon (Elvish Longbow); Marksman; Special (*see below*)

The arrow flies straight and true, from the archer's bow, driven by their patience and will. This Edge gives elves a supernatural connection to the arrow they loose from their bowstring, allowing them to find the weakest point in their foe's armor, bypass their cover, and even allows them to send it to track a target over a longer distance when a normal arrow would falter and fall to gravity.

While using an Elvish Longbow, an elf with this Edge may use one of the following benefits when they choose to fire without moving on a given round:

- +2 to offset Range penalties.
- +2 to offset Cover penalties.
- +2 to Bypass Armor on an opponent.

The ability to fire the bow at Extreme range (73-144") at -6 base penalty.

The Forest Talks

Requirements: Alakar or Eldakar, Veteran, Faerie Friend or Spirit Singer

Speak your message in one forest and be heard in another. This Edge is one which gives the elves a superior tactical advantage in combat, allowing them to quickly and clearly send messages via the network of living energies and spirits which flow through green places of the world. It lets them coordinate hunting parties and battle plans and is an invaluable tool when they go to war.

Fae with this Edge must spend ten minutes meditating in a peaceful space and make a successful Spirit check. Doing so allows them to send a message to anyplace else in either the forest they are currently within, or another such forested region anywhere else in Shaintar. If they know a specific being of fae blood they wish to reach, their message will be carried to that person. Otherwise, the spirits within the target location will simply give the message to the first elf or fae being they encounter near the target location. The message can be as long as desired, but the sender should bear in mind that as long as it takes to speak the message, it will take that long to be received, as well.

Eyes of the Land

Requirements: Alakar, Heroic, Faerie Friend, Woodwalker

If you've ever wandered the woods and felt animals watching you, but simply passed it off as the curiosity of such creatures - you don't have a strong connection to the *essans-vold*. The elves do and this Edge allows them an unhindered connection to the wild creatures of the forest. Through careful study and knowledge of the animals, the elves can pick a few as their chosen eyes and see through them

When an Alakar spends an hour or more quietly contemplating the natural world, they gain the *clairvoyance* power. It automatically works at a range of Spirit x4 with a successful Spirit check, with each raise doubling the range. The power continues to work as long as the Alakar concentrates and is motionless.

