

AN **ELRIC!** SUPPLEMENT

ATLAS OF THE YOUNG KINGDOMS

VOL 1: THE NORTHERN CONTINENT



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THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

ATLAS OF THE YOUNG KINGDOMS, VOL. I





THE BRIGHT EMPIRE WANES, AND AS HER LIGHT SHRINKS BACK TO THE SHORES OF FEY MELNIBONÉ, A THOUSAND LESSER BEACONS SPRING UP IN THE DARKNESS WHICH REMAINS. THESE DANCING POINTS OF LIGHT ILLUMINATE THE WORLD ANEW, NOT WITH THE DRAGON FLAMES OF THE BRIGHT EMPIRE, BUT WITH THE FIRES OF HEARTH, HOME, AND HUMANITY. THE YOUNG KINGDOMS AWAKEN FROM MELNIBONÉ'S DREAMS AND FIND THEMSELVES GROWN STRONG, IN THESE, THE EARTH'S LAST YEARS.

— THE CHRONICLE OF THE BLACK SWORD

THE
NORTHERN CONTINENT

Atlas of the Young Kingdoms, Vol. 1

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THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

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WHEN IS THE NORTHERN CONTINENT SET?

LIKE PREVIOUS publications in the *Elric!* series, this book is set a little before the events in *Elric of Melniboné*.

RICHARD WATTS' DEDICATION

DEDICATED to my queer brothers and sisters around the world.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK is the first in a series of four, describing the Young Kingdoms with a level of detail impossible in the *Elric!* rules. This first volume of the *Atlas of the Young Kingdoms* concerns the western half of the Northern Continent. This vast stretch of land is home to the Vilmirian Inquisition, to Ilmiora's assassin guild (the Mereghn), and to the foul beggars of Nadsokor. It includes the Sighing Desert and lost Quarzhasaat, and Eternal Tanelorn as well, that happy rootless city. Each chapter in this volume details the history, geography, culture, and society of lands such as devout Vilmir, the rain-swept Weeping Waste, and the Sighing Desert. These entries are based as closely as possible on textual references provided by Michael Moorcock in the *Elric* saga. Sometimes such entries are minimal, or nonexistent. In some cases entire cities and civilizations have been recreated in a style appropriate to *Elric!*

Prospective second and third volumes in the series describe the Southern Continent and the Western Continent, respectively. A fourth and final volume discusses the oceans, the isles within them, and the Unnamed Continent (in the far southwest). Readers will, we hope, find in all of them a fuller understanding of the turbulent, strife-wracked Young Kingdoms, and will be led to reread the whole of Moorcock's masterful saga.

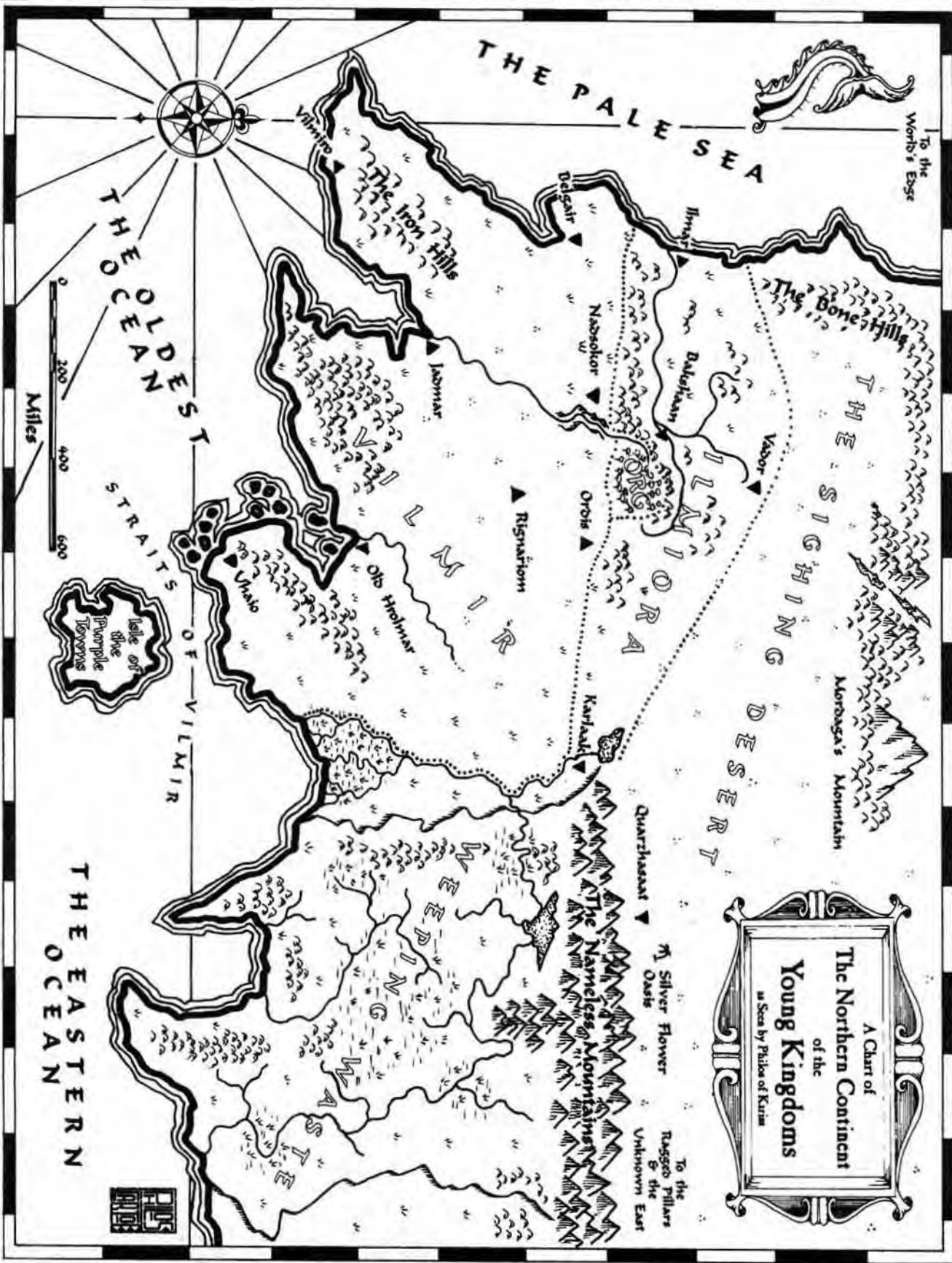
Lawrence Whitaker's excellent *The Unknown East* already details the easterly half of the Northern Continent beyond the Ragged Pillars; Eshmir, Changshai, inward-staring Phum, and other fabled places. Like the West, those lands knew the boot of Melnibonéan rule, but geographical obstacles to travel and trade between East and West have severed knowledge of each from the other. In Western imaginations the East has become mythic and proverbial. Gamemasters might wish to restrict what players may read, in order to maintain the Young Kingdoms' mystique. A player might read no more than the chapter describing his or her character's homeland, lest the sense of wonder so necessary to the roleplaying experience be compromised. No writer will be unhappy, though, to learn that his book has been read cover to cover by everyone!

In writing this book, I faced considerably more difficulties than I had foreseen. I would like to thank Lynn Willis, whose patience and guidance know no bounds, Mark Morrison, for his inexhaustible advice and companionship, and Penelope Love, Nick Haggard, Ian Harrison, Martin Liedke, Mark Holsworth, Phil Anderson, and Liam Routt for their support, friendship, good advice, and constant encouragement during the year this book took to complete. Truly, it could not have been done without you all.

Richard Watts,
November 1994



THE FILTH OF NADSOKOR



A Chart of
The Northern Continent
 of the
Young Kingdoms
 as Seen by Pallas of Kuria

THE OCEAN STRAITS OF VILMIR

THE PALE SEA

THE OCEAN

0 200 400 600 Miles

Lake of the Purple Towers



To the World's Edge

Quarshassat
 Silver Flower Oasis

To the Ragged Pillars & the Unknown East



UNCOMMON

KNOWLEDGE

BALANCE, LAW, AND CHAOS; THE MULTIVERSE;
THE YOUNG KINGDOMS; THE TRUTH OF CREATION;
WHAT HAS PASSED SINCE ALL BEGAN

“SEEK...THE TRUTH,” said Elric guardedly.
“There is no truth save that of Eternal struggle,” the
scarlet flamed giant said with conviction.

— The Weird of the White Wolf, I, 3

THE TRUE NATURE of the multiverse is known to but few in the Young Kingdoms. Even on Melniboné more is guessed about the world than is truly known. Only the wisest of the wise know that there are in fact a succession of worlds in a succession of universes, a universe in each sphere of the Million Spheres, as the multiverse is sometimes called, and all of them shifting through one another in a great and intricate dance of possibility. Once in innumerable eons a vast conjunction occurs in the multiverse, aligning all the spheres and precipitating great change.

The Conjunction of the Million Spheres, as this event is known, heralds the deeds of heroes and the deaths of gods. The events of the Elric saga reflect the tumult of the Conjunction and the whole multiverse. Other aspects of the Eternal Champion act out struggles similar to Elric's in other spheres; these tales are described by Moorcock in such works as *The History of the Runestaff* and *The Chronicles of Corum*.

According to Melnibonéan scholars, the multiverse and all it contains was brought into being by the Cosmic Balance. The Balance also created the Lords of Law and Chaos, who were originally one united race. The Elemental Rulers, the Beast-Lords, the Plant-Lords, and the Grey Lords are all said to be servants or creations of the Balance, aspects of the all-embracing natural harmony which the Balance created and represents.

In those long ago days the Lords of the Higher Worlds, as Law and Chaos were then known as, set about the ordering of the multiverse. They did so at the decree of the Balance, which had spoken once, instructing them, then fallen silent.

Thereafter the Lords of the Higher Worlds argued. At last two conflicting visions for the multiverse became preeminent: some of them sought to perfect their dominion in every way; while others wished to embellish creation with variety.

Thus Law and Chaos came into being and aligned themselves, and the great struggle between them for control of the Million Spheres began. That unimaginably vast combat continues yet today openly, covertly, as subtly as atoms and the distances between them. Tension and unending warfare is built into the very fabric of the multiverse, and that unquenchable conflict too represents the will and intention of the Balance. But of all of this, only the Balance is truly unknowable, and it has yet to speak again.

THE PHYSICAL WORLD

THE PLANE of the Young Kingdoms is essentially a flat, oval disk, about 15,000 miles (app. 24,000 km) from east to west, and 5,000 miles (app. 8,000 km) north to south. Because it was created by Chaos, the influence of which remains strong to this day, the earth does not always conform to natural laws. Thus tundra and tropical rain forest may be found within close proximity to one another. Magic exists and has a palpable effect upon the world and its inhabitants.

On this plane, the edge of the world is real, and not the product of superstition. It is a terrible place of rushing waters and empty void which only few people have seen. Once, when the world was smaller than it is today, the world's edge ended in the *chaoplasm*, a swirling, formless sea of pure Chaos. It was from this substance that the hero Earl Aubec of Malador shaped Dorel and other lands, long ago. Today the chaoplasm is held back from the earth by a Lawful barrier. Beyond the edge of the world lies only cold space and the distant stars.

East and west of the Young Kingdoms stretch other lands, unknown and little mapped save by their mysterious inhabitants. Because these lands are closer to where the sun rises and sets, they are hotter than the Young Kingdoms; indeed, it is said that to the far west the land has been reduced to a desert of ash because of its proximity to the setting sun, so great is the heat of the sun upon its going down.

The true nature of the sun is unknown, although most Young Kingdoms cultures claim that it is the palace of Kakatal, Elemental Lord of Fire. Just as fire flickers and is never still, so too is Kakatal's palace transient, never resting in one place. Similar myths concern the moon. Most hold that the moon is Chaotic in origin, given that its form undergoes constant change. Both moon and sun might be reached on dragon-back, for Lassa's dominion of the air extends as far as Law's barrier. What might be found when the barrier is reached could very well depend upon what is sought. Like gods, the world is very much the product of humanity's dreams and desires.

Scholars of Law hold the view that the stars are the souls of the pure, placed above the earth by the White Lords in order that their light might inspire humanity to greater deeds in Law's name. When a star falls, they say, it is because another soul has been corrupted by Chaos. Chaos scholars, conversely, claim that the stars are the souls of Entropic champions, and thus their light is never still, but flickering and dancing to the pulse of Chaos. In Oin and Yu, stars are believed to be the campfires of the dead. A Pan Tangian Chardros cult believes that all the world is contained within the skull of their god, and that the stars are his thoughts. From their movements the future may be interpreted.



CREATION

THE PEOPLE of the Young Kingdoms are not so learned as Melnibonéan's prehuman folk. They have evolved many notions concerning the origins of the world and the universe, and what those beliefs imply for the lives of mortals.

CHAOS

HERE IS THE WORD as recorded in *The Tablature of Vivid Suffering*, a tome contained in the Library of Tears, Hwamgaarl. The author is unknown.

OUR LORDS OF CHAOS sprang spontaneously into being, created from the raw potential of the nothingness before time. When Chaos tore itself forth the nothingness felt pain, and in feeling, knew consciousness. This conscience was the Cosmic Balance. With its pain came a cry, a birth cry said to still echo in the most distant reaches of the Million Spheres. Thus was the Balance born whining. As have many parents who bear children too early, the Cosmic Balance rejected Chaos, its eldest offspring.

The light of the Balance fell upon the Lords of Chaos, whose shapes were ever in flux, casting their shadows behind them. Whereas Chaos was fluid and never still, the shadows of the Lords of Chaos were sharp and clear, fixed forever in a single form. The shadows of Chaos became aware of the differences between themselves and those who cast them, and distancing themselves from Chaos, declared themselves eternal opposites. In this manner did the stain of Law enter the world.

Chaos then created the earth, shaping it, creating substance out of raw entropy. Sterile Law envied Chaos, and sought then and still seeks now to stifle it so that all creation has one form and one style. Whereas Chaos created life and takes pleasure in its ever-changing nature, Law seeks to bind existence, trapping life and insuring the death of magic, art, and all beauty.

Know that other worlds exist than our own, created by the Lords of Chaos as was our own world. Some of these worlds are ruled by Law, some by the Balance, but the majority of them are of Chaos. Every world that forms the dominion of Chaos is ruled over by one of the Lords and Ladies of Chaos, whom we serve. Creatures of Chaos, called demons by the foolish, can sometimes be called from these worlds. With the correct rituals, a sorcerer faithful to the Lords of Entropy may even pass freely into these other worlds. Followers of Law blind

themselves to the mad truths of the universe, but we know that if not for the reign of the Balance, Chaos would free this world forever from Law's unkind rule, and make of it one glorious seething sea of constant change.

After death, if one has obeyed the teachings of Chaos, one's spirit becomes one with Chaos, and is freed into creation. There it is eternally reborn and changing, moving from life to life and world to world. The more faithfully one has obeyed Chaos, the richer one's new lives shall be. Particularly strong spirits retain their individuality in the chaoplasm, in time becoming Chaos entities, perhaps even gods.

Worshippers of Law, on the other hand, damn themselves to the stagnation in a single form, and thus are annihilated when that form dies. He or she who displeases Chaos might be trapped forever in one form, often one twisted and terrible, or perhaps doomed to eternal torment in each form to which that tormented spirit flees...

LAW

WHAT FOLLOWS is titled "The Doctrine of Law", as taken from *The Flame of Purity*, composed by Cardinal Garrick of the Order of Donblas, in Vilmir.

KNOW THAT BEFORE LAW imposed Order upon the void, there was nothing save the void, shapeless and terrible. Our divine Lords of Law, blessed be their names and holy guidance, became self aware, formed from the needful knowledge that the void lacked shape and purpose.

In creating themselves, Law created the Cosmic Balance also, to watch over them as they would watch over creation. The shadows of Law, as dark and flexible as the Lords of Law were unchanging and pure, mocked Law's perfect form. These shadows too developed sentience, and became the Lords of Chaos, forever Law's foe. Together with the Balance, the Lords of Law laid out and ordered the world. Were it not for Law's vigilance, the Lords of Chaos would have long since unraveled the fabric of the world, returning it to void and entropy from whence it came. Our world takes the form of a great disk, enclosed within a crystal sphere in which are also set the sun, moon, and stars, whose paths across the sky are part of Law's grand and perfect design.

Within the sphere of crystal are found the realms of the elements, overlapping and intersecting with the earth. Beyond earth's sphere, and enclosing it, is the silver sphere of Law, where dwell the White Lords in perfect harmony forever. Law's sphere is in turn enclosed by the golden sphere of the Balance. The realm

of Law is home to those mortal spirits who have obtained oneness with the White Lords, as well as the Lords themselves. The realm of the Balance is a mystery to all save the Cosmic Hand itself and its servants. Beyond the spheres lies only the surging madness of the Chaoplasm, a shapeless and terrible sea. In the realm of Chaos nothing lasts and everything is fluid and formless.

Harken to my words and know how one may be spared eternal damnation in the realm of Chaos. By heeding the strictures of the Lords of Law and their servants, by guarding one's place in the grand cosmic scheme, and by carrying out one's duties and labors to the best of your abilities, may one escape the powers of Entropy. After death, if you have served Law well, the White Lords will place your soul in a new vessel, one better suited to doing Law's work. If this life is lived well and faithfully, and the next, and the next, you shall become more perfect and closer to Law with each life lived until attaining pure spirit, leaving behind the imperfections of the flesh and becoming one with the White Lords. That is the purity towards which we aspire. If we are to reach it, diligence, purity, and discipline must ever be our watchwords...

SHAMAN

HERE ARE THE WORDS of an Elder, Mog Mir Ruagh, Shaman of the Bear Tribe in the Weeping Wastes, as he spoke to his apprentice upon a day during which leaves fell greatly before the force of Laza.

LONG, LONG AGO, before this world was made, there were the Dead Gods. They were not Dead when this story happened, but they are Dead now, and that is why they are named so.

The Dead Gods were lonely, because they had no ancestors to seek guidance from, and so they made the world to entertain themselves, out of their blood and spit and skin and hair. Breathing upon the world they gave it life. The blood formed the rivers, their spit made the rain, of their skin the Dead Gods formed the earth, and from their hair they made the trees. Now the Dead Gods are Dead and gone, and the world has grown into other things just as eggs grow into birds, but this is the secret of how the world was made, and it is true.

Now, after they had made the world and enjoyed it, the Dead Gods became bored with it, and left it be. But their breath had woken the First Woman, Aai, and she walked about the world, marvelling at the springy grass beneath her feet, and as she walked about she named things, and so it is our tradition that it is always

the mother who gives a child its name. As Aai walked, she woke the spirits, and they talked to her, teaching her their secrets. That is why our people have always known the spirits, because the spirits themselves showed themselves to the First Woman, who was of our tribe, for this was in the days before the spirits grew shy. Now we must coax them to talk to us, but in the early days the spirits were curious of everything, and eager to speak.

Among the spirits, the first to awaken were Laza, Stret-Sha, Krek-Atu, and Grom. Being eldest, they became the chiefs of their tribes. Laza was of the air, and made her kingdom in the sky. Stret-Sha became Lord of Water, and made his palace at the bottom of the deepest lake. Krek-Atu built his fiery palace in the sun, while Father Grom's kingdom was the earth, as he was eldest of all, and so it was his right to rule the most land.

Now King Grom saw Aai First Woman walking his earth, and fell in love with her, and she with him. From their union came our people. Lord Stret-Sha too desired a wife, and wooed Lady Laza, but she spurned him, taking Krek-Atu for a husband instead. That is why we cannot see the sun, for Stret-Sha refuses to be looked down on by his enemy, and so blocks out Krek-Atu's view with clouds. The rains that fall forever from those clouds upon our home are Stret-Sha's tears, as he weeps for his lost love.

Among the spirits woken by Aai First Woman were the spirits of the beasts. While lesser spirits dwell in every rock and pool, breeze and tree, and are ruled over by their Elders, the Beast Spirits are strong, and rule only themselves. Among them is Great Bear, who watches over our tribe. Because of our totem, those of our tribe will never slay a bear, although we respect all the Beast Spirits, for if we displease them, then they will guide the beasts we hunt away from our spears, and so we should starve. But it is Great Bear whom we honor most. Respect too your ancestors who have gone to Grom. Ancestor spirits speak to us in dreams, offering wisdom, and protect us from evil.

Because we are the children of King Grom and Aai First Woman, when we die we go down to Grom and his underworld kingdom. This is where the spirits of the beasts go too, so that we may hunt them after we have died. If we have not honored the spirits as we should, then we are devoured by Great Bear. This is the way of the Wastes.



THE BALANCE

HERE IS QUOTED from *The Principles of Enlightenment, or, Concerning the Path of the Balance*, a manuscript of unknown origin and authorship in the possession of Duke Avan Astran of Old Hrolmar.

BEFORE CREATION, there was silence, and this silence was the silence of Balanced contemplation. The Cosmic Hand knew all, and meditated upon infinity and the void, upon the possibilities of creation and destruction. From these two principles the Lord of the Balance formed the world and all who walk within it. Although Law and Chaos were forever opposed, the Cosmic Hand knew that just as one could not exist without the other, so too the world could not exist without both contributing towards it. Without Chaos the world would stagnate, never changing. Without Law the world would have no form.

The secret of the universe is harmony, and by devoting our lives to such balance, we make the Cosmic Balance the more powerful thereby. It must be always our task then to bring harmony to the world, mediating between the struggles of Law and Chaos, neither ruling nor being ruled, but teaching all to take charge of their own destinies...

ELEMENTIST

SECRETS TOLD BY THE WINDS, as recorded by her slave-scribe, spoken by Tentative Thenalis of the Perceptive Zephyr, High Priestess of Lassa, Isle of the Purple Towns, are hereunder presented.

ATTEND, OH MY CHILDREN, and heed well my words, for I speak of a time before humanity, before even the Dragon Emperors of Melniboné came to this world and sought to bind Our Lady with their shackles of seduction and sorcery. In ancient ages past, before the first secret was spoken, Our Lady, Lassa, Queen of Air, floated alone above a silent world. In those days there was only the frozen world and the icy air, nothing more. No stars shone, no birds sung. Only the chill air moved, and Lassa was born from its embrace.

As a seed greets the sun, so did the world thaw before the first breath of the Goddess. Kakatal, Lord of Fire, was fanned by Her winds, and woke from his slumber. Straasha was freed by the melting of the ice which gripped the world's waters, and Grome released from the frost which froze the soil. Then awoke the lesser gods, the Lords of Law and Chaos, but it was Lassa who came first, and Her gentle breezes which gave them all breath. The winds and stars are Her children, born from

her womb without another's touch, and the sky is Her kingdom.

Upon her winds the Lady brings the souls of children to their mothers to be born, and too sends inspiration to artists and musicians She favors. Lassa sends storms to punish those who have slighted Her, and winds to fill the sails of Her faithful. Lady Lassa is all-knowing, for secrets from the four corners of the world are carried to Her by the breezes, who are Her children and Her servants. After death, the souls of those who have served Lassa well are carried by breezes to the Kingdom of Air, where winds blow their memories away, and from where they are reborn. Those souls who are unfaithful to the Goddess are condemned to be blown forever about the earth upon icy winds. All praise to Lassa, She who gives breath to us all!

ESCAPIST

WRITTEN WITH great effort at the command of her excellency Lady Firillian S'lar, Viscountess of the Tower Despondent, Dragon Princess of Melniboné, here is quoted from *The Politics of Tedium*, being a repetitious rendering of detail concerning Apathy, the nature of the multiverse, and the Grey Lords.

DAY FOLLOWS DAY, and will, and will, and will. Never is there variety or inconsistency, only boredom. Creativity is a lie. Order is stagnation. Only by knowing apathy and passing beyond it, to the uninteresting truth of Cosmic Tedium will you comprehend the forces which would control the universe were it was worth controlling. The world is beyond your control. You are irrelevant. Without you the world will continue. With you the world will continue. You will continue. Irrelevantly. Nothing is permanent save tedium, and tedium is the realm of the Grey Lords.

The Grey Lords are, were and will be, uninterested in mortals and mortal affairs. There is no point in worshipping them. There is no point in worshipping anything. There is no point.

The Grey Lords are servants of the Cosmic Balance, which created the world in all its uninspiring detail and is thus to be reviled for inflicting ennui upon us all. The Balance is the cause of tedium, and being bored with its creation, handed responsibility to others. Law and Chaos claim that they have inherited the reigns of power from the Balance, but they lie. Only the Grey Lords are the true heirs of the Balance, and they have no interest in what they have inherited. Truly, the pendulum always stops in the middle. The final power is the power of tedium...

HISTORY

FORTY THOUSAND years ago the Doomed Folk ended their age and destroyed their world. This marked the end of their Time Cycle and the beginning of the current Time Cycle, which it is Elric's doom to end, as described in the novel *Stormbringer*.

This new world was born from the Chaos unleashed by the Doomed Folk. Law was then weak on this plane, and the Lords of Chaos shaped the world according to their insane sensibilities. As Law grew more strong, the Lords of Chaos gradually retreated from the land, taking refuge in the ocean, whose fluid form was more akin to the ever-changing nature of Chaos. Law's strength was aided by the rise of several prehuman civilizations during this period. The creation of structure, of writing, and of history, and of those other developments associated with civilization gave the Lords of Law increasing influence in the world. As Law gained ascendancy, it forced the previously-Chaotic earth to obey such natural laws as genetics and climate, although neither always nor completely.

In these early days, the Earth was populated primarily by two races, the Older Ones, servants of Law, and the Guardians, who followed the Balance. There were as well the myriad spirits of the elements and archetypes. The Lords of Chaos needed no servants, for in those days they were unhindered and could walk upon the earth without aid.

After many years of shaping the earth and guiding it towards the Balance, the Guardians and their land were taken out of time and the world. Today they live in a far distant sphere, in a place not unlike Tanelorn, the last of their cities, which remains on the earth to this day.

THE ELEMENTAL WARS

Twenty thousand years ago, war broke out between King Grome of the Earth Elementals, and Straasha Sea-King. Their combat remade the world, shaping it into the form we now know. Mountains were leveled and the Oldest Ocean overflowed, creating the oceans and seas mapped today. Melnibonéan scholars have suggested that humanity's earliest ancestors developed at this time, making their homes upon the original shores of the Oldest Ocean. As evidence, they point to bipedal simian footprints, found in the sands of ancient beaches turned to stone by King Grome's wrath. Following the cataclysm, it is supposed that these semi-humans spread out across the world.

It was shortly after the worst excesses of the Elemental Wars that the nameless builders of the Fortress of Evening, in the Isle of the Purple Towns, came to the earth to build their great and mysterious sepulchre, dying ere the arrival of the Melnibonéans. Other prehuman races had evolved upon the earth by this time, including the Myyrrhn, and the mysterious, malicious folk of the Silent Land.

MELNIBONÉANS AND HUMANITY

The Melnibonéans came to this world some 12,000 years ago. After interbreeding with the Older Ones, the Lawful race of demi-immortals whom they found here, these proto-Melnibonéans became tainted by Chaos, in particular by the immortals' gifts, Stormbringer and Mournblade. During the same period, sentience began to emerge in primitive humanity, as evidenced by the crude burials of this time. Human corpses of the period have been excavated which were interred along with crude tools of bone and flint, as well as necklaces of shells and similar jewelry, and gifts or offerings in the form of small, crude statuettes and carvings.

About ten thousand years ago the Melnibonéans transferred their allegiance to the Lords of Chaos, and the rule of the Bright Empire began. (That event marks the first year of the Melnibonéan calendar; in the following essays the abbreviation AF indicates *After Foundation* of the Bright Empire, and hence the date accords to the Melnibonéan calendar.) Over the following millennia the Dragon Isle reigned unchallenged, enslaving and subjugating the earth's other nonhuman empires. Melniboné's rise in power corresponded with the increasing lethargy of her inhuman people. Soon Imrryr became known as the Dreaming City, after the narcotic visions of her citizens.

At this time, some four thousand years ago, a species of primitive apelike creatures was noticed by Melnibonéan scholars. Human tribes had cautiously advanced toward Melnibonéan outposts, drawn by the bright lights. There it was discovered that they made excellent slaves. Previously, humans had the benefits of fire, art, and pottery, but being nomadic hunter-gatherers, had been unable to sustain permanent settlements. Contact with Melnibonéan conduct, agriculture, and thought lent humanity the skills needed to develop human civilizations.

THE RISE OF THE YOUNG KINGDOMS

The last four thousand years have seen humanity's ascendancy as they spread across the world. Aping their Melnibonéan overlords, tribal chieftains began to name themselves kings, and their homelands became the first human nations. Quarzhasaat, in what is now the Sighing Desert, was the first such land to declare itself independent of the Bright Empire's rule, though it was destroyed for her pains two thousand years ago.

The Dharzi, or Beast-Folk, arose soon afterwards, their empire gradually embracing more and more land. One thousand years ago war broke out between the Dharzi and Melniboné, and while the Bright Empire triumphed, it was a hollow victory. Fatally weakened by the war, Melniboné began her long decline. Free of the Bright Empire's imperial yoke, humanity flourished. Minor nations rose and fell. These petty wars were to the Melnibonéans as the squabbles of children in a nursery, and the participants earned a disparaging name, the *Young Kingdoms*.

Over the last thousand years the Young Kingdoms have gone from strength to strength. While some nations, such as Sheegoth and Fwem-Omeyo, have fallen to the march of time, others of the Young Kingdoms have grown ever stronger. Four hundred years ago humanity had grown strong enough to challenge even Melniboné. The successful War of Independence in Lormyr sowed the seeds of revolt across the world. (That event marks the first year of the Lormyrian calendar, known throughout the West. In the essays that follow, the years follow the Lormyrian calendar, with the abbreviation YK standing for *Young Kingdoms*.)

Soon others amongst the Young Kingdoms followed Lormyr's lead the Isle of the Purple Towns, Vilmir, Tarkesh. The Dragon Princes of Melniboné retreated to their Imrryrian palaces of alabaster and gold, there to dream of the past in which they ruled unchallenged and triumphant. The age of the Young Kingdoms was begun. ☉



EVENTS OF THE SAGA, BY YEAR

400 YK — In the summer of this year, after a long and debilitating illness, Sadric the 86th dies. Following the Wild Dance of Melniboné, in which a tower is torn down, and a new tower constructed, named after the late, melancholy Sadric, his only son Elric is crowned 428th Emperor of the Ruby Throne.

401 YK — In spring, less than a year after his father's death, Elric is forced into action, despite his introspection, by the deeds of his cousin Yyrkoon. Having survived an assassination attempt, Elric dispatches armies to scour the world for Yyrkoon, who fled the Dragon Isle bearing with him Cymoril, his sister and Elric's beloved. After four months, in which dragons and battle barges travel to every corner of the known world, and return without sign of the traitor, Elric summons dread Arioch, Lord of the Seven Darks and Duke of Chaos, to aid him in his quest. Elric sails over land and sea to the slovenly city of Dhoz-Kam, rescuing Cymoril. Passing through the Shade Gate, he discovers the malevolent Stormbringer, and befriends Rackhir the Red Archer. After returning to the Dreaming City, Elric renounces the throne, leaving Yyrkoon as regent, vowing to return in twelve months. He departs to wander the Young Kingdoms in the hope of gaining knowledge to revitalize Melniboné.

402 YK — The year of Elric's wandering, in which he visits Ufych-Sormeer, Filkhar, and the lost city of Quarzhasaat, then returns to better known lands, seeking employment as a mercenary in Pikarayd, before being hounded into the Dead Hills. It is here that he encounters the blind captain and the Dark Ship, sailing between worlds in Fate's service. Elric returns to the Young Kingdoms in the company of Count Smiorgan Baldhead, who he befriended on a nearby plane. The two cross paths with Duke Avan Astran of Hrolmar, who is bound for the Unnamed Continent. Elric's company dooms the adventurer- duke, who is slain by Stormbringer, the first of many of Elric's friends to die upon the black sword.

403 YK — Desiring to return to Imrryr, Elric becomes aware of Yyrkoon's latest treachery. Yyrkoon has declared Elric dead and himself Emperor, once more casting Cymoril into an enchanted sleep. Elric travels first to Nadsokor, where he has heard the Beggar King possess a scroll which may awaken his beloved. Finding this untrue, he journeys to the Purple Towns, by way of Sorcerer's Isle and the End of Time. With Count Baldhead's help, Elric amasses the greatest fleet the Young Kingdoms have yet seen, to sack the Dreaming City that winter.

404 YK — Months later, Shaarilla of the Dancing Mist, a wingless woman of Myyrrhn, involves Elric with the quest for the Dead Gods' Book. During the journey he encounters Moonglum of Elwher, who became Elric's bosom companion. After the quest has ended, unsuccessfully, the albino makes the acquaintance of the sensual Queen Yishana of Jharkor. Their romance causes Elric to be hated by Theleb K'aarna, a Pan Tangian sorcerer in love with the Queen, who launches a magical attack against the albino.

405 YK — Pursuing the Pan Tangian, Elric and Moonglum journey south, to Lormyr, becoming caught up in the defense of Castle Kaneloon. Theleb K'aarna's further machinations involve Elric in the affair of the Vanishing Tower, in which the eternal city of Tanelorn is attacked, visiting Nadsokor on the way. Having saved Tanelorn, Elric is unable to find peace within its walls, and instead rides East. Here he becomes ensnared in the revenge of the Rose, traveling through countless planes and times in order to save his father's soul, and his own.

406 YK — Returning at length to the Young Kingdoms, Elric meets Theleb K'aarna for the final time, gaining his revenge at a high cost. He causes the deaths of his comrade of old, dragon master Dyvim Tvar, and the merchant-prince Nikorn of Ilmar. Some months later, after another unsuccessful venture in Nadsokor, Elric meets and falls in love with Zarozinia Voashoon while passing through the Forest of Troos. After destroying the doomed civilization of Org, Elric and Zarozinia ride to Karlaak, where they are married. Three months later the threat of the Flame Bringer and his horde force Elric to wield Stormbringer again, and reunite him with the dragons of Melniboné.

407 YK — A year in which Elric almost knows peace, dwelling with his beloved Zarozinia in Karlaak. The events of the Last Enchantment are Elric's only adventures during this time, which is perhaps the happiest twelve months of his life.

408 YK — While Tanelorn is attacked by a beggar horde from Nadsokor, led by a Lord of Chaos, Zarozinia is kidnaped by the minions of Darnizhaan, a Dead God. With the aid of Pan Tang, Chaos consumes the world. Only by allying himself with Law can Elric save the day. He blows the Horn of Fate, ushering in a new Time Cycle, and a new world. Having achieved this, at the price of Moonglum's soul, Elric too is slain by Stormbringer, ending at last the tortured albino's doom-laden existence.

VILMIR

THE UNHAPPY REDOUBT OF LAW
IN THE YOUNG KINGDOMS, AND THE
IMPLACABLE FOE OF CHAOS.

VILMIR IS DYING, choking in the grip of fanaticism and feudalism. Salinity and erosion have laid waste to the soil. Drought hovers over the nation. People starve. Church and state neglect the withering kingdom and squabble amongst themselves. Poverty, hunger, an oppressive Church, and a corrupt nobility doom Vilmir to destruction or insurrection in the coming years.

HISTORY

ONCE THE MELNIBONÉAN province of *Shu-Tha-Mirai* (The Land of Grass), Vilmir gained independence from the Bright Empire in 11 YK, declaring herself an independent kingdom. Vilmir's story begins eighteen years previously, with the birth of Vil Valario, a lowly slave. Son of a musician and a chariot-driver, both enslaved to a minor Melnibonéan lordling, Valario witnessed his parents being put slowly and agonizingly to death. Prince Imriss Dyshee, who owned Valario's parents, had been unhappy in love, and subsequently so had ordered that his slaves must be equally celibate and unhappy. Outraged at the union which produced Vil Valario, Prince Imriss ordered the child's parents executed.

In typical Melnibonéan fashion, their deaths were elegant, searingly painful, and drawn out for years. Forced to witness their death throes, the horror of his parents' final days drove the child mad. He escaped his master's tower, and fled into a forest where he lived alone for fifteen years. Hopelessly insane, Vil Valario lived the life of a penitent hermit, scourging himself and fasting. But then the Lords of Law appeared to him in waking dreams, telling him of his destiny, and of their plans for him and all the world.

VILMIR AT A GLANCE

RULED BY: Cardinal Garrick, of the Church of Law.

POPULATION: 4,000,000.

LONGEST RIVER: Varkalk River, 647 miles (1040 km).

HIGHEST PEAK: Mount Disappointment, 3070 feet (937 meters).

IMPORTS: flax, fruit and vegetables, grain, iron ingots, spices, timber.

EXPORTS: copper, lace, lead, red wine, sherry, sulfur, cooking oils, zinc.

Eight years previously, Lormyr had liberated herself from Melnibonéan rule. Now her agents infiltrated the Land of Grass, sowing the seeds of rebellion. One such agitator, badly wounded, was found by Vil Valario. Believing that the White Lords had sent him a sign, he tended the woman's wounds and spoke for the first time since he had fled his master's tower. Valario's hoarse, hesitant voice, gaunt and ragged appearance, and eyes aflame with passion won him his first disciple. From her he learned of the war against Melniboné. From that day, young Vil burned with a purpose. He walked the length and breadth of the land, spreading news of the Lords of Law and of the holy war against Chaos and the Bright Empire.

Within three years the uprising sparked by Valario had driven out Melniboné. The young prophet of Law was crowned king by an exultant people, and the new land was named Vilmir in his honor. Five years later, however, King Valario was dead. Called to the Silver Sphere of the White Lords, most said, but rumors of priestly murder persist to this day. Saints are, after all, more controllable when they are dead.

Vilmir's original capital was Rignariom, home to the king and his court. The priests of Law ruled from Jadmar,

THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

and as their power over the kingdom grew, so did Jadmar wax in importance, until it was declared the capital in 106 YK. Church and King ruled equally, but with the passing years the Church of Law gained more and more power. For more than a hundred years, the Church has ruled in Vilmir more truly than the king. Today, King Naclon struggles against his rival, Cardinal Garrick, constantly seeking to undermine his rule. With Naclon's death in the Sack of Imrryr, Vilmir will be truly Garrick's, and a new era, that of the Church of Law's absolute dominion in Vilmir, will begin.

Since its foundation, Vilmir maintained fanatical opposition to Chaos except in 113 YK, when a virulent pestilence swept through Nadsokor (then a great city of the kingdom). The inhabitants of Nadsokor came to believe that Law had abandoned them, and prayed to Chaos for deliverance, only to reap the destructive malice of Chaos as well, an example always cited thereafter by priests of Law.

The fiercest battle Vilmir has fought against Chaos to date was in 202 YK, when Taargano the Great, Champion of Law, was slain cleansing Chaos from the land. Certain regions of Vilmir worship Taargano as a god.

The strict control which the Church of Law exerts over Vilmir stifles free thought, experimentation, and creativity. Though technical science has flourished in Vilmir, its application has been restricted to the betterment of the priesthood and nobility. Bad farming methods have exhausted Vilmir's thin soil, resulting in severe erosion and scanty harvests. Little forest and woodland remain in Vilmir, since most trees have been cut down as fuel and replanting is rare. Famine is a constant threat.

Since the Bread Riots of 390 YK, when peasants ran amok in Jadmar and Rignariom, Vilmir has purchased grain from abroad to help feed its people. In 392, Vilmir annexed the independent principalities of Mariol, Khandar, and

FUTURE EVENTS — VILMIR

401 YK — In the autumn, following the destruction of a Melnibonéan battle-barge by Vilmirian privateers, dragons led by Prince Yyrkoon fly against Uhaio and the ships moored in its harbor. Thousands die, Crown Prince Bastrom, the only son of King Naclon, among them.

402 YK — A fierce winter grips Vilmir, frosts turning the ground to iron. Then heavy rains mire the Dinner-of-Dust, the desert-like dustbowl in central Vilmir, creating a deadly sea of thick mud. In Belgair many peasants freeze to death in the fierce cold. This same year, Duke Avan Astran of Old Hrolmar is slain by Elric during an expedition to the Unnamed Continent, cutting short the renaissance of Old Hrolmar. Many of the city's newer inhabitants (philosophers, artists, and their ilk) emigrate to Cadsandria in Argimilliar.

403 YK — The Sack of Imrryr. King Naclon is killed. He was persuaded to take part in the raid by Cardinal Garrick, who played on Naclon's grief concerning his son. Garrick then becomes the supreme power in Vilmir. Refusing to recognize Naclon's nephew and heir, Prince Hervis, the Cardinal instead nominates his own candidate for the throne, the weak-minded and easily controlled Lord Harron. Prince Hervis, labeled a pretender to the throne, flees to Rignariom, where he gathers around him many nobles still faithful to the crown.

404-406 YK — The Vilmirian civil war rages for two years, as Prince Hervis and his supporters battle for the throne. During this period, open rebellion flares in the Vilmirian protectorates, as well as amongst the peasants of several duchies. Dyvim Storm's roaming band of Imrryrian mercenaries take advantage of the disorder to

sack and loot several Vilmirian towns. Following Prince Hervis's excommunication in the winter of 406, the people of Rignariom, in fear for their immortal souls, rise up and slay the pretender. Less than a month thereafter the new King Harron is slain in battle against the remaining rebel lords.

407 YK — Six vessels sail from Uhaio to the Unnamed Continent, there to found New Vilmir as a solution to the growing number of convicts crowding Vilmir's prison hulks and jails. Most are prisoners from the civil war, or from the protectorates. Late in the year Cardinal Garrick's newborn nephew, Calvin, is crowned King of Vilmir, with Garrick as his regent.

408 YK — During the last weeks of the world, while the forces of Pan Tang and Entropy consolidate their hold upon the Western Continent before devouring the south and north, Jadmar experiences unprecedented earthquakes, balls of fiery metal rain down in Vilmiro, and the whole land is wracked by supernatural storms, scorching winds, and freak blizzards. All are part of the increasing Chaos that grips the world. As Moorcock relates, a final resistance is formed: *the Regent of Vilmir, uncle of the ten-month old king, headed this last group made up of senators from the city-states comprising Ilmiora; the red-clothed archer Rackhir representing the city of Tanelorn; and various merchant princes coming under the indirect rule of Vilmir as protectorates.* — *Stormbringer, II, 1.*

Despite an alliance with Ilmiora as well as with the Purple Towns, and despite being strengthened by surviving warriors from Shazar, Jharkor, Tarkesh, and Melniboné, Vilmir succumbs to the armies of Pan Tang and Dharjor, and the unleashed madness of Chaos triumphs.

Varg. These rich lands are now Vilmirian protectorates, and each year Vilmir claims a large proportion of their food production as tribute. Troops stationed in the protectorates and poised on their borders prevent rebellion.

GEOGRAPHY

Vilmire consists largely of low plains and rolling prairie. Its rocky southern peninsulas are the main areas of high ground. The highest peak in Vilmir, Mount Disappointment, is to be found in the uplands of Uhaio. To the north the land gradually rises towards the Ilmioran tableland. The Varkalk River bisects Vilmir from north to south, including the desolate region lately known as Dinner-of-Dust, where drought and poor farming techniques have exhausted the topsoil. The Varkalk rushes forth from mysterious Troos, and its ferocious upper courses have cut a deep gorge through the Rignariom plain. By the time it reaches the sea, the Varkalk's pace is placid, thanks to a glittering web of irrigation canals around Jadmar the nation's capital.

Cool currents from the Pale Sea bathe Vilmir's west coast. Coastal fogs are frequent there. The rocky southern shores and pebble beaches, although swept in the west by the pounding waves of the Oldest Ocean, are sheltered somewhat by the shallow Straits of Vilmir between Vilmir and the Isle of the Purple Towns. Many cliffs and small bays dot the southern coast. Especially in the east, these are home to pirates.

Vilmir has a moderate climate, with little fluctuation between the seasons. Rainfall is adequate in the north, heavier in the south and southeast, while central Vilmir averages little rain. Of late, a lengthy drought has made dust-storms common. Wildfire has always been a threat on the plains.

Land travelers entering Vilmir find that the nation's borders are systematically guarded by armed patrols, and manned watchtowers and beacons. Although today a truce of long standing exists between Vilmir and Ilmiora, her northerly neighbor, tensions still exist between the two nations, only slowly being eased by their prosperous trade. Raids by nomads from the Weeping Waste or the Sighing Desert are not unknown. When trouble threatens, the beacons of pitch-soaked wood are fired, sending a flaming warning across the land.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Vilmir consists mainly of grassy plains basking and shimmering beneath the sun. Once great belts of oak, beech, and elm trees grew across the plains, here and there with stands of olive trees and evergreens. Most such trees have long since been chopped down for fuel or to clear the land for farming, so that only the olive trees mostly remain, bent and gnarled like arthritic old soldiers. Many varieties of grapes are grown in Vilmir, while tomatoes, potatoes, oranges, and sunflowers are tended in the more fertile regions.

Mules and donkeys are the main pack animals in Vilmir. Horses are owned only by the nobility, and it is a breach of custom for ordinary folk to ride them in this land. Goats are

kept by most peasants, although cattle are grazed in Belgair and Hrolmar. Ibex (wild goats) can be found in the rocky southern peninsulas, as can the endangered Vilmirian lynx, occasional brown bears, boars, and the few remaining packs of wolves which live in Vilmir. Vultures, buzzards, and eagles make their aeries in the uplands, while elegant white storks winter in Hrolmar, migratory visitors from Filkhar's salt marshes. Vilmir is also home to a number of reptiles, including skinks, sand lizards, and chameleons.

VILMIRIAN CITIES AND HIGHWAYS

Visitors notice the hand of the Church everywhere. So rigid is the rule of Law in Vilmir that an ancient decree defines and restricts the manner in which buildings may be constructed. All structures houses, castles, mills, taverns, and stables must present a uniform height and appearance. Sandstone quarried in Dolgar is Vilmir's ubiquitous building material. From Belgair to Uhaio, all buildings present an identical and unimaginative appearance, constructed of the same gray-brown stone, their rooftops of equal height, and bearing little or no decoration. Vilmirian buildings, like their inhabitants, are functional and plain. Only in Old Hrolmar has this standard been ignored.

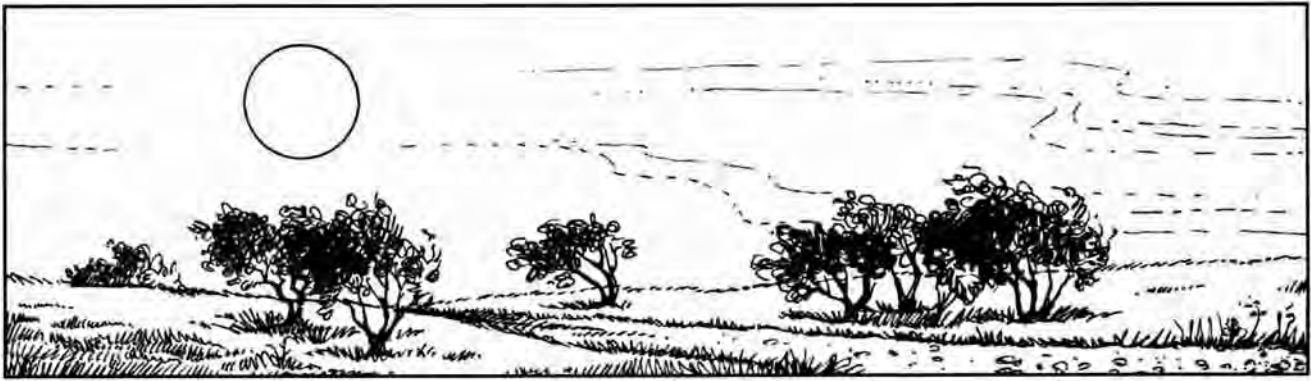
Vilmirian cities are well-planned and fully-sewered. Streets are neatly planned and cobbled. All cities are contained within a triangular wall, a pattern reflected in most official buildings. Churches and temples of Law are always constructed using the holy triangle, symbolizing the arrowhead of Law. Basic structures become the purest symbols of Law.

Without exception, Vilmirian roads run straight, and only grudgingly curve to avoid natural obstacles. Only major highways are shown on the map. Constructed by slave-gangs, the roads, paved in white marble, are efficient and well patrolled. Although not shown on the map, villages of between ten and one hundred people can be found along the roads, each a day's journey apart, in the more prosperous regions of Vilmir. These are the so-called *journeymen's villages*, universally poverty-stricken, but compelled to offer what hospitality they can to travelers.

TECHNOLOGY

Of the Young Kingdoms, travelers are most often likely to see evidence of such advanced technology as clockworks and steam power in Vilmir. Water-driven mills and looms are common, as are windmill-driven pumps. This is due to the support of the Church of Law, especially the cult of Arkyn, in promoting scientific investigation and (to a lesser extent) technical applications.

Though initially setting a page of type is slow and awkward, handset printing presses are quickly spreading from city to city, greatly reducing the cost of books, which were previously copied and illuminated by hand. The priesthood of Vallyn, who were responsible for copying and disseminating the good news of Law, have tried to restrict the printing press, but with little success. Lately, seditious and



blasphemous pamphlets have appeared in Vilmir, adding weight to the arguments of Vallyn's priests that setting down the words of Law back-to-front in type so that they may be read front-to-back on paper is surely the malicious work of Chaos, and must have evil in it.

The principles of hot-air balloons are being established. Diving bells have also been constructed, to aid in rescuing shipboard cargoes lost in harbors or along the coast. Across the country, mines, smelters and blast furnaces, factories, and cotton mills darken the skies and pollute the waters. To Vilmir's peril, industrial advances are everywhere outstripping agriculture.

THE DUCHIES OF VILMIR

POLITICALLY, Vilmir is composed of nine regions, each of them semi-autonomous and ruled over by a hereditary duke. Each duchy is named after its capital city. Hundreds of years ago, when the borders of the duchies were laid out, they were mostly marked by the natural boundaries of woods and forests. Those great trees have long since fallen, but Vilmirian bureaucracy ensures that the boundaries are unchanged.

DUCHY OF BELGAIK

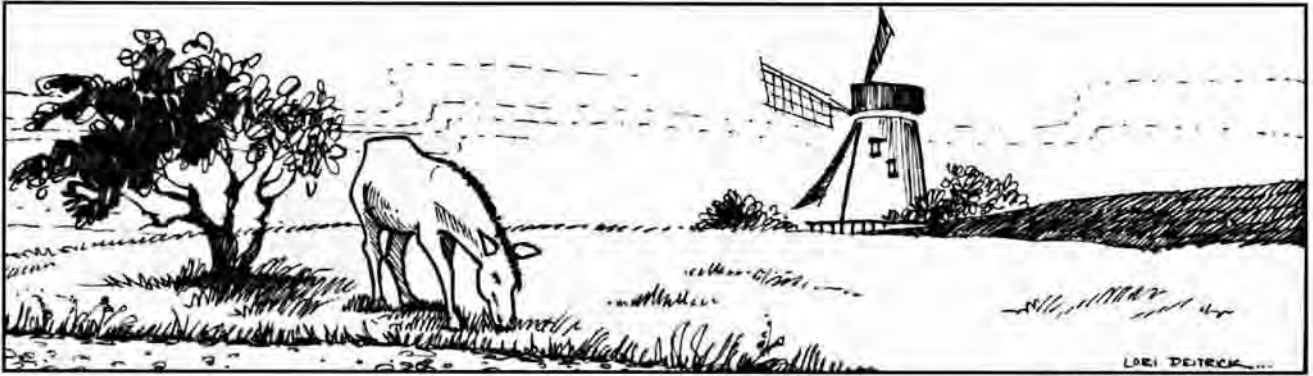
NORTHERNMOST duchy of the nine, Belgair is a region of downs and heath, the coastline alternating between low cliffs and pebbled beaches. It is exposed to the storms of the Pale Sea, which sweep unimpeded over the stunted trees and fields of bracken and heather. The duchy receives the highest rainfall in Vilmir.

For fuel, the peasants dig peat from the bogs. Small, shaggy cattle are sold for their meat and hides, and are the region's principal cash crop. From their milk are made small spheres of white cheese, protected by a characteristic green wax coating these so-called float cheeses are sold across Vilmir. Inland, rice is often grown.

BELAN, a provincial city built atop steep cliffs, relies upon its fishing fleet for survival. Sardines, anchovies, hake, cod, tuna, bream, salmon, and shellfish are all included in the catch. Much of what is caught is salted or peat-cured and sent to Jadmar. In Belan itself, fresh seafood is always part of the menu. Narrow, winding pathways and steps lead from Belan to its small harbor, above which flocks of gulls squawk and soar.

BELFORE survives upon peat and cattle, and to a lesser extent, the sea. Peat bogs surround this low-lying town, which is built in a sheltered coastal depression. A narrow causeway stretches across this moat of peat, giving access to the town. The town's cattle must perforce graze some distance from the town's walls lest they wander into the bogs and drown. East of Belfore the ground rises rapidly, becoming heath-land dotted with furze and broom, and in summer, clumps of bluebells.

BELGAIK, the capital, is little more than a large village surrounded by an earthen wall topped by an abatis (a defensive line) of sharpened whale ribs. Duke Amblis Galliard, the butt of many a Vilmirian joke, is a slow, sullen man who rarely leaves his seven-room palace. In Belgair he has power; elsewhere his insignificance is revealed to all. He rules over Belgair with an iron fist. Little escapes his notice. He scrupulously keeps his word, and demands the same from his people. The punishment stocks in Belgair are always occupied, and the corpses of cheats, liars, and seducers hang in gibbets at every corner. Belgair's Temple of Law is a pyramid of rain-stained white marble, its altar devoted to Mirath of the White Hands, the Lady of Death. Her high priest here is the colorless and humorless Chancellor Marinus, who always defers to the Duke.



THE VILMIRIAN PLAIN

DUCHY OF DOLGAR

DOLGAR IS a long finger of ragged hills and bare, rocky outcrops, the central of Vilmir's three southern peninsulas. Here hardy sheep produce fine wool, next to sandstone Dolgar's most important product. Wind-gnarled cypress trees dot the hillsides. Olive trees also are a staple crop. Wild boar once roamed Dolgar's hills in sizable numbers, but are now almost extinct. The few boar that remain are royal beasts, meaning that they may be hunted only by King Naclon and his peers. A peasant found guilty of killing a royal boar is executed for treason. Few roads run through Dolgar, save for rutted tracks winding through the steep hills. Travel from Sheff and Dolgar is mainly by sea. A salt mine exists in the hills above Sheff; all the miners are prisoners sentenced for political reasons. Many sandstone quarries dot Dolgar's hills. Gangs of yet more prisoners constantly move this fine building material across the nation, and the owners of these quarries have grown rich.

DOLGAR, the capital of the duchy, is the most isolated city in Vilmir. Its people are inbred and provincial. Almost all traffic to enter Dolgar does so by sea. Duke Ongar Octaviar, ruler of city and duchy alike, is a bloated tyrant, corpulent and corrupt. His courtiers feast lavishly while the people starve. Seafood and olives are the region's staples. The nobility occasionally feast on roast boar. The bronze pyramid of Law in Dolgar is dedicated to Lord Salik the Potent. Fittingly, the high priest, Chancellor Maltis, is rumored to have sired half the children in the city.

SHEFF is a small, rough town deemed the most dangerous in Vilmir. Due to its proximity to the salt mines, many prisoners are escorted through Sheff. The jail is large and savage, and the town's militia particularly brutal. Those who dwell in Sheff are usually prison guards or their families, or provide services for them: tavern keepers, bordello owners, merchants, craftspeople, etc. On rare occasions Sheff's inns may see gatherings of conspirators intending to free someone from the mine; such attempts invariably fail because

the salt mine is well-defended, as the mass graves in the Sheff cemetery testify. In the mine, dying or dead prisoners are stacked in an abandoned gallery, and then smothered with salt. The soon-desiccated corpses are unremembered and unmourned, their names and deeds lost to history.

DUCHY OF HROLMAR

DUKE AVAN *was himself a man who had explored most of the world and had brought back great wealth and knowledge to Old Hrolmar. Its riches and intellectual life attracted more riches and intellectuals, and so Old Hrolmar flourished.*

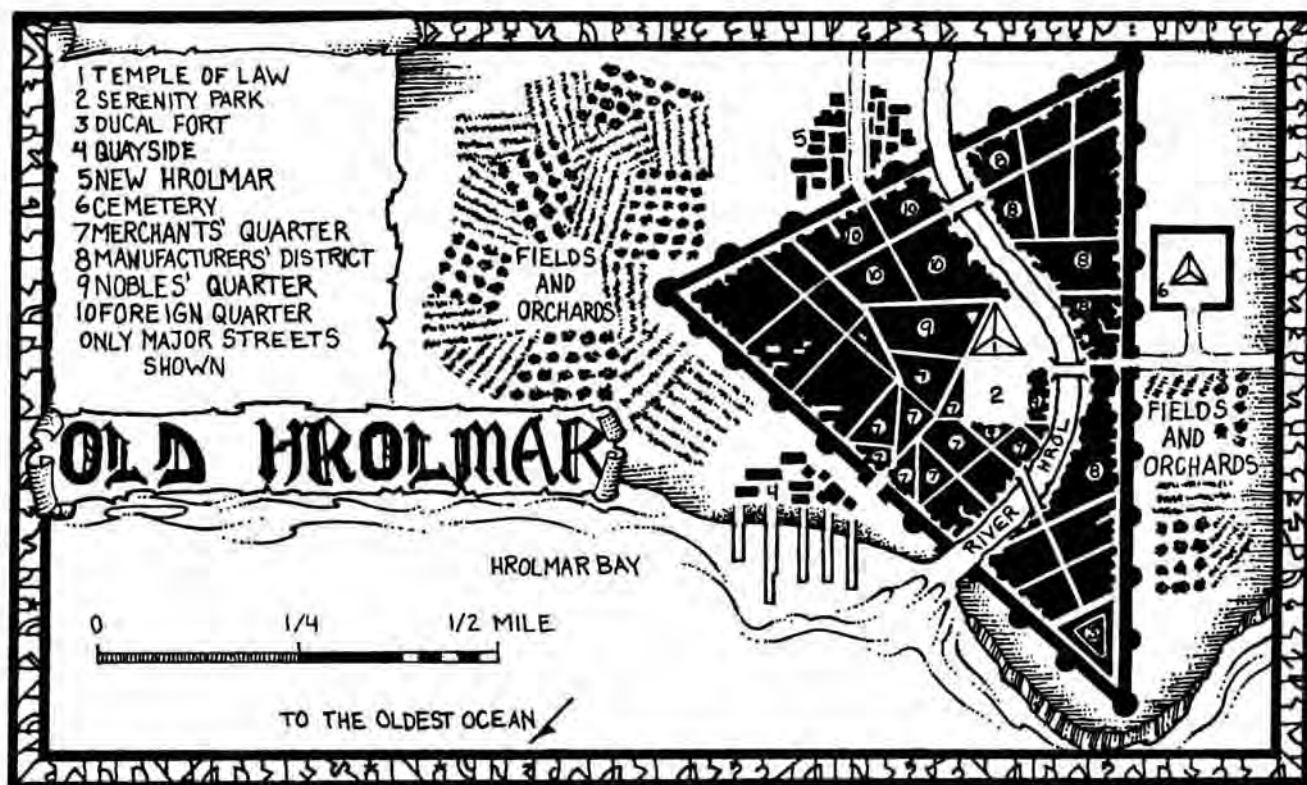
— *The Vanishing Tower, II, 2*

HROLMAR, ruled by the enlightened Duke Avan Astran, is the most pleasant of Vilmir's duchies, and the only one travelers from abroad seek out. Hrolmar is cradled between two ranges of hills, and sheltered from storms by the Straits of Vilmir and the deep anchorage of Hrolmar Bay. The duchy is well irrigated, its fertile soil producing grapes, tomatoes, onions, oranges, and potatoes, as well as saffron, olives, wheat, and barley. Its magnificent red wines are renowned. Hrolmar's peasantry is well treated, well fed, hard-working, and cheerful. The land is green and fertile (alas, not even Hrolmar's bountiful harvests can feed all of Vilmir).

North of the River Hrol, the fields begin to yield less and less, and the people become increasingly dour. Hrolmar is the jewel of Vilmir, but its popular and freethinking duke is a thorn to Church and King.

HROLFORD, a small town, is a way-station for troops bound to and from the Vilmirian protectorates. Tension is high between the legionaries and the city militia, who are loyal to Duke Avan. To guard against bloodshed, the Duke has forbidden that their companies fraternize, and quarters them in barracks at opposite ends of town.

THE NORTHERN CONTINENT



OLD HROLMAR is home to the duke, and under his rule has become Vilmir's most cosmopolitan city. Duke Avan has encouraged philosophers, explorers, artists, poets, and other of creative bent to make Old Hrolmar their home. Many changes have taken place in the city since Avan came to power in 395 YK, a renaissance both cultural and physical.

The city is developing a baroque and fanciful skyline, ranging from renovations of existing buildings to bold new styles completely out of character with Vilmir's laws. Not all of Old Hrolmar's citizens are pleased with the changes the Duke has introduced, although he is personally well loved.

Old Hrolmar is one of the few Vilmirian cities whose geometry of defense has been ruined by new buildings beyond its battlements. The one city in Vilmir to which many people would want to move, it has spilled beyond its walls to relieve overcrowding.

New Hrolmar is the busiest of these areas, a place of many taverns and the departure point for countless caravans. Its residents are traders, explorers, suppliers, and their companions. The lawless Foreign Quarter, inside the city walls and adjacent to the New Hrolmar district, is home to artists, prostitutes, and other bohemian folk.

The ducal fort overlooks Old Hrolmar from the south, erected upon a headland jutting into Hrolmar Bay, while in the city center stands the Temple of Law, a great pyramid of glass dedicated to Lord Elgis the Gentle. Chancellor Helforth, the spiritual leader of Old Hrolmar, is a charismatic but senile old man who has blessed Duke Avan's endeav-

ors. Helforth's likely successor, the ambitious and tight-lipped Administrator Velon, is unlikely to ignore Avan's heresies.

DUCHY OF JADMAR

ELRIC WATCHED as the beetles lurched slowly away their smoking backs reminding him of the fires of the leper camps on the outskirts of Jadmar.

— *The Fortress of the Pearl*, 1, 3

JADMAR TRADITIONALLY includes the estates of Vilmir's king, and was once among the richest of Vilmirian lands. Rice, corn, and barley were grown in its fields, as were onions, garlic, and peppers, and fine milk cattle grazed in the green pastures, all irrigated by the Varkalk River. The vanes of many windmills turned lazily against the sky.

Salinity now besets central and southern Jadmar. Many miles of fields are gray and blighted. The few trees remaining stand skeletal and bare, and the windmills no longer have grain to grind. In the north, Dinner-of-Dust swallows the land. In Marful and Jurdis, the forest has recently been stripped by woodcutters connected to important ministers of the King. Small stands of larch remain, while scattered evergreens grow near the coast.

King Naclon also holds title to Jadmar, as Duke of Jadmar.

JADMAR is the national and ducal capital. Of all Vilmirian cities it is the most rigidly laid out, and the most grand. It is also hopelessly overcrowded, riddled with corruption and minions of Chaos, rife with treachery and intrigue. Its fleshpots are sanctioned by the Church, which turns a blind eye to its own excesses while punishing those of others.

Like all Vilmirian cities, Jadmar presents monotonous facades of identical sandstone buildings, all of the same height and general appearance. In Jadmar's poorer districts up to five families live in squalor in one room. The unsanitary slums are a blight on the city.

The city is dominated by the Temple of Law, a monolithic silver pyramid dedicated to Donblas. From its rooms radiate the true power in Vilmir, wielded by cold Cardinal Garrick and his priesthood. Garrick doubles as Cardinal of Vilmir, for the nation as a whole. Opposite the temple stand the state palace and the barracks of the Vilmirian legions. More than one of Jadmar's nobility, who live in fine mansions near the palace, secretly worship the Lords of Chaos, although their subversive, criminal, and sometimes evil activities are concealed from the public eye.

A statue of Vil Valario stands in Discourse Park (informally, Rant Park) where by tradition the populace may publicly vent grievances. These days, those who are too outspoken have been known to disappear soon after.

Sand is slowly choking Jadmar's harbor. The small fishing village on the western shore is notable for the cormorants which its inhabitants train to dive for fish. The birds, also known as shags, wear copper collars around their necks

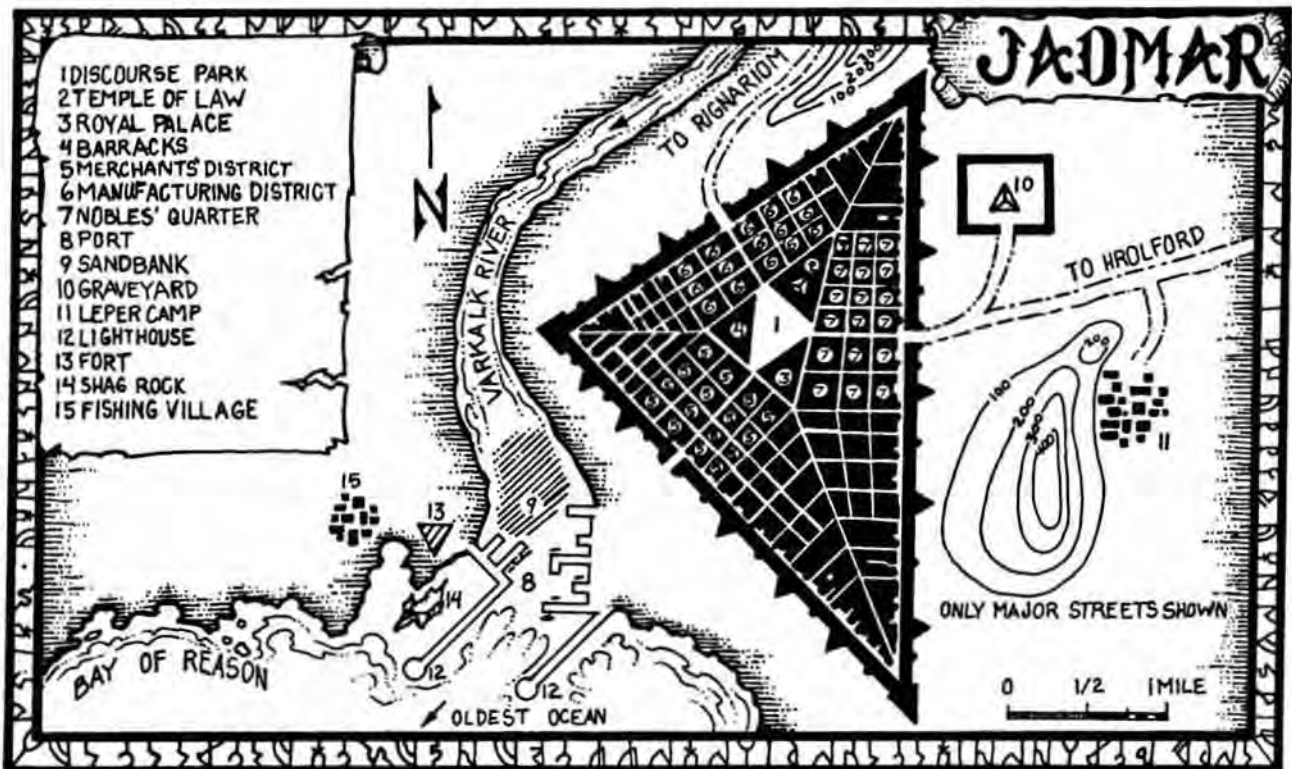
(to prevent them from swallowing their catch), to which are attached individual light chains which tether the birds.

JETCH is the royal family's summer home and the original ducal seat of Jadmar, a green and pleasant town overlooking the Varkalk. Once the surrounding fields were irrigated by a network of glittering canals, but salt has claimed them all, and dirty white crust chokes the soil. Jetch itself survives, with its fountains and gardens, only because the King and his treasury will it so.

JURDIS on the coast was famed for its fine shipyards, and the masts fashioned from the supple pines which grew in the region. No such trees now survive the woodsman's ax, and so the shipyards have died, and with them, much of the town.

In **KRELL**, the grain storehouses stand as empty as the bellies of its inhabitants. Hungry rats prowl every home in search of food, and menace the impoverished who must sleep in the open. Baron Hurlis, the lord of Krell, taxes his peasants to the point of starvation in order to pay for his luxurious tastes. The surrounding fields have been poisoned by salt, and the canals which once irrigated Krell's lands are stagnant breeding grounds for mosquitoes and eels.

MARFUL is found in northern Jadmar, where the plains rise gradually into the rolling hills of Ilmiora. The ancient stands of oak and elm that grow near Marful are shunned and untouched by its inhabitants. Centuries ago, these woods were the hunting preserves of Melnibonéan lordlings, and the people of Marful attest that inhuman ghosts glide amidst the boles and roots to this day.



MORLIS, like surrounding towns, has been ravaged by over-farming and overgrazing. Most people have fled to the capital in search of work and food. A handful of peasant families stay on in Morlis, eking livings from the briny soil. They have become, by default, the rulers of the town, and each family squats in its own elegant abandoned villa.

DUCHY OF NADSOKOR

NADSOKOR had been abandoned some centuries before by a people fleeing from the ravages of a particularly virulent pox which had struck down most of their number. Not long afterwards the first of the beggars had occupied it. Nothing had been done to preserve the city's defense and now the muck around the perimeter was as effective a protection as any wall.

— The Vanishing Tower, II, 3

ABLIGHT even upon Vilmir, the duchy is abandoned, and the ducal city of Nadsokor has become the nation's open sore. Having fallen to the plague in 113 YK, bedeviled by Chaos, and its population dispersed, Nadsokor is now home only to beggars. Much more information concerning this foul and pestilential city appears in the separate Nadoskor chapter.

Chancellor Quamba and Duke Deseintes, the titular rulers of Nadsokor, are unimportant pensioners who live in Jadmar. They have never seen Nadsokor.

DUCHY OF ORDIS

DRY AND FLAT, Ordis is the most boring of Vilmir's duchies. Little breaks the monotony of the landscape save for windmills and plumes of smoke. Ordis's main crops are olives and sunflowers, both vital for the oils they produce. The region's sparse grasslands offer little grazing for sheep or cattle. A few pockets of woodland remain, all that is left of the vast evergreen forests that covered the area hundreds of years ago.

AMBRIC, a dry, dusty Ordian town, is noteworthy as being the birthplace of Cardinal Garrick, and is otherwise unremarkable. Gifts from the Church of Law ensure that Garrick's mother lives in a manner far above her station. Ambric's church of Law is similarly grand; its velvet hangings, ornate candelabra, and golden fittings would be more appropriate in a large city.

GAMLIS sits at the edge of Dinner-of-Dust. Every year that ocean of barren dust expands and creeps closer. The town is surrounded by vast fields of sunflowers, while its population is swollen with desperate and starving peasants seeking shelter and sustenance, their livelihoods swallowed by the encroaching dust.

MALDAM, a village close to the Ilmioran border and the Weeping Waste, was the birthplace of Taargano the Great, Champion of Law, who fell defending Vilmir against Chaos two centuries past. Now worshipped as a god, his minor cult is strongest in this earthen-walled hamlet, where miracles are said to still happen.

In **ORDIS**, the duchy's capital, very little happens. The city is dry and uneventful, its broad, dusty streets witnessing little more exciting than an occasional dog fight. Its residents have achieved a level of literacy unique in Vilmir, there being little else to do in Ordis save read. The gaunt and aesthetic Chancellor Trueman, of the ivory temple of Vallyn the Wise, is responsible for educating the townsfolk. Open classes are held at the temple every day, for Trueman believes that only the wise shall enter the Kingdom of Law, and that ignorance provides a breeding ground for Chaos. The ancient Duke Thrinsus, Lord of Ordis, cares only for his own comfort. Because he fears for his soul, he does nothing to antagonize Chancellor Trueman, although he strongly believes that education is dangerous for any but the elite.

TRENTHAM, a town around whom the deep and extensive Forest of Trent once rose, today is in the middle of barren plains. The timbers were harvested long ago. The forest's edges marked the southern border of Ordis, which are today marked by occasional pylons. Trentham was famed for its wood carvings and decorations, but none save the oldest citizens remember the art. Today the craftsmen make do with poor-quality sun-baked pottery.

DUCHY OF RIGNARIOM

ALONE MAN in the livery of an Official Messenger of Karlaak goaded his horse southward. The mount galloped over the crest of a hill and the messenger saw a village ahead. Hurriedly he rode into it, shouting at the first man he saw.

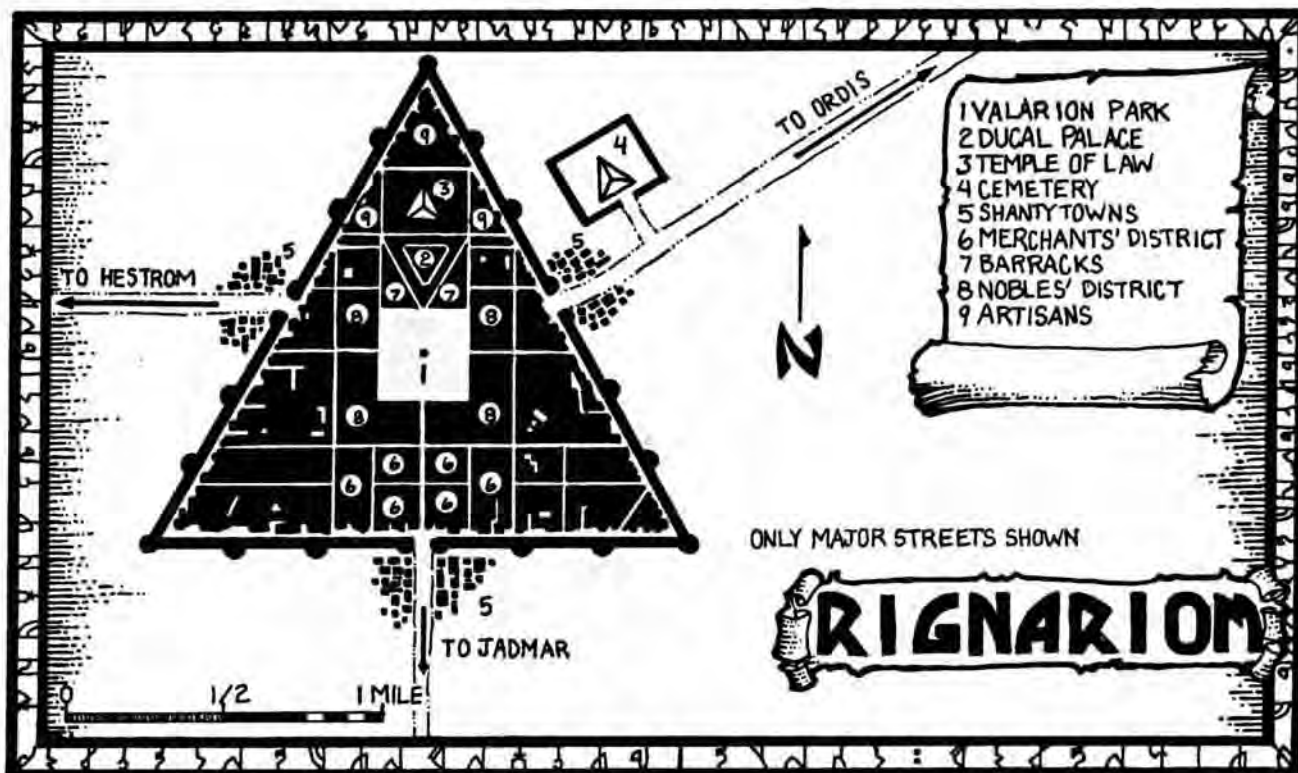
"Quickly, tell me know you aught of Dyvim Storm and his Imrryrian mercenaries? Have they passed this way?"

"Aye a week ago. They went towards Rignariom by Jadmar's borders, to offer their services to the Vilmirian Pretender."

— The Bane of the Black Sword, III, 2

THIS DUCHY has suffered the most from Vilmir's degradation. The heart of the duchy has been consumed by Dinner-of-Dust, that swelling man-made desert. In the east of Rignariom straggling crops are grown, mainly barley and corn. Windmills dot the duchy. Once used to grind grain, most have fallen into ruin. Sunflowers and goats are the important cash crops in Rignariom.

At **HESH**, windmills line the roads to town, their sails rotting and skeletal, silhouetted against the burnished sky.



Once Hesh stood amidst a sea of wheat and corn. Today waves of dust lap at its low walls. Hesh is a ghost town in the midst of Dinner-of-Dust, abandoned even by rats.

HESTROM was a thriving market town, until dust swallowed its fields and the crops died. Avenues of dead olive trees, blackened and skeletal, line the roads. South of town an abandoned windmill is said to be haunted by the wife of the miller who murdered her.

KALNAR'S empty granaries and abandoned homes testify that the Dinner-of-Dust is not far away. Even now the first beggars creep over the town walls, seeking to make Kalnar, like Nadsokor, their own.

RIGNARIOM retains a certain grandeur of old. It was the first capital of Vilmir. With its palaces, broad avenues, and high walls, Rignariom manages to impress even as it depresses. The barren dust over which it now presides has sent the peasants begging at the city gates.hovels and shanties line the roads beyond the walls. Dinner-of-Dust refugees threaten to swamp the city. Soldiers patrol everywhere, to keep the desperate under control.

Valarion Park in Rignariom's center is noted for its fine statue of Vil Valario, carved while Valario lived. It is the model upon which all successive portraits and statues of Vilmir's founder have been based. It shows well Valario's fanatical gaze and gaunt, aesthetic hunger. Visions are said to be sent to those who spend a night praying before the image.

During the squabble for the succession following King Naclon's death, Rignariom becomes home to the Vilmirian pretender, and for brief years is revisited by its regal glory of old. Duke Jorigal Rivalus, who rules in Rignariom, is one of many Vilmirian lords whose faith lies with his own power rather than with the Church, although he pays lip service to Law. The temple of Goldar, a quartz pyramid capped with gold, stands resplendent near the palace walls. Chancellor Jeldan, the high priest, has been a rival of Cardinal Garrick for many years and is always attempting to covertly block Garrick's moves. Jeldan throws his full support behind the Vilmirian pretender, Hervis, after King Naclon's death in the Sack of Imrry.

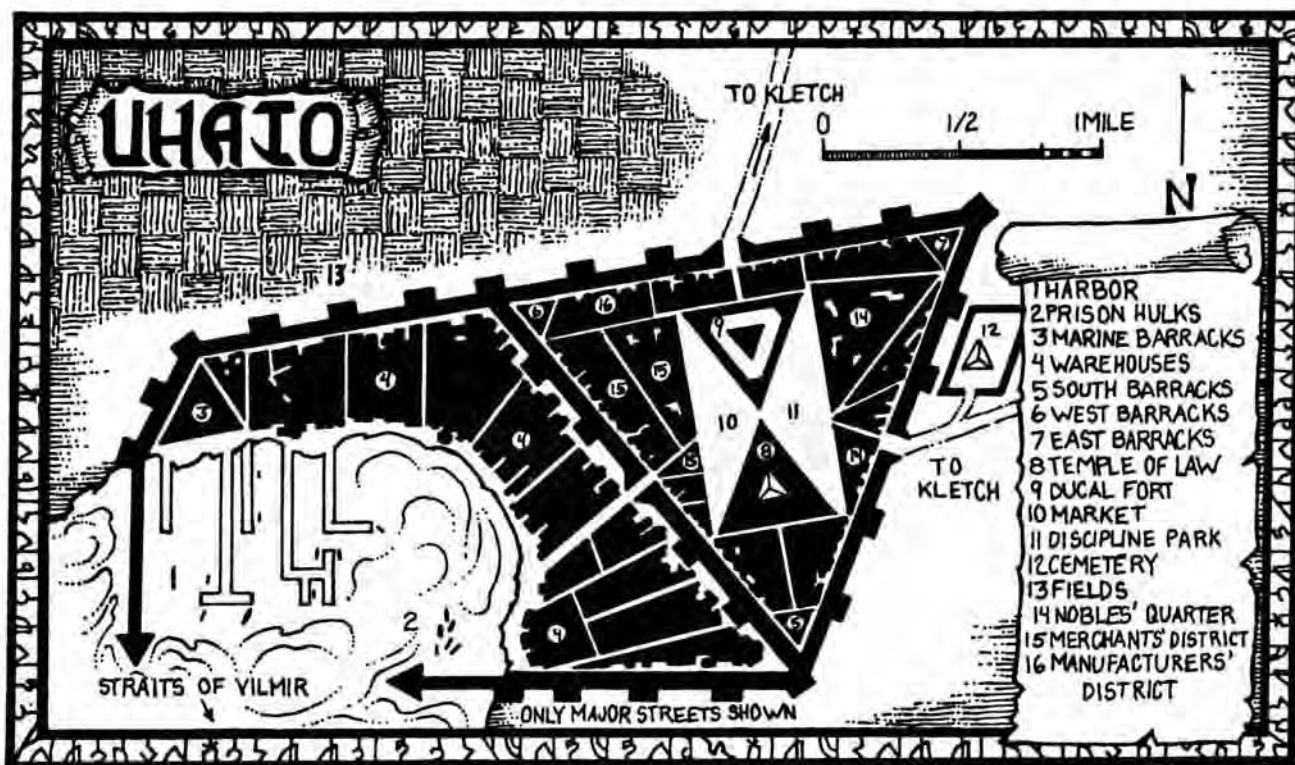
VLANCE is a small town close to the border of Hrolmar. Envious of the fine treatment accorded Hrolmar's peasantry, the peasants of V lance complain and rebel. The bodies of several rabble-rousers hang in gibbets in the town square.

DUCHY OF UHAIO

YYRKOON, as ever, was first to shout. "Let us go to meet them now, with dragons and with battle barges. Let us pursue them to their own land and take their war to them. Let us attack their nations and burn their cities! Let us conquer them and thus ensure our own security."

— continued

THE NORTHERN CONTINENT



Dyvim Tvar spoke up again: "No dragons," he said.

"What?" Yyrkoon said. "What?"

"No dragons, prince. They will not be awakened. The dragons sleep in their caverns, exhausted by their last engagement on your behalf."

"Mine?"

"You would use them in our conflict with the Vilmirian pirates. I told you that I would prefer to save them for a larger engagement. But you flew them against the pirates and you burned their little boats and now the dragons sleep."

— Elric of Melniboné, I, 5

THE EASTERN-MOST duchy of Vilmir, Uhaio sees many thousands of troops, mainly conscripts from homeless peasant families, march across its borders each year. Bound to and from the Vilmirian protectorates, most of the legionaries are stationed near the border, poised to flood into the principalities at the first sign of trouble.

Almonds, apricots, and oranges are grown in the duchy, although recent crops have been poor. In the east, towards the lush Vilmirian protectorates, crops of wheat and barley thrive, the richest crops anywhere in Vilmir save those of Hrolmar. The coastline is rugged, and dotted with numerous small bays and islets, while Vilmir's highest peak is found in Uhaio's steep highlands.

In **AINE** are stationed thousands of Vilmirian legionaries, poised for action in the protectorates. Off-duty soldiers swagger about the streets, drinking, gambling, fighting, and whoring. At other times they parade about in their polished armor, or mount exercises on the nearby plains.

KLETCH residents are skilled pirates and wreckers. Their small, sharp-prowed boats swarm amongst the bays and in the Kletch harbor. The townsfolk are skilled at luring passing ships onto the rocks at night. Kletchian boats are known as *bakrasim*, a Melnibonéan word meaning sharp-toothed, their prows being razor sharp, employed by the pirates of the region to slice through nets, anchor cables, and most importantly, grappling ropes.

UHAIO is the home of the Vilmirian navy. As well as their battleships and the schooners of many a privateer, the harbor is also home to several prison ships, rudderless, mastless, and rotting. In these hulks are imprisoned numerous convicts, often rebels from the Vilmirian Protectorates, the most troublesome of whom are kept in irons. Near the harbor lie the barracks of marines and soldiers. The city is ruled over by Duke Elgar Esholta, Vilmirian Lord Protector Vilmir's Lord Protector, commander of both the navy and the legions. He cuts an arrogant figure in gilt armor, and regularly struts Uhaio's streets, surrounded by his bodyguard of Pikaraydian warriors.

Opposite the ducal fortress stands the copper pyramid of Tovik the Relentless, Lord of Law, burnished so that it

seems to flame blood-red in the sunlight. The temple is the domain of the fanatical Chancellor Dassom, gaunt and sadistic. Dassom rarely lacks an excuse to torture heretics and rebels to death in Discipline Park, tasks he carries out with personal relish, although he could easily delegate such duties to priests of lesser station.

In 401 YK, the temple is one of the few buildings to escape unscathed when Melnibonéan dragons attack Uhaio in retaliation for the attacks by privateers on Melnibonéan vessels. Thousands of people die, and countless ships are destroyed, as are many wharves and warehouses in the harbor district. Included amongst the dead is Crown Prince Bastrom, King Naclon's only son and heir.

DUCHY OF VILMIRO

VILMIRO IS the most desolate of the nine duchies. Cold, dry winds from the Oldest Ocean sweep over its moors and barren hills. The River Vil, which runs through central Vilmiro, receives slurry from the copper, lead, sulfur, and zinc mines which line its steep upper banks. The broad watercourse is choked with silt and effluent by the time it reaches the sea. The Vil's waters are stained a poisonous green-blue by the mines wastes, and are almost lifeless. The river's headwaters gush steaming and boiling from the ground, in a rocky area of thermal activity in the duchy's highlands. It is claimed that waters from the hot mineral springs of the upland Vil cure many ills, but drinking from the Vil's lower reaches almost certainly will be fatal. Vilmiro's hills are grim and gray. In those areas where sulfur is mined, the slopes are barren and erosion-scarred. All vegetation is killed by the processing fumes. Numerous sandstone quarries also dot the region.

Other products from the duchy include the fine and intricate laces traditionally woven there, and the excellent sherries bottled in Villon.

Vilmiro was the birthplace of Vil Valario, and reverence for him and his teachings is strong here. The region's peasants are notorious both for their poverty in a poor nation, and for their fanatical devotion to the Church of Law. Vilmiro is also home to the Abbey of the Cleansing Flame, a spartan, ill-omened monastery whose martial priests are better known as the Inquisition, the most feared religious order in all Vilmir.

MIREK'S womenfolk knit the lace for which Vilmiro is famous, the men of the town spend most of their lives at work in the mines, and even the town's children break up rocks to make gravel, yet everyone is poor.

VILLON'S startlingly white soil produces grapes from which is made the renowned Villonese sherry, a bone-dry fortified wine sold throughout the Young Kingdoms. Brandy is sometimes added to the sherry to sweeten its flavor, but in Villon itself this is only done to sherries which are to be transported: as well as changing the flavor, the addition of brandy ensures the sherry will not be soured by heat or other factors

during travel. The grapes are crushed by treaders wearing special boots with nailed soles, between which the pips are caught so that they do not remain, to make the sherry bitter.

In **VILMIRO**, the oldest city in Vilmir and once a place of slender, tapering towers and pleasure gardens, the rebellion against Melniboné first flared. Hardly a trace remains today of the Melnibonéan settlement which once stood here, save for the occasional brick or block of pastel marble incorporated into newer buildings. Plows sometimes turn up enameled tiles in the soil. The iron pyramid of Arkyn which stands in the center of Vilmiro contains a sizable shrine to Vil Valario, who is revered as a demigod in the region. Vilmiro was founded by Valario. It was he who first urged the Melnibonéan slaves to rebel against their inhuman overlords, and eventually to tear down the beautiful Melnibonéan towers with their bare hands.

Today Vilmiro is home to many artisans and craftsmen. The fledgling science of Law is held in high regard here, and the meticulous and obsessive Chancellor Nairan, together with inquisitive Duke Nogion, do much to encourage its practice. A science festival is held in Vilmiro every year on the first of Arkenan, exhibiting and demonstrating many a new marvel. The cleverest inventor of the day is awarded a grand prize, and his image is enshrined for twelve months in a position of honor in a villa in the noble quarter.

SPECIAL PLACES

ABBEY OF THE CLEANSING FLAME

These dour walled buildings stand in the bleak uplands of Vilmiro, erected shortly after the death of Vil Valario in 16 YK. The monks of this militant order are fanatical worshippers of Lord Donblas of Law. Known also as the Inquisition, the Order of the Cleansing Flame scours Vilmir for heretics and witches. Those they accuse are invariably tortured to gain confessions, then executed, usually by burning. Drowning and strangulation are also favored. Despite not being officially recognized by the Church of Law, Cardinal Garrick sees fit to turn a blind eye to the Order's activities, and has been known to use them as a tool to rid himself of irritating nobles.

The Inquisition is greatly feared by the common folk, and respected by the nobility. It is rumored to have agents throughout the land. Terror is its power. Outspoken critics of the Church of Law or of Vilmirian state policy vanish from their homes during the night, thanks to the Inquisitions monks, and are never seen again.

THE SALT MINES OF DOLGAR

Located not far from the town of Sheff, the constricted shafts and galleries of the salt mines of Dolgar wind tortuously through the hills above Sheff. Its passages are low



VARKALK GORGE

ceilinged and narrow, forcing those who labor here to crawl on their hands and knees as they go about their work, their only tools blunt wooden picks. The corrosive salt they dig eats at the skin, while the brutal regime under which they labor denies them all but the minimum food required to stay alive, in order to keep them weak.

Prisoners sentenced to the salt mines have short and miserable lives. Once incarcerated, they never again see the light of the sun, for even their sleeping quarters are underground. The only light in the mine comes from smoky torches guttering in the foul air, dimly reflected from the crystalline walls. Prisoners in the mine are generally those deemed too dangerous to be incarcerated elsewhere, but whose executions might martyr them for one cause or another. Free thinkers, heretics, and rebel leaders from the Vilmirian Protectorates are all to be found in these grim passages, although rarely for long.

DINNER-OF-DUST

Bad farming, drought, and overgrazing have left the once-fertile fields of central Vilmir wastelands of drifting dust. This desert is man-made, and is increasing in size. Fleeing peasants are often encountered on Vilmir's roads, thin, gray-faced, and without hope. Their fields have been swallowed and their homes abandoned. The lack of rain, unofficially and without evidence blamed by the Church upon Chaotic magic, insures that dust storms strike whenever the winds rise. Then great clouds blot out the sun for hours or days, darkening the skies across Vilmir.

VARKALK GORGE

In flowing through the uplands of Nadsokor, the swift Varkalk River has cut a deep canyon through the rock. The gorge stretches for 120 miles, and is many hundreds of feet deep. Falls and rapids within make the river unnavigable, though the watercourse is narrow and can be boated across at many points, once the bottom of the gorge is reached.

No bridge spans its depths. Caverns, weirdly-eroded rock formations, and the startling variety of colors in the exposed rock strata make the Varkalk Gorge a breathtaking and memorable sight. Gangs of outlaws reputedly make the gorge and its side-canyons their home.

THE VILMIRIAN PROTECTORATES

East of Vilmir are the so-called Vilmirian Protectorates. Once independent principalities, Khandar, Mariol, and Varg stand within the lush delta of the River Stresh, which flows south from the Weeping Waste to the sea. The protectorates provide Vilmir with most of its grain; as a result of such excessive tribute the people of the region go hungry that Vilmirians may eat. Vast numbers of Vilmirian legionaries are stationed in and at the borders of the protectorates to prevent uprisings. The children of the merchant princes who ruled Khandar, Mariol, and Varg are held as hostages in Jadmar, on Cardinal Garrick's command. Helpless to save either their sons or their people, they pray to Goldar for deliverance from this tyranny.



TYPICAL VILMIRAINS

SOCIETY

VILMIR IS a feudal theocracy. The Church of Law dominates Vilmirian life. Church and state, despite differences, are united against Chaos, be it the worship of demons, or that aspect of Chaos represented by rebellion and disorder amongst the lower classes. Each person has an appointed place in society and should do nothing to contest it, for such would be against the teachings of Law. As for centuries, Vilmir is unchanging in its Lawful perfection of form, and continuing to stagnate and disintegrate in its substance.

The Church of Law has not always been all-powerful, but increasingly it influences everything, as its definitions and prohibitions are absorbed into the customs and expectations of the nation. Though with little effect, King Naclon strives for independence from Cardinal Garrick. With Naclon's death, Vilmir falls totally under the Church's sway.

In Vilmir, women are believed to be inferior to men, being tainted by bodily fluctuations that are obviously the curse of Chaos. As men do not menstruate, and are thus more physically perfect in the eyes of the Church, they are

therefore deemed the superior sex. Similar dubious deductions are held self-evident about other issues of sexuality and personality in Vilmir. For instance, the mentally ill and physically disabled are uniformly outcast, as the Church claims that such people have earned the wrath of Law for some misdeed, perhaps in a prior existence.

CHARACTER

Vilmirians think it good manners to be serious and unimaginative. They do not encourage individuality. Vilmirian virtues include obedience, respect for customs, steadiness of character, and hard work. It is disgraceful to express extreme emotions, except to show anger in time of war or awe before the Church of Law. Displays of drunkenness or passionate exclamation are frowned upon, and often punished.

From an early age, all Vilmirians are drilled to understand their places in society. Most believe that the gods appointed him or her to a particular position in life, and that it follows that personally striving to reach a different social position or failing to live up to the current position is an insult to the gods and the natural order. Little friction occurs between the social classes because all are bound to the Wheel of Law, and all must serve it. Just as peasants were born to serve the rich, the rich were born to serve the

COMMON VILMIRIAN NAMES

MEN'S FIRST NAMES: Amlis, Avan, Avvon, Bastrom, Calvan, Elgere, Fodric, Franchist, Garrick, Hervis, Holon, Jorivol, Leen, Manyule, Naclon, Nogion, Ongar, Pethron, Rodrigo, Toemas, Toro, Vil, Vust, Yann, Zamoro.

WOMEN'S FIRST NAMES: Atania, Betrik, Datar, Enna, Estele, Isahble, Janna, Jeda, Jemma, Lara, Lennara, Marahble, Marriat, Nara, Ninta, Peera, Shara, Zafra, Zammara.

SURNAMES: Almodo, Arrago, Astran, Bandras, Corunna, Dassom, Esholta, Fornova, Helforth, Jeldan, Mahlag, Malcon, Marinus, Mulay, Nairon, Ramir, Regalarrado, Satigo, Sissinner, Trasstam, Valario, Zagosa.

Church, and so too the Church must serve the gods. By serving well, the soul is later reborn higher on the Wheel, and after many eternities the soul earns acceptance by the White Lords, escaping the Wheel and extinguishing any chance for damnation.

The dual menaces of Chaos and of the Inquisition reinforce these attitudes at every turn. Vilmirians generally distrust foreigners, considering them lax and shiftless, believing that most pay only lip service to Law, if indeed they are not overt worshippers of Chaos. These expectations are easily fed and rarely disprovable: a charge of Chaos-worship is usually enough to ensure the arrest and interrogation of foreigners other than diplomats.

APPEARANCE

As a people, Vilmirians are of medium frame and height, their hair usually light brown to drab blonde, their eyes gray-brown. Both men and women crop their hair respectably short. Only women of the upper classes, who do not toil in factories or fields, grow their hair longer. A length below the shoulder is indecent and is rarely tolerated. Facial hair is encouraged for men, except amongst the priesthood, who are clean-shaven as a sign of their sexual neutrality. The nobility favor short neat beards and exuberant mustaches, often waxed, while peasants' full beards are tucked within their shirts when they grow long.

The peasantry of Vilmir are perforce hardy, although often underfed. Of late many peasants have been driven by the drought from their lands to the cities, hoping for work or charity.

The nobility, who rarely marry outside Vilmir, are inbred. Crossed eyes, weak or absent chins, thin blood, cleft palates, epilepsy, insanity, and other seemingly hereditary traits are common in Vilmirian noble families.

Vilmirian dress is plain and unadorned. Peasants wear undyed wool. The nobility wears drab linen, usually gray, white, and black. Tunics, trousers, jackets, broad-brimmed hats, and heavy boots are worn by men, while women favor long sleeved and high cut dresses, surcoats or aprons, and bonnets or scarves, together with slippers. Peasants often go barefoot, or wear simple sandals. The nobility express their wealth through the finer cut and fabric of their garments, but the style remains identical regardless of class. In Vilmir, decent people know that there is one right way for each sex to dress.

Warriors wear slit, knee-length coats of ring and leather armor, and simple conical helms with nose guards. Footmen carry shortswords and javelins, as well as kite shields, while cavalry carry a lance, as well as shortsword and shield.

FESTIVALS

Vilmir celebrates three important festivals each year. These are Valario's Day, All Gods' Day, and Donblas Day.

Valario's Day lasts from sunset on 15th Elordan until sunset the next day, and commemorates the independence of Vilmir. It is a time of fasting and penitence, ending in a great feast at sunset on the 16th.

All Gods' Day, on 20th Montfath, celebrates the Lords of Law. Painted statues of the gods are paraded through the streets, accompanied by flagellants, incense, singing of hymns, and ecstatic crowds dressed in their best clothes.

Donblas is held in special reverence in Vilmir, for it is said to be Donblas who appeared most often in Vil Valario's visions, inspiring him to lead the nation to freedom. Don Day, on 1st Donblan, commemorates the day Valario first saw the Defender, and is marked throughout Vilmir by processions of drummers, great bonfires, and the consecration of weapons.

Locally, some duchies and individual towns also tolerate traditional festivities of a more carnal nature, in which costumes, disguises, and other dubious revelry are common. The Church of Law inveighs against such celebrations, but does not yet work actively against them. As befits the Vilmirian way, however, individual debauchery and licentious behavior are stifled at every hand.

FOOD AND DRINK

Eating is simple, although not boring, in Vilmir. Seafood is a staple, with dried and salted fish carried inland by traders, and fresh fish consumed along the coasts. Tomatoes, peppers, olives, garlic, onions, and rice are universal in dishes throughout the duchies, while spices such as saffron and chili enhance the food of the rich. Among Vilmir's poor, potato omelets, olives, green onions, and unleavened bread are common. A favorite desert is *nouracho*, a nougat of almond paste sweetened with honey. Wines are drunk in moderation throughout the land, but drunkenness is frowned upon. If the imbiber becomes a public spectacle, scourging follows when he or she is sober enough to feel the consequences thoroughly.

ARTS AND PASTIMES

Vilmirian music is stately and solemn, played on wind instruments such as recorders, flutes, and horns, and small drums and tambourines. To such music people dance the *sargana*, a circle dance based on an elaborate series of short and long steps. In the great pyramids of Law, hydraulic organs, powered by slave-driven bellows, are played during services. The arts are not encouraged in Vilmir, given that time spent on such idle pursuits could be better employed in labor. Theater is particularly unpopular, given that it is a Chaotic art, depending on illusion and lies. Buildings are mostly left unadorned, as are clothes. Functional crafts as brewing, smithing, weaving, and lace-making are encouraged in Vilmir, as is any pursuit capable of reflecting the perfection required by the science of Law.

GOVERNMENT

A **HEREDITARY** king rules Vilmir, to whom the throne is a birthright. The eldest male relative of the king is the anointed heir. In Vilmir, currently, the Church of Law controls the king, and thus the country.

Vil Valario, the first King of Vilmir, was the leader both temporal and spiritual, but after his death the Church became a separate, self-governing body, answerable only to itself and to the gods. The king wields the power of life and death over every man, woman, and child, but the Church controls their souls. The Church is thus assured of absolute loyalty from almost all the people. Even the king must bow to the Church, and to Cardinal Garrick, or receive eternal torment after death. Although King Naclon chafes and maneuvers for freedom, he has had little success escaping Cardinal Garrick's strictures, and must be content with power over his nobles, and the kingdom through them, rather than possessing the absolute control of Vilmir as a whole.

King Naclon is the official head of state. Cardinal Garrick holds power of veto over any decision Naclon may make, and outranks him before the gods. Below the king in status stand seven dukes, rulers of the Vilmirian duchies. The king is also a duke, ruling over Jadmar. Nadsokor's ducal palace is empty until Church and State find someone worthy of the title who can also retake the duchy and thrive there.

By the king's acquiescence or instigation, barons, earls, and minor nobles are appointed by the dukes to rule in the king's name in Vilmir's regional cities, though some of these titles are hereditary. Each minor noble pays tribute and fealty to their duke and to the king. Below the nobility in status come the officers of Vilmir's legions and navy, then the armed militia, the small merchant class and small landowners, and finally the sea of serfs, servants, peasants, and slaves.

The priesthood of Law represents the spiritual equivalent of the nobility in status and influence. Just as the cardinal is slightly more important than the king, so too are chancellors slightly higher in status than dukes. Administrators are the equal of minor nobles, while even the most humble initiate is of slightly greater rank than an officer of the Vilmirian legions.

OTHER LANDS

A fanatical stance against Chaos and an aggressive foreign policy insures that Vilmir has few allies. Although the kingdom has not warred upon any nation for over a century, relationships with Argimiliar, Dharijor, and Pikarayd are tense. Pan Tang and its people are reviled in Vilmir: Pan Tangian vessels are forbidden to moor in any Vilmirian port, and Vilmir's privateers are licensed to sink all Pan Tangian ships they encounter.

Neighboring Ilmiora has the best relations with Vilmir, for the border is open between them and a constant stream of traffic passes along the roads linking their cities. This is of necessity. Lacking Ilmiora's grains and cattle, Vilmir would starve.

After the purges in Argimiliar begin in 404 YK, Cardinal Garrick seeks an alliance with that nation's insane King Hozel.

Vilmir traditionally exchanges embassies with the Isle of the Purple Towns, Filkhar, Ilmiora, Jharkor, Lormyr, and Shazar. Ambassadors are appointed by King Naclon but usually are in the employ of Cardinal Garrick. Ambassadors of foreign nations live in Jadmar in some opulence (because costs are low). Their villas and grounds are immune from Vilmirian law, save such legislation as concerns Chaos.

Vilmir's relationship with Melniboné is a curious one. The Church of Law denounces Melnibonéans as spawn of Chaos, and forbids common folk to traffic with the Dreaming City and its inhabitants. Nevertheless, Vilmirian privateers are licensed to conduct trade in Imrryr, since that way represents so much less of a sin. In exchange for wine and sherry, privateers sail from Imrryr with cargoes of spices, gems, and precious metals. A small illicit drug trade also makes its way into Vilmir in such fashion.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Vilmir's secular laws are decided by the king, in consultation with his dukes, ministers, and Cardinal Garrick. Religious laws are the province of the Church alone. The greatest crime in Vilmir is religious heresy, which includes blasphemy and Chaos worship, for which the penalty is death by burning. Nobles convicted of blasphemy are allowed the grace of strangulation before incineration, or allowed to commit suicide. Lesser crimes, such as treason or murder, are punished by incarceration or exile. The penalty for minor crimes such as theft against a person of consequence are dealt with by the amputation of one or more hands. Women found guilty of breaking their marriage

A Proclamation

LET IT BE KNOWN that minions of Entropy, under the guise of Itinerant priests of Our most Holy Church, have infiltrated the borders of Vilmir, and spread Heresy and Dissent throughout the land, encouraging Free Thought, and calling Shame upon the Church of Law, which they claim, in their malefic lies, to be Sullied and Corrupt. That the Pollution of the Pure and the spread of the Disease of Sin might be stopped, and the plots of these Worshipers of Demons be Thwarted, it is the Just and Holy Duty of Cardinal Garrick, High Priest of Donblas, Light of the White Lords, to command that no Sermon shall be preached unless it be from the Pulpit, and that Our soldiery are hereby possessed of the Duty of arresting those Diabolists who flaunt this decree. Thus may these infidels and most Chaotic enemies of the Church and State of Vilmir be Revealed in their Infamy, and their blandishments against the Purity of the Church cease.

— Issued in Jadmar on Fireday, 3rd Elordan, in the Year of Purity 400.

vows, or men caught sleeping with another man's wife, have their ears or noses notched or cut off. Petty crime, such as slander or gossip, is punished by small brands, or by flogging. Convicted of drunkenness or bullying, the malfeasant is flogged or exposed in the public stocks.

WAR

Vilmir's laws are upheld by the Gray Defenders, named for their drab uniforms, men chosen from among the most efficient of the nation's legionaries. Squads of them constantly patrol the streets and highways of the land.

While the Gray Defenders protect Vilmirian citizens from one another, a vast army and smaller navy guard Vilmir from the outside world. As well as patrolling Vilmir's borders, the nine legions also suppress rebellion within Vilmir and the protectorates. The legions consist largely of conscripted men; in Vilmir every man must, by law, serve for five years in the army or navy. Those who elect to remain on after this time receive better pay and have a higher chance for promotion.

Infantry are inevitably of peasant stock, although promotion to the cavalry or to the Gray Defenders is possible. Officers and most members of the cavalry are the lesser sons of the nobility. Rank and file marines are also of peasant stock, their officers likewise of higher birth.

PRIVATEERS, PIRATES

Elric wasted no time with parleying but jumped at once from the boats prow and cut at the first two who grabbed for him. The blade, still sharp enough, severed their heads and he stood over their bodies grinning at them like the wolf he was sometimes called. "I want you all," he said. He used the battle bravado he had learned from the pirates of the Vilmirian Straits.

— **The Fortress of the Pearl, II, 5**

Lacking in natural resources and in national genius, Vilmir is forced to seek outside herself for foodstuffs, timber, cloth, and other essentials. More than half the navy, and a number of licensed individuals, sail the seas of the Young Kingdoms as privateers, licensed pirates loyal to the Vilmirian throne. Such privateers are the closest Vilmir has to heroes; their boldest exploits are told and retold in marketplaces and taverns throughout the land. Crown Prince Bastrom is included among their ranks, and is much loved by most Vilmirians. Other well-known privateers include Dashing Jan Dans, and Fernand du Vilmiro, fearless captain of the *Black Wolf*.

Outright pirates live in southeast Vilmir, which is dotted with bays and islands. Home to those who hope to prey upon merchant vessels sailing the blue waters of the Straits of Vilmir, these local pirates are also part-time fishermen, who suddenly become law-abiding when good fish are schooling. They present a nuisance to shipping, but are little danger to large vessels. They rarely dare engage well-armed crews.

The warships of the Vilmirian navy are too large and cumbersome to sail into the shallow waters the pirates call home to burn their ships and put an end to their raiding. Wreckers, who set false navigational fires and then plunder the beached vessels, also are a threat to coast-hugging vessels.

THE CHURCH OF LAW

IT WAS FOUNDED in 11 YK by the followers of Vil Valario. After his untimely death in year 16, the Church of Law divorced itself from the government in order that politics and ambition should not sully its purity. Without external control, the Church of Law grew rapidly. The property and wealth of those who joined its ranks were signed over to the institution, and this rapid concentration of wealth became its strength and its greatest weakness.

By 100 YK, its devoted priests had gained many converts and mostly eliminated those they saw as touched by Chaos (invariably critics of the Church). Most of Vilmir was under the influence of the Church of Law. Its doctrines ordered their uncertain lives, gave the people something to believe in, and explained the apparent vagrancies of fate as being predestined by the Lords of Law. As Vilmir was rooted in religious fervor and the legend of Vil Valario was fresh and strong, the people saw it as only natural that Valario's holy war should be passed on to the priesthood of Law.

In little more than a century the Church of Law became preeminent in Vilmir. Few dared oppose it then, and almost no one does today. Followers of the Church of Law come from every class and social group, and it is rare to meet a Vilmirian who speaks of the Church with contempt. Other religions are not tolerated in Vilmir, although secretive worship of the Elemental Rulers exists in rural areas. Magic is illegal and proscribed; sorcerers, if discovered, are executed. Chaos is anathema. The worship of Chaos is the most heinous act one can commit in Vilmir.

THE GODS OF LAW

Vilmir worships the nine White Lords of Law, as described in the *Elric!* rules. Each god has a major temple somewhere in the nation dedicated to his or her worship. Lesser shrines are found throughout the land. The cult of Goldar is small, although the Golden God's teachings are fervently practiced by his worshippers, most of them drawn from the small merchant class. The Order of the Cleansing Flame contains the most fanatical worshippers of Donblas, although numerous martial orders devoted to the Lord of Justice can be found in Vilmir. Administrators of the cult of Donblas are Vilmir's judges and lawyers.

Arkyn's worship is concentrated in Vilmiro, while the worship of Theril, whose high temple stood in Nadsokor, has fallen into disregard until her temple can be reclaimed. Theril's largest following is in Old Hrolmar, but after Duke Avan's death and the repercussions following his demise, Lady Theril's worship ceases almost entirely. The temple of Elgis, in Old Hrolmar, survives the turbulence of Duke Avan's death, although it does lose many of its adherents in the following years. Vallyn's priests are responsible for the education of noble children, and may be hired by the wealthy for instruction in other areas. The remaining cults of Law are of little note, save for the priests of Mirath, whose healing arts are practiced free of charge at hospices throughout Vilmir.

THE PRIESTHOOD

Despite rivalries amongst members of the Church hierarchy, its priests do not squabble in public. Three distinct ranks of priests exist within the Church, membership of which is traditionally open to all men. Those of low birth rarely progress far in the hierarchy. Women are forbidden the Church, except as worshippers. Though several gods are female, their priests must be male.

Initiates, who may not practice as priests, are the acolytes of the Church, and perform menial tasks while they are trained for at least six years. Commoners who enter the Church of Law rarely rise beyond acolyte rank. Initiates serve higher-ranking priests, clean temples, prepare food, and learn the tracts and doctrines of Law as preached in Vilmir. Initiates wear simple white robes without belts or cords, to symbolize that their minds are not tied to earthly pleasures.

Administrators are the rank-and-file members of the Church of Law, and make up the majority of the priesthood. Administrators preach to the people, enact weddings, funerals, and other rites, and instruct initiates in their duties. They see to the day-to-day running of the Church of Law, and control its purse strings. Administrators wear robes of white trimmed in silver thread, with belts of silver chain. Their robes symbolize purity, the silver thread shows that they have heeded the word of Law, and the metal chain signifies that they are bound to the Church and its teachings.

Chancellors are responsible, in consultation with the Cardinal, for drafting the laws and regulations of the Church, and for overseeing their application. They speak for the gods, and decree what the gods have willed. Save for the Cardinal himself, Chancellors are the highest rank in the Church. There are nine chancellors in total, the chancellor for Donblas also being the cardinal for the nation as a whole, at present Cardinal Garrick of Jadmar. The position of chancellor is a lifelong position, save for exceptional circumstances, such as proof of high treason or Chaos-worship. Each chancellor leads one of the nine cults of the Church, and dwells within the temple dedicated to his particular god, except that a pensioner named Quamba, the chancellor for Theril, whose temple once stood in long-abandoned Nadsokor, understandably resides in Jadmar.

As token of their office, chancellors wear heavy robes of silver cloth, with sashes of gold. The silver shows their dedication to Law, while the gold sash represents their illuminated state. The Cardinal of Vilmir wears robes of cloth-of-gold, embroidered with silver. Bound about the waist is a belt of linked silver, showing that his illumination is all-encompassing, and that the power of the Lords of Law runs through him.

THE THREAT OF CHAOS

In truth, the threat of Chaos in Jadmar is not imaginary. There are a number of cults and solitary worshippers of the gods of Chaos. In Jadmar an established Chaotic underground exists, whose depraved and decadent rituals are held at the dark of the moon. The cult, worshipping Arioch of the Seven Darks, was established before Vilmir gained independence from the Bright Empire. Originally the cult existed among slaves, who aped the rituals of their inhuman masters. The destruction of Melnibonéan rule served to advance the cult. Free of their overlords, the cultists were able to gather more power to themselves, and entrench themselves in Jadmarian society.

Most of the cult's membership are merchants or disaffected priests, educated and financially powerful. They count at least one high noble among their ranks. Despite their influence and organization, the cult is unable to summon Arioch until 401 YK, when he appears before them for the first time. The cult's secret control over Vilmir thereafter tightens rapidly.

Starving peasants, bitter prisoners, the dispossessed, the outraged, and the desperate may turn to Chaos as a solution to their afflictions. The Inquisition exists to root out worshippers of the Lords of Entropy. Those who worship Chaos within Vilmir risk death and torture at the Inquisition's hands. Innocents are caught up in the Inquisition's nets. This is the price of vigilance, its monks would claim, were anyone so bold as to question their motives. Throughout Vilmir, the mere mention of Chaos is generally enough to quail most citizens.

TWO MINOR CULTS

The Lawful cults of Taargano and Vil Valario are unique to Vilmir. Vil Valario, who delivered the land from the Melnibonéans, is revered as a hero in most parts of the land, but in the Duchy of Vilmiro he is worshipped as a minor god. Rather than die, his faithful claim, Valario was taken by the Lords of Law to their silver sphere beyond the earth. He dwells there, to return to deliver Vilmir once again, in her hour of greatest need.

The cult of Valario has few adherents outside of Vilmiro. It is generally frowned upon by the Church, although not actively suppressed. Most educated folk consider the cult as one for superstitious peasants. Its worshippers fast and flagellate themselves, following the example set by Valario.

The cult of Taargano the Great was once widespread in Vilmir, especially between 202 and 250 YK. The headquarters

of the cult are based in Maldam, in Ordis, where Taargano was born. Taargano, a Champion of Law, purged the last taints of Chaos from Vilmir, dying in battle during the entropic invasion from beyond the world's edge. Although only a base-born peasant, Taargano led the battle against the enemy, fighting against his own sister, whose allegiance lay with Chaos.

Conflicting sources say that Taargano was slain by Chaos against his sister's will, and that she pleaded with her demon lords to restore her brother to life as a demigod, as she was already; and also that Taargano became possessed by an avatar of Tovik the Relentless, Lord of Law, during the battle, and that he was rewarded for his loyalty with immortality. Regardless of the truth, Taargano's cult was embraced by the peasants of Vilmir as a sign that they could achieve greatness in the eyes of the gods without rising beyond their station. Since its early great days, it has lacked fresh miracles perpetrated in Taargano's name, and his cult has greatly diminished.

VILMIRIANS OF NOTE

NAACLON OF VILMIR

NKing of Vilmir since his thirty-first birthday, Naclon has the high forehead and eagle nose of his patrician ancestors. His thinning silver hair is slicked backwards from his temples, and his mouth is pulled tight in a permanent frown. He wears clothing of black velvet and white silk, conservative despite their rich fabrics. When in court, Naclon wears the state crown, a silver band with nine points, representing the gods of Law, set with nine diamonds, one for each of the duchies over which he rules. At other times Naclon favors a broad-brimmed and low crowned black hat.

As a younger man Naclon was a privateer in his father's service; now he leaves such bold deeds to his own son. King Naclon is a careful man, never one to rush into an ill-considered or hasty venture, although he can be petulant and stubborn. The bitter rival of Cardinal Garrick, Naclon rules Vilmir more by name than by deed, as most important state decisions are decided by the Church. He is forever



testing the extent of Garrick's power. Toward the end of his reign, grieving over the death of his son, and resigned to the fact that he is unlikely to defeat Garrick, King Naclon looks for power beyond Vilmir's borders. He takes part in the raid upon Imrryr at the urging of the Cardinal, and is slain as a result.

KING NACLON, Duke of Jadmar, age 52

Chaos 45, Balance 15, Law 65

STR 15 CON 16 SIZ 14 INT 13
POW 16 DEX 12 APP 8 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Broadsword 146%, 1D8+1+1D4

Light Mace 85%, 1D6+2+1D4

Armor: 1D10 (helm off) Young Kingdoms Plate

Spells: none

Skills: Common 65%, Evaluate 40%, Insight 75%, Listen 50%, Oratory 96%, Ride 110%, Sailing 68%

CROWN PRINCE BASTROM

CThe only son of King Naclon, Bastrom is a dashing and athletic young man, blond haired and possessed of a wicked grin. This daring youth feels stifled by the rule of the Church, and consequently spends most of his time on the high seas, where he engages in acts of piracy in Vilmir's name. His deeds have bought him fame at home, and a measure of infamy elsewhere in the Young Kingdoms. He dies in 401, when his ship, and many others moored in Uhaio's harbor, are flamed by Melnibonéan dragons.



CROWN PRINCE BASTROM, age 21, privateer and heir to the throne of Vilmir

Chaos 20, Balance 5, Law 38

STR 17 CON 13 SIZ 15 INT 15
POW 17 DEX 18 APP 17 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Sea Ax 112%, 2D6+6+1D4

Rapier 88%, 1D6+1+1D4

Brawl 87%, 1D3+1D4

Wrestle 65%, damage special

— continued

THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

Armor: 1D6-1 (helm off) Sea Leather

Spells: Breath of Life (1), Heal (2), Make Whole (3), Wings of Lassa (4)

Skills: Bargain 85%, Climb 70%, Craft (Wirewalking) 55%, Jump 50%, Natural World 35%, Navigate 81%, Pick Lock 65%, Sailing 75%, Swim 70%, Young Kingdoms 30%

PRINCE HERVIS

Prone to epileptic fits, and a chronic stutterer, Prince Hervis is the eldest son of King Naclon's sister, Lenora. Unlike his energetic cousin Bastrom, Hervis spends his time studying military history and Vilmir's glorious past rather than engaging in acts of physical daring-do. He is pale and thin, with buck teeth and thinning blonde hair.

After King Naclon's death in 403, Vilmir's nobility declare Hervis the heir. Despite his feeble appearance, Hervis proves strong-willed and difficult to manipulate, and so Cardinal Garrick declares him physically unfit to rule, and will not crown him. The prince flees to Rignariom, the old capital, declaring himself king nonetheless. Garrick denounces him as a usurper, crowning instead the more malleable Lord Harron. A brilliant tactician, Hervis becomes the figurehead of the rebel movement during the Vilmirian civil war. Following his excommunication in 406, Hervis is slain by peasants, effectively ending the conflict dividing Vilmir.



PRINCE HERVIS, age 23, second in line to the throne

Chaos 9, Balance 23, Law 13

STR 9 CON 10 SIZ 12 INT 17
POW 16 DEX 10 APP 8 HP 11

Damage Bonus: none

Broadsword 65%, damage 1D8+1

Dagger 60%, damage 1D4+2

Armor: 1D8+1 (helm off) half plate and mail

Spells: none

Skills: Bargain 60%, Battle Tactics 87%, Common 90%, Insight 90%, Listen 90%, Natural World 55%, Oratory 30%, Physik 55%, Repair/Devise 46%, Ride 38%, Scribe 105%, Search 63%, Young Kingdoms 40%

GARRICK, CARDINAL OF LAW

A grim and ambitious patriarch of Vilmir's Church of Law is Cardinal Garrick, Chancellor of Donblas and Protector of the Faith. Cold and ruthless, passionless in public, in private he alternately gloats about his position and schemes to eliminate any conceivable challenge to his power. Ruthless and cruel, as befits the most powerful man in Vilmir, Garrick has fought his way from his humble birth in Ambric to become leader of the Church.



He is tall and well built, grimly handsome, and quite strong considering his age. His hair is snow white. When not wearing his priestly robes, the Cardinal favors armor of white ceramic, suitably blessed and strengthened. His voice is clear and cool.

A fanatical worshiper of the Lords of Law, like them he is inflexible and domineering in his quest for earthly perfection. He has no tolerance for human flaws and weaknesses, unless they can be exploited for his machinations. Where his Lord Donblas's needs end and Garrick's desires begin is sometimes difficult to know. The Cardinal has many enemies, several of them in the Church of Law itself. Of these, the most powerful is Rignariom's ambitious Chancellor Jeldan.

At the end of the world, Garrick has the good sense to bury old prejudices and allies with Elric, despite his personal loathing of all things Melnibonéan. The Cardinal dies bravely, defending Jadmar's Temple of Law against the irresistible tide of Chaos.

GARRICK, age 59, Cardinal of Law and Chancellor of Donblas

Chaos 35, Balance 13, Law 90

STR 16 CON 15 SIZ 14 INT 18
POW 21 DEX 12 APP 12 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Heavy Mace 180%, 1D8+2+1D4

Armor: 12 point (helm on) specially blessed ceramic

Spells: Field of Law (4), Four-in-One (2-8), Membrane of Law (3)

Skills: Common 100%, Evaluate 75%, High Speech 25%, Insight 112%, Listen 90%, Melnibonéan 55%, Million Spheres 15%, Natural World 45%, Oratory 120%, Potions 85%, Scribe 91%, Unknown Kingdoms 15%, Young Kingdoms 65%

DUKE AVAN ASTRAN

A man of no mean reputation, Avan

began revitalizing Old Hrolmar upon inheriting the mantle of Duke in 395 YK from Culvan Astran, his late father. The years after Avan's coronation saw the city full of artists, poets, and philosophers, while the air rang with the sound of hammering and sawing. Scaffolds were a constant sight, as building after building shrugged off the repressive Vilmirian restrictions on height and style. Such renovations have gradually slowed, leaving the city much changed. With Avan's death late in 402, the new Duke, appointed by Cardinal Garrick, begins the destruction of all that Avan achieved.

In his youth Avan was sent to be educated in Cadsandria, but instead fell in with a traveling band of thieves. Returning to Old Hrolmar when he was 19, he soon departed on further adventures. To date he has traveled to Melniboné, the Unknown East, Myrrhn, and the World's Edge. A brave man, he is sometimes foolhardy when adventure and excitement promise. Avan has infiltrated at least one Chaos cult, and has been known to occasionally curse using the name of Chardros. He fears no man living, nor any god.

Unlike most Vilmirian nobles, Avan is not ashamed to show his wealth, favoring plumed helmets, gilded armor, and rich garments, although he dresses conservatively when called to Jadmar. A man of foresight, he is also equipped with a fine sense of humor and irony. Avan is charismatic, with a square handsome face. He is equally at ease with princes and sailors, although he prefers the latter. His sharp wits and keen mind allow him to keep to the letter of Law, while ingeniously finding freedom for himself and his people.

DUKE AVAN ASTRAN, age 35, explorer and adventurer

Chaos 23, Balance 38, Law 62

STR 15 CON 16 SIZ 14 INT 13
POW 13 DEX 14 APP 12 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Great Sword 120%, 2D8+1D4

Broadsword 97%, 1D8+1+1D4

Spear 76%, 1D6+1+1D4

Full Shield 85%, KB+1D4+1D4, 22 hit points

Armor: 1D8-1, helm on, Half Plate

Spells: Buzzard Eyes (1), Demons Ear (1), Hells Armor (1-4), Hells Sharp Flame (1-4), Soul of Chardros (1-3), Tread of Cran Liret (1-4)



Skills: Art (Conversation) 65%, Art (Courtly Manners) 60%, Bargain 67%, Climb 35%, Common 80%, Dodge 66%, Evaluate 52%, Insight 39%, Jump 87%, Lesh 15%, Melnibonéan 40%, Mong 14%, Move Quietly 45%, Natural World 67%, Navigate 73%, Oratory 82%, Physik 62%, Ride 87%, Sailing 32%, Search 79%, Swim 49%, Throw 61%, Track 52%, Unknown Kingdoms 15%, Young Kingdoms 77%

ESTELE REGARDUS

This brave young woman is a devout worshipper of Elgis, Lord of Harmony. Red-haired and freckled, she has a snub nose and a square face.

Her green eyes shine with the fervor of her calling. Estele has come to believe that the Church of Law is corrupted by the cruelty and chaos inherent in human nature. As a result, she has begun preaching her doctrine of peace and purity in Rignariom's marketplace, calling on the people to turn away from the Church and seek harmony and law within their own hearts. Within a matter of days Estele found converts among those peasants displaced by the drought, desperate people in need of guidance. News of this spirited and dangerous woman has reached Cardinal Garrick in Jadmar, and even now he considers whether to have Estele arrested for heresy and executed, or imprisoned in the salt mines, or whether instead he should simply guide the Inquisition in her dangerously outspoken direction.



ESTELE REGARDUS, age 17, heretic

Chaos 15, Balance 29, Law 50

STR 12 CON 15 SIZ 13 INT 12
POW 18 DEX 10 APP 9 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Sling 71%, 1D8+1D2

Cudgel 67%, 1D6+1D4

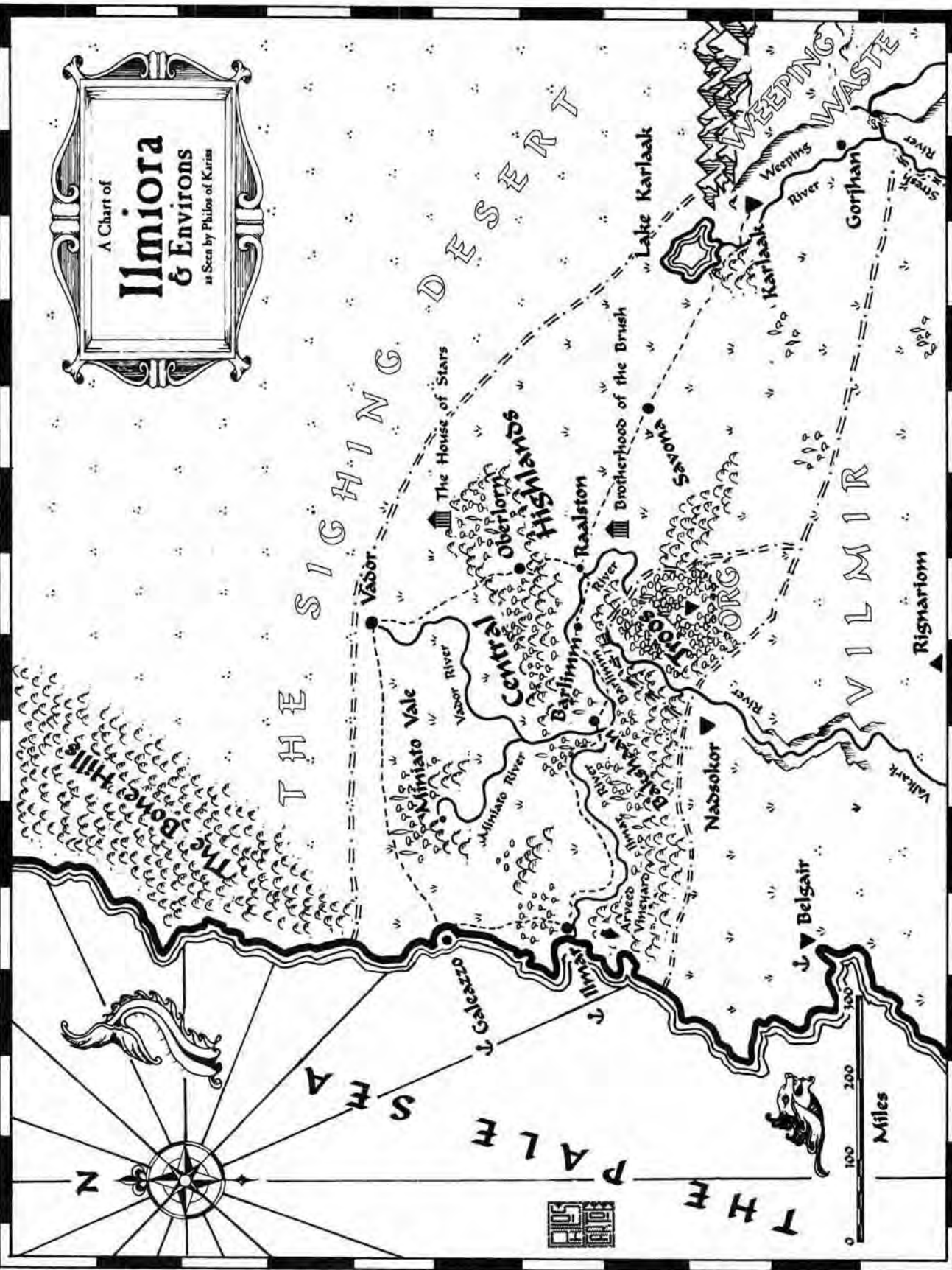
Brawl 50%, 1D3+1D4

Armor: none

Spells: none

Skills: Insight 100%, Listen 122%, Oratory 66%, Physik 96%, Search 66%. ☉

A Chart of
Ilmiora & Environs
 as Seen by Philos of Kariss



ILMIORA

ON THE EDGE OF THE PALE SEA,
THIS PROUD AND DYNAMIC CONFEDERACY
IS THE HOPE OF THE WEST.

ILMIORA'S MISTY valleys, cattle-dotted plains, and wooded hills make this confederation the most pleasant of the Northern nations. Aggression and suspicion fostered by the rival city-states insures stiff competition among them in trade, sport, and fashion. Competitiveness permeates Ilmioran society. Away from the crowded cities and their satellite villages and fields, Ilmiora's wooded hills and rolling plains remain largely unpopulated, home to trappers, charcoal-burners, herders, adventurers, and mystery.

HISTORY

THESE GREEN AND PLEASANT lands were a jewel in the Bright Empire's crown. During humanity's rebellion, the Dragon Isle fought fiercely to retain the area as their territory. Ilmiora's thick forests had become the home of many a Melnibonéan lordling and lady fleeing the frantic pace of Imrryrian life for a lazy and tranquil country retreat. Sadly, dragon venom scoured much of Ilmiora's forests during the wars. Today such areas are the grasslands upon which graze great herds of cattle. Forests remain, but only in the highlands. In these wilder upland regions, occasional ruins of Melnibonéan pleasure-gardens and slender towers can be found, and perhaps the ghosts and memories of their inhabitants also.

Melniboné's tenacious scorched-earth battle tactics provoked a backlash against all things Melnibonéan after liberation. In the dark years between 25 and 40 YK, bloody pogroms were enacted against those accused of Melnibonéan heritage. Thousands died. Fear and hatred enveloped such fey Melnibonéan institutions as sorcery, education, and the fine arts.

ILMIORA AT A GLANCE

RULED BY: the Ilmioran Senate, comprising representatives from each city-state, three each from the major cities, one each from the minor cities. Meetings of the Senate, which are open to the public, are punctuated by fierce arguments. The Ilmioran Senate meets in Ilmar, the nation's capital.

POPULATION: 1,500,000.

HIGHEST PEAK: Mount Armilla, 4666 feet (1701 meters).

LONGEST RIVER: the Vador, 687 miles (1057 km).

IMPORTS: dyes, Melnibonéan art and antiquities.

EXPORTS: glassware, grain, jade, leather and leather goods, sailing vessels, silverwork, textiles, cured timber, wine.

Later, most of Ilmiora felt great shame about this time, and from those memories developed worthy Ilmioran national traditions and character. A movement to reevaluate and reclaim some of the Bright Empire's achievements began when the pogroms ended. The architecture of Karlaak, City of Jade Towers, is an example. The heights of the Neo-Melnibonéan style were reached between 40-120 YK. The oldest and grandest of the city-states consolidated themselves and their regions of influence during these years. Of the minor city-states, Barlimm, Raalston, and Vador, all were founded after the Neo-Melnibonéan period. They lack the impressive architecture of the older cities.

In 202 YK, Ilmiora united against an army of Chaos which had flooded southward from the world's edge. Their new-found unity, allied with the military might of Vilmir, decisively defeated the gathered Chaos horde. Over the next century, relationships with Vilmir grew tense because of the militancy of the Church of Law. Border clashes still sometimes occur, and the fresh green lands of Ilmiora beckon to Vilmir's corrupt rulers.

It was the threat of Vilmir's military might that forced Ilmiora's young city-states to maintain their alliance once the threat of Chaos declined. Ilmiora's nationhood was declared in the year 221 YK, making it one of the youngest of the Young Kingdoms. The Ilmioran Senate was formed the same year, as a means of restricting the damage caused by city-states' vigorous schemes and ambitions. Despite the competition between them, or perhaps because of it, the

city-states grew in strength and economic might, until they reached the high level they maintain today. In this they have been aided profoundly by the agricultural incompetence of neighboring Vilmir, to which Ilmiora now ships the majority of its flour and cattle in return for Vilmirian gold. Only the end of the world now threatens the stability and prosperity of flourishing Ilmiora.

FUTURE EVENTS — ILMIORA

401 YK — Dragons sail the skies over Ilmiora, and battle-barges sail into Ilmar's harbor for the first time in centuries. Great panic sweeps Ilmiora, accompanied by rumors that the Bright Empire seeks once more to subjugate the world. Few learn that the reason for the Bright Empire's activity is the Emperor's search for his cousin Cymoril, who has been kidnapped by the insane, incestuous Prince Yyrkoon.

402 YK — Elric quickly passes through Ilmiora as he searches for the fabled city of Tanelorn. Lost in the Sighing Desert, the albino instead finds Quarzhasaat. This year Ilmiora experiences its hardest winter ever. The lower stretches of the Vador and Barlimm Rivers freeze, allowing skating by the citizens of Bakshaan, while snow blankets the hills of Oberlorn. Many peasants freeze to death or starve.

403 YK — A land-based power, not a maritime one, Ilmiora's merchants are nonetheless quick to fill the vacuum left in the wake of Imrryr's destruction. With the sea-lords of the Young Kingdoms crippled by the losses they receive during the sack of the Dreaming City, Ilmiora makes great gains at their expense. Merchant families marry into the noble houses of Filkhar and Shazar, consolidating their power and dynasties. Internal tensions increase between the city-states as they jostle for position in the new order.

405 YK — Foreshadowing the pustulent mass of beggars which will flood across Ilmiora in three years time, a small army of cripples, thieves, and their kindred depart Nadsokor this year, led by the sorcerer Theleb K'aarna. Crossing Ilmiora by night, the beggars attack a supply caravan bound for Tanelorn as it traverses the Sighing Desert. Cowed and defeated, the few surviving beggars skulk back through the city-states, which have, meanwhile, edged towards the brink of war. Using the beggars' incursion as an excuse, Vador masses a small army at its southern border, its eye on Galeazzo's fertile Miniato Vale. Only frantic debate in the Senate, and one or two trade concessions granted to Vador, prevent bloodshed.

406 YK — Melnibonéan mercenaries, led by Dyvim Tvar, come north into Ilmiora. They are diverted from raiding as they have done in Vilmir, by the promise of revenge against Theleb K'aarna, who jealously slew one of their number. The Pan Tangian is in the hire of a merchant prince, one Nikorn of Ilmar. K'aarna's sorcery is proof against assassination attempts on the merchant's life. Nikorn, Theleb K'aarna, and Dyvim Tvar all die during the assault upon the merchant's palace, fuel for Elric's all-consuming doom. With Nikorn's death, the turbulent order of the city-states shifts once more. Unaware of the chaos left in his wake, or uncaring, Elric weds Zarozinia, daughter of the chief senator of Karlaak, later the same year. Elric dwells in Karlaak for some months, until his peace is disturbed by the advance of the Flame Bringer and his horde that winter. The Easterners are vanquished thanks to Elric and his Melnibonéan allies. Save for the small town of Gorjhan, Ilmiora is spared the Flame Bringer's wrath.

407 YK — While returning one night to Bakshaan, where he and Zarozinia dwell for a single, happy year, Elric encounters the dying Siletah Slorg of Oberlorn. The sorcerer's dying curse flings Elric to another plane. After amusing the gathered Lords of Entropy, Elric is returned unharmed to Ilmiora and his wife.

408 YK — A horde of beggars pour out of Nadsokor and burn a black swathe across Ilmiora's hills and grasslands, bound for Tanelorn. Common opinion has it that the beggars have gone mad, and intend to throw themselves of the world's edge. At the same time, Zarozinia is kidnaped by the minions of the Dead God Darnizhaan. After rescuing his wife, but seeing the west fall to the Pan Tang-Dharigor alliance, Elric holds a war conference in Karlaak. Thereafter Zarozinia and her cousin Opluk accompany two thousand warriors to the Purple Towns, where Elric and Zarozinia are briefly reunited. She returns to Karlaak, and is captured by Chaos when it takes the city. The surviving inhabitants of Karlaak flee into the Weeping Waste, and they pass out of history.

GEOGRAPHY

THE ROLLING PLAINS of *Ilmiora*, a land where justice was known to prevail.

— The Vanishing Tower, II, 1

ILMIORA IS A LAND of steep ranges, between which lie broad, fertile plains. Thick stands of ancient forest grow along the hills and ranges. The valleys and plains have been cleared, and often are heavily cultivated. *Ilmiora*'s southern border is delineated by a range of hills, where the *Ilmioran* tablelands rise from the *Vilmirian* plain. The Southern Ranges are among the steepest in *Ilmiora*, rivalled only by the Central Highlands (where the city-state of Oberlorn holds sway). Mount Armilla, the highest peak in *Ilmiora*, is found in the northern extreme of the Central Highlands. Elsewhere in *Ilmiora*, the folds and rolls of the hills are gentle, gradually merging into the Savonese lowlands which become the Sighing Desert. Gold, granite, marble, and sulfur are among the gifts of Grome mined in *Ilmiora*, extracted from Oberlorn's bare hills.

Two major rivers flow through the confederacy: the Vador, which springs from a cavern beneath the city of the same name, and whose waters allow that city-state's rice fields to prosper; and the Barlimm, whose headwaters gush forth near Org, and thence flow to the sea. Numerous tributaries join the Vador along its course, including the silt-rich Miniato River, whose valley, prone to heavy flooding, is one of *Ilmiora*'s richest agricultural districts. The damming of the Barlimm River has caused much friction between Barlimm and its neighboring city-state, Raalston. The Vador and Barlimm Rivers meet at Bakshaan, and from there flow as the *Ilmar* to the sea.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Ilmiora's forests are the remains of the ancient wildwood which once stretched across the northern continent. They were part of a vast *Melnibonéan* hunting preserve. It was this forest, where weary *Imrryrians* retreated from the demands of court life, which the Bright Empire fought so desperately to retain, and in the end mostly destroyed. Since then, logging and grazing by *Ilmiorans* also have taken a toll on the wildwood.

Beech, oak, and chestnut trees are the dominant trees in *Ilmiora*'s existing forests. Bracken grows in profusion among the leaf litter of the forest floor. In the Central Highlands, these woods give way to conifers and alpine meadows. Near *Karlaak* grow Weeping Pines, whose tall, straight trunks are prized as mast timber, transported by caravan to the shipyards of *Ilmar*. The western coastline is dominated by light stands of birch and larch.

The dominant animals in *Ilmiora* are cattle. Their leather is worn as scabbards and coats, their meat eaten, their milk drunk and made into cheeses and yogurt. The placid *Ilmioran* breed, with its honey-colored hide and small horns, is in favor in *Ilmar*, *Galeazzo*'s *Miniato Vale*, and *Savona*, and

is a fine milker. In Oberlorn, shaggy *Pikaraydian* kine have been introduced, and flourish, supplanting the herds of deer which once roamed the Central Highlands. In Bakshaan, *Karlaak*, *Raalston*, and *Barlimm*, black and white dappled *Dharjorian* cattle dominate the herds; these hardy bovines have hides that can be turned into strong leather. In Vador, where the arid grasslands are too poor to support herds of cattle, goats are the common grazing animals. Elsewhere throughout *Ilmiora*, pigs and chickens, and sometimes geese and ducks, are raised by the peasantry.

Nondomesticated animals include red deer, which still roam the bleak hills of Oberlorn, and whose proud stags are hunted by the nobles of that city state. Some small herds of the smaller, dappled fallow deer, shy and skittish creatures, graze among the southern highlands and in *Karlaak*'s wooded hills. Wild boar have been hunted almost to extinction, as has the plains wolf, a tall, tawny predator with slender bones whose howling packs once prowled the grasslands of *Ilmar*, *Galeazzo*, and *Savona*. The smaller, darker timber wolf remains in some small numbers in the Central Highlands, and widely in the thickly-forested uplands of *Karlaak*.

Other mammals found in *Ilmiora* include beavers, badgers, brown bears, stoats, otters, foxes, and rabbits. Polecats, including the handsome marbled polecat, and three species of wild hamster are also found, as are rats, that bane of civilization. Rooks, buzzards, long-eared and white-faced owls, sparrowhawks, the rare, ground-nesting eagle, several species of thrush and finch, and nightingales are among *Ilmiora*'s birds. Roach, bream, trout, and pike can all be found in the land's rivers and streams.

Crops grown in *Ilmiora* include grapes, olives, oranges, peaches, apples, tomatoes, sugar beets, artichokes, asparagus, wheat, rice, and corn. *Ilmiora*'s forests are primarily deciduous, loosing their leaves in autumn. Conifers, which grow primarily around *Karlaak*, keep their needles all year. *Ilmiora*'s stands of forest are thick and old. Moss carpets many of the gnarled trunks, and bracken grows thick on the forest floor. Where a wooden giant falls, succumbing to age, bright flowers, snowdrops, bluebells, and jonquils, spring up to greet the sun.

CLIMATE

Spring and summer in *Ilmiora* are warm and sunny. During these months, prevailing winds are from the north, bringing the dry heat of the Sighing Desert to *Ilmiora*'s grasslands. Generally *Ilmioran* summers are pleasant without being uncomfortable, although they are hotter in the north. By autumn, cooler winds from the Pale Sea begin to blow more strongly, flowing east towards the Weeping Waste, and bringing rain and storms. Mists are common all the year round, silently flooding the valleys. The average rainfall in *Ilmiora* is 30 inches (76 cm) per year. *Ilmioran* winters are cold and blustery, with frequent showers. Snow is rare, save in the Central Highlands and more rarely near *Karlaak*.

THE NORTHERN CONTINENT



THE ROAD TO ILMAR

DISTANCES AND TRAVEL TIMES IN ILMIORA

BY LAND AND ON HORSEBACK

From	To	Distance in miles	Travel time in days
Ilma	Galeazzo	190	5
Galeazzo	Vador	200	6
Ilmar	Bakshaan	225	6
Ilmar	Oberlorn	300	9
Vador	Oberlorn	175	5
Oberlorn	Bakshaan	220	7
Bakshaan	Karlaak	625	18
Bakshaan	Savona	320	9
Bakshaan	Barlimm	85	2
Barlimm	Raalston	30	1
Raalston	Savona	200	6
Savona	Karlaak	340	10

TRAVELING IN ILMIORA

ILMIORA'S CITY-STATES are separated by many miles, contributing to the insularity which permeates Ilmioran society. Nonetheless, the tyranny of distance has been overcome, and goods and people flow steadily between the city-states. Carriage services, fleet messengers, barges, and caravans cross these relatively uninhabited hills and plains.

Of all, barges are the safest transport, being infrequently attacked by the robbers and highwaymen that plague Ilmiora's roads during hard times. Barges heaped with grain are a common sight on the Vador and Barlimm rivers, and on their tributaries. On the downstream journey barges are free-floating, maneuvered by rudder and pole. Barges are

drawn upstream by harnessed teams of slow, sure-footed draft horses. Small sailing ships also prowl the rivers. The Ilmar Falls prevent all river vessels from reaching the sea.

Land-based equivalents of barges are the ox- or draft-horse-drawn carts that lumber down the muddy ruts of Ilmioran country roads. A common sight, they are the usual means of transporting bulky goods between cities. Caravans of carts, usually guarded by handpicked warriors, are seen on every road. In this way wines, wool, hides, glassware (packed in straw), and other trade items circulate through the nation.

Every city employs an official messenger service to run errands and deliver important documents. Such messengers are usually adolescent boys. Clad in the bright and distinctive livery of the city-state, they dart between traffic on the crowded roads, often taking great risks to ensure that their message gets through. When they are required, the boys also ride between city-states. Horses for them are always reserved and waiting at way-posts along the way. These messengers are prized and respected in Ilmiora, and many a boy dreams of a job in the messenger corp. It goes without saying that the contents of the delivered messages are often secret and important, which does not stop the Mereghn, who have agents throughout the messenger corps, of becoming aware of their sensitive contents.

As well as the messengers, way-houses are made use of by the various coach services that rattle their bone-jarring routes between the cities. Well-to-do coach services (such as Borleiko and Sons, or the Swift Wheel Company) have valets and guards riding with every coach, while the least expensive services (Florio or White Coach) provide little better than flea and lice-ridden accommodation at each stop (meals extra). Such coach services make their way in *stages* from city to city; a stage is a day's travel and a night's rest. The distances in miles between cities are recorded below, together with the average number of stages the journey takes. Weather, accident, and highwaymen may add hours or days to the journey.

Ilmiora's roads provide fine pickings for bandits and robbers. The bandits most often encountered are small gangs of villains, unwashed and ill-educated louts, lawbreaker on



the run, or peasants who have given up on the land. Such gangs are usually ill-armed and untrained fighters, who are discouraged by any impressive show of force. They usually attack only lone travelers, or lightly-guarded carts and caravans. Larger gangs prove some danger, especially in the Central Highlands, where the tangled forests and hills afford them easy escape.

Closer to the cities, highwaymen prowl Ilmiora's roads, hoping for an individual or a single carriage or coach as prey. They demand travelers' valuables, and sometimes other tariffs. Successful highwaymen rely on speed and disguise for escape and protection, and tend to work alone. Some have one or two compatriots whose presence allows them to employ a variety of ambushes and stratagems, from trees across the road to well-staged unconscious damsel in the middle of the road routines.

Notable highwaymen include the debonair Black Lothario, who preys at night around Bakshaan and Oberlorn; he and his magnificent stallion Swiftshadow are the subject of many popular ballads. The extravagant fop Kaspar d'Zois steals the clothes of his victims as well as their jewels, if he considers the garments fashionable and in good taste, but he is always gallant in his conduct, even if force is required. The Silver Fox is a sorceress of no small means or capacity; she has been identified at various times in every part of the nation.

Finally, a particularly localized danger to travelers is the road from Bakshaan to Karlaak, where it skirts the fringes of the Forest of Troos. There caravans have occasionally been the subject of attack by the slumped and repulsive Orgians. The dead and wounded are carried off as food by the men of Org, whose poisonous forest home precludes physical retaliation by Ilmari army or militia.

NAMES OF NINE VILLAGES

ASTIAL, CODIGOR, CUNEUAS, ISCO, KORLOI,
MORTORA, ROVATO, SORESTINO, TOLLA

THE CITY-STATES

BAKSHAAN

IN A CITY called Bakshaan, which was rich enough to make all other cities of the North East seem poor, in a tall-towered tavern one night, Elric, Lord of the smoking ruins of Melniboné, smiled like a shark and dryly jested with four powerful merchant princes whom, in a day or so, he intended to pauperize.

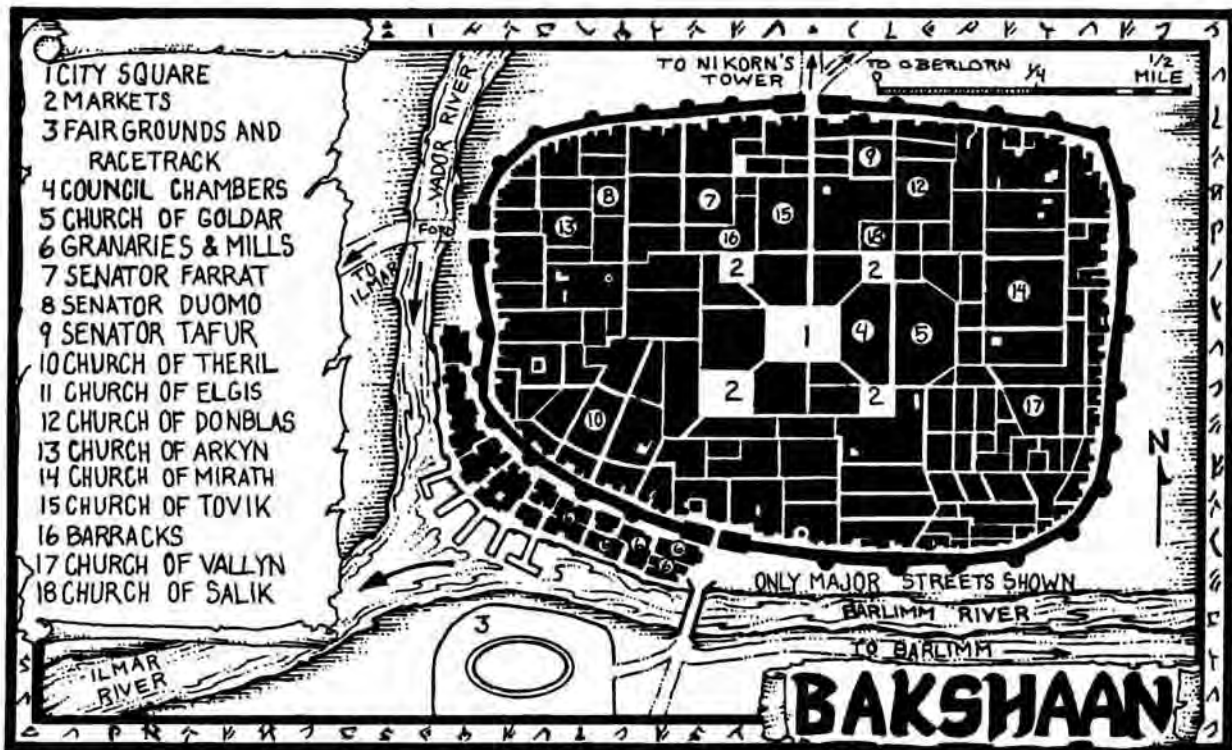
— The Bane of the Black Sword, I, 1

ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ sat hunched in his saddle, watching the warriors bustle to and fro around him in the city square of Bakshaan. Here, years before, he had conducted a siege against the city's leading merchant, tricked others and left rich, but such scores that they held against him were now forgotten, pushed from their minds by the threat of war and the knowledge that if Elric's command could not save them, nothing could. The walls of the city were being widened and heightened, warriors being trained in the use of unfamiliar war-engines. From being a lazy merchant city, Bakshaan had become a functional place, ready for battle when it came.

— Stormbringer, III, 1

OVERLOOKING the junction of the Barlimm and Vador Rivers, in a broad valley between two steep ranges, Bakshaan is the richest city in Ilmiora and, with a local population of almost 90,000 people, the most crowded. Constant traffic upon the rivers, notably barges piled high with golden grain, brings much trade to this energetic and prosperous city. A great stone bridge of four arches spans the frothing Barlimm south of Bakshaan, while to the

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north the broad, lazy Vador is crossed by a shallow ford. Bakshaan's high walls have gates west, north, and south, through which traffic floods. The taverns nearer the south gate are poorer, its drinkers those fonder of squalor and privacy. The city's south-side is generally poorer, and built upon the lower ground, close to the river and its disease-carrying vapors. The fleshpots of Bakshaan are found here, and so too are the Mereghn, the assassin-guild of Bakshaan. Taverns of higher quality, such as the Purple Dove, and the palaces and villas of the wealthy can be found on the north side of the cobbled city square.

Thanks to careful subsidies and adroit political maneuvers, Bakshaan's mills grind grain from throughout Ilmiora. Flour is shipped downstream from Bakshaan, as are fine cheeses, hides, and timber from the stands of forest which carpet the hills north and south of the city. Beyond Bakshaan itself, the city-state consists of small farms and scattered hamlets, growing grain, silver beets, artichokes and asparagus, and herding cattle. Pigs and chickens are also tended by Bakshaan's peasantry. Occasional vineyards produce large quantities of low-grade, rough red wine.

Bakshaan is a mercantile city, made rich by the aggressive trade of its foremost citizens. Its narrow, cobbled streets, bazaars, and buildings of embellished stone are thronged with caravans, traders, and other folk eager for bargains. Bakshaan's woodcarvers, silversmiths, granaries, and above all, printers, are the foremost in Ilmiora. The fierce competition between

the city's merchant princes has made its populace comfortable in the main, valued contributors to prosperity, and therefore secure in their wealth and power. The artists and artisans attracted to Bakshaan by the large purses of the nobility have done much to embellish the city. Considerable rivalry exists between the artists of Bakshaan and those of Galeazzo and Ilmar. Certainly Bakshaan's poet-haunted cafes and library are beyond compare, and even the poorest noble in the city boasts dozens of books. Unlike its rivals, Bakshaan boasts no great gallery or museum, an irritant to its eminent citizens. Plans for a university are well underway.

Over the past fifty years, as Bakshaan's wealth has grown, the city's wooden buildings have been replaced with structures of stone. Architects from throughout the Young Kingdoms have found employment here. Fanciful decorations of stone, gargoyles, buttresses, and spires greet the eye, as do windows of stained glass and a plethora of statues and fountains. Even lowly taverns boast worthy decoration.

Like most Ilmioran houses, those in Bakshaan have steep roofs (here of red tiles), and average two or three stories high. Small and orderly gardens, often decorated with fountains or sundials, and containing neatly laid-out flower beds and close-cropped turf, lie before the high houses of the nobility, behind fences and gates of wrought iron. Stables and other utility buildings are usually separate from the main house.

Places of note in Bakshaan include the four bazaars, busy day and night, and the central town square, where

executions are carried out for the public's amusement each week. Granaries and warehouses line the rivers, together with water-mills and piers. Small churches to the gods of Law are scattered throughout Bakshaan, one god per temple. Of these, the temple of Goldar is the most ornate, although the smaller temples of Theril and Elgis are more crowded. South of Bakshaan, just across the broad bridge crossing the Barlimm, monthly horse races are held. The grounds are also the sight of the yearly Bakshaan Fair, which attracts visitors from throughout the Young Kingdoms.

SENATOR FARRAT, LADY FARRAT

The lofty palaces of Bakshaan's senators stand on the north side of the city. The most ostentatious of these buildings, with its grand staircase, onyx entrance hall, and east and west wings crammed with expensive furniture and objects

of art, is the home of Senator Burchard Farrat, a fussy, ineffectual man, overdressed and overweight, thick-lipped and red-faced. He lives with his plump wife and their litter of squealing, spoiled children. Senator Farrat is the owner of many mills and granaries. He has many rivals in Bakshaan, not the least of whom is the merchant adventurer Nikorn of Ilmar. Unknown to Farrat, his greatest foe is closest to him, and least suspected. The Senator's wife, Lady Vanozza Farrat, is the leader of Bakshaan's assassins' guild, the Mereghn.

Although he fears and dislikes his fellow senators (the pale and interesting Lady Giulia Tafur, and the quick-witted and sly Fillipo Duomo, respectively), any real danger to Senator Farrat comes not from his peers, but from the reckless acts of the city council, some members of which would sacrifice the fortunes of Bakshaan for their own ambitions. Such is the case in 406 YK, when a small cabal of merchants hires Elric to dispose of Nikorn of Ilmar, with drastic results.

THE MEREGHN: KILLERS FOR HIRE

(WITH LAWRENCE WHITAKER)

COMMON ASSASSINS *are easily employed, particularly in Bakshaan,* Elric pointed out softly.

— *The Bane of the Black Sword, I, 1*

THE SECRETIVE order of assassins who make Bakshaan their headquarters take their name from the Melnibonéan word mereghiagn (information). Following the Bright Empire's defeat in and withdrawal from Ilmiora, the early rulers of the fledgling city-states fought for power and control among themselves, mostly a covert one of economics and intrigue, but occasionally troublesome competitors were murdered. The war-chieftains of the city-states each created their own cadres of spies and assassins to gather information from the streets, and occasionally kill their opponents. From such humble beginnings, the Mereghn grew.

Originally the tool of the senators and council of Bakshaan, the Mereghn quickly became self-sufficient, once they found that they could use their power against their onetime employers. They could pull down one senator and establish another more sympathetic to their aims, and so ensure their continued dominance. With a vast network of informants at their beck and call, the Mereghn began to infiltrate the spying rings of other city-states. Soon the organization sought employment outside Ilmiora's borders. The senators of Bakshaan, Ilmar, and the other city-states

became resigned to dealing with the Mereghn as a separate, sovereign power.

Today the Mereghn are an international web of criminals, assassins, and spies. Their information is always available, at a price. The usual means of contacting them is traditionally a note or message left at the local shrine of Mirath of Law. The Mereghn's members are trained in disguise, thievery, deception, information gathering, and murder. Although disciplined and professional, the orders members are not fanatical. Anyone can hire the Mereghn, and fees are open to negotiation.

In a twisted way, the Mereghn are honest and honorable. Their services are open to negotiation, and they believe in a fair service for a fair rate. If a member is captured in the line of duty, the organization offers a ransom for the assassins safe return. If a commission cannot be completed or completed in a specified time, the Mereghn cancels the contract, and returns any monies paid. People who murder or torture a member of the Mereghn ensure themselves plenty of enemies for the short remainders of their lives.

Because of the Mereghn's apparent honor and their genuine power, and also because they have neither commissions from nor targets among the impoverished, joining the Mereghn is a great ambition among poor youths. And, young or old, serf, slave, or stable hand, the poor tell fantastic stories about the Mereghn.

BARLIMM

DESPITE ITS minor status in the Ilmioran Senate, Barlimm's citizens are proud, and their city is vigorous. Situated upstream from Bakshaan, Barlimm will always be in Bakshaan's shadow. Barlimm's people content themselves with the fact that, dwarfed as they are by Bakshaan, they are superior to their neighbors, the residents of the equally insignificant city-state of Raalston. The feud between these latter two city-states is a minor one, but one pursued doggedly for generations. Were it not for this friction, the two could ally in the Senate, and improve their lot. The bickering between them prevents such beneficial union, a situation which Bakshaan's senators are careful to encourage.

Situated on the river bearing its name, Barlimm has barely fifteen thousand people within sight of its walls. With no great forests nearby, the city relies upon waterpower. Were it not for the dam which raises the height of the water and hence increases the force and speed of its flow, making the mill wheels turn faster, Barlimm's mills would be less able to economically grind grain, which is the basis of the city's wealth. From Barlimm, boats carry the flour to Bakshaan, where it is resold or baked in vast ovens as flat bread and waybread of various sorts.

Barlimm's dam is the cause of frequent complaint to the Senate by Raalston's Senator Erichy Gambard, who inveighs that his own city's flour must be ground more slowly than Barlimm's. Even if Raalston built its own dam, the flour would still need to be portaged around Barlimm's dam while being shipped downstream, putting Raalston at a double disadvantage in the markets of Bakshaan, as compared to Barlimm. Thus the dam represents an unfair obstruction of trade. To date the Senate has always ruled in Barlimm's favor.

Handsome young Senator Thaldon Nichorr rules Barlimm sternly and effectively. At twenty-six, he is the youngest senator in Ilmiora. His hair is prematurely gray, his energy boundless. He was elected by the city council when his father, the previous senator, was killed by an unknown assailant, reported variously as a jealous lover, a fiend from Nadsokor, an assassin from Raalston, and his ambitious son.

North of Barlimm's walls stretch rich fields of grain, interspersed with sunflowers and olive trees, while to the south rolls the Barlimm River. Grapes are grown, and wine bottled in Barlimm, but of inferior quality. Peasants tend small herds of cattle and pigs, and keep chickens and occasional flocks of geese. On the lake created by the dam, vast drifts of ducks quack and bob contentedly.

South of the river the ground rises steeply. The heights of the Southern Ranges are crowned by the sickly Forest of Troos, overlooking Barlimm at a distance. Occasionally residents report strange lights flickering on the edges of the forest, as if signaling. Beyond Troos, the hills drop to the dusty Vilmirian plain. From Barlimm, skirting Org and its sickly forest, it is a hard day's ride to the stinking beggar-city of Nadsokor, whose wretches have plagued the region in the past.

GALEAZZO

IN THIS LOVELY city married to the sea, the faded glories of Galeazzo are an ever-present memory. The city is built upon a series of small rocky islands off Ilmiora's northern coast. Once a seaport famed for its merchants and shipyards, Galeazzo's days of greatness are gone, but trophies of the past adorn the walls of its palaces and churches, in the forms of statues, frescoes, stained glass windows, books, paintings, and religious icons of precious jewels and beaten gold.

Galeazzo is a beautiful city, whose moods alter with the changing light and the passing seasons. On sunny days Galeazzo is burnished and glowing, its slow decay invisible. In winter, when the mists billow gently beneath bridges and across balconies, when the sea is no more than a sigh, Galeazzo becomes a wet and rippling reflection of itself, with water enveloping the city in a sad, romantic shadow. Galeazzo is a subtle city, a lovely city, adored by visitors and inhabitants alike.

Built at the start of the Neo-Melnibonéan period, Galeazzo stands upon what was, during humanity's uprising, a rebel outpost. The city's pride is rooted in these brave foundations. Once the trading mecca of the Northern Continent, and crowded with artists, Galeazzo's glory has been stolen by Bakshaan, while her reputation as a city of fisherman, shipbuilders, sailors, and merchant-adventurers has been eclipsed by Ilmar. The citizens of Galeazzo retain extraordinary pride and affection for their city, which they speak of as one would a mother or a lover. She exasperates them, shelters them, provides for them, enriches them. To spurn her is to insult them. The city districts maintain intense rivalries, as do Galeazzo's guilds and noble houses. Two such houses, the Rocco and the Bocheti, have been at war as long as records have been kept.

Every year, on the first day of Spring, a ritual wedding between Galeazzo and the ocean takes place, when the senators of the city are rowed out to sea, and offer up Galeazzo as a bride to King Straasha. A golden ring is tossed into the waves to signify the union, and the flotilla of boats accompanying the senators returns to the city for a day of celebration. The Church of Law decries this ceremony as Chaotic and heretical, and warns of dire retribution if Galeazzo's citizens do not change their ways. The sailors and sea folk in turn warn of Straasha's wrath should ever their city not be offered up to the Sea King as a bride. They swear that in all the centuries the ceremony has been conducted, Galeazzo has never been seriously affected by strong waves or high seas, despite the ferocious winter gales which plague the Pale Sea.

Approaching the city from the land, one must traverse a treacherous marsh to reach a muddy beach, beyond which stand Galeazzo's islands. Pontoon bridges of floating logs, roughly hewn and roped together, provide a floating path across the worst of the swampland. In times of war this route can be easily removed, and the city safely isolated.

Numerous ferries and rowboats and slowly-poled gondolas transport visitors and residents across to the islands.

Most of Galeazzo's poor live here, on the muddy edge of the sea, dwelling in rotting huts and houses slowly sinking into the quaking earth. A Galeazzan insult, born with mud between his toes, suggests birth upon this putrid beach, implying ill-breeding and boorishness. Great numbers of shorebirds, herons, ducks, and gulls nest and feed in the marshes. Vast flights of birds summer there or stop there while migrating between the far north and Filkhar in the south. Galeazzo's commoners occasionally hunt the marshes for sport, but most think the marshes cause disease or bad luck, and only the desperate regularly hunt the reeds and slippery pools.

From the sea, Galeazzo is a blaze of burnished domes and bridges, towers, masts, and a thousand proud banners. Its numerous buildings are squeezed together on a scattering of crags and small islands, which range in size from only a few square yards to a square mile. Bridges arc from rock to rock, connecting the districts of the city, and countless boats row and pole across the waves which separate them.

Its residents include many artists, for Galeazzo's nobility have long patronized painters, sculptors, and other skilled and gifted artisans. The younger artists now flock to Bakshaan and Ilmar, leaving only their elders, those of inferior talents, and a handful of unrecognized geniuses to struggle in their wake. The glories of Galeazzo slowly crumble in the salty air, and few have the skills to repair them. On darker days, a resident of Galeazzo might look at his sad, seductive city, and almost believe that it is slowly, elegantly, sliding into ruin and the waves.

Houses in Galeazzo are tall and narrow, and almost always have at least one doorway opening onto the water. First floor rooms are usually spartan, so that valuables will not be harmed during high tides and stormy weather. Generally, only kitchens and entrance halls are found on the first floors. Upper floors are decorated as the residents can afford. Window frames are often arched, and invariably have balconies and shutters. (Unlike most Young Kingdoms cities, glass panes appear in Galeazzo with some regularity, although always of separate small panes, held together in a whole by lead cames. The technology to create large sheets of glass has not yet been achieved by Galeazzo's artisans.) The steep, red-tiled rooftops are occasionally broken by chimney pots and small square towers. Palaces are grander, bristling with towers and a-leer with gargoyles, their rooftops hidden by forests of cupolas and spires, their windows concealed behind rows of pillars or elegant latticework screens.

The islands closest to the mainland are given over to glassblowing factories, dye houses, warehouses, fish-gutting plants, and other odorous, effluent-producing buildings. (The lot of the glassblowers is an especially sad one. Although their wares and skill are praised throughout the Young Kingdoms, in Galeazzo they are virtual prisoners, forbidden to leave the city or to speak with outsiders, and they are guarded at every move.) Houses in this district are



GALEAZZO

THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

only ever inhabited by the poorest of Galeazzans, the rent all that stands between them and a hovel on the shore. The prevailing sea breeze blows the industrial stink inland, away from the houses of the wealthy, although in summer, and at low tide, the stench of offal and excrement rising from the water can be distressing, for every household empties slops into the ocean.

Gardens are maintained on some of the larger islands, with rotting seaweed used as compost to aid the thin soil. Fish and seafood form the staple diet of Galeazzo's residents. Grains and vegetable produce are carried to the city from Miniato Vale, a fertile district lying within the city-state's border.

Away from Galeazzo itself, the city-state is of little interest save for Miniato Vale. A tributary of the Vador River, the Miniato rises at the head of a narrow but fertile valley frequently flooded by the river's silt-heavy flow. The narrow fields which flank the Miniato's banks produce wheat, barley, parsley, basil, tomatoes, artichokes, and other vegetables, which Galeazzo consumes. Without the produce of the Miniato, Galeazzo would be much the poorer. Elsewhere the city-state's territory consists of gently undulating plain, lightly forested, becoming arid in the north, near the Vador border.

Some tension exists between Galeazzo and Vador, with Vador's ambitious young senator dispatching numerous 'trading parties' to expand his city-state's claim on Miniato. Such actions are preposterous, or so Senator Augustin Tintoreo of Galeazzo believes. It would take a significant shift in the loyalties of the Senate to approve such a dramatic and significant alteration of Ilmiora's internal borders.

Tintoreo, a gaunt man in his mid-fifties, fond of skullcaps to cover his bald head, and full of passionate intensity where Galeazzo is concerned, rules his city virtually single-handedly. His extensive family's wealth comes from Miniato Vale, owning the fields upon which the peasants toil. Tintoreo's fellow senators, Gritti Bocheti and Dandin Rocco, despise one another, and cannot work together, forcing Augustin to work without them. The feud which poisons their relationship, and kills their families' young, springs from the days of Ilmiora's revolution. The Bocheti and the Rocco maintain that each family betrayed the other, and Galeazzo, to Melniboné. Since that time, the two houses have warred upon one another. Their bitter and destructive feud is in part the cause of Galeazzo's slow decline.

ILMAR

A HARBOR TOWN of steep-roofed houses and narrow spires. The town certainly seemed of familiar appearance, much like any town of the Northern Young Kingdoms, and he guessed this place was close to his own part of the Sphere.

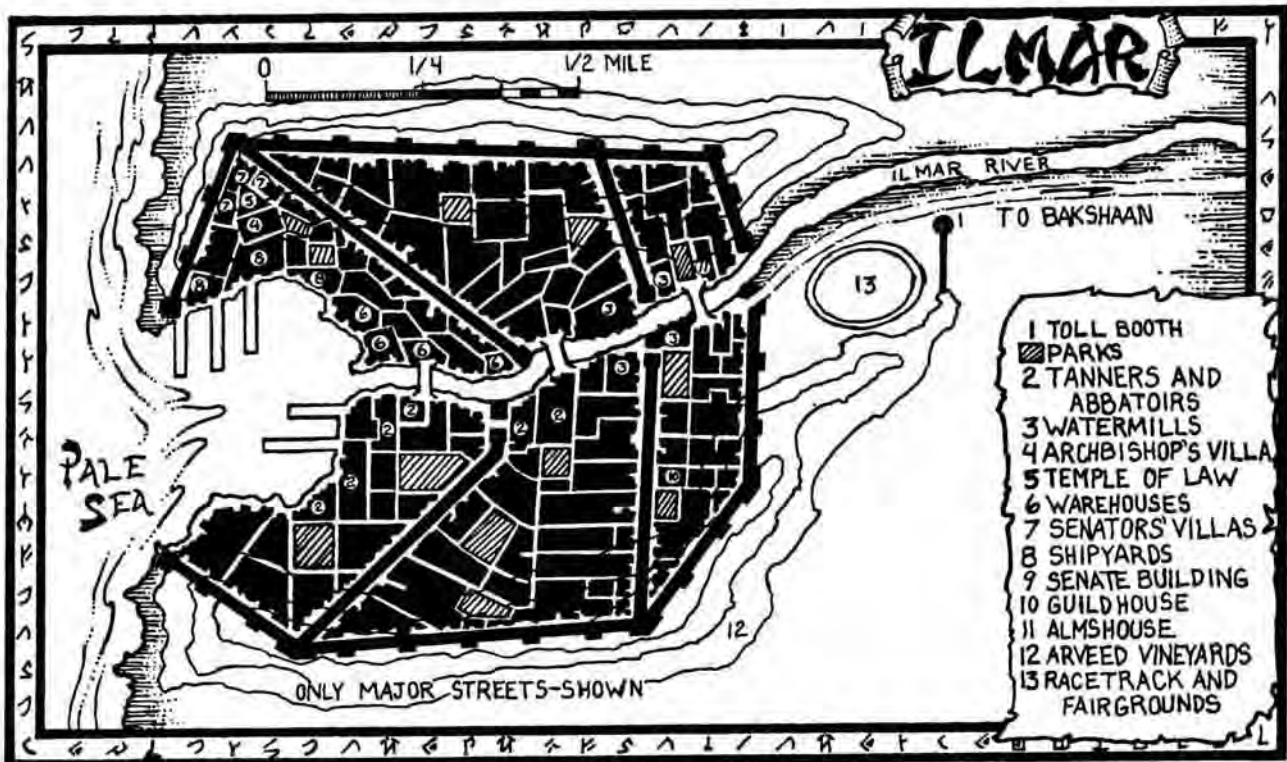
— The Revenge of the Rose, II, 2

ILMIORA'S CAPITAL CITY is nestled in the folds of a valley, where the swift-flowing Ilmar River reaches the sea. The broad river mouth and harbor are crowded with masts and rigging, for Ilmar's shipyards are the best in the North. The city's fishing fleet too, is large, and the many proud ships of the navy make Ilmar's harbor their home. The constant stream of maritime traffic in and out of the harbor, bringing trade, sailors, and visitors from all corners of the Young Kingdoms, further adds to Ilmar's bustling atmosphere. Beyond Ilmar's walls, the area is densely populated, unlike most of rural Ilmiora. Ilmar's plains are broad, ending only at the border formed by the Vador River. Farms and villages spread out around the city, growing grapes, grains, and a variety of vegetables, and herding cattle and pigs. Tall stands of slender birch trees grow near the coast, where the cold waters of the Pale Sea lap upon pebble beaches, while inland the scattered woods are of oak and chestnut.

Twice Ilmar has outgrown its walls. Where once the city sat perched at the sea's edge. Now its steep-roofed, shingled wooden houses stretch far up the valley. The hills encircling the city are capped by fortifications. The main road into Ilmar runs beside the Ilmar River. Entry to the city is by toll, one bronze per head. The Ilmar River's course is broken several times by waterfalls where it flows through the city. Many of Ilmar's mills are built above the falls. Closer to the harbor, warehouses and the offices of merchants predominate. The north side of the harbor is given over to shipyards, while tanneries and slaughterhouses dominate the southern shore, and the effluent from the latter invites sharks and other predators to be common visitors to Ilmar.

The harbor district also supports brothels, seedy taverns, and other less salubrious businesses. One might stumble upon a drug-den tucked away on a wharf, where illicit substances from the Dreaming City are smoked and drunk by hollow-cheeked, glazed-eyed sailors, and where the occasional corpses are slipped through trap doors into the harbor (and the circling sharks) below. Narrow alleys conceal the shops of tattooists from Pikarayd, and the smoke-wreathed residences of alchemists and sorcerers.

The palaces of Ilmar's nobility stand about the city, enclosed behind high fences or walls. Each such palace stands two or three stories high. Over a century ago, a fashion of towers as symbols of wealth was the fad among Ilmar's nobles, and so today a forest of peaked roofs and square towers four to eight stories high rears over the city. The towers, always separate freestanding structures, fly banners and flags. Trumpets are blown from them on special occasions, and bells tolled. From their windows, one looks out across Ilmar's narrow streets winding down to the harbor, at parks and plazas, statues and fountains, and the broad bridges which cross the river. Frescoes adorn the walls of the impressively-spired guild house and the Ilmari Senate, two of the major landmarks on Ilmar's skyline. The recently completed Cathedral of Law, built of stone, is one of the few buildings in Ilmar not lavishly decorated. This austere



and solemn cathedral is at the command of the archbishop, Kimroc du Feadio.

Ilmar's nobles feud with one another as well as those of neighboring city-states. Feuds probably concern business if merchant families are involved, or the support and patronage of famous artists if the question is one of prestige. As in Bakshaan and Galeazzo, creations of artisans and craftsmen adorn most of Ilmar's major buildings. Although most buildings are constructed of wood, the lintels, eaves, door and window-frames, and beams of Ilmar's buildings are invariably intricately carved and richly painted.

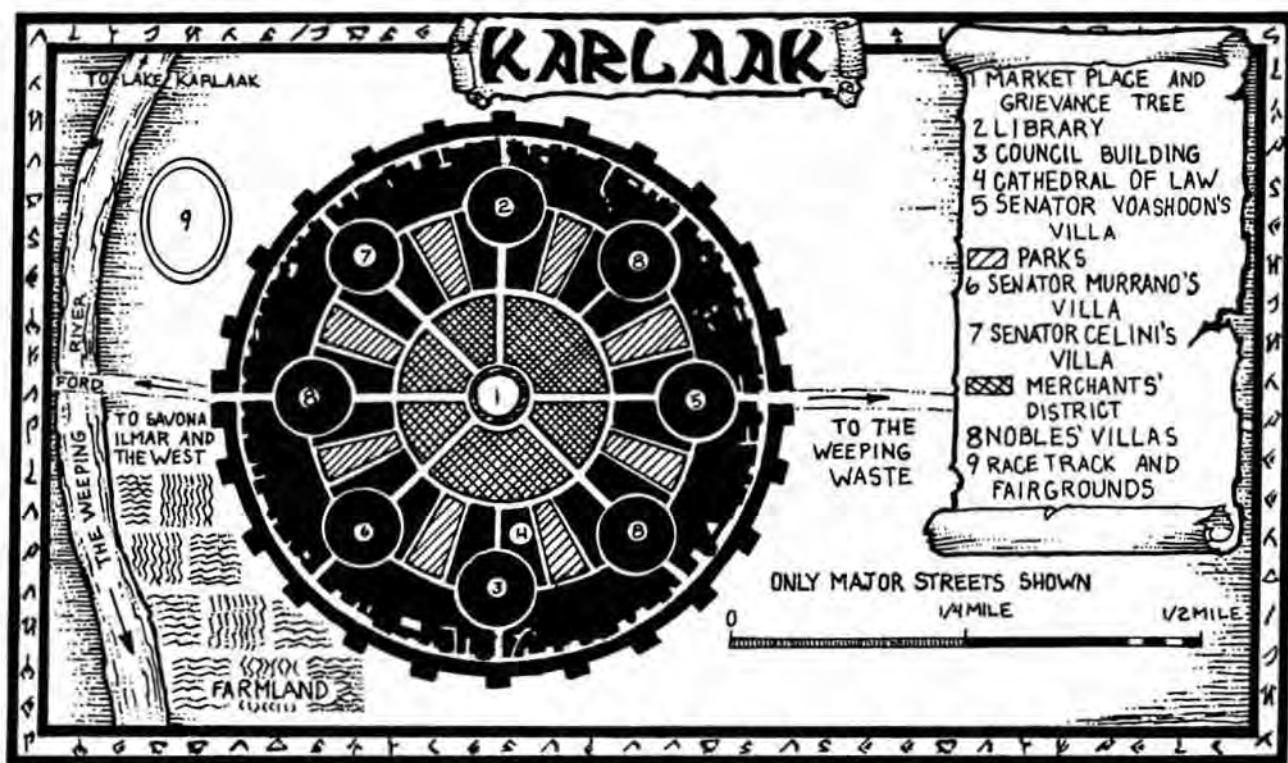
The city's nobility compete to collect objects of art. At least one noblewoman annually opens her palace to the people, so that her collection of paintings, tapestries, and fine furnishings can be admired by all. Salons are in vogue, where the nobility and the wealthy gather to discuss science, theology, and religion, history, and art. Poets read their works at such gatherings, dancers and actors perform and entertain, and fine food and drinks are served to the invited guests.

Ilmar's Archbishop, Kimroc du Feadio, is an elderly, unstable man with an unhealthy love for his daughter Vesna. He is the head of the Ilmari Church, and commands respect throughout Ilmiora. He lives in a large, spartan villa close to the cathedral, and rules the Church as he does his home, with a strong grip and a quick temper. All who favor chance, change, and instability are his enemies. When Archbishop Kimroc's mind finally snaps, he is replaced by the less fanatical, more open-minded Sandrek d'Nunzio, a

priest of Elgis, under whose guidance the Ilmari Church of Law moves away from repression and toward harmony.

The chief senator of Ilmar is Arturo Lorandon, whose powerful family controls the city's shipyards, and thus its heart. A tall, heavy-set man, with eyes as black as his hair, Senator Lorandon at 73 is much older than he looks. A life of rigorous exercise, mental as well as physical, has kept his wits sharp and his muscles firm. Lorandon's first love is his family; his duty to Ilmar comes second. The senator is fanatical where his family's interests are concerned, and his revenge against slights is remorseless and implacable. It is his personal tragedy that he is estranged from his eldest surviving son, Nikorn. Lorandon's declared heir is now his nephew, the ill-suited debauchee Andrek, much to the senator's discomfort. He is considering adopting and training an orphan, in order to protect the family's traditional interests.

Senator Fillipo Glorvario's family dominate Ilmar's tanneries and dye-works, and to a lesser extent the abattoirs. Glorvario is the sworn rival of Senator Lorandon, but due to Lorandon's firm alliance with the Church of Law, has thus far been unable to undermine his position. Ilmar's third senator, and the most avaricious, is Karlo de Fabris, from an old and declining noble house. Reputation and good breeding do not pay the bills, and so Senator Fabris is concerned only with feathering his own nest. He plays upon the hostilities between Senators Lorandon and Glorvario, amassing promises of wealth and power from each in return for his continually shifting support.



KARLAAK

ABOVE THE EARTH great clouds tumbled down and bolts of lightning charged groundwards to slash the midnight black, split trees in twain and sear through roofs that crackled and broke.

The dark mass of forest trembled with the shock and out of it crept six hunched, unhuman figures who paused to stare beyond the low hills toward the outline of a city. It was a city of squat walls and slender spires, of graceful towers and domes; and it had a name which the leader of the creatures knew. Karlaak by the Weeping Waste it was called.

Not of natural origin, the storm was ominous. It groaned around the city of Karlaak as the creatures skulked past the open gates and made their way through shadows towards the elegant palace where Elric slept. The leader raised an axe of black iron in its clawed hand. The group came to a stealthy halt, and regarded the sprawling palace which lay on a hill surrounded by languorously scented gardens. The earth shook as lightning lashed it and thunder prowled across the turbulent sky.

— Stormbringer, I, 1



ISOLATED IN THE southeast of Ilmiora, closer to the Weeping Waste than it is to the capital, the City of Jade Towers, as Karlaak is sometimes known, is the last civilized outpost of the Young Kingdoms. Beyond its borders ride the barbarian tribes of the Weeping Waste and the enigmatic nomads of the Sighing Desert. Sometimes emissaries of their people come nervously to Karlaak, bringing fine jade and rare ambers to trade. Sometimes, instead of the small, surly tribespeople in their furs and hair, and the tall, black-skinned nomads, there come only rumors of war.

Karlaak is a graceful city of terraced gardens and perfumed bowers, a peaceful and tranquil place, not a warrior-guarded fortress. Fountains play beneath its cypress trees and willows, children laugh in its narrow streets, and meditative scholars ponder old truths in its great library. In dusty vaults beneath Karlaak, the centuries-old armor and weaponry of the city's war chiefs lies unused and forgotten. For a time, while Elric dwells peacefully in the city, Stormbringer hangs here also. Nearby lie Karlaak's dead, in crowded catacombs beneath the earth. Like the Black Sword, they do not always rest easy.

Beyond Karlaak's gardens and squat, square towers rises the rain-shrouded massif of the Weeping Waste, distant enough that its rocky heights give no military advantage to a potential besieging army. To Karlaak's north lies a clear blue lake, its wooded shores hung with coiling mists, while south of the city flows the river which feeds the lake, its

headwaters lost in the Waste. Irrigated fields surround the river for many miles where it flows past Karlaak. Few villages lie beyond the river: most cluster close to Karlaak's low walls. The surrounding territory consists of low hills crowned with forest. Karlaak itself stands upon a series of hills, the palaces of the wealthy built upon their heights. While Karlaak experiences many rain-drenched days due to its proximity to the Weeping Waste, its winters are no colder than Ilmar's. The city-state's farms produce most of the foodstuffs Karlaak's residents need, with the excess carted to Savona or Oberlorn and sold.

The city's grand palaces stand within high-walled gardens. Beyond their wrought-iron gates and gatehouses shimmer sculpted lawns and willows weeping over leaf-shrouded pools. Such palaces are two or three stories high, built around a central courtyard. A square tower, rising at least another two stories and ending in a steep, gabled roof, usually rears above the grand front door. Weather vanes atop the tower-tops are a current craze among Karlaak's lords. Traditionally jade is used for tower-roof tiles. Elsewhere slate is preferred, although among the poor the cost even of wooden tiles on the roof can often barely be afforded. Heavy shutters secure most people's windows.

Despite its isolation, Karlaak's residents enjoy a rich life, although they may be viewed as provincial by jealous citizens in Oberlorn or Ilmar. Karlaak has a large and well-appointed library, of which any citizen may enter. Its burnished dome is a major landmark on the city skyline. None may take books from the building. Elric is often found here during his year in Karlaak, when he is not walking with Zarozinia in the terraced gardens or speaking with her father, Senator Voashoon. Several minor churches dedicated to various Lawful deities are dotted about Karlaak, each with their own fanciful spire in the Neo-Melnibonéan style. The Cathedral of Law, notable for its high nave and stained glass windows depicting the White Lords vanquishing Chaos, rears up near the council building.

Like the churches, both these official buildings are built in the Neo-Melnibonéan style, faced with jade and marble, and capped with slender spires. The overall effect is pleasing to the eye, although to those who have seen Imrryr's scintillating pastel towers, of which Karlaak's low spires are a crude imitation, the buildings are but a clumsy flattery of the Dreaming City.

Numerous public parks lie within Karlaak's walls. One such belt of parkland rings the main marketplace, with a single, ancient oak standing in the market's center. This is the Grievance Tree: during markets and fairs, priests of Goldar sit beneath the tree ensuring fair trade. Those with complaints regarding prices and quality of goods make them here. In summer, Karlaak's nobility stage concerts and plays in the parks for the people's amusement. Senators Popul Celini and Narre Murrano are chief rivals in this endeavor, each year attempting to outdo one another with the lavish spectacles they stage. Their petty but passionate feud frees Lord Voashoon, Karlaak's chief senator, to rule the city virtually single-handedly in a wise and benign dictatorship.

OBERLORN

“ I HAVE BEEN profaned. I am Slorg. I was once a man but those.... He rocked his body and flung his rolling head backwards, the curved lids falling down to cover his bulging eyes. I have been profaned.... ”

Elric leaned forward on the pommel of his saddle and said lazily: “This is none of my business, Master Slorg.”

The great head darted forward, the eyes snapped open and Slorg's long lips writhed over his teeth like a camels. “Address me not by a mundane title! I am Siletah Slorg Siletah of Oberlorn rightfully rightfully.”

The title was unknown to Elric.

— Elric At The End of Time, ‘The Last Enchantment’

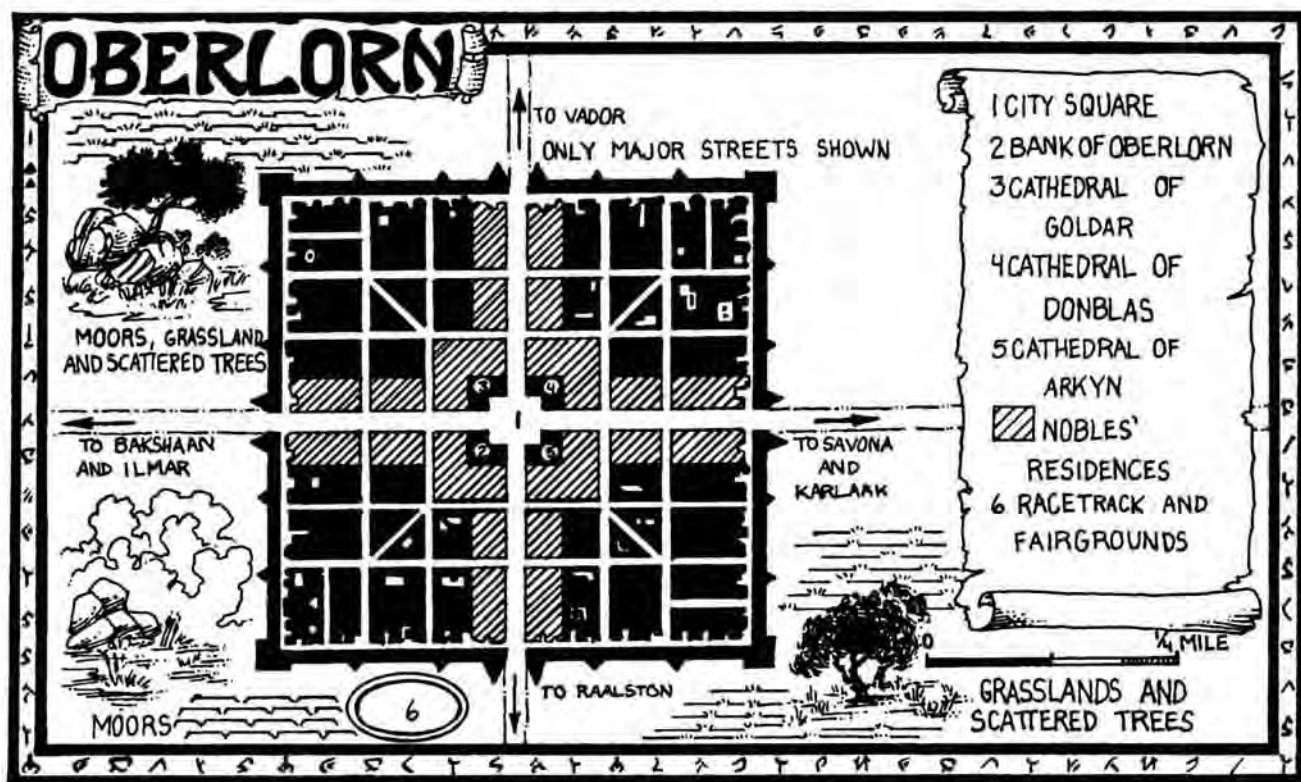
THE GRIM CITY-STATE of Oberlorn lies within the rugged hills and steep gorges of Ilmiora's Central Highlands. It is isolated from the rest of Ilmiora, but thanks to the rich gold mines within its borders, it is home to the richest bank in Ilmiora, the Bank of Oberlorn. Moneylenders from across the Young Kingdoms have flocked to the city despite its out-of-the-way location. Its many grand sandstone buildings, bell-towers, and Neo-Melnibonéan facades reflect the sober wealth and respectability of Oberlorn's prominent citizens.

Oberlorn's rich make their homes in tall houses of sandstone, hidden behind high walls. Archways bearing the crest or motto of the family rises over each gate. Such houses line Oberlorn's grand avenues, while the center of the city is given over to a large market square, dominated by money-changers, itinerant priests of Goldar, and sellers of ore and other samples of precious metals, together with pens of nervous cattle, and laconic donkeys. Elsewhere in the city stands the Bank of Oberlorn, with its famous tower (reputedly haunted by the ghost of the first bell-ringer, who hung himself in the pull-ropes.) Oberlorn's cathedrals to Goldar, Donblas, and Arkyn are the most prestigious in all Ilmiora, with proud spires and echoing naves, tapestries, candelabra, and intricately carved and painted icons. Even the churches of Tovik and Salik are rich with gold, although granite and rough wood prevail within their walls. Fountains are few in Oberlorn, as the winter chill cracks their pipes and freezes their flow. Similarly, flowers, sensitive to frost, are not favored. Neatly ordered lawns dominate.

The senatorial families of Oberlorn are well-established, their titles inherited by several successive generations. Unlike other city-states, the nobles of Oberlorn are dignified and set in their ways. They would not dream of squabbling for position as do their uncouth peers in Bakshaan and Savona. Even the merchants of Oberlorn seem content to compete with the residents of other cities instead of their own. Opponents say that the citizens of Oberlorn are as cold as their winter fogs, and as lively.

Others who dwell in Oberlorn are not so phlegmatic. Despite the prestige enjoyed by the grand old families of the city, some seek the fulfillment of desires which cannot

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be satisfied by trade or reputation. The eldest son of Senator Salvator Slorg, the dissolute young Capello, is a worshipper of Lord Teshwan of Chaos, and has been since his teens. He and a handful of other young and jaded children of the idle rich celebrate their perverse liturgies in an abandoned mine on the outskirts of the city. Verga Slorg, his sister, is Capello's rival as cult leader. For the present, Capello Slorg is the head, or *Siletah*, of the cult of Teshwan (from the High Speech *Shu-Lytah* (Obsequious Provider of Sweetmeats.) Given Verga's ambition, it is only a matter of time before she calls the Hungry Whisperers down upon Capello, and takes his place.

The elder Slorgs, Vasponis, and Horns, together with the lesser families of Oberlorn, little suspect the depths to which these jaded offspring have fallen. Other Oberlorn citizens of note include several musicians, who have fled for more pleasant climes, of whom the foremost is the balladeer Matteus Thomaso, aged in his early twenties, and now a resident of Ilmar.

Outside Oberlorn's gray walls, the land is rough and mountainous. The hills are thick with old forest, wildwood, its depths untamed. Bears, boars, and other creatures make the woods their home. Rutted tracks and muddy roads cut across the hills, sometimes spanning rushing streams on perilously narrow bridges, sometimes plunging through the forests. In the southern districts of Oberlorn the trees are being cut down, fuel to feed the smelters and mills which process the ore from the Central Highland's mines and

quarries. Villages near the mines and smelters are dusty with soot, their inhabitants' faces pale and pinched. Brick chimneys rear over their rooftops. Diseases of the lung prosper here, and black fogs sometimes shroud the bleak hills. The northern hills and forests are as yet unspoiled.

The staple crop of most Oberlorn peasants is oats, and shaggy cattle are herded throughout the city-state. Oberlorn's winters are harsh. Snowfalls are irregular, but not unknown. In 402 YK, thick drifts blanket the countryside, cutting off the roads to the capital for almost two months. The gaunt and starving citizens of Oberlorn prowl the streets with hungry eyes, while elsewhere in the city-state, entire villages freeze or starve to death. Cannibalism is not unknown in some parts of Oberlorn that dread winter.

RAALSTON

ALTHOUGH RAALSTON is a minor city-state, one would not think so if judging the fervent pride with which its inhabitants hold it. Raalston and its handful of villages and hamlets are fiercely independent, and have long resisted the attempts of the Senate to merge the city-state with neighboring Barlimm or Bakshaan. Built of wood, the only stone building in Raalston is the home of Senator Benvenuto Tinreo. The townspeople compete with one another to present the best window-box displays. As a result, flowers bloom on all sides. Raalston has the sleepy

atmosphere of a town the world has passed by, although its citizens would hotly deny such a claim. Only during the yearly races, to which its citizens flock from farms and city alike, does Raalston come alive.

Raalston's economy depends on the golden fields of wheat which surround it. The city's miller, Rico Parducci, who has bought out all his rivals, is the second-most important man in town. Only the current senator, whose family fortune is due to the many serfs who labor upon his land, outranks him. The miller is known to have his eyes set on a seat in the Senate. Marlo, the no-nonsense, stocky bailiff, is the Senator's muscle, and can often found in the Chequered King, Raalston's finest tavern.

SAVONA

EASTERLY SAVONA receives the least rainfall of any Ilmioran city-state. Its gentle plains are only lightly forested, save in the east, where the lowlands rise toward Karlaak's hills and forests, and in the west, toward the foothills of the Central Highlands. Savona is a warm, dry region, and produces the best white wine in the north. Its broad fields of wheat and corn, and vast vineyards, are rivalled only by the great herds of cattle pastured in the city-state.

Savona is a rural capital. Its broad streets are regularly crowded with cattle being herded to market. Water troughs line the streets for cattle and horses to drink from. Six wells provide water for the city's human residents. The Savonese look on water as fit only for washing and cooking; wine is their chosen drink, and they consume it in vast quantities. The city's taverns are the largest and most crowded in Ilmiora, and stay open late into the night. During the summer, Savona's streets ring with drunken laughter, song, angry shouts, and slurred curses. Stabbings and minor brawls are common.

Although once a grand and powerful city-state, Savona's wealth has gradually been reduced as the fortunes of Bakshaan have grown. Savona's houses are predominantly of wood, although the palaces of the senators are extravagant exceptions. The grain upon which Savona's wealth is based is still shipped to Bakshaan, but it no longer claims the price it once did. The encroaching Sighing Desert casts an arid pall over the city-state's grain belt, and the yield is of poor quality. Drought will strike Savona over the next few years, the first and most crippling period immediately following the winter of 402 YK. Hungry and angry at their loss of livelihood, they seek someone to blame. Savona's senators point to the city council, claiming it wastes money and that its members are decadent and corrupt, while the Church blames Chaos. It is not long before council and Chaos are united in the citizens' minds.

The three Savonese senators gain their wealth and position from their dominance of the wine, grain, and cattle trades, respectively. All are faced with ruin by the encroaching desert, and so cast about for further sources of

income and power. By seizing absolute control of their city-state, and claiming the property of the city councilors, the senators hope to maintain their prosperity through the hard times ahead.

Senator Mikale Guiliatava, whose family owns the largest winery in Savona, is a plump, florid man with a nose stained and swollen by too much wine. His eyes are inevitably bloodshot, and his breath heavy with the scent of the grape. He is a superb orator, and extremely vain. Sadly, not even the most gorgeous apparel can enhance Guiliatava's extreme ugliness. Senator Yasarina Shurinae, whose income comes from her family's farms, is tall and thin, with blonde hair bleached by many long days in the sun. Her skin is rough and reddened by the wind. Her eyes are pale and cold. The stocky, muscular, and hirsute Senator Honorio Tormesh trades in horseflesh and cattle. He owns several abattoirs, and has near complete control of the Savonese Butchers and Slaughterers Guild. In times of trouble, he can call upon the guild to supply him with a number of toughs as bodyguards.

Savona is a strictly-governed state. Its future looks extreme. The Church of Law, under the tutelage of portly Bishop Baldiano, is more powerful here than elsewhere in Ilmiora. Baldiano is a strict believer in the hierarchy of Law. He thinks the Church should serve the state, so as to impose Law's order upon the chaos of existence more easily. National unity and patriotism are highly praised in Savona, and the Church commands the people to dedicate their lives to the will of their senators. The good of Savona is the good of the people, is the message from the pulpit. The occasional witch or sorcerer is publicly burnt in the city square, and the monthly races and fair, once held just outside the city walls, have been banned as sinful on Bishop Baldiano's orders. In his zest for purity, the Bishop would close Savona's taverns, too, but the senators know where to draw the line. To remain in power, they know they must keep the citizens of Savona content. Although he is a useful ally of the three, the senators neither trust nor like Bishop Baldiano, and plot his eventual assassination and replacement.

Only the city council, which consists of minor nobles and successful merchants, stands between Savona and totalitarianism. The conscript Savonese army has been enlarged in recent months, and tightly drilled and trained until they are a crack force. The senators have reinstated the anachronistic office of War Chief, a title taken on by Senator Tormesh's brutal son Cesare. If the senators assume complete command of the city, individual rights will be swept away. Savona's people will exist only for the benefit of the city-state; the distinction between public and private life, between a person as a citizen and as an individual will no longer exist. With the city council gone, the senators will cast their eye further afield for likely enemies, and eventual conquest.

Savona's endangered city council is led by the pragmatic tactician Enwarina Marillo. To date, her robust guidance has prevented the trinity of senators from eclipsing the council. With their enemies including the unstable Bishop

SPECIAL PLACES



Kimroc du Feadio of Ilmar, and Vilmir's Cardinal Garrick (who is in constant communication with Bishop Baldiano), the future of Savona and its independent city council looks bleak, unless aid should come from some unexpected outside quarter.

VADOR

THE MINOR CITY-STATE of Vador is important as the source of the Vador River, which has its origins in a great cavern beneath the city. The river's water irrigates the many rice fields which are the source of Vador's wealth. Situated on the fringes of the Sighing Desert, away from the river, the terrain is arid and bleak. The soil is dry, and the trees low and scrubby. Goats, rather than cattle, are the major herd beasts here.

Vador's buildings are mostly of whitewashed mud-brick. Rainfall is scarce, but the growing season is long. Wind-blown sand drips from the steep rooftops. A central bazaar is aswarm with camels, for Vador is one of the few cities to trade with the Nomad Nations. Tax collectors and priests of Goldar have their stalls in the bazaar also, and watch the trading from under striped sun awnings.

The eager young Magel Matavia, a tall man with black hair, sharp eyes, and a close-trimmed beard, is Vador's senator. Crafty and ambitious, he desires a grand future for his humble town. Matavia's main ally in the Senate is the equally young Senator Nichorr. Matavia conducts audiences in his courtyard, surrounded by fans, fountains, and singing birds. He pays lip service to the Lords of Law, notably Goldar, and places great trust in his seers and entrail-readers. Senator Matavia enjoys iced sherbets, and is not above employing assassins, should he feel the need.

ARVEED VINEYARDS

On the southern slopes of the Ilmar hills grow pale green grapes whose wine brings dreams and madness. Local legend has it that the tower of a Melnibonéan sorcerer stood where the arveed vines now grow. The rare potency of the wine, so they say, is due to the unearthly distillations that seeped into the soil when the sorcerer's tower burnt to the ground, fired during the human revolt. Regardless of the reason, the grapes that grow within these few square miles produce the dry yellow wine called arveed. Cuttings taken from the vines and grown elsewhere do not have the same effect, producing merely a mediocre chablis. The owners of the arveed plantation, the Bonechi family, have made their fortune from the vineyard. They guard it jealously.

Illegal in Bakshaan, avidly quaffed in Imrryr, arveed is a truly potent wine. By tradition, the wine is always stored in oaken casks for a year, then is placed into bottles of Galeazzan glass and sold. On average, only enough wine to fill two large barrels, enough for eight hundred bottles, can be made each year, and a bottle of a particularly fine vintage can be worth tens of thousands of bronzes. Even the most ordinary bottle costs 1000 x1D6 bronzes, if a bottle can be found at all.

Arveed is at its peak between two and five years after bottling. Before that time its potent strength and smoky flavor have not developed. After then, arveed soon deteriorates, always becoming vinegar by seven years after bottling (eight years after its vintage). In large doses, arveed drives human drinkers insane: similar quantities induce visionary unconsciousness in Melnibonéan drinkers.

In game terms, each bottle of arveed has a POT of 1D10+5, different vintages varying in quality. The drinker matches CON against the potency of the wine. Success means the wine increases Listen, Scent, and Taste skills by 2D10+5 percentiles for 1D3 hours. Failure means that visions of a thousand other worlds grip the victim's mind. A human will be driven insane by such visions unless receiving a successful D100 roll of POW x3 or less. Regardless of whether the human drinker goes mad, he or she adds one percentile to the Million Spheres skill. A Melnibonéan must fumble a POW roll to be driven mad by arveed, otherwise emerging relaxed and calm at the end of the experience, and with the Million Spheres skill also raised by one percentile.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE BRUSH

This extremist sect of the Church of Law is composed of voluntary self-exiles from Vilmir. Their monastery stands in the hills near Raalston, north of the Barlimm River. They make up in devotion what they lack in numbers. Lead by

the pale, hairless Deacon Just, who speaks in a voice like grinding metal and who travels in a sealed iron carriage drawn by four white horses, the Brotherhood of the Brush guard volumes of arcane lore considered too blasphemous to be kept in holy Vilmir.

Zealots, the monks codify the knowledge the books contain in order to have a complete understanding of the foe they face. The vaults in which their books are stored are deep underground. A priest is always on guard, grinding his teeth as he reads of Entropic abomination. The Brotherhood's curious name comes from their habit of cleansing themselves and everyone they can reach free of the taint of Chaos with iron-bristled scrubbing brushes.

DHARZI AND MELNIBONÉAN RUINS

Throughout Ilmiora may be found scattered ruins of the Bright Empire, and sometimes even traces of the Dharzi, the war with whom so fatally weakened Melniboné a thousand years ago. Melnibonéan ruins characteristically include slender, tapered towers of jade or crystal. These are discoverable especially in the deep wooded valleys of the Southern Ranges or of the Central Highlands.

Within such a tower, an ancient library might contain lost grimoires. Galleries might be hung with portraits of the damned. Overgrown foundations and crumbling marble steps could lead down to a long-forgotten wine cellar, whose dust-shrouded bottles might bring high prices or unspeakable dreams. An ancient artifact caked in leaf-mould and history might be stumbled upon in a new-ploughed field, containing a trapped spirit or bound demon, promising secrets and power, fetching grief and tragedy.

Dharzi relics might attract the attentions of a Beast Lord toward the adventurers, for good or ill, or catch their discoverers up in dreams in which they relive the exploits of a Dharzi champion, and eventually the doom which was her death. Or a relic might warp the adventurers strangely, perhaps granting them animal powers or turning them into bestial mockeries of human beings.

GORJHAN

The only Ilmioran village described by Moorcock, this humble township lies close enough to Vilmir for its people to be influenced by that dour land. Its proximity to the Weeping Waste allows the villagers to trade with the Waste's more adventurous clans. Gorjhan has dirt streets which swiftly turn to mud during rain, and small white-washed houses. The worship of the Vilmirian hero Taargano is known here, although not practiced. Among the village's inhabitants is Cavim the Saddler. He, like almost all of Gorjhan's residents, are slain by the Flame Bringer and his men in 406 YK, the only Young Kingdoms folk to fall victim to the Eastern horde.

THE HOUSE OF STARS

On the upper slopes of Mt. Armilla, in the northern Central Highlands stands an observatory dedicated to seeking out the intricate mechanisms which drive the universe. Staffed by a small and dedicated order of priests of Arkyn and Vallyn, the House of Stars opens its doors to scholars of any denomination. The priests keep strange hours, working long into the night over their charts and calculations, and eagerly manning shifts at their great telescope when the skies are clear.

Some of the priests believe that, given enough careful scrutiny, they will decipher some codified message, perhaps the secret of life itself, inscribed in the paths of the stars at the dawn of creation. Others work upon theories which claim the movements of the stars control human destiny. These priests seek to predict the future from the patterns of the heavens. At least one scholar resident at the House of Stars is an agent of Chaos, and hopes that by charting the paths of the stars, he will discover the secret tabulation of the Music of the Spheres, and with its wild melody sing the world into anarchy. Another curious individual is from Elwher, in the East. He is much derided by the majority of his colleagues because he claims that the stars are gods.

MEREKHN HEADQUARTERS

Located deep below Bakshaan, accessible only via a secret and well-guarded door in a pestilential tavern in the worst part of the city's seedy south side, or from a dark, dank passage whose entrance lies below the surface of the turbulent Barlimm River, are the headquarters of Ilmiora's secret order of assassins. Here the Mereghn's newer members are trained and taught their skills. Maps pinned to the walls display the location of guild houses around the Young Kingdoms, and the floor plans of the Temple of Law in Jadmar and of other important locations. Entire rooms are given over to brewing poisons, philters, and other potions useful in the art of assassination; other rooms are devoted to wardrobes and disguises, weapons and weapon ranges, and similar such purposes. A library contains books about spying and information gathering, geography, languages, murder, religions, and death cults. More rooms contain files and documents about important people of the present and of the past several hundred years, and detailed records of current and past Mereghn activities. This is as complete a history of the Young Kingdoms as ever will be written.

A shrine to the Ladies Mirath and Vallyn of Law stands at the center of the complex, for the Mereghn believe themselves to be acting in Law's interests. Members may choose their personal allegiances as they will. Regardless, all Mereghn must swear to obey the order's creed. Those who refuse, or who break the rules of the Mereghn, are put slowly and horribly to death. The rooms, chambers, suites, and halls of the Mereghn complex have rarely been glimpsed by outsiders. On those rare occasions, the outsiders were kidnapped and blindfolded before being brought by roundabout routes to the underground headquarters.



TYPICAL ILMIORANS

MINIATO VALE

As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, prosperous Miniato Vale is the source of Galeazzo's continued survival. A steep, semicircular range of hills forms the valley, containing the headwaters of the silt-rich Miniato River, which joins up with the Vador further downstream. The fields of Miniato Vale are almost supernaturally fertile. Local legend has it that the river began flowing when a star (the Star of Miniato) fell to earth thousands of years ago, creating a massive crater, of which the worn and weathered hills are the last trace. If the meteorite were unearthed and removed from Miniato Vale, the river will dry up and the rich soil turn to dust. Already the cause of much tension between Galeazzo and Vador, Miniato Vale will provoke more dramatic action if the meteorite is found and transported elsewhere.

NIKORN'S PALACE

In the forest north of Bakshaan stands the grim fortress-palace of Nikorn of Ilmar, merchant prince and adventurer. Rising above a deep, stagnant moat and the surrounding trees, the sprawling fortress, with its natural buttresses and

steep-roofed towers, is built into, rather than on, a rocky outcrop, carved from the living stone. The rock from which its foundations grow is semiporous. Water seeps through it and a slimy moss clings tenaciously to the surfaces of the stones. The moat is crossed by a slippery causeway. The fortress gates, of wood and iron, which can be barred from within, swing inward on heavy chains. The narrow windows looking out from the high towers too are heavily barred.

In contrast to its unlovely exterior, the interior of the palace is well-appointed and comfortable. Bright frescoes cover the walls, and those in the bedrooms have bawdy themes. Cushions, rugs, tapestries, divans, and other furnishings make the cold stone rooms livable and pleasant. The palace is well-guarded by desert warriors whom Nikorn has hired. In 406 YK he also hires the sorcerer Theleb K'aarna, an act ensuring his doom. The same year the palace hosts Queen Yishana of Jharkor, who travels to Ilmora in search of Elric. The albino's revenge upon Theleb K'aarna overcomes the fortress's defenses and the Pan Tangian's magic, and claims Nikorn's life. After it is sacked by Melnibonéan mercenaries, the fortress-palace stands empty, awaiting an heir or a claimant.

SOCIETY

ILMIORAN CULTURE grew from the competitive beginnings of the city-states. Their history and outlook is firmly ingrained in Ilmiorans today. Ilmioran culture has also been strongly influenced by the vast distances separating their cities, causing the people to become strongly independent and self-sufficient. Despite the cities' high populations, the surrounding countryside, plains and wooded uplands alike, are almost empty of human settlements. Only immediately surrounding the cities themselves are the city-states crowded with farms and hamlets. Similar settlements can be found along the main roads, generally growing up around coach-route way-posts. In this way, civilization slowly extends itself across the Ilmioran wilds.

APPEARANCE AND FASHION

ON THE DECK of an Ilmioran schooner, *Elric of Melniboné* stood wrapped in his cloak, shivering and staring gloomily at the cloud-covered sky.

The captain, a stocky man with blue, humorous eyes, came struggling along the deck towards him. He had a cup of hot wine in his hands. He steadied himself by clinging to a piece of rigging and gave the cup to Elric.

Thanks, said the albino gratefully. He sipped the wine. How soon before we make the port of Banarva, captain?

The captain pulled the collar of his leather jerkin about his unshaven face. We're sailing slow, but we should sight the Tarkesh peninsula well before sunset.

— Stormbringer, I, 2

MOOINGLUM BORE a similar bow and quiver. On each hip was a curved sword, one short and straight, the other long and curved, after the fashion of the men of Elwher, his homeland. Both blades were in scabbards of beautifully worked Ilmioran leather, embellished with stitching of scarlet and gold thread.

— The Vanishing Tower, I, 1

THE FOLK OF ILMIORA are of average height and build. Their coloring is fair, with pale skin and light-brown to blonde hair the norm. Their eyes are usually gray-green, or gray-blue. Black hair, such as Zarozenia's, is rare, and considered striking. Many fashionable young women dye their hair black. Ilmioran men are not above such vanities either, for both sexes value style and appearance. Ilmiora's rich spend long hours with their servants, being bathed, having their skin anointed, having their hair styled, and carefully choosing ensembles.

Clothing is considered an art. The right look can achieve far more for one than the right contacts, as any fashionable young Ilmioran knows. News of the latest fashions from Filkhar is a valuable commodity; ships from that land are besieged for information when they dock in Ilmar or Galeazzo. Clothes, like hairstyles, indicate wealth and good breeding. Only a peasant wears her hair ragged and unkempt. Young girls have their hair long and free, binding it up under caps and wimples when they are married. Long hair, sometimes curled, is the fashion for men. Small moustachios, goatees, and closely trimmed beards are much in vogue.

Clothing worn by men of respectable background generally consists of a shirt, doublet and hose, the doublet slashed to reveal more of the shirt material, which is often of linen or fine wool, with silk worn by those who can afford it. Cloth of gold and silver is worn only by the most wealthy. Shirt sleeves are full, sometimes gathered or pleated at the wrist, or worn loose. If gathered, the area pleated is usually embroidered with fine stitches of red, black, or gold. Necks might be square or round. Doublets are fashioned of a variety of materials, and are laced up the front. Soft leathers and suedes are the norm for doublets, with wool, velvet or felt sometimes used. Warm woolen hose are worn laced to the doublet, with a codpiece covering the gentleman's crotch. Collarless cloaks of brocaded velvet or patchwork leather may be worn over such garments. In colder weather, thick woolen robes or coats of embellished leather are favored. These are of knee to floor length, worn open in front, and trimmed with fur or suede around the neck and cuffs.

Men's hats are usually soft, beret-like designs, their brims slashed to reveal the material of the contrasting backing, and are capped off with a brooch of pearls or jewels, or a long plume or bunch of feathers. In Galeazzo the men favor long, loose caps of velvet. Shoes are only worn when outside, and are usually round-toed, made of quality leather. Most men carry a small dagger or poignard, elaborately bejeweled and gilded, at the waist. Leather belts, and beautiful leather scabbards, complete a man's apparel.

Women of breeding and wealth wear low-necked gowns, with high waists and full skirts. The bodice of the gown is tight, and closely fitted. Fur decorates the gown's neckline, and the cuffs of the long, tight sleeves. A gown is made of whatever heavy material is available to the wearer often silk and velvet brocade, although fine wool is also worn. A high-waisted, pleated petticoat is usually worn under the gown, and a long belt over it. One end of the belt is usually left hanging almost to the floor, the other end drawn up in the knot. Headdresses are popular, sometimes heart-shaped, sometimes elaborate spires, complete with veils. Jewelry, and ornaments including perfumed kerchiefs and pomanders, complete the ensemble for both sexes.

Peasants wear simpler clothing. Long loose smocks are worn by the men over baggy woolen hose. Cloaks and coats are the province of the nobility; in winter, men simply wore more layers. Women's clothing, among the poor, is kept to homespun woolen dresses and undyed linen. Clothing is

COMMON ILMIORAN NAMES

MEN: BATTISTA, COSIMO, FERRARO, INAGO, KARLO, KULDANO, LUDOVICO, NARRE, OPLUK, PIETO, TITAN

WOMEN: CATERINA, CHIARA, ESTRELLA, FERVANCIA, GUILIA, LARELIA, LUCRETZIA, SERAFINA, TERTZIA, ZAROZINIA

SURNAMES: ARDONNI, CELLINI, CONDOTTA, FAENZAN, FARRAT, FORLI, KELOS, NIKORN, PILARMO, REMATI, VOASHOON

valuable, and will be patched and worn until it falls apart. Like peasants everywhere, Ilmioran commoners rarely wash; bathing once a year is not unusual. Hair is unkempt, and men shave perhaps once a week, if at all.

CHARACTER

AN ENERGETIC, passionate, and open-minded folk, Ilmiorans are welcoming of outsiders, but temper openness with pride in their home city-state, whichever it might be. First and foremost, Ilmiorans recognize their loyalty to their city, identifying themselves as an Ilmari, a Galeazzan, a Bakshaanite, etc. While Ilmiorans rarely disparage foreigners (save those from city-states other than their own) they are quick to take offense if their own home is slighted, and engage in vigorous argument with ease. They make proud friends and tenacious foes.

Extended families, with both sets of grandparents residing under the one roof, are the Ilmioran norm. Family life is central to most Ilmiorans. Inheritance may be through sons or daughters. Large families are a special source of pride, though upper-class women may choose not to remain in the home and instead to follow careers as merchants or other professions.

Although not ill-tempered, Ilmiorans are proud and argumentative. The quickest way to earn an Ilmioran's contempt is not to rise to a challenge. Children learn to compete for their parents' attention, and against one another in gangs. Similar gangs, comprised of the apprentices of the various guilds in Ilmiora's city-states, take this competition to an extreme in the kickball games they play. These wild contests sweep through the streets, often turning into large-scale brawls, and shopkeepers know how to close up quickly when a kickball match is on. City districts meet in more formalized weekly games, usually in the city square. Kickball competitions between guilds, merchants, and city districts, as well as between entire city-states, are the dominant expression of the frequently intense Ilmioran way of life.

As a result of the distances separating most city-states and of the smallness of the individual cities, Ilmiorans learn to look after themselves. They are supportive of those who clearly cannot, and consider it a point of honor to care for the aged and the infirm; alms houses, supported by philanthropic members of the nobility, are common in most cities. But Ilmiorans are contemptuous toward people that they perceive as having had a share in their own misfortune, perhaps through consorting with Chaos weaklings, misfits, emotionally awkward people, and those who are physically ugly.

In compensation for fanatical excesses committed in the name of Law after liberation from Melniboné, Ilmiorans today pride themselves upon their religious broad-mindedness. Although the forces of Chaos are suspect in Ilmiora, the presence of magic is not feared outright, as elsewhere. Ilmiora's Church of Law, lacking a platform of hate upon which to build, lacks the strength and ruthlessness of its Vilmirian counterpart. Most Ilmioran cities are home to handfuls of sorcerers, alchemists, scryers, and magicians who have learned to be secretive about their professions. Such people are tolerated by city authorities, who may make use of them from time to time. The Church frowns upon their very existence.

Slaves are rare in Ilmiora. Servants are employed by the wealthy, usually traveling between their homes and those of their employers every morning and night. Only the most wealthy families provide rooms for their servants. Other city residents are self-employed, such as the merchants and the guards they employ, and the members of the many Ilmioran guilds (including glassblowers, printers, smiths, weavers, dyers, slaughterers, shoemakers, milliners, and millers).

Farms and hamlets surround the city-states, supplying food for the urban markets. Most farms are small, less than twelve acres (five hectares), although there are many of them, labored upon by the peasant families who own them. Farming communities are also small, little more than clusters of houses, without shops or other amenities other than a god's shrine. In some parts of Ilmiora, the land is owned by members of the nobility. There families work the land as serfs, largely without rights. They must pay the bulk of their produce to their landlord. This is particularly the case in Miniato Vale, where conditions are little changed since the people slaved for Melniboné.

Ilmiora is generally not a society whose classes are rigid. The borders of social class are easily blurred. Merchants who amass enough wealth become nobility. If one is wealthy enough, he or she can buy a seat in the Senate. This evolution of wealth and power is seen as only right and proper. Merchants and shopkeepers who fail in their trade become craftsmen or peasants. The strictures of Law, which preach a preordained place for every person, are out of favor in Ilmiora. Similarly there are no general social restrictions against women or minorities. In the main, individuals are treated equally, and given similar opportunities to succeed or fail.

GOVERNMENT

A COUNCIL of representatives from each city-state rules Ilmiora. This assembly is called the Ilmioran Senate. A senator's position is traditionally hereditary, the title handed on to his eldest child after the senator's death. An appeal to the Senate (usually accompanied by bribes) by the people and council of a city-state may be able to replace a senator at any time, if the Senate acquiesces by a vote of two-thirds or more. This happens relatively often, so that a senator never knows when he or she will be deposed by a rival from the home city. But it takes much influence to win a senate seat, and, as the majority of senators are of noble birth or are merchants wealthy enough to buy themselves a place in the Senate, the bribes required to replace a senator are high indeed.

Three senators each are elected by the six major city-states of Bakshaan, Galeazzo, Ilmar, Karlaak, Savona, and Oberlorn. Barlimm, Raalston, and Vadgoodor have one senator each, making a total of twenty-one senators. The Ilmioran Senate meets in Ilmar, although in recent years, the senators of Bakshaan have been pressing for a move, now that their city eclipses the capital in wealth and size. Lately there also has been discussion of a senator- or senators-at-large, who would represent the nation as a whole, but most think this notion too radical.

Senators are responsible for the civil and military administration of their cities, as well as for maintaining Ilmiora's cohesion and unity. Theirs is no easy job. Duties include ratifying and enforcing laws passed by the council, financing the militia, and maintaining foreign relations, as well as smoothing over the rivalries which divide Ilmiora. Senators are also the heads-of-state of their individual city-states. As such, they are responsible for ensuring that appropriate bodies of men are drafted into the army and navy, and that no man escapes his national service (although bribes may allow them to turn a blind eye to such breaches of the law.) Members of the Senate routinely use their powers to further the business interests of their families and friends, and no one in Ilmiora would understand anyone who refrained from doing that.

CITY COUNCILS

In each city, councilors advise senators, and see to the day to day affairs of their city. Councilors appoint people to public offices, such as night watchmen, tax collectors, executioners, and harbor masters. A small annual stipend comes with such positions, as does a degree of prestige. As with all levels of Ilmioran society, intense subterfuge, intrigue, and bribery is involved in such appointments. A senator must agree to the award of the office, but is rarely involved in choosing councilors, even if they turn out to be family members or friends.

Methods of choosing a council varies by city, by lot from among the nobility, by agreement among the wealthiest merchants, by acclamation from among the leaders of the



guilds, or by nomination from the old and wise. No manner of choice works very well, nor badly enough to warrant changing it.

A city council, backed by the enthusiastic demonstration of the people, may appeal to the Ilmioran Senate to replace a senator, usually by one of their own number. This occurs often enough that most of the Senate is replaced every ten years or so. The hereditary nature of the senatorial title seems to be a quick way of establishing a successor once a senator dies, not a prediction that the successor will hold that office for long.

JUSTICE

ALTHOUGH ILMIORAN laws are made and enforced by the Senate, senators are not actively involved with Ilmiora's legal system. Nor does the Church of Law fully control justice. Two levels of legal system exist in Ilmiora, a Common Judiciary, which oversees the crimes and punishments of city-states, and a High Court, which tries criminals accused of high treason against Ilmiora. Senators accused of crimes may only be judged by the High Court, which sits in Ilmar. Judges of the Common Judiciary travel from city-state to city-state throughout the year. Lawbreakers are imprisoned until a judge is available to try them, which might be many months. If convicted of an offense, a criminal may be pilloried, flogged, or hung, the degree of punishment dependent on the crime. People found innocent by a judge receive no compensation for their imprisonments.

The Judiciary consists of six people nominated by the Senate, and six people nominated by the Church. Judges have no permanent residence for the minimum three years they serve, but travel from city to city, dispensing justice as they go. After three years have passed, a judge may be released of their burden, or, if they desire, they may stay on for another three years. The so-called Hanging Judge,

Cosimo Condotta of Savona, has served for over thirty years. This lean old man's gaunt face and cruel eyes strike terror into the hearts of all who appear before him.

The High Court is composed of six judges, invariably of great wealth or noble birth. Three of its members are appointed by the Church of Law, the remaining three by the Senate. High Court judges hold their position until death claims them. The Senate provides them with sumptuous chambers in Ilmar, and large stipends.

Informally, most city-states have developed a system of parallel civil courts for mediating problems of commerce and property. It is all very well for traitors and murderers to languish in prison, but that will not do for merchants who must collect on accounts or fail, or for traders who have shiploads of perishables at risk.



WAR

AN ILMIORAN man must serve a compulsory two years military service in the army (or one year in the navy) once he turns twenty-one. Those who stay on receive small pay, but may rise to the rank of sergeant. Officers are always of noble birth. The military is the last bastion of the nobility and, to date, not even the wealthy children of merchants have been able to buy themselves commissions in the Ilmioran army. The admiral and the general of Ilmiora's armed forces are chosen by the Senate from among suitable officers.

While the army largely guards the Org and Vilmir border, the navy patrols Ilmiora's coast, escorting ships from Galeazzo and Ilmar and protecting them from attack by Pan Tangian raiders or Vilmirian privateers. Token army garrisons are stationed in every city-state. Tensions between representatives of different cities are sometimes high among the enlisted men.

Ilmioran infantry wear rounded, brimmed helmets and breastplates. They fight with pikes and shortswords, and carry large round shields. Marines wear light leather armor. The cavalry wear half-plate, and are trained in the art of javelin, flail, and shield. Cavalrymen also carry a shortsword strapped to the saddle of their horse.

In older days, when memories of the war with Melniboné were still fresh, and the threat of a Vilmirian invasion loomed greater than it does today, every city-state maintained War Chiefs as well as senators. Today few cities maintain this anachronistic office. Oberlorn has never ceased the tradition, however ceremonial, while in Savona it has been newly resurrected. The descendants of War Chiefs of old retain the pride of the high office, and many a career man in the navy or army boasts of an ancestor who wore a War Chief's helm.

RELIGION

THE WHITE LORDS are the state gods across Ilmiora. The worship of other gods is permitted, and in some city-states is actively promoted by the senators and councils. Individual churches to individual White Lords stand in most cities. The recently completed Cathedral of Law in Ilmar is an exception. The seat of the Archbishop, the Church's head, it is an elaborately spired building designed in Neo-Melnibonéan revival style built to commune with all the Lawful gods. Its central altar is dedicated to Donblas, Arkyn, and Goldar. Smaller shrines to the remaining Lords of Law lie in side chapels.

Ilmiora's priesthood is open to all regardless of birth, though as elsewhere the Church does not accept women as priests. How far a priest ascends through the ranks depends upon his devotion, and his ability to gain the sponsorship of superiors. Like Ilmiorans everywhere, the priesthood is fiercely competitive. The bishops and archbishop of the Ilmari Church of Law prove by their positions that not only are they staunchly faithful, but also cunning, ruthless, and powerful. Ilmioran noble houses confirmed their strength by placing offspring and allies in the Church of Law, as well as in the Senate. A bishopric exists in each of the senatorial cities, but only Archbishop Kimroc and Bishop Baldiano of Savona are politically powerful.

Small shrines stand at roadsides throughout Ilmiora, many of them sacred to Lady Theril of the Guiding Hands, who in the city-states is also worshipped as the traveler's patron. Tovik the Relentless is prayed to by many travelers, who ask him to spare them from attack by beasts or bandits. Lord Goldar's adherents are growing in strength in Ilmiora, but their worship has not yet reached the level of the Purple Towns, where the Lord of Profit is the dominant god. In Ilmiora, he is one of many.

The Elemental Rulers are weakly worshipped in the city-states. Straasha is the most favored, especially by seafarers, sailors, and shipbuilders. Ilmioran shrines to the Elemental Gods are invariably humble; only in Galeazzo is there a church of Straasha; it is small, but its flock faithful. The Sea King's priests are well-respected in Galeazzan society. Ilmiorans are, as a rule, too civilized to worship the Beast-Lords. The Balance is virtually unknown in the city-states save as an abstract philosophical concept, and so too the Grey Lords.

All Ilmiorans know of the Lords of Chaos, and almost all shun them, although without the overwhelming panic evidenced by Vilmirians. Ilmiorans mostly perceive Chaos as malevolent and creative in turn, rather than as strictly evil. The forces of Chaos are seen in storms and earthquakes, and other random, senseless acts. Murder is often believed to be as a result of Chaotic influence. The Church of Law exists to guide people away from Chaos, and towards Order. The Lords of Law represent stability, civilization, and peace to Ilmiorans. Law is the essence of civilization, while Chaos is its opposite. Lawful fanatics exist in the city-states as they do everywhere (the current Archbishop is one), but in Ilmiora they are viewed as much with amusement as with respect.

FESTIVALS

THE WEDDING OF Galeazzo to the sea each spring has already been described. Bakshaan's main festival is its annual fair, when the already crowded markets of the city swell to bursting. Held in the second week of Theofric, the Bakshaan Fair sees many visitors to the city, as well as merchants who trade in Bakshaan at no other time of year. Emissaries of the Nomad Nations might be encountered, tall and dark and dignified, selling incense and cinnamon, and perhaps a Dreamthief might wander incognito through the crowd. Even emissaries of the Dreaming City have occasionally appeared at the Bakshaan Fair, elite slaves with eldritch features, their retinues rich enough for those of kings.

Every city-state holds a Great Fair, although none so sumptuous as Bakshaan's. Although the fairs are set and unmoving, their participants are not. A traveling circus of stalls and merchants, entertainers and thieves moves on each month to a new city and a new fair. A spectacular series of horse-races is held in each city at the same time as the fair, and are its high point. Most nobles enter between a single rider and an entire team in the races, and competition is strong between their supporters. Fierce loyalties often flare into violence during the few short days of markets and racing each month.

FOOD AND DRINK

ELRIC Poured wine for the other five. It was of a vintage which the law in Bakshaan forbade the populace to drink. Too much drove the imbibers mad, yet Elric had already quaffed great quantities, and showed no ill effects. He raised a cup of the yellow wine to his lips and drained it, breathing deeply and with satisfaction as the stuff entered his system. The others sipped their cautiously. The merchants were already regretting their haste in contacting the albino. They had a feeling that not only were the legends true but that they did not do justice to the strange-eyed man they wished to employ.

Elric poured more yellow wine into his goblet and his hand trembled slightly and his dry tongue moved over his lips quickly. His breathing increased as he allowed more of the beverage to trickle down his throat. He had taken more than enough to turn other men into mewling idiots, but those few signs were the only indication that the wine had any effect on him at all.

This was a wine for those who dreamed of different and less tangible worlds. Elric drank it in the hope that he would, for a night or so, cease to dream.

— The Bane of the Black Sword, I, 1

FOOD IS IMPORTANT to Ilmiorans. They prize well-developed palates. To be a gourmand is the proof and perfection of a civilized man, or so many Ilmiorans

Great Opportunity!

BATTISTA ARDONNI, Merchant, late of Bakshaan, is pleased to announce the arrival of the brig **THE SWIFT BREEZE**, whose cargo consists of divers goods of unsurpassed quality. Included for sale are a gross of silken kerchiefs manufactured in Menii; several casks of fine Vilmirian sherry; glassware from the Dreaming City; and a consignment of foodstuffs from Filkhar, including preserves, condiments, and spices. Also a quantity of hides, tallow and grains. All enquiries to the Harbor View Inn, dockside, Ilmar.

believe. The major meal in the city-states is served at midday. Breakfasts are light, as are dinners. Beef is Ilmiora's most popular meat, followed by pork. Meats may be roasted, delicately marinated, or served as spiced sausages eaten hot or cold. Artichokes, asparagus, garlic, tomatoes, peppers, and zucchini are important ingredients in Ilmioran dishes. A popular Ilmioran snack is bread served hot, with cheese melted over it, sprinkled with tomato and olives. Herbs and spices are frequently employed to add flair and zest to dishes, even to fruit flans. Olives, eggs, tomatoes, cheeses, fresh fruit, and bread are usually on the table. A favorite appetizer consists of cold meats and pickled vegetables. To palates accustomed to simple foods, Ilmioran recipes are rich, heavy, and spicy. Middle-aged Ilmioran nobles and merchants tend to plumpness.

Wine is served at every meal in Ilmiora except breakfast. Even children partake of a drop. Although not the best wine-making country of the Young Kingdoms (that honor falls to Filkhar), Ilmiora is certainly the most prolific. Considerable regional variation exists in Ilmiora's vineyards. The tough, austere red wines of Bakshaan are produced in quantity, and widely exported; although their quality is low, so is their price. Fresh, crisp white wines are a staple of Ilmar, and come into their own when drunk with seafood. Miniato Vale's best wine is *chianti*, a delicious quaffing red. Ilmiora's finest wines come from Savona; Savonese *moscato*, a white, bubbly wine, is recognized even in Melniboné, while the dry white *diccio*, and superb, full-bodied *virso*, a rich, magnificent red, are drunk in the best homes of the Young Kingdoms.

Ilmari arveed, the yellow wine of madness, is illegal in Bakshaan, but is consumed in the other city-states with caution. Arveed is the wine of choice for decadents, dreamers, poets, and the debauched. A single glass brings visions; too much of it brings delusions and inescapable nightmares.

ARTS AND PASTIMES

ZAROZINIA murmured: "I have learned dancing in Ilmiora where all ladies are taught the art..."

— **The Bane of the Black Sword, II, 3**

A GLASS OF WINE, a game of cards: few Ilmiorans, high or low born, bother to resist such a pleasant interlude. Ilmiorans love games such as cards and chess, and sports such as kickball, horse-racing, and cockfighting. Be it one on one, or against a rival team, Ilmiorans are staunchly loyal, and pugnacious in the extreme when their passions are aroused.

The monthly horse races accompanying Ilmiora's fairs are traditionally held outside the walls of the city-state, and are the scene of frenzied betting and much ill feeling towards residents of rival city-states, and supporters of other teams. Bakshaan's Senator Farrat is the owner of one of the most prestigious racing teams, the Blues. The Greens, who regularly contest with the Blues for top honors, are owned by Senator Glorvario of Ilmar, while the merchant Nikorn has recently added his own team, the Golds, upsetting the status quo. The Bishop of Savona has banned the annual races, as a result of which Bakshaan now holds the event twice each year.

Almost every city district and guild has its own kickball team, whose pursuit of the small round ball, which players are forbidden to hold, is often interrupted by fierce brawls. Kickball games are held at the drop of a hat, with organized games played every Waterday afternoon. A city's nobility put up prizes for the matches; the more generous a senator is with gifts and patronage, the more he or she is loved. Oberlorn's kickball teams have shabby uniforms, for their senators have little time for the game. In Savona, kickball is forbidden. The town squares of the other cities are the site for the weekly games, which begin at noon and finish at sunset; impromptu matches are held anywhere the fancy strikes, in a half-tilled field, or in the street.

Music and dancing are favorite pastimes. Any Ilmioran lady or gentleman of quality is expected to know all of the old Ilmioran dances. A man or woman who cannot dance is thought as doltish as a peasant, and receives no invitations from society. Graceful and delicate, Ilmioran dances derive from the intricate pavannes and minuets of Melniboné, although the social penalty for a mis-timed step is more literally deadly in Imrryr than in Savona or Vador. Choral cantatas and instrumental concertos for violin or harpsichord represent the most sophisticated new styles of music in Ilmiora. As the fashion for music quickly evolves, nobles are scrambling to acquire personal music masters and soloists.

ILMIORANS OF NOTE

DEINSTAFF, A MERCHANT

Deinstaff is dying. A rotting disease contracted during an unsuccessful mercantile venture to the kingdom of Org slowly eats away his lungs. He coughs often, sometimes spitting blood into a lace handkerchief. His hard face is deeply lined by his constant pain. Deinstaff rarely speaks, but when he does, his once booming voice is reduced to a harsh growl. Broad-shouldered and tall, he is slowly wasting away. When he dies, he will be an emaciated husk. Deinstaff is still



a bulky man, but he wears long leather coats with fur-lined collars to hide his weight loss. His silken hose hang loosely around his thin legs. Deinstaff carries a slender dagger, so elaborately bejeweled as to be almost useless in combat.

Always a man of action and resource, Deinstaff's passion for wealth drove him into Troos in search of trade. He barely escaped with his life, his health and his fine clothes in tatters. Prior to that unfortunate incident, Deinstaff had been most successful. His ruthlessness caused the untimely deaths of several minor rivals, allowing him rapid accumulation of wealth and a seat on the city council. Faced by the seemingly insurmountable Nikorn of Ilmar, it is Deinstaff who conceives of hiring Elric as an assassin, after even the Mereghn fail to take Nikorn's life. Knowing of Elric's evil reputation, Deinstaff's illness gives him nothing to lose in hiring the doomed albino.

DEINSTAFF, age 41, an unhealthy merchant

Chaos 13, Balance 6, Law 41

STR 9/15* CON 7/13* SIZ 10/16* INT 13
POW 14 DEX 11 APP 7/12* HP 9/15*

*After the slashes: Deinstaff's stats before his illness.

Damage Bonus: none/+1D4*

Dagger 75%, damage 1D4+2

Armor: 1D6-1 (helm off) leather

Skills: Bargain 80%, Common 65%, Conceal Object 54%, Dodge 30%, Evaluate 79%, Fast Talk 41%, Hide 50%, Insight 50%, Move Quietly 48%, Natural World 40%, Scribe 50%, Track 64%, Young Kingdoms 25%

SENATOR FARRAT

Red-faced and portly, Senator Farrat is one of Karlaak's three senators. He has thick lips and fingers, and tends to overdress. Prone to arrogance, he is fussy and pedantic, as well as short tempered. Farrat leads a delegation of merchants demanding Deinstaff and his three conspirators pay Elric a bribe from their own coffers, so that the albino will spare Bakshaan after killing Nikorn. Pilarmo, Tormiel, Kelos, and Deinstaff are virtually ruined as a result.



SENATOR BURCHARD FARRAT of Bakshaan, age 50

Chaos 10, Balance 8, Law 41

STR 11 CON 12 SIZ 10 INT 15
POW 13 DEX 10 APP 8 HP 11

Damage Bonus: none

Dagger 40%, damage 1D4+2

Armor: none

Skills: Art (Conversation) 67%, Bargain 90%, Conceal Object 35%, Evaluate 91%, Fast Talk 55%, Insight 75%, Other Language (Melnibonéan) 40%, Own Language (Common) 75%, Scribe 60%, Young Kingdoms 43%

LADY VANOZZA FARRAT

The plump and seemingly inoffensive wife of Senator Farrat is one of the most dangerous people in the Northern Continent. Lady Vanozza is the leader of Ilmiora's order of assassins, whose power has infiltrated almost every city in the Young Kingdoms. Initiated by a now-dead aunt into the Mereghn, Lady Farrat has successfully lived a double life for more than twenty-five years. By day, she is meek and mild, her time devoted to her plump brood of spoiled children. At night, after



drugging her husband to ensure his uninterrupted sleep, she slips away to the Mereghn's headquarters, where she coordinates the actions of a hundred assassins and a thousand spies. Vanozza Farrat is a good-natured woman, and dislikes killing when it is not necessary. Despite her personal qualms, she will not hesitate to protect the Mereghn, or her children, taking whatever steps she deems necessary should the stability of her double life be threatened.

LADY VANOZZA FARRAT, age 39, leader of the Mereghn

Chaos 89, Balance 6, Law 41

STR 11 CON 15 SIZ 14 INT 17
POW 16 DEX 13 APP 9 HP 15

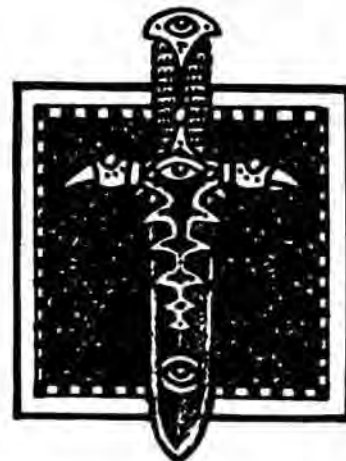
Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Brawl 115%, damage 1D3+1D3+1D4
Bludgeon 91%, damage 1D8+1D4
Rapier 90%, damage 1D6+1+1D4
Hunting Bow 80%, damage 1D6+1+1D2
Strangle Cord 85%, damage strangulation
Broadsword 75%, damage 1D8+1+1D4
Whip 60%, damage 1D3+entangle

Armor: 1D6-1 (helm off) soft leather

Spells: Bonds Unbreakable (3), Breath of Life (1), Cloak of Cran Liret (1-4), Demons Eye (1), Heal (2), Hells Armor (1-4), Hells Sharp Flame (1-4), Liken Shape (4), Midnight (1), Moonrise (1), Muddle (1), Rat Vision (1), Span of Cran Liret (1-4), Sureness of Cran Liret (1-4), Tread of Cran Liret (1-4), Witchsight (3)

Skills: Art (Courtly Manners) 85%, Climb 105%, Common 86%, Disguise 130%, Fast Talk 78%, Hide 101%, Mabden 48%, Melnibonéan 65%, Move Quietly 101%, Opish 15%, Pick Lock 95%, Oratory 75%, Potions 60%, Search 85%, Throw 80%, Unknown Kingdoms 15%, Young Kingdoms 50%



KELOS THE MERCHANT

K Of the four merchants who hire Elric to remove Nikorn, the enemy who has been skewering them all, only smooth-tongued Kelos is not entirely ruined by the venture. In 408 YK, when Elric resides temporarily in Bakshaan, training warriors and overseeing the strengthening of the city's walls, it is in Kelos's home the albino stays, making himself free with the merchant's many fine wines. Tall, thin, and bald, Kelos is the most ambitious of the merchants who comprise Bakshaan's city council. Lust for wealth and power drives Kelos to agree to hire Elric. Afterward, Kelos works fanatically to amass a new fortune, only to lose it, and his life, at the world's end.



KELOS, age 37, a merchant of Bakshaan

Chaos 33, Balance 3, Law 31

STR 12 CON 11 SIZ 15 INT 17
POW 17 DEX 12 APP 9 HP 13

Damage Bonus: 1D4

Rapier 75%, damage 1D6+1+1D4

Dagger 65%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Armor: 1D6-1 (helm off) soft leather

Spells: Liken Shape (4), Wisdom of Slortar (1-3), Visage of Arioch (1-3)

Skills: Bargain 87%, Evaluate 62%, Fast Talk 115%, Insight 25%, Listen 60%, Navigate 30%, Oratory 95%, Repair/Devise 50%, Young Kingdoms 35%



NIKORN OF ILMAR

N Although, as his name indicates, he is not native to Bakshaan, the merchant prince Nikorn has gladly made the thriving city-state his home, dwelling in the forest north of Bakshaan in a dark tower. The surviving son of the elderly Senator Lorandon of Ilmar, Nikorn is not a young man. Although born to a peasant woman out of wedlock, Nikorn was always treated well by Senator Lorandon, who planned a career for him in the church as a way of consolidating the Lorandon family's power. With his son-by-marriage the heir to the Lorandon shipyards, and another son, no matter how illegitimate, in the Ilmari Church of Law, the senator foresaw his clan's fortunes much strengthened. Lorandon did not expect the ambitions of his bastard to disrupt those plans.



Young Nikorn sought a more glorious life than one sequestered in the church. When he was twenty, Lorandon's son and mercantile heir Filippo was murdered while in Galeazzo. His body, found floating in the sea, bore dozens of stab wounds. Some whispered that Nikorn had organized the assassination; others blamed a cuckolded husband, for Filippo was a well-known seducer of other men's wives. To his anger, Nikorn was not declared the official heir, being passed over in favor of his debauched and idle cousin Andrek. Rebellious against his family, who had until then treated him honorably, Nikorn vowed to become powerful on his own terms. For the past thirty years, he has wrangled, argued, and battled his way to become the most successful merchant in Ilmiora. Only the Voashoons rival his wealth and influence.

Nikorn is handsome, in a rugged way, and has preserved much of his looks despite his age. He has hard, keen eyes and thin lips. He prefers to go clean-shaven, an affectation which he believes makes him look younger. Despite his ruthlessness, Nikorn is not without honor. He is courageous and clever, and discomforted by needless suffering. Although members of Bakshaan's city council have approached him, seeing in Nikorn a potential senator and pawn, the merchant has refused their alliances, preferring to operate unencumbered. Other councilors see in Nikorn an unendurable rival.

Much of Nikorn's success comes from his refusal to trust important tasks to anyone other than himself. Where most merchants pay other men to head their caravans, Nikorn leads them himself, making profitable on-the-spot deals. The additional money allows him to hire more guards, and

to equip larger caravans. Importing in higher volume, he undersells his opponents, making money and many enemies. By 406 YK, Nikorn has hired the Pan Tangian sorcerer Theleb K'aarna to guard him against assassins and magical attack. Only the sorcery and battle skills of Elric and the Melnibonéan mercenaries led by Dyvim Tvar prove strong enough to sack Nikorn's castle and bring about the merchant's death. Against his will, having sworn not to harm Nikorn, Elric is forced to wield Stormbringer against him, and against Elric's will, the runesword steals Nikorn's soul.

NIKORN LORANDON, age 53, doomed merchant

Chaos 31, Balance 20, Law 35

STR 15 CON 14 SIZ 13 INT 14
POW 12 DEX 11 APP 10 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Brawl 75%, damage 1D3+1D4
Broadsword 112%, damage 1D8+1D4
Lormyrian Axe 85%, damage 3D6+1D4

Armor: 1D8 (helm off) half plate

Skills: Bargain 85%, Evaluate 71%, Common 70%, Fast Talk 67%, Jump 45%, Lesh 21%, Listen 84%, Melnibonéan 25%, Mong 27%, Natural World 38%, Navigate 60%, Oratory 80%, Ride 66%, Scribe 43%, Search 74%, Swim 45%, Young Kingdoms 34%

OPLUK OF KARLAAK

Cousin of Zarozinia, and nephew of Senator Voashoon, fiery young Opluk is a bold warrior, although unskilled in bargaining and similar arts useful to merchants. Slow-spoken, Opluk can seem dull-witted on first appearance. His mind is sharp. His hazel eyes are dark, his brows heavy. Under average height, Opluk is stocky and well-muscled. He is a natural tactician, and a good leader. The formative years of his life are spent in Pikarayd. In 408 YK, Opluk leads two thousand men to the Fortress of Evening, where he places himself and his warriors under Elric's command. Zarozinia accompanies her cousin on this ill-fated journey. Opluk and his men are slain during the sea battle between the Purple Towns and their Northern allies, and Pan Tang's navy and the Chaos Fleet.



OPLUK OF KARLAAK, age 23, cousin of Zarozinia
Chaos 13, Balance 6, Law 21

STR 18 CON 14 SIZ 15 INT 10
POW 13 DEX 16 APP 10 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Javelin 75%, damage 1D6+1D3
Great Sword 101%, damage 2D8+1D6

Armor: 1D8+2 (helm on) half plate and mail

Skills: Climb 85%, Common 50%, Dodge 46%, Hide 41%, Listen 63%, Move Quietly 69%, Natural World 50%, Navigate 47%, Physik 60%, Ride 78%, Sailing 45%, Search 60%, Swim 65%, Track 50%, Trap 45%, Young Kingdoms 30%

PILARMO OF BAKSHAAN
Scrawny Pilarmo dresses in sumptuous and extravagant clothes. His wealth and good taste cannot conceal a disfiguring disease of the skin, the patches of which Pilarmo constantly picks and scratches. His long fair hair is greasy, unless freshly washed, in which case it is scented with rosewater. Pilarmo, like his three compatriots, sits upon Bakshaan's city council. He is adept at dissembling, and concealing his emotions. When Nikorn's loyalty cannot be purchased, nor can he be financially ruined, Pilarmo and his friends decide to hire Elric as an assassin. The plan is Pilarmo's ruin.



PILARMO OF BAKSHAAN, age 46, merchant

Chaos 18, Balance 3, Law 20

STR 11 CON 13 SIZ 14 INT 12
POW 14 DEX 15 APP 7 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Rapier 75%, damage 1D6+1+1D4

Armor: none

Skills: Art (Conversation) 40%, Bargain 55%, Common 60%, Evaluate 60%, Oratory 38%, Search 70%, Scribe 35%, Young Kingdoms 21%. ♣

CAPELLO OF OBERLORN

A worshipper of the little-known Chaos Lord Teshwan, Capello Slorg is the Siletah, or leader, of a minor Chaos cult based in Oberlorn. His sister Verga sets the Hungry Whisperers upon Slorg in 407 YK, and takes his place. Slorg is encountered, ravaged, insane, and desperate, by Elric, in the woods near Bakshaan. His dying curse catapults Elric into another world.



CAPELLO SLOG OF OBERLORN, age 26, doomed Siletah

Chaos 51, Balance 7, Law 3

STR 10 CON 12 SIZ 15 INT 12
POW 17 DEX 9 APP 8 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Brawl 65%, damage 1D3+1D4

Armor: none

Spells: Buzzard Eyes (1), Curse of Chaos (4), Pox (1), Rat Vision (1), Summon Demon (1), Visage of Arioch (1-3)

Bound Demons and Elementals: Slorg carries the traditional staff of his cult, a long, white, metal-colored claw, a glowing black stone clutched within its carven fingers. A demon, whose need is to be bathed in excrement once a week, of the breed Lyrkaarl, is bound into the stone. It has the abilities Dazzle and Teleport

Skills: Lurch 85%, Moan and Moo 100%, Spider-like Scuttle 85%



SENATOR VOASHOON

Lord Voashoon is Karlaak's chief senator. His family is one of Ilmiora's richest; the efforts of previous generations gathered great wealth and power for the clan. Merchants of great cunning, the Voashoon have factors from Tarkesh to Pikarayd, and throughout the city-states. Senator Voashoon's chief rival is Nikorn of Ilmar. With Nikorn's death at Elric's hands, the family reap many benefits, perhaps the primary reason for Senator Voashoon's friendly welcome to Elric, of whom so much dark rumor speaks, into the extensive and powerful Voashoon clan.



A solid, robust man, the Senator has heavy, patrician features. He is inclined to be stubborn. His receding hair is iron gray, and his solid face craggy and lined. When Karlaak falls to Chaos, Lord Voashoon takes to the Weeping Waste, where he briefly encounters Elric. Exhausted by the horrors he has seen, Voashoon is unable to mourn the loss of his city, and is given over to a weary hopelessness. He is last seen riding eastward in the company of six guards, the last surviving citizens of Ilmiora. Details of Lord Voashoon's eventual death are unknown.

LORD TITAN VOASHOON OF KARLAAK, age 62, senator and father of Zarozinia

Chaos 16, Balance 41, Law 62

STR 12 CON 11 SIZ 14 INT 16
POW 17 DEX 9 APP 14 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Shortsword 81%, damage 1D6+1+1D4

Dagger 65% 1D4+2+1D4

Armor: none

Spells: none

Skills: Art (Conversation) 71%, Art (Courtly Manners) 73%, Bargain 91%, Common 90%, Evaluate 81%, Fast Talk 35%, Insight 50%, Lesh 20%, Listen 41%, Melnibonéan 68%, Mong 15%, Natural World 64%, Navigate 43%, Oratory 95%, Ride 50%, Sailing 25%, Scribe 62%, Unknown Kingdoms 5%, Young Kingdoms 65%

TORMIEL OF BAKSHAAN

This unpleasant merchant is the last of that reckless four who hire Elric. Tormiel is a fat and flabby man. His powdered and painted cheeks wobble when he laughs, which is not often. Quite the opposite of the stereotype of the jolly fat person, he is mean-spirited, bitter, and ill-tempered. Among Bakshaan's merchants he is known to sit stuffing his mouth with sugared almonds and other sweetmeats, while watching his servants being whipped for minor misdemeanors.



Tormiel displays his wealth with ostentatious jewelry, particularly large rings. Many of the city's prostitutes bear the scars of Tormiel's rings, which he refuses to take off when he paws and drools over them. His clothes are always extravagant, more fit for an emperor than a merchant. He shares his home with his father, a dry, withered ancient, whose senile maliciousness in the main is expressed towards Tormiel. The old man's ranting, croaking demands echo through the upper rooms of Tormiel's villa, where he is confined.

TORMIEL OF BAKSHAAN, age 40, merchant

Chaos 21, Balance 9, Law 25

STR 13 CON 19 SIZ 16 INT 14
POW 12 DEX 7 APP 8 HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Wrestle 86%, damage special
Dagger 41%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Armor: none

Skills: Art (Conversation) 20%, Bargain 85%, Common 62%, Conceal Object 75%, Evaluate 98%, Fast Talk 85%, Insight 35%, Melnibonéan 15%, Oratory 61%, Scribe 40%, Young Kingdoms 30%

ZAROZINIA VOASHOON

The strong and confident daughter of Karlaak's Senator Voashoon, Zarozinia is being groomed by her father as the heir to his mercantile empire. Her studies include languages, history, and politics. Returning from a trading jaunt to Pikarayd with her uncle in 406 YK, Zarozinia is the only member of their caravan to survive an Orgian attack. Fleeing into the depths of Troos, Zarozinia there encounters Elric and Moonglum. She falls in love with the moody albino, and returns with him to Karlaak to be wed.



Despite the danger Elric constantly places her in (his arrogance in Org almost costs Zarozinia her life), her rival is the Black Sword itself. Toward the end of the world, she is twice kidnapped by Chaos, and direly warped by it. Zarozinia's love for Elric does not waver. Although she maintains an air of self-assurance, Zarozinia has an insecure side only Elric sees. Her innocence, youth, and vulnerability were what first attracted Elric to her, and in the brief months of their marriage uninterrupted by Fate, he remains her closest confidant as well as her true love.

Zarozinia has a low, deep voice. Her features are heavy but attractive, and framed by her long black hair. Her eyes are gray-green, and her graceful figure full and rounded. Despite her sensuous lips and loving skills, despite the arts of intrigue and entertainment taught her as befits an Ilmioran lady of her station, Zarozinia is still only a girl. She is barely sixteen when she meets Elric in Troos, and slightly less than eighteen when she throws her Chaos-warped body onto his moaning, rune-carved hellsword.

ZAROZINIA VOASHOON, age 17, merchant's daughter and doomed lover of Elric

Chaos 5, Balance 31, Law 27

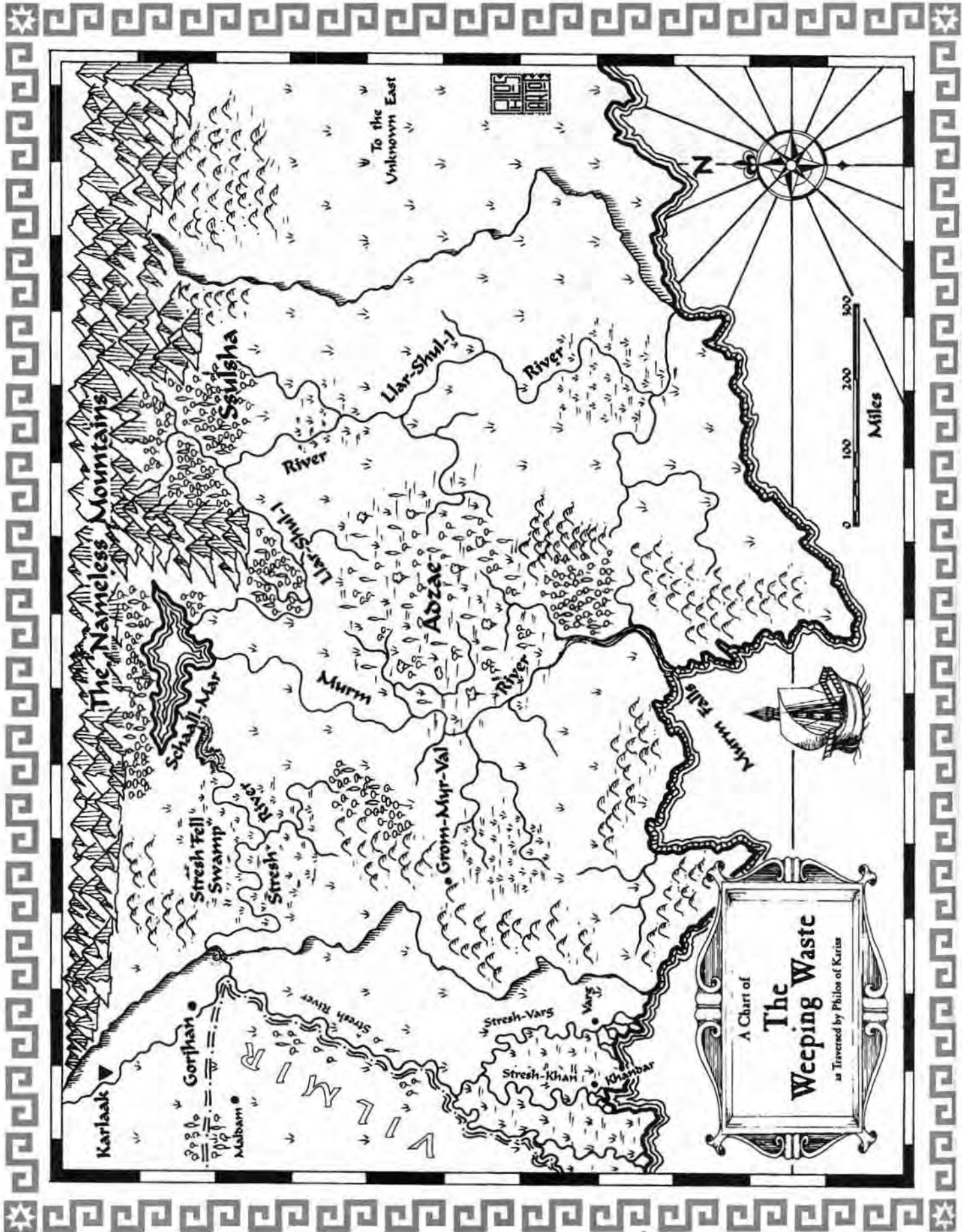
STR 13 CON 11 SIZ 10 INT 13
POW 12 DEX 16 APP 21 HP 11

Damage Bonus: none

Brawl 85%, damage 1D3
Dagger 43%, damage 1D4+2
Hunting Bow 21%, damage 1D6+1

Armor: none

Skills: Art (Conversation) 73%, Art (Lute) 80%, Art (Dance) 92%, Common Tongue 75%, Evaluate 30%, Insight 62%, Lesh 15%, Listen 51%, Melnibonéan 30%, Mong 15%, Natural World 27%, Orate 85%, 15%, Physik 68%, Ride 75%, Search 64%. ☉



A Chart of

The Weeping Waste

as Traversed by Philos of Kartis

THE WEEPING WASTE

IN THE LAND OF CLOUDS AND RAIN, THE
SUN IS THOUGHT THE PRESENCE OF EVIL,
AND THE SEASONS FLOW WITHOUT
EASY RECOGNITION.

NORTHEAST of the Vilmirian Protectorates, and fifty miles from the Ilmioran outpost of Karlaak, rises the vast plateau which is the Weeping Waste. Perpetual clouds shroud this high tableland, which remains a mystery to most of the Young Kingdoms. The gray-green sweep of turf and fen which is the Weeping Waste, isolated atop a vast escarpment, is the habitat of many strange and rare species of plants and animals, as well as home to scattered tribes of nomadic barbarians. This is a place of eternal rain.

HISTORY

THE WEEPING WASTE was thrust up from the grasslands of the northern continent during the Elemental Wars 20,000 years ago, when the earth itself was remade. It was at this time, the barbarians of the Waste say, that Straasha fought with Kakatal for the hand of Lassa. Losing, the Lord of Water blanketed the sky above the Waste with thick clouds in order that he might not see the face of his enemy, beaming triumphantly from his sun palace, ever again. The rains which soak the Weeping Waste, day in, day out, are Straasha's tears, shed as he mourns that Lassa chose Kakatal as a lover over him.

In the early days of the Bright Empire the Weeping Waste became home to those Melnibonéans of a somber and melancholy cast of mind, who found in its curtains of rain and constant moisture an environment to suit their moods. The mossy remains of at least one fantastic palace, all flying buttresses and soaring towers of ebony and bone, in classic Imryrian style, still stand in the hills overlooking The Birthplace of Rivers. The last such palace was abandoned by its mournful Melnibonéan inhabitants as the Dharzi began

THE WEEPING WASTE AT A GLANCE

RULED BY: no one king or chieftain dominates the Waste. Individual nomadic tribes rule themselves, extending their laws to the area through which they travel.

POPULATION: 300,000

LONGEST RIVER: Llar-shul-i River, 950 miles (1530 km).

HIGHEST PEAK: the Weeping Waste sits at an average of 6500 feet (2000 meters) above sea level. The mountains which divide it from the Sighing Desert, although higher, are not part of the life of the Waste.

IMPORTS: copper and bronze tools and weapons, whetstones, other small artifacts that will not rust. Some traders have luck with blankets, mirrors, or beads.

EXPORTS: timber, pelts, and furs are occasionally brought out of the Waste by brave adventurers or wary tribesfolk.

to encroach upon the Weeping Waste, shortly before war broke out between their two empires a thousand years ago.

The human tribes which evolved in the Weeping Waste went largely unnoticed by the Melnibonéans, and so were left to their own devices. Without Melnibonéan contact to spur their culture, the Waste folk remained crude barbarians. Memories of Melniboné linger on in the Weeping Waste as tales of were-dragons. In later years, both Lormyrian and Vilmirian expeditions were to scout the land, dismissing it as a damp hell with little strategic value. More recently, Vilmirians have attempted to harvest the mighty trees which grow in the Weeping Waste as fuel for their barren land, only to be repelled by whooping and screaming barbarian hordes.

Permanent settlements were never developed by the Weeping Waste tribes, as their waterlogged environment discouraged any constructions save the temporary.



GEOGRAPHY

The tribes remained nomadic, their departure from one campsite heralded by the availability of food at another. Over the centuries the tribes have learned, for example, that when the blue herons fly from one marsh, it is a sign to move on to the next camp site, several days distant, where the swamp tubers will be ripening. It is by the knowledge of such natural signs and portents that the tribes know when to travel, and when to linger. This has been their way for thousands of years, and without interference from outside, it is how the Waste folk would live for thousands of years to come.

IN THIS PLACE of eternal rainfall, the land ahead was difficult to see, and the drizzle spread down their faces and into their eyes as they peered through it, trying to make out the high mountain range which ran along the edge of the Weeping Waste, separating it from the Sighing Desert.

— Stormbringer, III, 5

FUTURE EVENTS— THE WEEPING WASTE

402 YK — Elric passes through the Weeping Waste during his year of exploration and wandering. Those few tribes who encounter him, and the individuals foolish enough to befriend him, meet with a tragic demise.

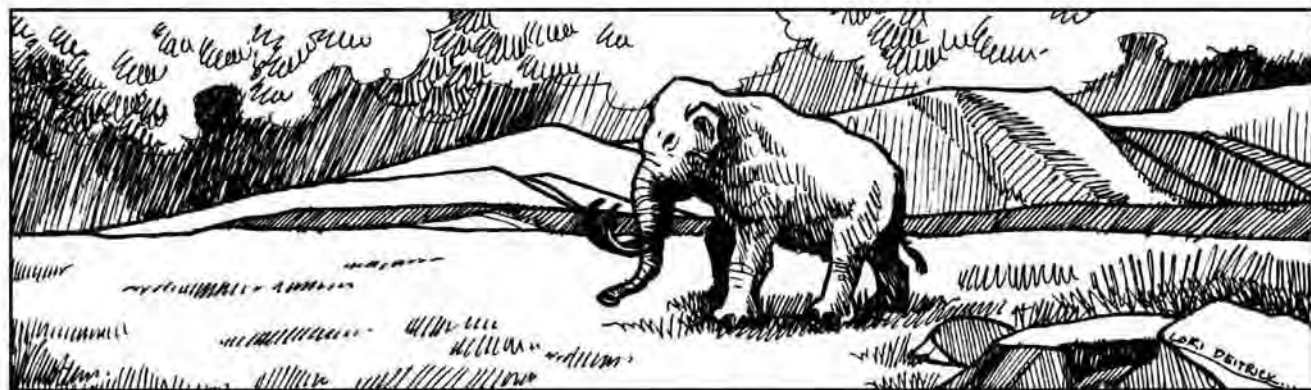
406 YK — The Flame Bringer and his horde cross the Weeping Waste from the East, but are destroyed by dragon fire at the borders of Ilmiora, thanks to Elric. The Waste tribes flee before the eastern army, and so escape decimation. Those straggling horde survivors attempting to return to the East are harried and killed by the tribes as they recross the Waste. None of Terarn Gashtek's men live to see their distant homes.

408 YK — Elric, Moonglum, and Rackhir cross the Waste during their quest for the Sad Giant's shield. Shortly thereafter, residents of Karlaak take refuge in the Weeping Waste when their city is destroyed by Chaos during the last days of the world. They, together with the Waste and its unique tribes, are destroyed when Chaos consumes the world.

THE WEEPING WASTE stretches from the treacherous peaks of the Nameless Mountains, 700 miles south to where its rocky slopes meet the sea. From east to west the gently undulating plateau sprawls for a distance of over six hundred miles. Along the coast the Waste drops in bleak cliffs to the tossing waves, while to the north the plateau gradually rises, to merge with the peaks separating the Weeping Waste from the Sighing Desert. The eastern borders of the Waste are formed by the steep slopes of a barren escarpment, its rocks gouged and ridged by erosion and thunderous waterfalls, while in the west the plateau descends more gently to the plains of Vilmir and Ilmiora, although few trails ascend its slopes.

The Weeping Waste's average altitude is 6500 feet (2000 meters) above sea level. This ranges from about 1500 feet at points along the coast to nearly two miles high where the Waste melds with the mountains. The swampy central basin is the Weeping Waste's lowest point. The region's climate is cool, with precipitation constant. This varies from day to day and place to place, from light mist with faint, glowing sunlight, to soft drizzle, to fog, through to torrential downpours. Even when the rain relents in a region for half a day, sullen clouds still obscure the sky. The Waste tribes can identify thirty-seven different types of rain, which to the untrained eye are largely indistinguishable. The sun is rarely seen in the Weeping Waste, except as a faint bright blur on rare days when the clouds are thin. Such an event is cause for much trepidation and ceremony by the Waste tribes.

THE WEeping WASTE



THE WEeping WASTE

The never-ending rainfall in the Weeping Waste, averaging four yards of rain a year, gives rise to lush vegetation, as well as swampland, and vast rivers and lakes. The majority of the Waste's terrain consists of gently undulating grasslands, where in places the grasses grow as high as a man. Occasional areas of low hills are carpeted in soft, springy turf, and dotted with small streams and tarns. Caves can be found in places where the streams eat through the softer rocks, and caves can often be found, many of them conducting underground rivers.

Only two distinct areas of forest can be identified in the Weeping Waste. Scattered areas of shrub and low, spreading trees grow here and there across the grasslands. The constant downpour leaches nutrients from the soil, inhibiting the growth of larger plants and trees save in a few special areas. The poor soil inhibits the development of agriculture, which in turn discourages denser populations and permanent settlements.

In the north, the Weeping Waste rises to join the mountains. Here is found the largest body of water in the Waste, the lake Schaall Mar as it is called in Mong. Three great rivers wind their way from Schaall Mar to the edge of the Weeping Waste, the Stresh, Murm, and Llar-shul-i. Although the latter is the longest river in the Weeping Waste, the Murm contains the greatest flow of water, being almost a mile wide where it pours in a roaring torrent over the two thousand foot cliffs to the sea. The River Stresh, its flow lessened by the quiet waters of the Stresh'Fell Swamp through which it winds before streaming over the escarpment, undulates through the Vilmirian protectorates before reaching the sea. All the rivers of the Weeping Waste are dark with silt and sediment.

The swamps and marshes of the Weeping Waste are host to many different sedges and rushes, including bulrushes and papyrus. A great variety of floating plants, including water lilies, hyacinths, pondweed, duckweed, and marsh marigold grow in the slow-moving waters. The clans of the Marsh Cat Tribe make artificial islands in the swamps, and boats, from bundles of rushes. A species of water lily flourishing in the Stresh'fell swamp grows large enough that its great floating leaves can support the weight of a grown man. Several such

leaves, stitched together with grass fibers, make superb shelters from the rain.

FLORA AND FAUNA

BLOODY-BEAKED HAWKS soared on the frigid wind. They soared high above the mounted horde moving inexorably across the Weeping Waste. The horde had crossed two deserts and three mountain ranges to be there and hunger drove them onwards.

— The Bane of the Black Sword, III, 1

AS PREVIOUSLY NOTED, the Weeping Waste is covered with abundant and lush vegetation. An astounding variety of grasses, mosses, creepers, and water-plants thrive in the Waste's sodden environment. Miles of undulating turf and waving grasses stretch beneath the clouds and falling rain. Those trees which do grow here attain phenomenal heights. Certain classes of plants, such as flowering and fruit-bearing trees and vines, are rare in some areas.

The largest animal found in the Weeping Waste is the greater mammoth, small family bands of which may be found grazing upon the high grasses in the west of the plateau. Mammoths stand four and a half yards high at the shoulder, and are massive, elephant-like beasts, with small ears, long curving tusks, and shaggy reddish coats of long hair. They are rare even in the Weeping Waste. Mammoth hair is oily and water-resistant, and much prized by Waste tribes for the weaving of clothing and blankets. The heavy musk of wet mammoths can be scented well downwind. Mammoths are passive, gentle creatures, although being social animals they will fight to protect members of their herd. Often timid, always sharp of hearing, they avoid humans instinctively. Clan taboos prevent indiscriminate slaughter of mammoths; given also the poor weapons owned by the Waste tribesfolk, only very young or old and sickly mammoths are hunted by them with any great effect. The discovery of a dead mammoth is a cause for much

celebration by a tribe, considering that a mammoth hunt usually takes weeks of tracking and stalking before bringing hunters even close to their wise and watchful prey.

Several large predators live in the Weeping Waste. *Cave bears* live in the northern mountains, while the swamps are home to the *spotted marsh* cat, which grows up to ten feet long from nose to the tip of its tail. Marsh cats eat snakes, lizards, waterfowl, and fish, and are adept swimmers. Both cave bears and marsh cats are rare, as well as solitary, coming together only to mate. Crowning the food-chain in the swamps and marshes of the Weeping Waste is the *nalar-grun*, or mole-worm. See the end of this chapter for information concerning *nalar-grun*.

Other creatures found in the Waste include a variety of waterfowl, including ducks, bitterns, ibis, herons, and white swans, and many species of freshwater fish, such as catfish, trout, freshwater salmon, bream, and pike. The gorrow, or giant perch, is found only in the waters of the Schaall Mar; its tender, pink flesh makes delicious eating, although as the creatures dwell only in the deeper parts of the lake, they are rarely caught. Wild herds of elk and ponies, small, hairy hippopotami, polecats, hedgehogs, and shrews are the Waste's predominant mammals. Beavers live along creeks and streams.

Given the cool climate, few reptiles dwell on the plateau. Giant snails, yard-long slugs, and uncomfortably large and venomous centipedes can also be found here, while midges, mosquitoes, and other swarms of small, biting insects dwell here in profusion.

Unless familiar with the Waste and its territory, food can be hard to find. Fish are difficult to see, let alone catch, in the silty waters, while the only large, and thus obvious animals are dangerous, shy of humans, or both.

PLACES OF NOTE

DWARFED BY the vastness of the softly turfed plateau which was the Weeping Waste, the place of eternal rains, the two horsemen drove their hard-pressed steeds through the drizzle.

— *The Bane of the Black Sword*, III, 2

SCHAALL MAR

This vast lake, two hundred miles long and considered bottomless by many, is a place of reverence and mystery among the Waste's tribes. The lake's name, translated from the Mong, means *Lake-which-is-the-Birthplace-of-Rivers*, and indeed the three great rivers of the Weeping Waste all have their headwaters here. The Schaall Mar's origins are in the thawing snows and glaciers of the northern moun-

tains, as well as numerous springs of fresh, clear water hidden below its surface. Mists always coils above the lake's mirrorlike surface, which is overhung by hoary, bearded trees. Beyond them the high white peaks of the northern mountains are faintly visible through the constant curtains of rain. Crumbling and overgrown ruins of once-proud Melnibonéan towers, quite alien to this place, slump in places upon the shore.

Schaall Mar is sacred to the tribes who dwell in the area, and they guard it fiercely. According to some it is a gateway to Straasha's realm, while others claim that King Stret-Sha has his palace upon the lake's bottom. All agree that those favored by Stret-Sha may walk or swim down into the lake without fear of drowning, should the Water Lord desire audience with them. Numerous creatures dwell in or around the lake's still waters, including the huge, placid gorrow, a fish unique to the lake's deeper regions, a perch which reaches up to two yards in length.

GROM-MYR-VAAL

Found in the western hills of the Weeping Waste, these vast limestone caverns are home to many strange creatures, including blind fish, glowworms, many species of bat, colorless lobsters so transparent that they are seen only by the shadows they cast as they move through their still pools, and white, eyeless crickets. Many types of moss grow near the cave entrances where some light penetrates, while deep underground sprout pale and mysterious phosphorescent fungi.

One of the more horrid inhabitants found only in these caverns is the *igliog*, or giant albino spider, which grows to the size of a horse's head. The spiders do not build webs, but instead prowl the walls and floors of the caves. Their powerful venom allows them to prey upon bats and similar creatures, and has proved deadly to humans. When Elric rode through the Weeping Waste in 402, returning from the Unknown East, his fatal personality and resemblance to the deadly albino spider earn him the tribal nickname *Igliog*. The Grom-Myr-Vaal is notable also for its magnificent stalactites and stalagmites, frosted curtains of stone, mineral formations, and underground lakes, pools and streams.

A cave feature important to the Waste tribes is *Hostra-Gra*, The Place of Dreaming. This chamber lies many hours walk into the maze of passageways and caverns which make up the Grom-Myr-Vaal. The faithful of Father Grom, as Grome of the Earth is called here, who seek revelation, or answers to prayers or troubles, come to sleep in *Hostra-Gra*, in the hope that the Earth King will send them wise dreams. By tradition, those who receive revelation paint their visions upon the cave walls, to guide others of the tribes who may follow them in later years. The walls of *Hostra-Gra* are half covered in cave art, primitive but passionate, depicting the dreams of Grom's petitioners.

MURM FALLS

A massive waterfall is one of the natural wonders of the Young Kingdoms. The turgid, silt-stained waters of the River Murm, a mile wide by the time it reaches the escarpment, rush and roar over a two thousand foot cliff, plunging down to the sea. Such is the force and volume of the Murm's flow that the river's fresh, silty water can be drunk a day out to sea, where its current and color are still distinctly separate from the salty ocean waters.

Downwind, the waterfall can be heard from up to twenty miles away, while nearby the roar and vibration is cataclysmic. The vision of this gargantuan torrent is overwhelming. Even when onshore winds press back the normally billowing clouds along the seaside cliffs of the Waste, the plume of vapor forming above Murm Falls hangs in the sky like a sentinel. Ships wandering far at sea can mark their positions by it.

ADZAE, THE FLOATING FOREST

In the central basin of the Weeping Waste grows the Floating Forest, Adzae to the tribes, whose roots are always submerged in the waters of the Murm River. Unlike any other forest in the world, in Adzae it is possible to pole one's boat from one side of the wood to the other without ever touching or seeing dry ground. Beneath the thick canopy of leaves, through which drips and splashes the constant rain, thrive a great variety of insects, reptiles, birds, and small mammals.

In the center of the Floating Forest rear the pillars of Adzae, six gigantic trees, methuselaha of the forest, their trunks roughly painted to represent human faces a hundred feet high. These trees are sacred to the large Water Dragon Clan and in times of great need the elders of the clan gather here, to summon the long-dead spirits of their founders into the trees, there to speak with the living and impart their wisdom.

Outsiders who trespass in this most sacred of groves are put slowly and horribly to death, bound below the waters of the flooded forest so that only their noses are exposed to the air. Insects, present in Adzae in great numbers, soon notice the moist warmth of the victim, and lay their eggs inside their nostrils. When these eggs hatch, they slowly devour the victim from within, assuming the unhappy intruder has not already drowned.

THE CLOUD FOREST OF SSULSHA

Where the turf of the plateau rises against the mountains, there grows Ssulsha, the Cloud Forest. Mist pours down from the high rocks, flowing and floating through the hanging mosses and thickly tangled lianas which cling like nervous lovers to the thick trunks of fern trees, and gnarled and ancient yews and oaks. This lush, temperate rainforest is a riot of vegetation, for here the rain has not yet had a chance to fall, leaching the soil of nutrients, and instead floats as mist and cloud through the trees. Spears of bamboo can

grow up to a foot a night here, while amidst the vines and leaves dangle the gorgeous blossoms of richly colored fushias and orchids.

WAYS OF THE WASTE

ACCORDING TO their oral histories, the nomadic tribes of the Weeping Waste are descended from the union between the Elemental Ruler Lord Grome, or Grom, as they call him, and Aai First-Woman. Today there are some forty distinct tribes in the Weeping Waste, each named after some totemic beast with which they have spiritual links.

Despite being looked down on by the people of other lands, such as nearby Vilmir, the Waste folk have achieved a unity with their environment foregone in the Young Kingdoms. Their life-style does not exploit the world in which they live, and their philosophy has linked personal, spiritual, and physical needs into a complimentary, unified whole. Unusually, men and women are considered equal, and all work is shared amongst the members of the clan without divisions of gender.

The tribes and clans of the Weeping Waste are primitive and superstitious peoples. Their closely-knit extended family clans also ensure that each member is surrounded by lifelong affection, and as well receives constant teaching in the ways of the tribe and the Waste. Elders are revered for the wisdom they have accrued, while children are respected for their boundless energy and enthusiasm. The clan rears its young collectively, with the adults taking turns to supervise, instruct, and play with them.

A typical clan might consist of three siblings, their wives or husbands, their children, perhaps some grandchildren, any surviving parents, and often friends and wanderers. Most clans average fifteen or twenty people. At certain times of the year the separate clans of a tribe gather, to share food and tales of the past year and to get reacquainted, as well to recite as the deeds of their ancestors for the benefit of the children.

Each tribe holds sacred the totem beast for which it is named. They will not hunt that beast, (although other tribes may do so with impunity) and pray to their totem for aid in times of danger or sickness. If the clans have pleased their totem, it may send the shamans useful dreams, or guide them on spirit quests in the netherworld. Non-totem animals too are held in reverence by the tribes, and are not hunted without reason.

Fire is a magical thing in the Waste, the province of the cruel and contrary Lord Krek-Atu (Kakatal). As such, it falls to the shaman or the wisest of each clan to guard fire,



PEOPLE OF THE WASTE

least it become hungry and seek to devour them all, or capriciously die. It is partially because of their knowledge of fire that the shamans of the Weeping Waste are respected and feared. The constant rain hinders common camp fires, a message from Stret-Sha that fire should be shunned, so the Waste folk say.

Clans huddle together for warmth under their cloaks and furs, and eat their food raw, except on special occasions such as the gathering of the tribe. While Lord Krek-Atu is worshipped by the tribes, the purpose of his rites is more placatory than reverential. Weeping Wasters fear the sun, while the moon and stars are virtually unknown to them. On the rare occasion these lesser heavenly bodies are seen through the clouds, they are taken to be spirits of the sky, children of Laza of the Winds who spurned King Grom, and are the subject of angry curses until they hide themselves once more behind the clouds. The sun is feared.

APPEARANCE AND FASHION

THE WASTE PEOPLE are small in stature and of light build. Their dark skin is weathered by constant exposure to the wind and rain. They tend to have square, heavy-set faces with thick brows and dark brown to black eyes. Facial hair is sparse and straggling amongst the men. Weeping Wasters have coarse hair, usually black or

dark brown in coloring. Children born with red hair are shunned, often exposed to the elements at birth, as it is believed that such hair means the child is favored by Krek-Atu, Lord of Fire, and traditional enemy of King Grom. Conversely, children born blonde are reputedly favored by Grom, and are invariably trained as shamans and priestesses. Clothing and style varies greatly from tribe to tribe. Men and women often shave their heads, keeping only a small topknot, mohawk or plait, depending on their tribe. Others grow short dreadlocks, or tightly weave their hair. Only shaman grow their hair long, usually weaving rune-carved twigs and bones into their constantly wet locks. Makeup is impractical in the Weeping Waste's climate, and given the low level of technology amongst the tribes, jewelry is only infrequently worn, and usually of a simple nature, constructed of wood, teeth, and bones. Tribal elders and shaman are the usual wearers of jewelry, given to them by others of their clan as emblems of their respect. Scarification is the main form of body adornment practiced amongst Weeping Waste tribes.

Clothing is kept simple, often to a minimum, due in part to the damp climate. Only such garb as is water-resistant is worn in the Weeping Waste, usually leathers and furs, sometimes as little as a rough hide cloak, worn fur outwards. Clothes invariably become waterlogged and rot in the constant rain. Crudely fashioned trows of fringed leather or hide are sometimes worn, as are hats of fur. Cloaks of

mammoth hair are treasured items, woven for shaman and tribal elders revered for their wisdom and age. Such cloaks are checked with dyes of brown, blue, red, and green, representing earth, air, fire, and water, and denote the link between humanity and the physical world. They may also be decorated with occult sigils signifying the spirit worlds and arcane power. Having so little in the way of property means that theft is virtually unknown to the Waste tribes.

SCARIFICATION

Men and women alike adorn their bodies with elaborate scars. Although such markings may seem disfiguring to outsiders, in the Waste such scars tell the beholder much about the person so marked and to which tribe he or she belongs. Within a tribe, scars vary from clan to clan, and between the sexes. Each tribe scars its people in different ways, although the technique used is often similar. Sharp flints, bone needles, or the jagged edges of freshwater shellfish are used to cut the skin. Charcoal or clay is then rubbed into the wound to inhibit clean healing and create a raised scar. Faces, chins, and hands are the most common parts of the body to be so adorned.

The Waste folk believe that the ability to alter and adorn their bodies differentiates humans from animals; by adorning themselves with the symbols of their beast totem, they can take on its characteristics, becoming the animal while remaining human. In the Weeping Waste, scarification is a religious act, as well as an act of self-adornment and a test of courage.

Scarification generally occurs on special occasions, such as ceremonies marking marriage, death of a loved one, or upon entering adulthood. Scarification may be restricted to the face, such as the parallel incisions from lip to chin of the Catfish tribe, representing the whiskers of their totem, and the dots circling the eyes of members of the Owl Tribe. More elaborate scarification is practiced by the Moth Tribe, who reproduce the patterning of their totem's wings down their arms. Other tribes scar their chests or backs with horizontal lines or rows of dots, or their entire bodies, in the case of the Mammoth tribe, who adorn themselves with row after row of small scars from head to toe, just as Mammoth's body is covered in hair.

RELIGION

THE WASTE TRIBES practice a form of animism. They believe that everything, from rocks to trees, pools, and animals is alive, having a spirit as well as a physical form. The greatest of these spirits are the Kings and Queen of the elements, Earth, Water, Fire, and Air Lord Grom, Lord Stret-Sha, Lord Krek-Atu, and Lady Laza. The Beast-Lords and Plant-Lords correspond with the animal totems and plant spirits collectively revered by the tribes. Even minor elementals are held sacred and accorded special rites, and are thus inclined more favorably to the Waste's sorcerers than to others of the human race.

COMMON WASTE NAMES

NAMES IN the Weeping Waste are complex things. Each person bears their own name, their father's name if male, their mother's if female, their clan name, and the name of their tribe. Men's names always start with a consonant, while women's begin with a vowel (J and L are pronounced as diphthongs and treated as vowel sounds in Mong). First names consist of only one syllable, while clan names have two syllables. Name order is as below: first name, parent's name, clan name, then tribal name. Except on formal occasions or with strangers, however, the tribal name goes unused since it is unneeded, and the person is simply Gorn Selg Sharp Ears, for instance, or Aai Eld Falling Water. Within the clan, the person is Gorn Selg or Aai Eld during ceremonies, but simply Aai or Gorn when being called.

MEN'S FIRST NAMES: Bost, Benj, Calp, Dred, Druss, Fyrn, Ged, Gorn, Hard, Harl, Hed, Keil, Kem, Mir, Mog, Noon, Prel, Ram, Ret, Rel, Stig, Set, Selg, Trav, Tim, Vog, Whuls, Yarm, Zet.

WOMEN'S FIRST NAMES: Aai, Ack, Alk, Al, Ard, Ast, Eck, Eel, Eld, Ell, Em, In, Ill, Jed, Jeil, Lef, Lolk, Lam, Olk, Ool, Osh, Ost, Ug, Ulf.

CLAN NAMES: these take many forms. Some clans name themselves after a family characteristic (the Sharp Ears clan) or after a local geographical feature (the Cloud Forest clan). Other clans are named after a great ancestor, or a local spirit.

TRIBAL NAMES: each tribe bears the name of their totem beast, with whom their shamans commune, and whose children they may not hunt. There are approximately forty tribes in the Weeping Waste, each divided into many separate clans and smaller family groups. Sample beasts include *Thu-rah* (Bear), *Chit'lush* (Beaver), *Moush* (Catfish), *Llargru'al* (Gorror), *Skreet'ha* (Hawk), *Mreowushar* (Marsh Cat), *Shu'fultho* (Mammoth), *Fa* (Moth), and *Nk'tch-shee* (Spider).

Before slaying an animal, or chopping down a tree, tribal members apologize to the resident spirit, asking its forgiveness, and explaining that the deed is done out of necessity, not greed. The appropriate rite afterwards ensures that the spirit of the tree or beast will be reborn in another form.

Weeping Waste folk walk through a world populated by spirits as well as those of flesh and blood, and unlike most humans, are well aware of this fact. Because of this, the Waste tribes hold the entire world sacred, and attempt to live in harmony with it, taking only what they need from it, no more. Greed, and wanton destruction, are counted among their greatest sins.

THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

As well as worshipping the spirits of the natural world, the Weeping Waste tribes also revere the spirits of their ancestors. Upon death, they believe, one's soul travels underground to the spirit world, the realm of King Grom, their father. If one was bad in life, disobeying the laws of the tribe and totem, after death that person will be devoured by their tribe's Beast Spirit, which also dwells in Grom's realm; otherwise one dwells in harmony with the Beast-Lord and its spirit children, as well as one's ancestors, in a glorious afterlife similar but superior to mortal existence.

Ancestor spirits can be petitioned for aid, and often watch over their descendants from the spirit world. Because of this, one should always be respectful of one's ancestors, the tribes say, for one never knows when they might be watching. If honorably treated, ancestor spirits send dreams to help and guide their descendants, and sometimes battle against evil spirits and demons on one's behalf.

After death, bodies are treated in various ways. Those tribes who travel through Adzae and Ssulsha place the bodies of their dead on corpse platforms, erected in the branches of trees, upon which they slowly rot away. Once the flesh has been consumed by beasts, passing on the life essence within, and one's breath has returned to Laza, the bones are gathered from the platforms and buried in Grom's earth from which they were made. Other tribes bury their dead in Grom's good earth, or float the cadavers away downstream. Corpse platforms are sacred, and woe beside any outsiders who accidentally or deliberately despoil one.

Funeral rites are held over the corpse for a week, so that the spirit knows its body is dead, rather than sleeping. Thus it passes on intentionally into the spirit realm. Occasionally a stubborn spirit might linger in the vicinity of a body, perhaps for years, haunting the dreams of those sleeping nearby.

CONCERNING SHAMANS

The most important members of society in the Weeping Waste are the shamans, men and women who interpret the words and actions of the spirits for the tribe. One individual from each clan usually acts as a shaman. If it happens that no one among a clan has been chosen by the spirits, a shaman or apprentice from another clan of the tribe will volunteer or be appointed to accompany the clan until a clan shaman is born and trained.

Shamans are always alienated individuals; loners, homosexuals, transvestites, the mad or disturbed, or children born with blond hair, who, because of their difference, are believed to be marked out by the spirits, and are thus more able than most to communicate with them. Were they not trained, most shamans believe, their uncontrolled magical abilities would kill them or drive them mad. Training is conducted by another shaman, who recognizes the latent gift in an individual. On rare occasions such training may be conducted by the spirits themselves. A spirit-trained shaman is powerful indeed, with insights and powers that put most shamans to shame.

After many painful years of training, the would-be-shaman's ultimate test is to face his or her own death. Having ingested certain herbs or mushrooms (psychoactive and mind-altering drugs feature heavily in shamanic rites) the shaman leaves the body behind, journeying to the underground spirit realm of Grom. Here the tribal totem must be faced, and the would-be shaman must be slain by it, whereupon the spirits of the shaman's ancestors restore him or her to life, usually replacing certain organs, such as bones or the heart, with specially fashioned items such as rune-carved stones or copper rods. Surviving this rite, and re-awakening in the same body, the student is now considered a fully-fledged shaman, ready to speak with and command the spirits for the good of the tribe.

A shaman's strength does not depend upon a link with a god, but upon his or her own will. Thus, the individual strength of the shaman decides how ably he or she can face and perform tribal responsibilities. Through public performances involving drumming, ecstatic dance, the ingestion of drugs, and the use of rattles and singing, as well as through such trickery as faith healing, ventriloquism, and escapology, the shaman deals directly with spirits, and convinces the tribe or individual, as well as himself or herself, of the shaman's power. As there is never any guarantee of a shaman's success, gifts, such as food or clothing, are made only after the task has been completed. Tasks include banishing a ghost who does not realize it is dead, or casting out an evil spirit from the body of someone made sick by its presence.

GOVERNMENT

THE WEEPING WASTE has no central government. Clans rule themselves, with all adults taking part in discussions involving the clan and its future. Children are not excluded from such discussion should they wish to attend. Rather than being ruled by an individual, the clans rely upon the wisdom of all the individuals to guide them. Decisions are made collectively by the clan, once suggestions have been heard and pondered.

When the scattered clans of each tribe gather once a year, to meet and exchange tales, decisions are made in a similar manner. In some clans, a strong individual, usually a shaman although sometimes a warrior, declares himself or herself the ruler, and sets up a line of succession. Such dictatorships rarely last more than a generation or two.

Conflict is resolved between individuals and clans, or between tribes, in an identical manner across the plateau. (This common practice across the Waste points to the Waste folks' common ancestry.) The opposed parties face one another, some tribes employing spear and shield, others just spear and spear-thrower, hurling insults, until they are worked up enough for combat to begin. Weapons are thrown and blocked, and the person first or most grievously wounded is considered the loser. Following such conflict, the successful combatant invariably helps bandage the

defeated party, whereupon a feast is held, and the issue is declared resolved. In this manner the Waste tribes prevent unnecessary death and bloodshed.

Not all arguments end in bloodshed. Some tribes talk things through, saving combat as a last resort. The reverse is also true.

Should the loser of such a combat persist in a feud once it has been declared resolved, he or she is cast out by their clan, and is considered to be without honor. Without the support of a clan, such outcasts soon succumb to the predators and conditions of the Weeping Waste. Often the few people of the Weeping Waste at large in the Young Kingdoms are exiles, outcast for such reasons. Because of the close ties of clan and tribe, most consider exile worse than death.

Theft is rare among the tribes, as property in the Waste is minimal. Incest is a crime, as are rape and murder, all being punished by exile, while sleeping with another's husband or wife allows the insulted party to hurl a spear at the guilty individuals, who are not allowed to carry shields, but may only attempt to dodge. Whether the targets are killed, wounded, or even missed entirely, the act of throwing the spear officially ends the conflict.

WAR

Both sexes are trained in the arts of hunting and combat. Spears are usually fashioned of ironwood, and are treasured items, given the scarcity of suitable trees on the plateau. Less often, they may be of bone. Their points are hardened amongst coals, while the spear shafts are decorated with feathers and bones. Each such adornment representing a different occasion the spear was used.

Knives are commonly made of flint, carefully gathered from the northern mountains and traded between the tribes, or also of bone. Recently, trade daggers from Vilmir and Ilmiora have acquired considerable status. Shields, which are used only by some tribes, are made of wood and hide.

Slings, the preferred missile weapon of the Weeping Waste, are often fashioned of untanned hide, and discarded once rot robs the leather of strength and elasticity. Slingers use stream-rounded pebbles as missiles.

Armor is rare, as it quickly rots or rusts in the constant rain, and is cumbersome and impractical for a people constantly on the move. What armor there is, leather for the most part, is usually traded from outside the Waste for pelts and furs. Those rare owners of metal weapons, swords, spearheads and the like, prize them highly for their effectiveness and superiority when compared to the usual Waste weapons. Like armor, such tools of war are always of foreign manufacture. A fortune could be made by the merchant brave, or foolhardy enough, to transport high-quality weapons into the Weeping Waste, although none have done so to date.

Foreigners who enter the Waste often meet sullen, suspicious tribesfolk. Experience has shown them that outsiders are generally greedy people; some react by avoiding

foreigners altogether, so that it seems the Waste is entirely unpopulated, while others attempt to harry the intruders back over the lip of the escarpment, or to slay them outright. Martial tribes, including the Mammoth and Marsh Cat tribes, thunder down upon invaders, whooping and screaming on the backs of their small, shaggy ponies. Members of these tribes are amongst the few who sometimes mount raids upon the lowlands in times of famine. Occasional forays into the Waste by Vilmirian slave gangs in search of timber meet with armed Waste folk, angry that the spirits of the trees were not consulted before being slain by the Vilmirians' axes.

THE WEeping WASTE AND THE WORLD

Isolated as they are atop their cloud-shrouded plateau, the tribes of the Waste have little contact with the Young Kingdoms. Since the Melnibonéans who dwelt on the shores of Schaall Ma returned to the Dreaming City, few outsiders have ventured into the Weeping Waste. In the last fifty years, Vilmirian slave-gangs have occasionally attempted to harvest timber in the Waste without success. Such intruders have been slaughtered, their bodies left to rot in the rain, sometimes even provoking the occasional retribitional raid into the lowlands, usually at the expense of a few cows. Not all visitors to the Waste are met with violence. Most often the Waste folk avoid strangers entirely, slipping away in the rain and mist-like phantoms.

To the Waste tribes, the Young Kingdoms are a mystery. Some shamans say that the outside world is hell, hot, dry, and exposed to the burning wrath of Krek-Atu. Others, brave explorers or outcasts from their tribes who have ventured beyond the Weeping Waste, sometimes to trade in furs and pelts with nearby towns, have returned to tell of the dry lands. Always their tales grow in the telling.

The lands bordering on the Weeping Waste have many legends concerning the mist-wreathed plateau. Some say the Waste is a hell on earth populated by ghosts and wraiths dimly seen in the eternal rain, or that the plateau is a gateway to other worlds. Gorjhan, in Vilmir, which has lost cattle to the Waste tribes, and jade-towered Karlaak, have had occasional dealings with the Waste tribes, the latter trading with the suspicious, half-naked savages. A few individuals in each region know something of the Waste and its ways. Elsewhere in the Young Kingdoms the Weeping Waste is unknown, or wholly legendary.

PLEASURES

FESTIVALS

Festivity is common amongst the Weeping Waste tribesfolk. As well as such minor festivals as birthdays, usually marked by undergoing further scarification, the Waste tribes also gleefully celebrate such occasions as the subtle changing of the seasons. As they rely on irregular natural

signals, such as the bloom of certain flowers or birth of young animals to tell them when a new season has begun, such festivals are celebrated on different occasions from year to year, and from tribe to tribe. Drumming, dancing, and feasting mark such rites.

Once each year the scattered clans of a tribe gather communally. Like the change of the seasons, the time of such gatherings is signified by natural phenomenon. For the Beaver Tribe, for example, the appearance of the first beaver pups of the year in the ponds and rivers of their territory is the signal that their clans should gather at the traditional meeting place on the banks of the Schaall Mar. Over the following weeks the separate clans make their way towards the great lake, and the gathering of the tribe begins. In such ways do the many Waste tribes know when it is the appropriate time to meet with their kindred.

The gathering of clans is a special time for every tribe, since this is ordinarily the only time that the entire tribe is together. New additions to the various clans are met and exclaimed over, and deaths mourned. Similarly, weddings are arranged for future years, and previously arranged marriages conducted by the shaman of the appropriate clans. Such gatherings are among the few times when the Waste folk eat cooked food, for great bonfires are kindled by the first clan to arrive at the gathering, not allowed to burn out until the last clan has gone on their way. Should the gathering

bonfire go out, it is a sure sign that the clan who first kindled the flames will die in the upcoming year, having earned Krek-Atu's wrath for some prior deed.

Many tests of strength are held at these gatherings, including jumping over the flames, wrestling, running and similar feats of strength and dexterity. Not all tribes celebrate the coming together of the clans in such ways, with activities ranging from singing, riding, or cooking contests conducted from gathering to gathering. Ten days after the last clan has arrived at the site the festivities end, with the clans bidding one another farewell and departing in the order of their arrival, not to see one another again, unless by chance, for another year.

The other festival of note held by the Waste tribes is one common to them all. Should ever the sun break through the clouds which hang perpetually above the plateau, the tribesfolk hold noisy rituals, drumming and singing, in order to drive Krek-Atu away. Such an occurrence is rare, and feared by the tribes when it does happen, as it signifies that some minor battle between Grom and Krek-Atu has just occurred, with Krek-Atu the victor. Should the sun be seen during a tribal gathering, it spells almost certain doom for all gathered there, unless the united strength of the shamans can somehow avert the wrath of the Fire-Lord, their Earth-Father's enemy.

WHY THE MOLE-WORM BURROWS

LONG AGO, before Stret-Sha began to cry, Nalargrun was a beautiful creature, with sleek glossy fur and bright brown eyes. She loves to bask in the sunlight on the river bank after taking a swim, and to sing the praises of Krek-Atu, who was her friend. When she heard that Krek-Atu had fallen in love with Laza, Nalargrun said to herself, I will go and look at this Laza, and see if she is good enough for my friend.

She looked in the grass, and she looked in the trees, and, being a good swimmer, she even looked underwater, but she could not find her. Laza was playing on the mountaintops, but Nalargrun did not know that. So she looked and looked, and could not find her. No one Nalargrun met as she traveled could tell her where Laza was, and Nalargrun began to grow angry. She would bite those people who could not tell her what she wanted to know, and soon no one would talk to her.

Nalargrun walked further and further away from her river bank, and before long she was in the high mountains. Laza came up to her, and Nalargrun, not knowing who she was, asked if she knew where Laza was to be found. Laza decided to ask Nalargrun, who looked angry and short-tempered, why she wanted to know this before telling her who she was. Nalargrun

decided Laza was impertinent, and bit her, to teach her manners.

So angry was Laza that her forceful scream blew Nalargrun's hair out, great tufts of whirling away on the wind. Where it fell, the soft brown moss called Mole-Bane now grows. Frightened, Nalargrun tried to run away, but Laza seized hold of her feet, so Nalargrun could not run away. She squirmed and squirmed, stretching and pulling to try to get away. So hard did she squirm that her body became stretched out long and serpent-like. With a great pop, her legs broke off in Laza's hand, and taking advantage of Laza's astonishment, Nalargrun quickly crawled away.

Laza sent winds to blow upon Nalargrun and make her cold, for without her fur she was naked, so Nalargrun hid underground, where Laza's winds could not find her. She burrowed into the earth of her river bank, and hides there still. So long has Nalargrun huddled underground that she has forgotten how to see, for where she lives there is only darkness. Krek-Atu forgot about her, and Nalargrun was all alone. She did not forget how no one had helped her in her quest, and to this day Nalargrun still bites those people and animals she does not like.

— The Cloud-Forest Tribe

FOOD AND DRINK

Gathering food takes up a good part of the day of the average Weeping Waster. Only a small part of their diet consists of red meat, with the majority of food consumed by the tribesfolk consisting of roots and tubers, shoots, fungi, fruit, eggs, insects such as beetles and grubs, and fish. Occasionally hunters will return to the clan bearing waterfowl, small mammals, or, on particularly successful days, slabs of mammoth meat. Food is invariably consumed raw, except on feast days at the above-mentioned tribal gathering. Men and women share in hunting, and in the gathering of other foodstuffs.

Although wine and beer are unknown to the Waste tribes, save for when unscrupulous foreigners transport alcoholic beverages into the plateau, getting tribesfolk drunk in order to cheat them of furs or other valuables, fermented psilocybin mushrooms are consumed by them with joy. Although such mushrooms are only briefly in season, usually in the last month of spring, they are stored in honey in order to preserve them, and enjoyed throughout the year. As well as the alcohol fermented by the honey, the mushrooms themselves are potent hallucinogens, stimulating the tribesfolk into experiencing visions and a sense of unity with the world, physical and spiritual, in which they dwell.



ARTS AND PASTIMES

Few arts are practiced by the tribes of the Weeping Waste, save the making of weapons, arguably a craft, as is the fermenting of mushrooms. Although skilled at swiftly constructing crude but efficient shelters out of leaves, branches and grasses, this craft is of little practical knowledge beyond the confines of the Waste's damp plateau. Various sigils and signs are painted and dyed into the cloaks of the tribal shaman, although these can hardly be counted as an organized artform. Nor is there anything approximating the making of fine clothing in the Waste.

Music is loved by the tribes, played upon simple drums, rattles and wooden or bone flutes and whistles. For many of the tribes, their voices are the only instruments they require. The haunting chants and songs of the Waste, rising and falling in eerie melodies, mimic the sounds of water and rain, as does Mong, their unique language. Mong has no written form.

Simple physical games are played by the Waste children and their parents, games of hoping, tumbling and climbing, hide and seek and rope jumping, the rope fashioned from a thick vine or the entrails of a recently gutted animal. Swimming and running are eternal favorites in the land of eternal rain, as are educational word games, naming objects seen and unseen. In such simple ways are children amused, and also taught more of the world in which they live.

INDIVIDUALS, CREATURES

ULF

Short, muscular Ulf is the battle-chief of a powerful clan of the Mreowushar, or Marsh Cat tribe. After plague, introduced on blankets by an Ilmioran merchant, killed the elders of the Quaking Ground clan, Ulf declared herself leader. Her cheeks are marked by raised, parallel scars, and she has a long, plaited scalp-lock. Ulf's eyes are as sharp as her spear, and her wits as quick as her senses. Ulf is fierce, but not bloodthirsty.



She saw that, without a strong leader, her clan would die. Since taking power, she has proven herself as a good headwoman, despite her fanatic hate of Outlanders. The Quaking Ground clan now numbers thirty, having merged with the Bearded Tree clan. Like all members of the Mreowushar tribe, Ulf and her people are fierce warriors. They have more than once slaughtered pale strangers from the Dry Lands.

It is Ulf's dream to unite all the scattered Marsh Cat clans, making the Mreowushar the most powerful Waste tribe. Then she will force the tribes, even the weak Moth tribe, to fight foreigners, making the Weeping Waste safe for all the People. One day, she knows, she will go to meet her ancestors. On that day, Ulf Eel Urdon will carry her head high, and Father Grom himself will welcome her, she is sure. Ulf's name is already legendary among the tribes which inhabit the plateau's central basin; she intends that her deeds will be known throughout the Waste.

ULF EEL URDON MREOWUSHAR, age 35, warrior

Chaos 22, Balance 20, Law 16

STR 15 CON 15 SIZ 10 INT 13
POW 16 DEX 17 APP 10 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Long Spear 107%, damage 1D10+1+1D4

Short Spear 89%, damage 1D6+1+1D4

Dagger 110%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Full Shield: 76%, damage KB+1D4+1D4

Armor: 1 point of hide and furs

— continued

THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

Skills: Climb 87%, Dodge 44%, Hide 50%, Insight 80%, Jump 75%, Listen 61%, Move Quietly 83%, Natural World 67%, Navigate 85%, Oratory 85%, Own Language (Mong) 60%, Scent/Taste 50%, Search 64%, Swim 37%, Throw 75%, Track 75%, Trap 73%, Young Kingdoms 05%

Mog

Tall for one of the Waste

folk, Mog is heavy set, although now hunched with age, and losing the phenomenal strength of his youth. His arthritis causes him to walk with a shuffling gait, like that of Bear, his totem. Mog's hair is woven into many gray dreadlocks, through which are twined numerous bones and teeth. His dark skin is deeply lined and leathery, and he is blind in one eye because of a cataract. Mog is deeply revered by his clan, and cared for by young and old. He is the eldest of all Bear tribe shamans, and does not expect to meet with his peers again save once more. Soon, he knows, he will go to Grom.

Mog's apprentice never returned to his body from his spirit quest, dying in the Underworld. Having already spent ten years and more training the dead boy, Mog is worried that he will not be able to pass on his wisdom before he dies. His clan will be without a shaman, and many secrets will be lost. Recently, however, Mog has seen a child born in his dreams, a baby girl licked into human shape by Bear and given breath by Aai First-Woman. Mog believes this child to be his spirit-appointed heir, and is ready to find heroes to seek the baby out. For all he knows, she may not yet be born. Her location is similarly hidden from him.

MOG MIR RUAGH THU-RAH, age 62, shaman

Chaos 12, Balance 67, Law 13

STR 10 CON 15 SIZ 14 INT 16
POW 17 DEX 9 APP 8 HP 15

Damage Bonus: none

Dagger 105%, damage 1D4+2

Armor: none

Spells: Bounty of Straasha (4), Buzzard Eyes (1), Flames of Kakatal (4), Gift of Grome (4), Liken Shape (4), Rat Vision (1), Summon Beast Lord (Bear) (3), Summon Elemental (1), Wings of Lassa (4), Witchsight (3)

Skills: Bargain 85% Conceal Object 103%, Craft (Sleight of Hand) 98%, Fast Talk 96%, Insight 99%, Light Fire 93%,

Listen 75%, Natural World 71%, Navigate 68%, Other Language (Common) 10%, Own Language (Mong) 105%, Physick 89%, Potions 92%, Search 35%, Unknown Kingdoms 10%, Young Kingdoms 10%

MOLE-WORMS OF THE WEEPING WASTE

THESE HORRID, hairless beasts, thankfully uncommon, swim through the swampy soil of their habitat, hunting their surface-dwelling prey by means of scent and vibration. Nalargrun are completely blind, due to their subterranean existence. A pale, wrinkled, wormlike mammal, with spadelike claws behind its sightless eyes, a nalargrun's nose is a fleshy flower, and its wide mouth is lined with fangs. An adult nalargrun can grow up to fifteen yards in length.

The Waste folk hate and fear this carnivore, whose name they use as a synonym for treachery. It mostly ambushes prey from below ground, and prefers the soft, semiliquid soil of swamps and river banks for its home. Nalargrun avoid rocky terrain and the dense roots of heavily forested areas. Elk, ponies, baby mammoths, and hippopotami form the bulk of its prey.

The nalargrun gnaws on tree roots to sharpen its teeth. The dead trees and its occasionally collapsed tunnels produce a characteristically lumpy and barren local terrain that Waste folk easily recognize and avoid. These great predator worms are not energetic, luckily. Tribes whose travels bring them near nalargrun swamps know to stand perfectly still and silent if they suspect that a mole worm is near, hoping that the absence of vibration will confuse the creature, thus preventing it from attacking them. The sudden hush of an area's wildlife is often the only indication that a nalargrun is hunting in the vicinity.

All large nalargrun are female. Male and immature mole worms have been sighted, surface-dwelling miniatures of the females. They wander at large, feeding on small birds and mammals. The young are about a foot long at birth, and reach about two yards before going to ground. A male goes to ground only when a female is ready to mate. She accepts him through her mouth. He is led by an irresistible scent to a special pouch in her throat, where he copulates and is then ingested. Females of age come to ground at five years of age, but must continue to feed, transform, and grow for years more before becoming large enough to mate.

NALARGRUN, adult female

characteristics	rolls	averages
STR	6D6+20	41
CON	5D6+6	30
SIZ	10D6+10	45
INT	4	4
POW	3D6	10-11
DEX	1D6+4	7-8

THE WEEPING WASTE

MOV writhe 6/burrow 3

Av.HP: 37-38

Av. Damage Bonus: +5D6

Swallow Prey* 45%, victim dies one round later

Bite 25%, damage 1D10+1/2db

Crush 30%, damage equals db only

* *attacking up through the roof of its burrow, the nalargrun attempts to swallow one victim on its initial strike from below. The target must resist the creature's STR to escape its jaws, or else he or she is swallowed whole at the end of the following round, and the mole-worm withdraws with a full gullet. If the attack fails, the nalargrun makes bite attacks. If it loses half of its hit points, it spits out its prey and retreats into the earth.*

Armor: 1D6+2 of thick, wrinkled hide

Skills: Ambush 70%, Burrow 50%, Dig 100%, Listen 85%, Scent/Taste 80%, Sense Vibration 75%

NALARGRUN, mobile adolescent in the year it goes to ground

characteristics	rolls	averages
STR	3D6+3	13-14
CON	3D6+3	13-14
SIZ	2D6+6	13
INT	4	4
POW	2D6	7
DEX	3D6+4	14-15
MOV 6 scamper		Av. HP: 13-14

Av. Damage Bonus: +1D4

Bite 40%, damage 1D4+1

Armor: none

Skills: Ambush 50%, Burrow 10%, Dodge 45%, Listen 75%, Scent/Taste 80%, Search 30%

WASTE PONIES

THE WEEPING WASTE is home to a diminutive breed of horse found nowhere else in the world. The Waste pony, as Melnibonéan naturalists called the animal, is smaller than the average riding horse, standing only 44 inches (1.14 meters) high at the shoulder, and has a shaggier coat. Waste ponies are usually gray in color, with a short, stiff black mane and black tails. A narrow black line runs along their backs from the mane, ending at the tail. Occasionally all black individuals are born.

Waste ponies can be bred with common horses, although the resulting offspring are always sterile. Small herds of Waste ponies roam the wilder regions of the Weeping Waste, preferring the rockier terrain of the north, toward the mountains. Herds rarely contain more than twenty individuals. Seldom hunted, the ponies are wary of humans, but

not actually frightened by their presence unless some action proves their mistrust founded.

Waste ponies are the only animals to be domesticated by the Weeping Waste tribes, although by no means all tribes possess ponies, nor know how to ride them. The skill of breaking the ponies, forcing them to one's will, is unknown in the Weeping Waste. Instead, members of a clan, under their shaman's guidance, accompany a herd and gain the ponies' trust by feeding them, and speaking soothingly with them. This takes weeks.

The almost-magical art of gaining a pony's trust was revealed to the Pony Tribe in dreams by Pony herself, and with the Beast Spirit's permission, passed on to certain other tribes. Once a pony's trust has been gained, a tribesman stays by the animal's side for three days and nights without sleep, crooning to it, currying it, and feeding it, at all times treating the pony with love and respect. Having won the animal's trust, the would-be rider entrusts the beast with her own safety, riding the pony without stirrups, saddle or reins. A Waste rider steers her pony with words, and with the pressure of her knees, achieving a level of communion with her mount rivalled only by the dragon-riders of Melniboné.

WASTE PONIES

characteristics	rolls	averages
STR	2D6+6	16
CON	3D6+6	15
SIZ	2D6+6	12
INT	4	4
POW	2D6+2	8
DEX	3D6+4	13
MOV run 10 swim 2		Av. HP: 14

Av. Damage Bonus: +1D4

Bite 10%, damage 1D10

Kick 20%, damage 2D4+db

Plunge 20%, damage 2D3+db

Armor: 1D2 hair and hide

Skills: Dodge 45%, Hide 40%, Move Quietly 50%, Scent/Taste 80%. ☉



NADSOKOR

BY A TRICK OF FATE AND THE WILL OF
CHAOS, NADSOKOR AND HER WILY
KING PREY WITH IMPUNITY ON THE
YOUNG KINGDOMS.

NADSOKOR, city of Beggars, was infamous throughout the Young Kingdoms. Lying near the shores of that ferocious river, the Varkalk, and not too far from the Kingdom of Org in which blossomed the frightful Forest of Troos, and exuding a stink which seemed thick enough ten miles distant, Nadsokor was plagued by few visitors.

From this unlovely place sallied out her citizens to beg their way around the world and steal what they could and bring it back to Nadsokor where half their profits were handed over to their king in return for his protection.

— The Vanishing Tower, II, 1

NADSOKOR IS an open sewer, a cess pit of human misery and despair. Although once a city of Vilmir, today that Lawful nation has disowned Nadsokor, leaving the city to drown in its own refuse. Nadsokor is inhabited only by beggars, the diseased, damned, and insane. No sane person sets foot within its tumbled walls. The noxious effluvium which hangs over Nadsokor is enough to ward off even the bravest adventurers; entering the city of beggars invites disease and uncontrollable vomiting, let alone the unwelcome attention of Nadsokor's degenerate inhabitants.

HISTORY

ORIGINALLY A PART of Vilmir, Nadsokor was founded soon after the successful rebellion against the Melnibonéans. Blessed by fertile farmlands and an agreeable climate, as well as its proximity to Ilmiora, the city prospered, and was a great trading center. This came to an end in 113

NADSOKOR AT A GLANCE

RULED BY: Urish the Seven-Fingered, King of the Beggars, with his great cleaver, Hackmeat.

POPULATION: Beggars arrive and depart every day, engaged in various sinister and repugnant plots. Nadsokor never has less than 10,000 residents at any one time. Toward the end of the saga, that number swells greatly, as tens of thousands more beggars flock to Narjhan's call.

LONGEST RIVER: The Varkalk River flows past Nadsokor, and is its main water supply.

HIGHEST PEAK: None.

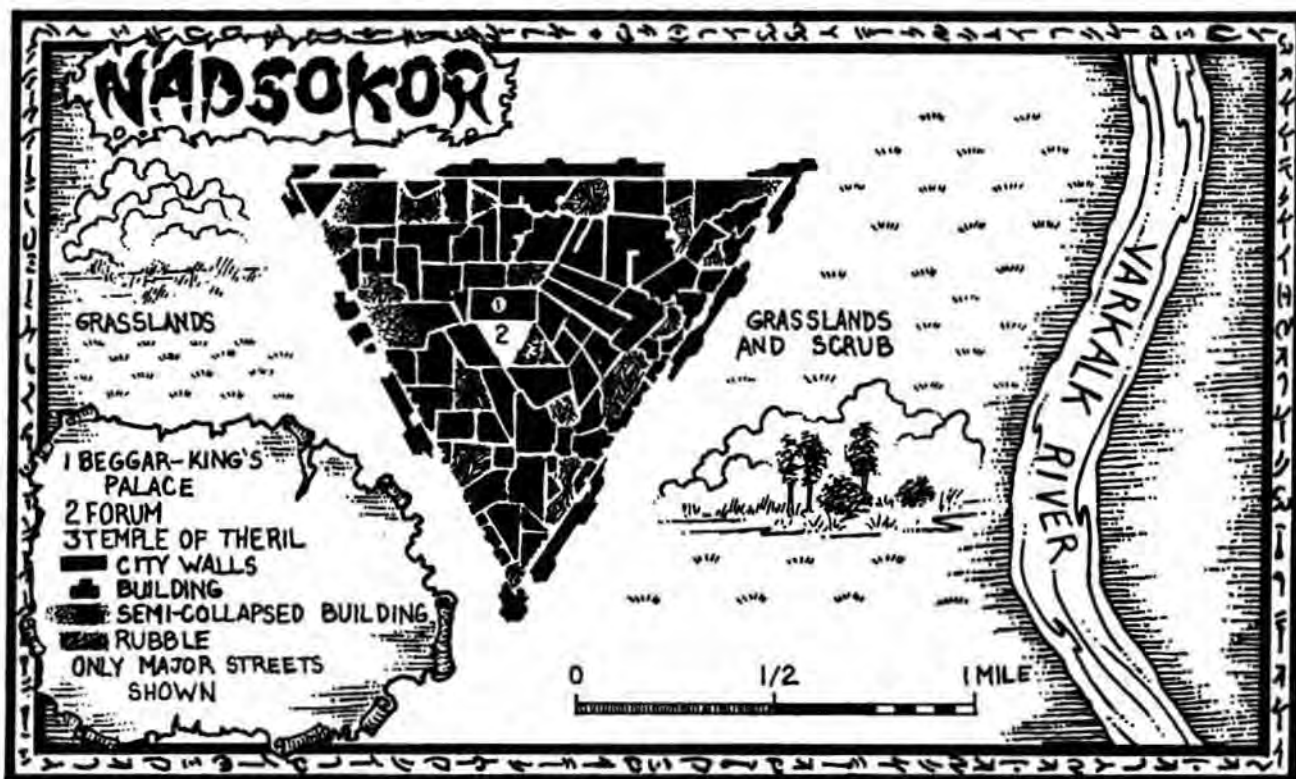
IMPORTS: Whatever can be stolen or looted.

EXPORTS: Disease and despair.

YK, when Nadsokorite farmers unwisely cleared and settled the fringes of Troos. Their first harvests were bountiful, but the crops were poisoned by the sickly earth of Org. Sickness swept through the city, affecting the highest and the lowest alike.

Panicking, the people turned to the old gods of Melniboné for succor, and begged the Lords of Chaos to cleanse the city of disease. The Dukes of Disorder made a cruel jest of this entreaty. They sent their brother Checkalakh, the Burning God, to purify the city with his scouring flames. Many of those who had survived the plague were burned alive in their houses. Sorely regretting their transgression, the people pleaded with Law for rescue. Donblas the Justice Maker intervened, but left a permanent reminder of the blessings of Chaos by imprisoning the Burning God within the city. The survivors abandoned the town, and moved to Bakshaan, in neighboring Ilmiora.

Bakshaan could not sustain so many thousands. To relieve the burden, the bailiffs drove the outcast, the weak,



the crippled, and the insane out of town. These unfortunates were banded together by the vitriolic oratory of Jass Half-Nose, a leper whose wife was killed by guardsmen when she tried to reenter the city to collect their son. Jass forged the beggars into a ragged tribe. They set out across the Southern Ranges to the now-deserted city of Nadsokor. Most of the original Nadsokorites remained in Bakshaan, and many still live there today, including one city councillor who tirelessly argues for the retaking and cleansing of his ancestral home. Few in the Ilmioran Senate support his cause, since reclaiming Nadsokor would be very expensive, and since Ilmiora has long prospered without it.

Nadsokor played no active part in the 202 YK invasion of Chaos, when demons and other creatures surged over the World's Edge southward across the Northern Continent. Their strength shattered by the combined forces of Ilmiora and Vilmir, some Chaotic survivors took shelter in Nadsokor, further entrenching the existing worship of Chaos among the beggars. The Chaos Lord Narjhan, whose province is offal and decay, is foremost among the Dukes of Entropy worshipped in Nadsokor, although the Burning God also receives a steady trickle of tribute, and is greatly feared.

In modern times, Nadsokor has become a synonym for foulness. The miasma which clings to the city's walls penetrates the minds of its dumbest inhabitants, and the centuries of degradation have taken their toll upon an already deranged society. Ruled over by King Urish the Seven-

Fingered, Nadsokorites are detested throughout the Young Kingdoms. Such is the extent of Nadsokor's foulness that its perverse ways and filthy ruffians are proverbial even in distant Quarzhasaat.

THE CITY

FRAMED AGAINST the scarlet sunset, Nadsokor looked from this distance more like a badly kept graveyard than a city. Towers tottered, houses were half-collapsed, the walls were broken.

— The Vanishing Tower, II, 3

NADSOKOR WAS a small city-state, and now its territory consists only of the city itself and about ten square miles of surrounding grassland. Herders from beyond bring their stock no nearer, lest they be lost to hungry beggars. What it lacks in size Nadsokor makes up in presence and infamy. The city is built atop a low hill rising up from the Vilmirian plain, overlooking a valley through which flows the Varkalk River. The river is wide, deep, and fast-flowing, with steep banks. Vilmirians say that the Varkalk runs so swiftly here because it is rushing to escape from the twin horrors of Nadsokor and Troos. Beyond the river's eastern bank the ground rises towards Org, while a few miles south begins the Varkalk Gorge.

The beggars neither bathe or swim in the Varkalk, although a bucket brigade passes drinking water in cracked cups and leaking amphorae from the river to the city most days. Serving water-duty is considered ignominious, and is a task Urish reserves for troublemakers. The water is stored in Nadsokor's old baths, the once grand building a slime-coated shell. None might say what now breeds in the stagnant pools where Nadsokor's wealthy once splashed and swam.

Like all Vilmirian cities, Nadsokor was rigidly planned by architect-priests of Vallyn and Arkyn. Originally a proud, severe city contained within a great triangle of masonry, Nadsokor's walls are now tumbled and fallen, and her straight streets and serried rows of identical buildings are a ruinous mockery of their builders' dreams. King Urish demands that all refuse be carted to the city's outskirts and dumped there, to form noxious new fortifications or reinforce Nadsokor's old defenses. The centuries of garbage ringing the city is almost as effective a palisade as any construction of stone. Nadsokor's broad streets are ankle deep in refuse and offal. Festering piles of garbage lie high at every intersection. Slops are tossed out of windows without heed of who may be passing below. At night the streets are unlit.

The once-regular ranks of buildings list and lean, their sandstone blackened with the grime of centuries. In many places the buildings have collapsed entirely, and rank fields of nettles, thistles, and similar weeds grow amongst the rubble. Hungry beggars sometimes fossick among their

roots for tubers. Elsewhere, surviving buildings are crowded to the eaves with beggars, with sometimes as many as twenty individuals sharing a single room. Shacks and lean-tos are regularly constructed on the rooftops, and just as regularly burn down. Flooded basements house entire families of the maimed and malnourished. Communal fires burning in the streets and plazas are shared by starving throngs, who toast whatever meager food they have scraped together, guarding it greedily. Such fires often burn out of control. Truly Nadsokor is a city of Chaos, where disease and decay run riot.

The only flora which survives in Nadsokor are weeds and thistles. The beggars tear out anything they can eat, smoke, or burn. Tubers, roots, bark, and leaves are all consumed by the locust-like starving horde. Nadsokor's animal life consists primarily of vermin. Huge black rats scuttle about the beggar city, sometimes raising themselves upon their hind legs to peer about with angry red eyes. They are hunted and eaten by beggars, and retaliate by swarming into beds at night and gnawing at the sleeping occupants. More than one beggar has lost his eyes, or her baby, to hungry rats in the night. Packs of wild dogs also prowl Nadsokor's streets, snarling and drooling if a human comes near. Dogs and rats alike often carry disease, and their bites can be deadly. A few feral cats and goats also manage to survive in and around Nadsokor, but more mangy, gaunt animals have not been seen.

FUTURE EVENTS — NADSOKOR

403 YK — In the spring of this year, Yyrkoon gives a Nadsokorite who comes begging at the gates of Imrrya a scroll whose sorcery will allegedly end Cymoril's unnatural slumber. Hearing of this, Elric, disguised as a leper, steals the scroll from Urish's Hoard. It does not awaken Cymoril, to the albino's anguish. That winter Elric's wrath descends upon the Dreaming City, which falls forever more.

405 YK — Elric's Pan Tangian foe, Theleb K'aarna, takes refuge in Nadsokor, and prompts the Beggar King to ensnare the albino in a plan involving prostitutes, Old Hrolmar, and the Ring of Kings. Arriving in Nadsokor bent on vengeance, Elric is taken prisoner with the aid of cold ghouls from Limbo, and he is imprisoned in the Labyrinth, intended as a sacrifice to the Burning God. Elric slays Checkalakh, who is much weakened by his imprisonment. The energy of a God, transmitted by the Black Sword, proves too great for Elric's mortal frame to contain. Knowing something of

the destiny Elric will serve, Lord Donblas of Law manifests, easing Elric's pain. Thereafter, with many beggars slain in an abortive attack on a Tanelorn-bound caravan, Urish returns to Nadsokor only to be devoured by a demon, which had been summoned by Theleb K'aarna to guard the King's hoard in their absence.

406 YK — Entering Nadsokor for a third time, in search of a secret, Elric is chased out without success. He and Moonglum make a course for Troos, to discourage the beggars from pursuing them further.

408 YK — While Elric is away rescuing a kidnapped Zarozinia, in an overture to the earth's last months, Lord Narjhan of Chaos travels to Tanelorn, there to raise a horde against Tanelorn. Thanks to Rackhir and the Boatmen of Xerlerenes, the beggars are defeated. Some of their diseased army flee into the desert. Few survive the journey home. Nadsokor stands empty for the second time, then dissolves into slime at the end of the world.

SPECIAL PLACES

THE FORUM

Where once grand markets were held, and the elders of Nadsokor came to discuss the business of their city, now diseased prostitutes, some as young as six years old, ply their trade, coupling in the dirt for food, or better yet, ale to bring temporary oblivion from their miserable lives. Flanked by the palace of King Urish, and the decaying pile which was the Pyramid of Theril, the plaza is the largest open space in Nadsokor. Refuse and offal coat its cobblestones, and stagnant pools of liquids best ignored attract buzzing clouds of flies. Maggots squirm in the ooze underfoot. The stench is unendurable.

No matter how perverse a client's preference, be it for animals, children or corpses, the prostitutes of Nadsokor can meet the need. Even when the forum is empty of rutting and revolting beggars, it is almost impossible to imagine that well-fed merchants and aesthetic priests once hawked their rare goods and spiritual rewards in this now decayed and detestable place.

THE COURT OF THE BEGGAR KING

King Urish holds court in what was Nadsokor's Hall of Justice, where priests of Law passed sentence against criminals. The scales of Justice have shifted, and now the lawbreakers pass judgments upon the lawmakers in this place. The Beggar-King, Urish the Seven-Fingered, is the worst criminal of all. He presides over a villainous rabble of malformed malcontents, in a dark, drafty, and echoing great hall through whose narrow window slits the sun shines fitfully upon the slime-slicked flagstone floor. A huge, crudely carved throne stands atop a dais at the hall's far end, adorned with bits of gold and bone.

Beneath the throne in a locked chest sits Urish's Horde, which it is death to look upon for anyone save the Beggar King himself. Ordinarily the hoard is guarded by Urish himself, or else by armed beggars. In the events of the story *To Snare the Pale Prince*, Theleb K'aarna conjures a demon to guard the treasure while he and the Beggar King lie in ambush for the Tanelorn caravan.

Near the throne, a small door provides Urish with a handy escape route in an emergency, should he ever have need of one. The narrow passageway emerges close to the entrance of the labyrinth below.

Slender pillars once decorated the portico of the palace; many of these have long since fallen, although some attempt has been made to preserve and even repair the palace, making it fit for Urish's habitation. Steps lead up from the forum to the palace. The great door, of battered oak, has examples of every coin minted in the Young Kingdoms embedded in it, even a Melnibonéan gold wheel (to retrieve

THE SHAME OF THE YOUNG KINGDOMS

IN EVERY LAND of the Young Kingdoms, even in courts as isolated and introspective as Quarzhasaat and Imrry, the Beggar City is discussed and hated. Its thieves are renowned, its depravities the cause for the clucking of tongues and shaking of heads. Nadsokor draws away unwelcome members of society to a place where they are not seen and can do little harm. The city is hated because it empowers those inhabitants, giving them a perverse sense of self-worth, and an inverted pride in their loathsome state.

Few are aware that the beggars who skulk about the cities of the Young Kingdoms are King Urish's spies, as efficient in their way as the assassins of the Mereghn. The Vilmirian Inquisition and the Mereghn themselves know something of the reach of Urish's operatives, but have had little success infiltrating their ranks. The Sea Lords of the Purple Towns are familiar with the beggars' infamy, and have enacted strict laws against begging in an attempt to weaken Urish's power. The gray port of Ulkel remains a beggar haven despite these strictures. Ilmiora's city-states are riddled with beggar networks, who hobble and limp from town to town in search of alms, food, and information for their maimed king.

The nations of the Southern Continent are likewise infested, (although late in the Saga Argimiliar burns out its beggar nests) as are Shazar, Jharkor, and Tarkesh. Dharjor's bloodthirsty government makes life for beggars difficult, while no beggars have dared set foot on the iron streets of Hwamgaarl, Pan Tang's grim capital.

which the Dragon Emperor would stop at nothing, should the Ruby Court become aware of its location.) Above the door (which creaks on opening), half hidden in the shadows of the portico, are a pair of crossed crutches. The archway around the door is painted with representations of the arts of begging and extortion. Beggar guards, more noted for bringing down opponents by sheer weight of numbers rather than any remarkable skill, patrol the palace, including legless men on low, wheeled trolleys, blind archers trained to listen for an enemy's heartbeat, and similar freaks and human wonders.

In smaller rooms on the upper floor of the palace, Urish gives himself over to stinking luxury, pampered by scrofulous hand-maidens amidst piles of muck-encrusted and rotting finery. In these private rooms the beautiful and the ugly, the precious and the tawdry are thrown together in unholy confusion. Fine statues, lost paintings by old masters, and books and scrolls whose pages Urish tears out to light fires with or wipe his pimply backside, lie ignored amidst mounds of mildewed carpets, torn garments, decaying food scraps, and nameless stains. His most precious possessions lie in his Hoard below.

Urish has the pick of everything which comes into Nadsokor. To conceal anything from him is to invite death.

THE STINK OF NADSOKOR

NADSOKOR ASSAILS the senses. It is malodorous beyond the limits of human tolerance. The beggars are accustomed to it, but it makes outsiders gag and retch. In this way their true identities are revealed. In Nadsokor, vomiting is evidence of treason against King Urish. Elric and Moonglum use drugs to infiltrate the City of Beggars, white tablets which deaden the sense of smell and taste. These last for twelve hours, and can be concocted with successful use of the Potions skill. Theleb K'aarna uses a scented kerchief to quell his quivering nostrils, but this is an obvious gesture, permitted only because he is the guest of Urish.

Outsiders need a CON roll for each hour spent in the City of Beggars, unless drugged as above. The entries below discuss the possible results.

CRITICAL SUCCESS: Any roll of CON x1 is a critical. The subject gulps back the rancid air with nary a grimace. No CON roll is needed for the next hour.

CON X2: The subject bears up stoically. Make another roll next hour.

CON X3: The subject coughs and splutters a little, but no more than the average beggar with a lung disease. Make another roll next hour. Nadsokorites making a critical Insight roll realize that he or she is an outsider.

CON X4: The subject is visibly distressed, and suffers from gagging. All skills are temporarily reduced by ten percentiles. The next hour's roll is made at three-quarters of normal CON. Nadsokorites making successful Insight rolls realize that the subject is not a local.

CON X5: The subject is dizzy with nausea. Reduce all skills by twenty percentiles for the next hour. The next hour's roll is made at half-CON. Nadsokorites automatically realize that the subject is not a beggar.

FAIL: Any roll above CON x5 is a failure. The subject suffers from weakness and vomiting, and loses one hit point. All skill percentiles are temporarily halved. The next hour's roll is made at quarter-CON.

FUMBLE: The subject collapses. He or she can do little more than crawl about and retch, and loses 1D3 hit points. The subject is physically incapable of skill use, or any other action. No further CON rolls are possible. The subject does not recover until taken out of the city, and administered to with a successful Physik roll.

Loot from all corners of the Young Kingdoms ends up in the beggar city. Wise collectors have been known to swallow their pride and make deals with King Urish, through his beggar-spies and representatives in their cities, when searching for certain lost treasures and artifacts. Sooner or later, everything seems to end up in Nadsokor.

THE LABYRINTH

Beneath the muck-encrusted streets of Nadsokor stretch the remains of a once-great example of Vilmirian plumbing and sewer installation. Formed of filthy gray flagstone, with many of the tunnels dead ends, their roofs collapsed, these ducts and ways have become a virtual maze. The beggars refer to the sewers as the labyrinth.

Herein did Lord Donblas of Law imprison Checkalakh of Chaos, sealing the entrance with a shimmering barrier of Law, which will only dissolve if Checkalakh dies. It is possible other entrances may exist, similarly sealed, in forgotten stretches of the old sewer system. The barrier takes the form of a shimmering, almost fleshy membrane, which can only be penetrated from the outside, through which one slowly pushes. Elric compares the experience to drowning. Once through the membrane, and into the labyrinth, it is impossible to get back out. Not even Stormbringer proves strong enough to pierce the barrier.

Here and there within the labyrinth light filters into the tunnels from gaps in the roof. The only other light comes from the membrane of Law, which is faintly iridescent. Within a few twists and turns of the tunnels, this light is lost. Where rare sunlight seeps through into the labyrinth, strange, pale plants and fungus grow. In some places the roots of weeds from above have grown through, and dangle down, fibrous and moist.

Although water once flowed through the tunnels, today they are dry, thanks to the presence of the Burning God. Where Checkalakh passes, the walls grow hot. Beggars who displease King Urish, would-be-thieves, and unwelcome visitors are pushed into the labyrinth as sacrifices to Checkalakh, who consumes their souls in order to prolong his miserable existence. The bodies of such unfortunates are also consumed, by the fire of which Checkalakh is formed.

THE TEMPLE OF THERIL

Built in traditional Vilmirian style, the temple of Theril is a three-sided pyramid. Originally the pyramid stood a proud hundred feet high. It has long since fallen into ruin. Theril's jade statue stands headless in the chapel, which takes up the entire ground floor. Her head lies unnoticed in a far corner, a beatific smile still carved upon her cold lips. Rooms above the chapel were home to the priests, given over also to school rooms and libraries. Many sheets of music, containing lost symphonies and forgotten forms of tablature lie crumbling in the vaults of the pyramid, which despite its desolation, has a sad, faintly peaceful atmosphere. With the loss of their main temple, Theril's cult was permanently weakened in Vilmir, and that land made the more stern thereby.

WAY OF LIFE

FROM SOME of the tumble-down buildings came cacklings and titterings as the maimed caroused with the crippled and the degenerate and corrupted coupled with their crones... there came a scream from one shattered doorway and a young girl, barely over puberty, dashed out pursued by a monstrously fat beggar who propelled himself with astonishing speed on his crutches, the livid stumps of his legs, which terminated at the knee, making the motions of running ... the fat cripple bore down his prey, abandoned his crutches which rattled on the broken pavement, and flung himself upon the child.

Moonglum tried to free himself from Elric's grasp but the albino whispered: "Let it happen. Those who are whole either in mind, body or spirit cannot be tolerated in Nadsokor."

— The Vanishing Tower, II, 3

THE ESSENTIAL rules within these walls are loyalty to King Urish and loyalty to the beggar's code. Within Nadsokor is a dog-eat-dog world, whose corrupt and tittering crew of blind, maimed, malformed, and evil individuals creep out across the Young Kingdoms to beg and steal, and return to gloat among the ruins of their despicable city. Despite their appalling quality of life, the beggars are perversely proud of their existence. They know the fear and loathing that their corruption inspires, and are not adverse to exploiting it. Leering, limping, wretched, and pitiable were it not for their depravity, Nadsokor's beggars revel in their squalor. They are truly the lowest of the low, worthy of contempt and fear. Few living are so distressed and hopeless that they ever could look up to Nadsokor and its vile citizens.

Beyond Nadsokor's walls beggars are forced to conform somewhat to the standards of the Young Kingdoms, at least when in the public eye. When they are begging in marketplaces, and on street corners from Ilmar to Iosaz, beggars perform a less repugnant role than that they are accustomed to, lest by their foulness they drive away the kindhearted persons whose alms they seek. Out of view, away from the brightly lit boulevards where the well-heeled citizens of the Young Kingdoms stroll, whose reverie and happiness a beggar can shatter with one well-placed belch or whimper, Nadsokorites fall back into their usual disgusting ways.

Almost every city in the Young Kingdoms plays host to beggars. Their refuges, their holes away from home, are always found in the least well lit, most dangerous and crime-ridden districts. Here they congregate and exchange information, eat, sleep, and fornicate. Such hives of corruption are often aswarm with other criminal elements, including murderers, cut-purses, and the most desperate and depraved of the city's poor. These miniature Nadsokors might be located in an abandoned tenement, a collapsing warehouse, or a sewer. Such beggar-homes are commonly called "rookeries", for here all within are birds of prey.

BEGGARS' SLANG

OVER THE CENTURIES the beggars of Nadsokor have developed a unique way of speaking which binds them together as much as do their squalid surroundings. Although not a complete language, its terms denote the speaker as a Nadsokorite, and allows such beggars to identify one another and to conduct conversations largely not understood by outsiders.

ANKLE-BITER: a beggar child, often blind or starving, whose innocent expression evokes sympathy for its plight. A dripper may pose as its parent.

BOOG: expose oneself in order to be given clothing.

CROP: to hit or punch. To crop a mark is to ask alms of a passerby.

DRIPPER: beggar whose tearful sad stories are designed to generate extra bronzes or food. To drip is to lie to.

DIP: steal.

DIVE: hide.

DUFF: a hard mark, one not forthcoming with coinage.

FAMILY, THE: the beggars of Nadsokor.

GAGGER: a beggar who relies upon disgusting wounds and deformities in order to elicit alms.

GUMP: an easy mark, or one who gives the beggar a sizeable sum.

COUSIN: to deceive, impersonate, falsify.

JUG-GUMPER: a beggar who specializes in deceiving or robbing drunks.

CLIP: a cutpurse or pickpocket. Also clipper.

MARK: a target, someone with money, a normal person.

MAUNCHER: beggar with no teeth. By extension, a sycophant or suck-up.

OLD MAN: Urish, the Beggar King.

PRINCE: a fellow beggar, a peer of Nadsokor.

SHIFTER: a beggar who fakes his afflictions, and hence is not fully one of The Family. A shifty beggar is unfaithful to the twin rules of Nadsokor.

SHIK: a straightedge razor. Also a cut or wound inflicted by same. A shikker characteristically fights with this sort of weapon, and by analogy is one whose words or actions cut quickly and deeply.

TAPSLAP: the simple aural code with which beggars can communicate without speaking, characteristically done by hammering with the tip of a crutch, but tongue clicks, the beat of palm against thigh, and many other methods do as well.

WOLVER: for a group of beggars to bully an isolated passerby in order to force the giving of alms.

WONK: to purposefully annoy. Wonk and wolver, the standard night-tactic for Nadsokorite beggars.

CHARACTER

Above it had been nailed, perhaps ironically, a pair of wooden crutches, crossed as swords might be crossed, indicating that the weapons of the beggar were his power to horrify and disgust those luckier or better endowed than himself.

— *The Vanishing Tower, II, 3*

Beggars are, without doubt, often mentally seriously disturbed. Rejected by the world for their defects of birth or accidents of fate, maimed, blind, mad, or diseased, they have in turn turned their backs upon normal society and so-called civilized behavior. Embittered by circumstance, they take opportunity to wallow in corruption, flaunting their foulness at the world. Nadsokorites reverse all known standards of decency and decorum. The more brutal, rude, perverse, and hideous a beggar is, the more she is honored, admired, respected, and liked. Good manners of any kind, social or sexual, are not tolerated in Nadsokor.

Every beggar is deformed in some way. Unlike the Mereghn, who have been known to disguise themselves as beggars by binding limbs, and judiciously applying makeup in order to seem diseased, Nadsokorites deliberately disfigure themselves in order to *be* more disgusting. Exposing themselves to disfiguring diseases such as smallpox, syphilis, or scabies, cutting off limbs, scaring and blinding themselves with fire and brands, and the amputation of fingers, noses, and ears are all forms of self-mutilation encouraged in Nadsokor. Prestige rises with having a truly revolting appearance, and so the beggars vie with one another to create the most horrid afflictions imaginable, and several that are not. Children born whole in Nadsokor are maimed, blinded, or disfigured, if not killed outright. The physically or mentally normal are not tolerated.

Despite their bravado, Nadsokor's beggars are a cowardly lot. They fear strength and bravery, and hate it too. When the warriors of Tanelorn ride through Nadsokor accompanying Elric when he recovers his Actorios, the beggars hide amongst the rubble and ruin. Sorcery too is shunned by them, for the beggars are uniformly superstitious. The erudite beggar is a rarity, and must hide his books away from the thieving fingers of his fellows, lest they be burnt as fuel. Few of them can read, and those who do are made the butt of many a cruel joke, unless they have sorcerous power with which to defend themselves. The only education-valued in Nadsokor is that which teaches.

GOVERNMENT

Like much else in Nadsokor, its government, courts, and the decrees of the king are a mockery of normal human society. Since the beggar city was founded, the titular head of its corrupt state has always been the city's strongest resident. Kings and occasional queens among Nadsokor's despicable inhabitants have constantly fought their way to the top of the dung heap, from where they survey their kingdom with jaundiced eyes.

The Beggar King of the Elric saga is Urish the Seven Fing-ered. He fears the rabble over which he rules, maintaining his position only through force and guile. Urish's paranoia churns the coterie of ruffians who congregate closest to his throne; the Beggar King's advisors are always short-lived, and there are always others eager for status and the benefits the position confers.

In return for his nominal protection, Nadsokor's king claims half the proceeds of what his subjects loot or steal upon their return to the beggar city. The prize pieces of loot Urish locks away from sight in the chest beneath his throne. Urish delights in pseudo-formal pronouncements, such as the sentence he passes upon Elric. He awards titles to enemies and friends alike (see "Common Nadsokorite Names," nearby). Favorites of Urish lounge about in filthy luxury, at least when compared to their cohorts, with their pick of food and sexual partners.

The great cleaver Hackmeat is King Urish's symbol of office, a battered blade once wielded in one of Nadsokor's kitchens. It is what Urish swears by. Previous kings have sworn by their warts, their poxes, and one by his withered nose, which he wore on a cord around his neck (King Burgo's nose was said to be able to sniff out poison. This may be true. Sadly for Burgo, it failed to smell the several daggers with which he was stabbed. Like many other wonders, Burgo's Nose is today but one of the items, some tawdry, some marvelous, that make up Urish's Horde.) Like most Nadsokorite kings, Urish deposed his predecessor. After his death, squabbling ensues to gain the empty throne. The next Beggar King becomes a pawn of Chaos, when Duke Nar-jhan is appointed to lead Nadsokor to war.

WAR

Despite their horrid looks and life-styles, the beggars are largely safe from attack, even though their city festers in the very heartland of Lawful and imperious Vilmir. Their very squalor is their safeguard from invasion and war. Few dare to brave the risks of disease and massed beggars in order to bring retribution to Nadsokor for its many villainies; even Ilmiora's ruthless assassins, the Mereghn, will not accept a commission against Nadsokorites due to the risks involved, although they may agree to kill a beggar outside of Nadsokor's walls. To successfully crush Nadsokor, an invading army would have to raze the warren-like city to the ground, or else engage in a protracted and bloody campaign against the skulking beggars room by room, a guerilla war few armies have the stomach to win.

Beggar leaders depend upon sheer weight of numbers, rather than any particular proficiency, to bring an opponent down. Long knives, bows, axes, and clubs are their preferred weapons, as well as hands, feet and teeth. Many beggars carry disease, which can be more of a threat than the beggars themselves. It is virtually unknown for beggars to leave Nadsokor in large numbers, and they almost never directly attack caravans or even single riders they encounter. Selling arms to Nadsokor is a truly criminal act, and any merchant or noble convicted of such a crime would

COMMON NADSOKORITE NICK-NAMES

THE BEGGARS of Nadsokor are a motley collection of people from throughout the Young Kingdoms. Inhabitants of every land, provided they are foul enough, make their way to the Beggar City, and so their names reflect their broad cultural background. A beggar could conceivably have a name that was Tarkeshite, Oinish, or Vilmirian in origin, or from any other of the Young Kingdoms. Regardless of their previous homeland, all Nadsokorites adopt a new name upon taking up residence within Nadsokor's tumbled walls.

Create your own name or choose an appropriate name from among the following: Armless, Dog Eater, Drop-guts, Dung-breath, Earless, Greenscab, Half-Lung, Happy, Lord of Slops, No Dick, No Jaw, One-Arm, One-Ball, One-Eye, One-Hand, One-Foot, One-Leg, One-Tit, Pus Face, Rat Face, Rotten, Scab-Back, The Broken, The Legless, The Mad, The Maimed, The Foul, The Tongueless, Toothless, Withered.

certainly face execution. Beggars shun horses as a rule, disdaining their use, but towards the end of the Saga obtain a few starving nags, upon which they once chase Elric and Moonglum. The beggar army's attack on Tanelorn is threatening only because of its vast size, numbering many tens of thousands united under Narjhan's command.

RELIGION

"By Narjhan's droppings..."

Beggar's oath.

— **The Vanishing Tower, II, 4**

For two hundred years the worship of Chaos has been entrenched among Nadsokor's filthy denizens, with many and varied deities of Entropy revered by the beggars, including Slortar, Chardros, and Maluk. Checkalakh the Burning God and Narjhan Filth-Lord receive the most worship. No temple dedicated to either deity stands in Nadsokor, although it could be argued that the entire city functions as a shrine to Narjhan. Nor do their cults practice organized ceremonies, nor do they have genuine priests (though there are mock-priests aplenty).

The most powerful among their worshippers cow other beggars into propitiating particular gods. King Urish is a worshipper of the Burning God, and considering that he serves to offer up the majority of Checkalakh's sacrifices, may be considered his high priest. Narjhan's default priest is a grossly fat individual without arms or legs, Kretch the

Corpulent. Little more than a living torso, Kretch is carried about Nadsokor upon a litter by his servile beggar flunkies. Worship of the Burning God is firmly tied to Nadsokor's history. Over the centuries, the Beggar Kings have come to see the existence of Checkalakh as sign of Chaos's blessing of their reign. Those who displease the Beggar King, and enemies of beggarkind in general, are sacrificed to the Burning God by being tossed into the labyrinth, from which none have ever emerged.

As is proper for the Filth God, Narjhan's worship involves large quantities of offal, excreta, and decay. Clouds of flies constantly buzz about his stinking worshippers, who take pride in their odorous adoration. Services to Narjhan are gross in the extreme, best not described. His worshippers are never buried. They rot where they fall, adding to the pleasing pall of putrification hanging over Nadsokor. Sacrifices to Narjhan are drowned in pits of sewerage, or flung into pits containing plague-bearing or rabies-infected rats.

TECHNOLOGY

Nadsokor is without smiths, craftsmen, and repairs. Entropy and decay claim everything of value, and everything else as well. Heat and light are obtained by burning garbage, the oily smoke only adding to Nadsokor's noxious atmosphere. As practiced in surrounding Vilmir, the recent advances in printing, machinery, and other technologies have passed Nadsokor by. The beggars neither understand nor trust things that cannot be deceived or whined at, shunning them as presences of Law. A beggar who returns to Nadsokor bearing some technological innovation is killed, sacrificed to the Burning God.

FOOD AND DRINK

Beggars are not famous for their delicate palates. Food in Nadsokor consists of whatever can be found locally, (rats, feral goats, wild dogs, roots, weeds, and tubers) supplemented with occasional produce transported into the city by returning beggars. Though the Church of Law admonishes against such practices, caravans sometimes pay off beggar bands in food to stay clear of them, and area ranches also find it wise to pay a small tribute of food or cattle to the beggars, so as to be left undisturbed. King Urish claims the best of all of this, leaving only spoilt and rotting delicacies for the remaining populace.

Fine wine is almost unknown in Nadsokor, though inferior fortified vintages are avidly consumed. Only potent beverages are at all much transported in, since liquids are heavy to move. The crafts of brewing and distilling, while known and agreeably Chaotic, are rarely practiced, given the general laziness in the beggar city and the frequent lack of raw material.

For those many beggars who cannot find a drink, a local and plentiful vine, *ditchweed*, grants a mild narcotic euphoria when chewed or smoked. Teeth darkened from this habit enhances their disgusting appearances.

NADSOKOR AND TANELORN

“URISH has knowledge of Tanelorn though not much, I gather, and fosters an unreasoning hatred of the place, perhaps because it is the opposite of what Nadsokor is.”

Moonglum to Elric
— *The Vanishing Tower, II, 4*

BEGGARS COME to Nadsokor from all over the Young Kingdoms. It is a haven for the outcast and the unclean, those who have borne the hatred of other societies for their misfortunes of birth and health. In this fashion it is a diseased shadow of Tanelorn.

If virtuous warriors find peace in the cool arbors of the Eternal City, then beggars find their own kind in the filthy byways of Nadsokor. Tanelorn is the highest point any resident of the Young Kingdoms can rise to, Nadsokor the lowest. Once someone has fallen to Nadsokor's level, they can sink no more. Twice in the Elric Saga Nadsokor's beggars strike at the City of Peace; once at a vital supply caravan, and once directly, when the Chaos Duke Narjhan has inflamed the hatred that burns in the heart of every beggar for those better off than themselves. Each attempt proves neither profitable for the beggars, nor healthy.

ARTS AND PASTIMES

The most popular pastimes in Nadsokor are the comparison and exchange of diseases, scabs, ulcers, and other afflictions. Attempts to outdo one another in grossness are common. Begging contests are also popular. Mockery, vicious practical jokes, and cruel jests are the arts most practiced among the beggars. Bargaining and Fast Talk, being virtually the only skills respected here, get frequent use; Evaluate, since things of worth exist mostly elsewhere and not here, is of much less use, but all three skills give basis to lots of informal games and contests.

In general, being a lazy crew, beggars prefer indolence to artistic endeavors. Such crafts as painting and scribing are essentially unknown in Nadsokor, although the singing of bawdy songs, and lewd or capering dancing, accompanied by flatulent music played upon whistles and reeds, and simple drumming, are held in high esteem.

Other familiar pastimes include smoking ditchweed and gossiping, smoking ditchweed and staring at the ceiling, and smoking ditchweed and creating group fantasies with words. Once in a while a Lord of Chaos notices one of these last efforts, with unpredictable results.

POWERS

KING URISH

The most degenerate of Nadsokor's

degenerates is their Beggar King, a once-handsome man upon whose face are stamped the ravages of his dissolute life and depraved personality. His eyes are bright and pale, his hair unwashed and lice-infested, his nose and cheeks mapped with broken capillaries and caked with filth, and his teeth rotten. Urish rarely shaves or bathes. He constantly scratches himself, for his clothing is inhabited. Urish's voice is gravelly, his behavior coarse. He has several diseases, including lung infections, numerous rashes, and at least one venereal disease, of which he is proud. His manner is rude, his mind sharp, corrupt, and malicious. Urish knows many secrets, gathered by his beggars across the Young Kingdoms, and will sell some of them. He is a sly and powerful man.



KING URISH, age 45, the Seven-Fingered

Chaos 212, Balance 15, Law 55

STR 16 CON 9 SIZ 11 INT 16
POW 16 DEX 21 APP 7 HP 10

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Hackmeat the Cleaver 95%, damage 1D8+2+1D4
Dagger 78%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Armor: none

Spells: Cloak of Cran Liret (1-4), Rat Vision (1), Summon Elemental (1), Suppleness of Xiombarg (1-3), Tread of Cran Liret (1-4)

Skills: Climb 91%, Common Tongue 99%, Conceal Object 89%, Dodge 45%, Evaluate 133%, Hide 109%, Move Quietly 95%, Nadsokor Beggars' Slang 80%, Physik 32%, Pick Lock 91%, Pick Pocket 115%, Search 73%

CHECKALAKH

Imprisoned by Donblas in the labyrinth beneath Nadsokor, Checkalakh is much weakened by his long captivity. Only the beggars and enemies which Urish sacrifices to him keep Checkalakh incarnate. Even at his most powerful, the Burning God is only a very minor Chaos deity. Checkalakh's appearance varies between a great conflagration, and a being composed of flame. His voice is like a blast furnace, or the roar of flames in a chimney. In his presence clothes smoulder and skin blisters, while metal becomes hot to the touch. The Burning God is slain by Stormbringer. His life-force proves almost too strong for Elric to contain, and it is only due to the intervention of Law that the albino survives.



CHECKALAKH of Chaos, the Burning God

Chaos 333, Balance 0, Law 0

STR 30 CON 25 SIZ 40 INT 20
POW 33 DEX 28 APP 20 HP 33

Damage Bonus: +3D6

Flame Burst 160%, damage 6D6+3D6

Pseudopod/Fiery Fist 80%, damage 4D6+3D6

Armor: a weapon striking Checkalakh suffers 14 hit points of fire damage each time the blow lands. Subtract this from the weapon's hit points before inflicting damage upon the Burning God. If the weapon is destroyed, Checkalakh takes no damage.

Spells: Checkalakh has access to all spells and summonings, as appropriate. He may also manifest 1D8 demonic abilities per round at the cost of an equal number of magic points.

Skills: Bemoan Fate 100%, Crackle and Roar 100%, Million Spheres 65%

NARJHAN OF CHAOS

In the last year of the world, the Lords of Chaos decide to move against Tanelorn, which they have always hated, and whose residents they fear may contest their conquest of the earth. Lord Narjhan is chosen to be Chaos's emissary. He manifests in Nadsokor, inflaming the beggars' hatred of Tanelorn and leading them to war against the Eternal City. Narjhan appears as a horseman clad in jet black armor of intricate and baroque design. His hollow, disdainful voice echoes within the helm, which when opened proves to be empty.



Although a Lord of Chaos, Narjhan seems to be a minor one, yet he has the full support of his Entropic peers. He cannot take direct part in the assault against the Eternal City, but Narjhan can use magic on behalf of his beggar horde, and in self defense. Tanelorn's nature prevents him from attacking the city directly, while the strictures of the Balance, already stretched to breaking point, also forbid him to directly interfere against Tanelorn's residents. His most blatant action is to summon the Kyrenee.

No statistics are provided for Narjhan. However, to mortals, the powers of any Lord of Chaos seem, and are, virtually limitless. ☹





0 6 12 18
Miles

A Chart of
**The Kingdom of Org
 & the Forest of Troos**
 as Recounted to Phileas of Karas

River
 Barlimm

Sucking

Swamp

Midmere

The Forest of Troos

Valkark

River

The Barrow's Glen

Citadel

of Org

The Old Thins

Fungus Groves

Wasteland



To Balshaam

VILMIR

Nadsokor
 (The City of Beggars)



To Karlaak

THE CITADEL OF ORG, AND THE

FOREST OF TROOS

HERE ROTTS A PLACE WHERE EVERY SUNRISE
IS FRESH DOOM; THE TRIUMPH OF CHAOS
WILL BE A BLESSING TO ORG.

TOWARDS the hell—spawned Forest of Troos which lay within the borders of Org, country of necromancy and rotting, ancient evil.

— The Bane of the Black Sword II, 1

THIS IS THE Forest of Troos, sure enough. It's told of how the Doomed Folk released tremendous forces upon the earth and caused terrible changes among men, beasts and vegetation. This forest is the last they created, and the last to perish.

Moonglum to Elric,

— The Bane of the Black Sword, II, 1

THE CITADEL OF ORG is an enigma to the world of men. It lies deep within the hideous Forest of Troos, a poison witch—wood. Even the beggars of Nadsokor will not go there. Merchants and travelers en route from Bakshaan to Vilmir who must skirt Troos are sometimes never seen again. Only the Orgians are safe from Troos' poisonous grasp, but then only in this fashion: they were all infected with the forest's madness from birth. It is an old dementia, the insanity of Troos, for it stretches back to the previous incarnation of the earth. That was the time of the Doomed Folk, whose hubris destroyed the world.

BACKGROUND

THE DOOMED FOLK held sway over the world in its previous incarnation, before the world was remade. Their doom was of their own making. They constructed planar machines, powerful devices which could pierce the divisions between the spheres. The Doomed Folk plundered from a thousand thousand worlds, and revelled in the spoils of every kingdom of every era.

ORG & TROOS AT A GLANCE

RULED BY: King Gutheran

POPULATION: 1000

LONGEST RIVER: The source of the Varkalk River is in Org.

HIGHEST PEAK: None

IMPORTS: Goods stolen from foreign merchants

EXPORTS: Herbs from Troos

They became immortal, and lived as gods. Their greed knew no bounds, and it was their undoing. Their machines were driven with energy leeches from the earth, and at last they rendered the world uninhabitable. The skies were still and lifeless, and the Earth was barren and dead. There was no power left for the machines, and nothing to eat.

At the last the damned race sought to escape their fate, and used their machines to transport themselves to another plane, a feat never before undertaken. The energy required consumed the earth, and thus began the new time cycle. Did the Doomed Folk escape or perish? We do not know, but we can say that at least one survived, to establish the bloodline that yet flows in the diseased nobility of Org. It is tragic to envision the last of the Doomed Folk, wandering alone in the new world, not knowing if he was the savior or destroyer of his kin.

The Forest of Troos is the only landscape from that Time Cycle which survived, and it stands today as it did in the days of the Doomed Folk, a sterile place where no animal life exists. The palaces and devices of the mad race are buried beneath the soil, and it is wise to leave them there. Only sorcerers and the insane would wish to dabble with the powers which were the undoing of the Doomed Folk.

Although those people are gone, their legacy lives on, in the blight that curses the area and those within it. The folk of Org are held to be the descendants of the Doomed Folk. Their forefathers were savage primitives, prehumans who wandered into the Forest of Troos even before the founding of A'sha'hiian. There they found a man who was twice their height. Their first neanderthalic instinct was to worship him, but he told them that there are no gods, and that he would kill any who dared to deify him. He told them his name, which is lost to history, but it can be postulated that it was long and complex, and ultimately rendered down by the savages to the simple abbreviation, Org. They followed him as their chief, and his blood tainted and damned the children which followed. Today those who are direct descendants of the Doomed Folk can be clearly marked: they are tall and well-made, whereas the common folk of Org are subhuman, no further evolved than they were when the world was fresh.

The last of the Doomed Folk tired of sleeping in the leaves and mud, and he showed his new people how to construct a fortress in which they could dwell. In time, he tired

of existence altogether, so he bade his tribe to raise a great barrow, and he walked below, to sit there in darkness and wait for the world to end again, that it might bring him peace at last.

With him passed the lore of masonry. The folk of Org kept the citadel in vague repair, but they never built another structure. They remained there, deep in the heart of Troos, and among each generation there were born a handful of perfect children whose features verified their natural right to rule. However, each of those rulers found in the end that, like their forefather, the finality of death was denied to them. For them immortality was a creeping madness, and the only cure was to succumb to their birthright and join their father below the hill, and wait. Thus it has always been in Org.

Beyond Troos, the Bright Empire rose. Those masterful people knew to avoid staying long within the dells of the sickly forest, but certain herbs grew there which were unobtainable on any other plane. When the Melnibonéans withdrew to Imrryr, even that little amount of knowledge

FUTURE EVENTS — ORG AND TROOS

401 YK — Veerkad is the reigning King of Org. He is accused of sorcery, and usurped by his brother Gutharan. Veerkad is blinded, but left to live. Gutharan takes the Lady Vigda as his queen.

402 YK — Virianne Visconti, the daughter of a powerful Ilmioran merchant, is captured as her caravan skirts Troos. Gutharan is besotted with the captive. The Lady Vigda protests, angering the king. He scars her face with a burning brand, decreeing that she shall henceforth be known as the Lady of Veils. Gutharan marries the outsider, calling her the Pale Queen. Virianne is miserable, but cannot escape.

403 YK — The Pale Queen takes a lover, Count Hroald, a lesser noble of Org. She urges him to return her to the world outside, but his deep-rooted xenophobia cannot allow him to consider such a plan.

404 YK — Lady Hrodna, Count Hroald's jealous sister, poisons the Pale Queen. Gutharan is enraged, but the murderer is not found. The Pale Queen is buried Beneath the Hill. The Lady of Veils tells Gutharan of his consort's adulterous relationship. In a mocking ceremony, Gutharan marries Count Hroald to the Pale Queen's corpse, consigning him to the barrow before his time. This shocks the court of Org, and perhaps in some ways precipitates the doom which is to come.

405 YK — Theleb K'aarna explores Troos, and recovers one of the devices of the Doomed Folk. He trans-

ports it to the Sighing Desert. There he uses it to part the veils between the spheres, and summons forth the reptilian men of Pio to attack Tanelorn. Elric finds K'aarna and rides into the machine, and disappears. The Pan Tangian thinks him dead, but Elric is actually transported to another plane, and the adventure of the Vanishing Tower. When Elric returns to the Young Kingdoms, he destroys the machine with the aid of Jhary-a-Conel, an aspect of the Companion to Heroes.

406 YK — The bestial men of Org ambush a caravan of the Voashoon clan of Karlaak. Zarozinia survives, and meets Elric and Moonglum in the Forest of Troos. They travel to the citadel of Org to retrieve the caravan goods. Veerkad attempts to sacrifice Zarozinia to the King Under the Hill, but is attacked by Hurd. They kill each other, fulfilling an ancient prophecy, and the dead King walks. Gutharan dies of fright, and the barrow-ghouls slaughter the noble family. Elric and his companions escape as the citadel burns.

407 YK — The citadel of Org lies in ruins. Some beast-men survive, split into feuding tribes. The two most powerful chieftains are Mord and Arnlaug, and they hate each other. Savage guerilla warfare rages across Troos. The citadel is shunned by all, as ghouls still dwell there. No further noble children are born.

408 YK — The world ends. Troos, which survived the end of the last time cycle, does not survive again. The legacy of the Doomed Folk is expunged from history.

passed from general circulation, and with ignorance came superstition and fear, as is always the case.

Humans had always dreaded Troos. The founders of the new nations of Ilmiora and Vilmir did not include the forest within their borders. No one settled within ten miles of the foul forest, and in time people came to call both the uninhabited ring of land and the woods it girthed by the name of Org. This created a geographical contradiction. To an outsider, Troos lies within Org, but to an Orgian, Org in fact lies within Troos. As the only communication between Org and the world outside is through raiding and guerilla warfare, the distinction is unimportant to all save the scholars of the Young Kingdoms.

GEOGRAPHY

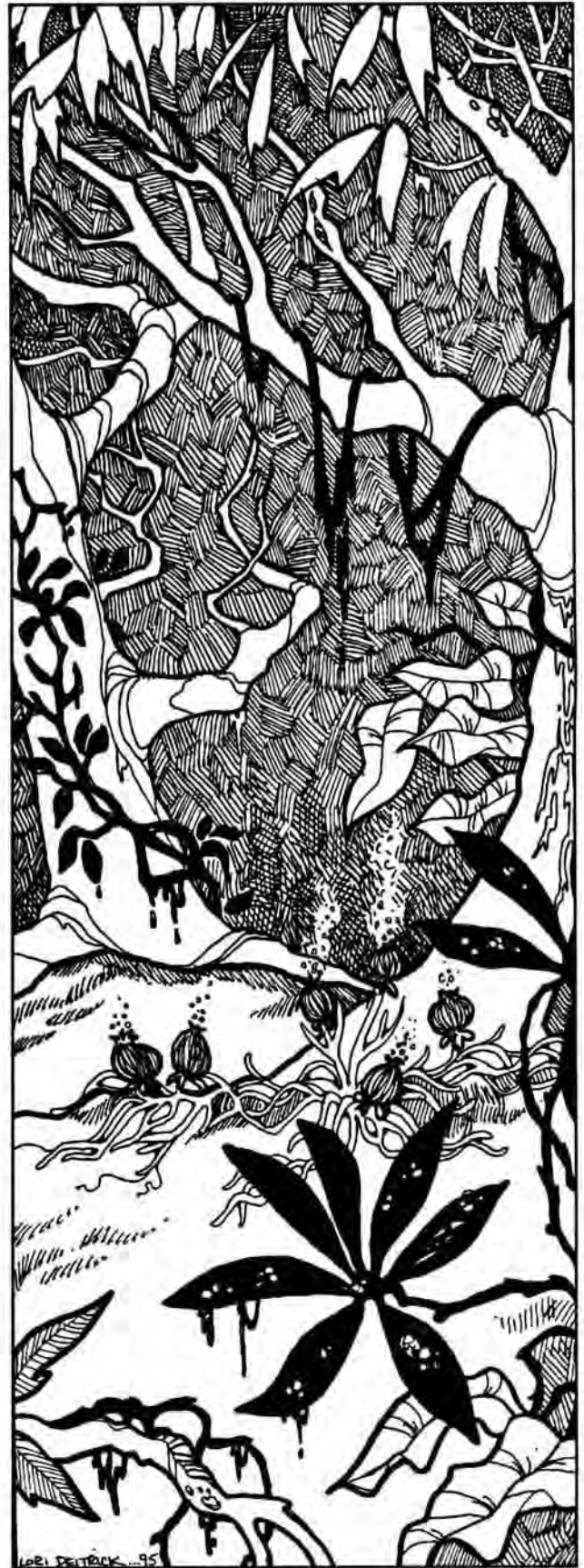
IT WAS A FOREST of malignantly erupting blooms, blood-colored and sickly-mottled. A forest of bending, sinuously smooth trunks, black and shiny; a forest of spiked leaves of murky purples and gleaming greens—certainly an unhealthy place if judged only by the odor of rotting vegetation which was almost unbearable.

— The Bane of the Black Sword, II, 1

TROOS AND ORG lie atop a miserable plateau in Ilmiora's Southern Ranges, a lonely place that would be avoided did not a pass between Ilmiora and Vilmir lie slightly to its west. Org is a land of windswept grasses and mud, bereft of any distinguishing landmarks save the Forest of Troos itself. Purplish bracken and heather spring up here and there, as do occasional crags of granite. The northern edge of the plateau overlooks Ilmiora's Barlimm Valley, with its swift-flowing river and fertile fields. The Barlimm River, and the Varkalk, both have their headwaters in this region, springing up in an area of swamp and marsh. The southern reaches of the Orgian plateau are drier, and exposed to hot winds from the Vilmirian plain. In summer, these winds blow ceaselessly, dusty and scorching. Troos experiences dry summers and damp winters. Snow sometimes falls in the harsher winters.

Sprawling across much of the Orgian plateau, the Forest of Troos itself is poisonous; saps, leaves, bark, and blossoms all secrete numerous toxins and agents, some merely irritative, others provoking hallucinations and insanity, the most potent causing death. Simply to walk through the Forest of Troos is to invite dangers of the worst kind. Swollen trunks hundreds of feet high, trails deep in rotting humus, spreading branches, and suggestively rustling leaves that block out the sun, make Troos an ill-omened place.

By reputation, Troos is home to all manner of deadly beasts and dangerous creatures, as well as demons, wraiths, and worse. Such fantasies are brought about by the hallucinogens and toxins with which the forest abounds. Few who enter the place survive, and those who do are always mad and babbling or mewling and feverish. Save for the Orgians themselves, and its ghastly vegetation, the Forest of Troos is lifeless.



THE FOREST OF TROOS

FLORA

THE MADNESS OF TROOS

THE VERY AIR of Troos is unclean, and this is the secret of the forest. Weird pollen storms roll through the forest, silent, drifting. Invisible clouds of spores float upon the air, and find their way into the lungs and brains of humans. The Orgians are immune to this, because Troos has already infected their genetic makeup. Healthy travelers from other lands are at risk. The hallucinations brought on by the pollen clouds give rise to the stories of haunted Troos. Although the plants might seem to move, or walk, or speak, none are in fact sentient in any way.

Each day, a stranger in Troos must receive a successful CON x5 roll, or else succumb to the hallucinogenic effects of the drifting spores and pollen. Those suffering from such delusions can shake them off by receiving a successful INT x1 roll, or by leaving the environs of Troos. A fumbled CON roll might leave permanent results.

The delusion table gives a range of reactions to the air of Troos.

DELUSION TABLE

Rather than rolling 1D10, gamemasters may prefer to select one of the following.

1. THE FOREST IS ALIVE

The trees are bending over to grab me. The flowers are screaming at me. The vines slither like snakes. I have to get out of here!

2. THE FOREST IS HARMLESS

Why does Troos have such an evil reputation? It is a place of peace and wonder. The water is so refreshing, and that fruit over there looks delicious. I shall stay here always.

3. YOU'RE ALL OUT TO GET ME

Why did you bring me here? You bastards! You're trying to kill me! Get away or I'll stab you!

4. THERE ARE MONSTERS EVERYWHERE

They are hiding in the underbrush, they are stalking me through the woods, they are disguised as my friends. It's kill or be killed!

5. I RUN WITH THE BEASTS

Forest good. Shed clothing. Run naked. Smell trees. Drink water. Eat grass. Sleep.

6. ALL THE PRETTY COLORS

Look at the flares of yellow and purple, the pink and green of the sky, the ground flows with all of the colors of the rainbow. Now everything has turned golden. Can't you see it?

7. I, FUNGUS

I grow in the earth. I draw nutrients from the soil. I stand still. I do not move.

8. WHO AM I?

Where am I? What is this place? How did I get here? Who are you? Is this good to eat?

9. WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

My friends have all left me. I can hear their voices in the distance, but I can't see them. All I can see is the trees. Where are they? Hello?

10. I AM THE LAST OF THE DOOMED FOLK

This is Troos, my home. I shall find the buried devices of my kinfolk, and rule the world as we did in days of old. These humans will serve me as slaves.

THE PLACE WAS full of malicious rustlings and whispers, though no living animal inhabited it, as far as they could tell. There was a disconcerting absence of birds, rodents or insects and, though they normally had no love for such creatures, they would have appreciated their company in the disconcerting forest.

— The Bane of the Black Sword, II, 1

TROOS IS FULL of dangers. The ground is evil-smelling muck, ankle-deep in most places. Certain stretches of treacherous sucking mud are deep enough to swallow rider and horse. At other points carpets of thin ferns spread out to cover a drop of one hundred feet or more, while in the south, dry and spiny thorn bushes scratch and claw at passersby. The wise traveler sticks to the trails marked out by the Orgians. Then again, wise travelers do not visit Troos.

No animals live in Troos. The only beasts wandering the forest are those lost from caravans, gripped with madness. Dogs become feral, and foam and drool. Horses recognize no master, but roll their eyes in fear and kick at figures unseen. Cattle plunge blindly through the woods in terror, and do not stop running until their hearts burst with exhaustion.

The plants of Troos are unhealthy and unholy. They bloom in luxuriant profusion. The thick canopy overhead protects them from the effects of wind and weather, and retains heat. Troos is humid, and the plants thrive in the greenhouse conditions. In the north, the forest is especially thick and wet, eventually giving way to the Mudmere, and the swamps beyond it.

Little in Troos seems wholesome. Thick boles weep putrescent oily sap. Trunks leak resins which stain human skin permanently. Some roots coil like worms, burying their thick heads in the black earth. Other roots are stretched taut, and the slightest pressure cause them to snap and whip up into the face of the trespasser. In places there are dead trees held in place by the flimsiest of vines, and the slightest motion of a passerby can cause them to crash to earth. Thorns are abundant, and their pricks cause burning sensations, fever, itching, and rashes. There are mile-long glades of stinging nettles, and wide curtains of sticky vines which adhere to flesh and must be cut away.

Flowers grow everywhere, and of every size. Some are purple and black, and their perfumes prompt strange dreams; other nodding blooms are the height of a person and give off the scent of decay. Ferns are furry to the touch, but covered in tiny needles which catch and tear skin. Fruits hang heavy from the vines, dropping now and then with a soft splash of smell and color. The fruits exude sweet and delicious aromas, but their flesh is pulpy and noxious, and their juice burns the throat.

Many species of fungi are unique to Troos, and are invariably dangerous to humans. Mould covers ground and trunks in a sickly carpet. Hollow dead trees are host to quivering pinkish crops of fungi, slowly splitting the old bark

and oozing down the trunk. Bloated toadstools sprout between tree roots, like decaying flesh swelling from the ribs of a corpse. Fetid mushrooms gather in festering clumps. In one stretch of the forest, the Fungus Glade, there are no trees for miles, only fungi. Some are lethal only if ingested. Others sweat poisons which inflame the skin and eyes. All exude spores.

Water stands in pools, collected from the leaves of the trees. Such water has an acid sheen, a swirl of rainbow colors, and is foul-tasting. Often it is fermented, choked with spores and pollen, and causes the drinker to suffer visions, deliriums, and death.

HERBS FROM TROOS

"Some of these are healing herbs, and others are used in summoning spirits. Yet others give unnatural strength to the imbibitor and some turn men mad. They will be useful to me."

Eric to Zarozinia,

— **The Bane of the Black Sword, II, 1**

Not all of the botany of Troos is harmful or perilous. Many species of plant and flower are unknown elsewhere, and have unique medicinal and magical effects. The searcher must know which plants to look for, and how to harvest them. Described here are a selection of herbs and other useful plants from Troos. Finding them, selling them and imbibing them can be adventures in themselves.

If inhaled, the pollen of the blue-green blossoms of the *bruised blood-drop* plant has powerful narcotic qualities. *Blood-drop*-induced dreams which accompany the intensely pleasurable languor are believed to reveal the user's future. If the user fails a roll of POW x3, they become subject to rapid mood swings between euphoria and melancholia. While under the influence of bruised blood-drop, an adventurer may well endanger themselves due to their rapidly fluctuating emotional state unless they can succeed at 1/2 Idea rolls.

A brew from the flesh of the *dogtail toadstool* is an antidote to most poisons, although its purgative influence has been known to cause vomiting and sweating fits lasting for 1d10 days while it cleans out the drinker's system.

Prurian fruit has coarse, acidic flesh of a vivid scarlet hue. The fruit, which only grows on parasitic creepers which slowly strangle the trees upon which they take root, is poisonous (POT 15). The fruit's seeds, if soaked in alcohol for two weeks to destroy the toxin and then dried, significantly enhance cognitive power when smoked. An unfortunate side-effect visits the user with severe nosebleeds, palsy, and lethargy (in game terms, adding 1D3 points to INT for 1D6 days, with a temporary loss of CON equal to the INT gain).

The sickly-sweet sap of the *gallowgrass* tree, when dissolved in boiling water and drunk, allows the user to see spirits, and communicate with them, for 1D3 days thereafter. Gallowgrass trees only grow in Mudmere, their spongy

trunks and frond-like leaves sprouting from the corpses of the drowned. It is said that each tree is possessed by the ghost of its unfortunate fertilizer, who haunts the sap's drinker in dreams, tormenting him or her until he or she is driven mad. The tree screams when it is tapped. Sometimes the harvester of the sap is so startled by the scream that he topples from his precarious perch into the glutinous muck below, with dire results.

Scrapings of the bark of the *Gulgoron* thornbush, growing in the south of Troos, if rubbed into a wound, speeds healing by one hit point per day. Additionally, the bush's bitter nuts inhibit tooth decay if chewed, although they stain the user's teeth and tongue a deep indigo.

SPECIAL PLACES

MUDMERE

TO THE EYE, This is a stretch of slick, black earth, in which grow tall trees with spreading branches and needle-sharp foliage. It is in fact a deep lake of noisome black mud, and those who walk here sink without trace. The trees extend far below the surface. It is possible to row across Mudmere, although cutting down trees from Troos to build a raft is inadvisable, as the saps invariably cause madness, death, or both. A safer way to cross the lake of mud is by climbing from the branches of one tree to the next. Although such a journey is slow and extremely painful, there is a reward. In the center of the lake are slender trees with curling, silvery bark, not found anywhere else in Troos. The bark can be brewed into a powerful tea which imbibes the drinker with superhuman energy, granting him or her the ability to perform startling feats of physical endurance, and to go for a stretch of days without need for sleep. An army thus provisioned could march twice as far and fight twice as long. Other things in Mudmere include boat-sized lily pads which seem as stout as wood for fifteen minutes or so after picking, before they swiftly rot into a noxious pulp; submerged fungi which glow in the dark and taste of human flesh; and occasional floating corpses which seem to swim lazily through the muck.

THE FUNGUS GROVES

NO TREES RISE here. This part of Troos is a cryptogamous wilderness, a bizarre expanse of fungi. Pallid mushroom stems with the girths of houses tower like tree-trunks, with vast caps overhead wide enough to build a castle upon. Head-high toadstools sweat beads of stinking pus-like moisture. Brain-colored molds on quivering stamen columns swell as if burdened with unguessable vegetative thoughts. The ground underfoot is

entirely covered with spongy knee-high growths of mildew, making travel here akin to wading through decayed compost. The air is fetid with rot. It is a weird and silent place, save for the explosive bursts of spore showers, sticky clouds of fungoid particles which have virulent hallucinogenic effect on humans. Travelers also find that, within hours of wandering into the Groves, they have fungus growing in their mouths, ears, nostrils, and tear ducts. Only an explorer of superhuman constitution could penetrate far into the interior. No one ever has. What stupendous forms of fungoid life yet await discovery?

THE OLD THING

THERE IS ONLY one clearing in the Forest of Troos. For a radius of a hundred yards, the sick nightmare foliage shrinks back from something which protrudes from the earth. The bestial hunters avoid this place, and speak of it only as the Old Thing. The thing in question is the exposed part of a Doomed Folk machine. It is the last and largest they ever built, and was the instrument of their interdimensional migration or of their mass suicide. Its pitted surface at once suggests both glass and flesh, raised in humps and protrusions disquieting to look upon. The thing seems alive, and in the act of drawing itself out of the ground. Those who make close inspection see myriad reflections of themselves, which dissolve into kaleidoscopic views of other aspects of themselves in other worlds. Those who step closer still simply disappear. Perhaps they are transported to one of those other places. It is more likely that they have been devoured by the Old Thing, body and soul. When it has gathered enough food, it may yet complete the task of rising from the mud, and set out to explore this new world that it has made.

THE DEEP TREE

THERE IS A TREE, deep in the heart of Troos, which has metal leaves and metal bark. It gleams with a weird halo of electricity, and those who walk near it wearing metal armor are flung back with tremendous invisible force. The tree grows up out of a wide pit, a sunk-en well. Even though the tree itself glows, from the crumbling earthen edge of the pit, no bottom can be discerned. Scholars speculate that the tree's roots are in another plane, a place where metal grows like wood, and that the tree forms a bridge between that world and the Young Kingdoms. This may be true, for none who have climbed down into the pit have ever emerged. The bestial men avoid the Deep Tree.

THE BARROW GLEN

THE FOREST FLOOR here swells in a series of hummocks and mounds. Beneath the soil are buried tombs of the Doomed Folk, from the days before that race discovered immortality, and did away with death altogether. Occasional brave or foolish human sorcerers come to the Barrow Glen to dig for grimoires and ancient machinery. This is a hazardous undertaking. It is possible that, down in the dark, there are Doomed Folk who chose to be buried alive and immortal rather than join their comrades in the last exodus to the other planes. Furthermore, some of the hummocks are not barrows, but are pushed up naturally by the actions of subterranean gases. Such gases might cause sickness, death, hallucination, intoxication, detonation, or simply stink.

THE CITADEL OF ORG

THE CITADEL IS capital, city, and court to the folk of Org. It is an ancient fortification built at the command of the last of the Doomed Folk, with high battlements and towering walls. The stone is old, and covered with moss and lichen. A heavy wooden draw-gate gives access to the courtyard, and there is a postern gate at the rear, near to the barrow. The courtyard is muddy and ill-kept. Stairs rise to the arched entrance to the citadel.

Org has few visitors. If a large band approaches, the king simply refuses to raise the drawgate. If a small band requests audience, he admits them to the courtyard, but then drops the gate and ambushes them in the confines of the courtyard, with arrows from above. True Orgian hospitality is rare, and only forthcoming if the outsiders frighten King Gutheran of Org Gutheran, or if they offer something he needs.

Within the walls, the citadel is vast and sprawling. Stinking corridors wend through the guts of the stone, connecting low-roofed chambers and forgotten halls. Water drips from the walls, leaving the citadel chill and damp. Tapestries and floor coverings have long since rotted away, so there is no color to break up the unending monotony of dank stone. This suits the gloomy countenance of the occupants. Less than half of the available rooms are tenanted, the rest are left to rot in darkness. Some halls have caved in, but masonry is a forgotten art in Org, and now moss grows on the rubble.

At the center of the citadel is the Great Hall. Here the Kings of Org keep their dismal court. It is a high-ceilinged chamber, but only its size distinguishes it from any of the other drab and dank rooms of the citadel. Stairs lead up to a gallery which runs the circumference of the room, and shadowed archways lead from the galley to the nobles' quarters. The common folk of Org sleep wherever seems warm, moving through the corridors like nomads.

BURIAL HILL

Behind the citadel is a huge barrow, a great mound of earth raised over the tombs of Org. Two tall stones, hung with chains of iron, stand on the crown of the hill. At the base of the hill, a dark cavern entrance faces the citadel. A tunnel of earth leads within.

Human sacrifices are shackled to the stone menhirs, and left there to be consumed by the Ones From the Hill. This is the fate of any travelers who stray into the clutches of King Gutheran. The Orgians never remain to witness the victim's ordeal. When the postern gate clangs shut, and night falls, the tomb-ghouls creep from the entrance and clamber up the mound, to fall upon the screaming sacrifice. The ghouls are accustomed to chained and helpless repasts; if they are faced with any kind of resistance, they flee back into the barrow.

Burial Hill casts a long shadow over the citadel. It is the constant reminder of the doom of every Orgian, to one day walk into that shadowed tunnel mouth and never return. Orgians do not willingly go to, look at, or talk about the Hill.

THE CENTRAL TOMB

The tunnel slopes downward, leading to the heart of the Hill. A dread smell hangs in the frigid air, the stench of death and longing. Deeper in, the barrow is alight with an eerie lich-glow. The tunnel leads direct to the Central Tomb.

The Central Tomb is a circular chamber, lined with blocks of stone. Mummified cadavers in open sarcophagi stand against the walls. In the center of the tomb is the source of the weird phosphorescence, a vast coffin of ancient design, twelve feet long and six feet wide. This is the grave of the Hill-King, last of the Doomed Folk, and ancestor of the cursed and godless people of Org. The King From the Hill lies beneath the lid as one dead, flesh dried to leather and eyes dull and lifeless, but within the yellowed skull the worm-rotted brain yet thinks and broods. If the mad minstrel's prophecy is realized the bloody death of one of the two Kings of Org, Gutheran or Veerkad then the massive corpse will become fully awake, and stalk the halls of the citadel to expunge the race that he has sired.

Smaller passages wind away from the Central Tomb, into the bowels of the Hill. These ossuaries are packed with the dead, and bones lie knee-deep on the earthen floor. The tomb-ghouls make their lairs in these side tunnels, waiting out the endless night of the crypt until the Hill-King leads them back into the world of flesh and light. Each of the ghouls remembers his or her previous life as a noble in the court of Org and harbors a cold hatred for those who yet live. Hunger gnaws at the vitals of the ghouls, and the distant clink of a chained captive brings them out of the barrow, there to devour fresh meat and blood. Consuming the hot stuff of life grants the ghouls a few moments' peace from the aching knowledge of their own terrible fate.

WAY OF LIFE

LITTLE WAS KNOWN of the tiny kingdom of Org save that the Forest of Troos lay within its boundaries and to that, other nations felt, it was welcome. The people were unpleasant to look upon, for the most part, and their bodies were stunted and strangely altered. Legends had it that they were the descendants of the Doomed Folk. Their rulers, it was said, were shaped like normal men in so far as their outward bodily appearance went, but their minds were warped more horribly than the limbs of their subjects.

— The Bane of the Black Sword, II, 1

ORG IS A TINY KINGDOM, peopled by near-brutes who are ruled over by madmen. It is a relic of a bygone age, without place or role in the modern Young Kingdoms. The majority of its citizens, slumped and primitive, are the only Orgians seen with any regularity by the outside world. Their appearance is not welcomed, as they most often emerge from their nightmare forest when raiding.

The common folk of Org are simple and brutal. Their intelligence and behavior is apelike. They speak in grunts and howls. Among themselves, they respect only the strongest, but all defer to the nobility. The Hill fills them with terror, and they will not go near it.

Labor divides along traditional gender lines. The women remain in the citadel, looking after the young, harvesting the grain, and preparing food. A male selects a woman to be his mate after the agreement of his peers. A strong warrior may take several women. Medicine is barely known in Org, so childbirth is hazardous, and the death of mother or infant is common. Conversely, disease is less prevalent than in the Young Kingdoms. Fewer children die once born. It is considered bad luck to have a noble child. Love and affection are unknown in Org.

The men go out hunting. They are comfortable moving through Troos, and know which plants are to be avoided, and where not to enter. They exult to attack foreigners, but only strike when they have greater numbers. Treasure and captives are always dutifully given up to the king.

THE NOBILITY

The nobles are sophisticated in comparison, and ultimately unhappier as a result. They have greater self-awareness, and comprehend their own doom. They have complete authority over the lower caste, and treat them with the natural contempt of those born to rule.

Among the nobility, men and women are roughly equal in station, the major difference being that the ruler of Org is always a man. Both male and female take lovers of their own choosing, and are faithful to them by and large. No noble will lie with one of the lower caste, so incest among

COMMON ORGIAN NAMES

MEN'S NAMES: Armod, Brand, Durg, Durmod, Gutheran, Gortmond, Havard, Hurd, Thormod, Valgard, Veerkad

WOMEN'S NAMES: Aud, Gudrid, Gyda, Hurda, Ingrid, Radna, Thurid, Valgerd

the nobility is common. Neither is necrophilia unknown. Children are never born from union between the nobility.

Nobles are morose and brooding. All are insane in some fashion, tending towards dementia and depression. They have little to do, and nothing to hope for. Often a noble will not rise from his or her bed for weeks on end. They produce nothing. They never travel outside of the citadel, and take no exercise of any kind. They gain fleeting amusement from the misfortune of others. Their laughter is harsh and brittle, until they remember the level of their own misfortune and fall silent.

The nobles do not speak of the Hill, and become hysterical if the subject is raised. When a noble can stand existence no longer, he or she walks into the Hill. After their departure, that person is never spoken of again in the Court of Org, as if he or she had never existed at all.

APPEARANCE AND FASHION

The lower caste are semi-evolved. Their gait is shambling, their backs are hunched, they are hirsute and thick-skulled. They never wash, and do not adorn their bodies in any way. They wear clothing looted from civilized travelers, and wear such garments until they fall apart. They admire jewelry, but such stuff is always given to the king. Some among the women fashion loose trews and smock-like garments for their menfolk from coarse cloth, roughly spun.

The nobles resemble normal humans, and many are indeed handsome by Young Kingdoms standards. They are slender and pale. They have long faces, and black hair which turns white with age. They dress themselves in the finest clothing available, and gems sparkle at their throats, but their interest in their appearance waxes and wanes. A noble might appear at court elegantly attired one day, and uncombed and unkempt the next.

CHANGE

Nothing ever changes in Org. Nothing is ever invented in Org. The people live as they did four thousand years ago. The plane-spanning sorcery of the Doomed Folk is lost to these simple inbred folk, and the Lawful technologies of the Young Kingdoms are unknown here.

FESTIVALS

No festivals are observed in Org. No calendars are kept, no seasons marked. Every twilight is merely the death of one more day, one day closer to Going Under the Hill. Sacrifices are given to the ancestors whenever available. If it has been too long, certain sounds from the barrow and dread scratchings at the postern-gate prompt the denizens of the citadel to make an offering from among themselves.

The nobles make raucous celebration of any victory over a foreign caravan. Stolen foodstuffs are consumed in an orgy of gluttony, and the King and his court drink until they are insensible. In this way they forget about their doom for a time, and sleep without nightmares.

FOOD AND DRINK

Orgian cuisine is bland at best, obscene at worst. The people are ignorant of or ignore any vegetarian bounty from the Forest of Troos, and instead grow potatoes and grains around the citadel. These staples are boiled up with any meat available, and served as a glutinous porridge. Orgians have no knowledge of spices or flavoring.

The people of Org do not ride horses or keep dogs, and such animals are eaten if captured from passing caravans. The most common meats are the corpses of the lower caste. Cannibalism is not taboo in Org. Those who die of illness are merely boiled for a longer period. The bestial men hold no horror at ending up on the tables of their nobles, and in fact think it fortunate that their bodies are eaten rather than taken Under the Hill. Devourment is also the fate of prisoners taken by the beast-men of Org, and of all the corpses carried back from the field.

Orgians brew a crude form of vodka from potatoes. The spirit has little flavor, but is strong enough to warm even the damned. Orgians do not drink socially, they drink to nullify their wretched existence. The king keeps a golden Guest Cup for visitors, but this is only used as a means to administer poison under the guise of hospitality.

ARTS AND PASTIMES

Orgians have brooding down to a fine art, and little else. They have skalds and minstrels, but they only sing songs and tell stories of a dire and dreary nature, finding little to celebrate in either the world or their condition. No games are played. There is nothing to hunt, save for merchant caravans, and that dangerous pursuit is left to the lower caste.

The nobles read, predominantly scrolls and grimoires surviving from the time of the Doomed Folk, but they do not write, as they have little to make record of. Some desperate souls attempt the sorcery they find in the ancient documents. Such meddling in the knowledge of ancestors is generally abhorred, and sorcerers are blinded to stop their researches. They are never killed, because that would be a blessed relief from the fate which waits for them Under The Hill.

GOVERNMENT

Org is a monarchy, but since the kingdom is like a tribe, accession is hereditary and informal. Usurpers are common; the stronger Gutheran deposed his own brother. The king presides over the court, receives the lion's share of stolen booty, and decides who will be taken to the Hill. Kingship of Org, however, is not a position of great standing. There are few decisions of state to be made. And, because of the blood-taint, the man on the throne is as doomed as his subjects.

Justice is dispensed by the king. Little is called for. The lower caste know their place, and if the strong among them should kill the weak, that is the way of things. Among the nobility, crime is almost unknown. Theft is of no interest, and would in any case be soon discovered in such a closed society. Murder is unthinkable. To kill your rival is to kindly spare him or her the torment of passing Under the Hill, a doom which is worse than any death or torture. The one real crime is that of sorcery, and then only if it pertains to the raising of the Ones From the Hill.

WAR

The Orgians ambush and raid caravans passing around Troos. These attacks irritate the Ilmiorans, and a standing bounty of one hundred bronzes is paid for any Orgian scalp presented to the councils of Bakshaan, Raalston, or Barlimm. Ilmioran senators sometimes petition for war against Org, but wiser heads know that an army which marched into Troos would be an army that was never seen again.

Orgian tactics are minimal. They strike at night, while the caravaneers sleep. They rush at their prey, and flee if victory seems unlikely. They carry off the dead and wounded of both sides. Merchants shudder as to why.

Orgians do not wear armor. They fight with cleavers, heavy long-bladed weapons something like great swords, except that the blades have only one edge and do not stab. Blacksmithing is primitive in Org. Only nobles carry swords, especially decorative weapons looted from unfortunate travelers. The nobility has little idea of swordplay, but wears these captive blades in bravado.

RELIGION

"Org has had no Gods to worship for an eternity," said Gutheran hollowly, turning back into the citadel. "Why should we welcome them now?"

— **The Bane of the Black Sword, II, 2**

The folk of Org pay no fealty to Law, Chaos, or the Balance, just as their ancestors did not. At the height of their power, the Doomed Folk feared no gods, for they had themselves become as gods. Nor were gods their undoing, but their own greed.

The legacy of the Doomed Folk casts long shadows over their twisted descendants, Dread of the Ones Under the Hill

takes the place of religion in Org. Offerings are left chained at the mouth of the barrow for the living-dead ancestors. These sacrifices are not made in the hope of gaining favors, but if the ancestors are kept fed, they are unlikely to venture into the citadel in search of food. If a stranger is not available, one of the stunted men is given to the Hill. All accept this, as indeed all know that it is their doom to join those under the Hill.

As a consequence carriers of the blood-taint of the Doomed Folk, the nobility of Org accumulate no allegiances to Law, to Chaos, or to the Balance. The subhuman Orgians do accumulate such allegiances, mostly to Chaos, but make no worship. They are so bestial that their women bear no prophets who might create religion among them.

THE ONES FROM THE HILL

No one in Org speaks of the Ones From the Hill, but nor does anyone ever forget that they wait in darkness to receive their living kinfolk. Every Orgian noble will degenerate into one of these mindless creatures, never to know rest.

The Hill-Folk are ghouls, pallid and hairless necrophagic monsters. They cannot die, but roam the twisting tunnels of the barrow until hunger drives them out in search of prey. Only when they consume hot blood and meat can the Hill-Folk find relief from the aching numbness of undeath.

Ghouls leave the barrow only as a pack. They are inherently cowardly, and flee from any form of resistance. Their ruler, the Hill-King, always lies silent and still. One day he will rise, and lead them back into the world of the living, where they will feast without fear.

ORG AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Repellant Org is loathed in the courts of the Young Kingdoms. The King of Org does not trade with or send envoys to other nations, signs no treaties, exchanges no ambassadors, and never returns captives. Those lost to Org are lost forever, and so it has always been. Ordinarily a country so small and weak as Org, and as belligerent, would be crushed and swallowed up by a greater power, but the foul forest surrounding Org is like a moat, and keeps it safe from invasion or conquest.

News never travels between Org and the outside world. No one in the Young Kingdoms knows who is the current king, or perhaps even that there is a king. It is unlikely that the nobles of Org know that the Bright Empire has fallen, or that they care.

Other countries avoid Org as a matter of policy. No one travels into Troos unless he or she is an ignorant fool or a supremely-confident sorcerer. Ilmioran caravans traveling to Karlaak sometimes journey close to the toxic forest. These traders are careful to skirt the edges of the forest, and never to enter beyond the first line of trees. But since even the most cautious caravan can be subject to night-raids from the Orgians, mercenaries find steady employment as caravan guards along this route.

NOBLES

*Three Kings in Darkness lie,
Gutheran of Org, and I,
Under a bleak and sunless sky
The third Beneath the Hill.
When shall the third arise?
Only when another dies.
When that other's blood flows red
We'll hear the footsteps of the dead.*

— The Song of Veerkad

KING GUTHERAN

Gutheran is the last king of Org. He speaks in a low monotone. His long white mane of hair is unwashed and tangled. Gutheran is tall and solidly built. He wears a quilted leather jacket, and ankle-length yellow kilt, and carries a naked dagger in the belt at his waist. The symbol of his kingship is a jewel-encrusted chain, ugly of design despite its obvious value, which Gutheran wears around his neck. Like all Orgian nobility he is handsome, although his heavy-lidded eyes and pocked face bear the marks of his decadent lifestyle. Rings adorn his pale hands, and he rarely smiles. If Gutheran has a victory, he is raucous and gloating. He is sullen and ungracious to outsiders, and only shows hospitality to those he cannot have killed or captured outright. He hates and fears the Hill, and spends much of his time slumped and brooding. He dies of fear at the sight of the Hill King, denying Elric of vengeance.

GUTHERAN of Org, age 49, the last king

Chaos 0, Balance 0, Law 0

STR 16 CON 15 SIZ 19 INT 16
POW 14 DEX 11 APP 15 HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Dagger 130%, damage 1D4+2+1D6

Armor: 1D6-1 (no helm), Yellow Leather

Spells: none

Bound Demons & Elementals: none

Skills: Brood on Doom 100%, Conceal Object 76%, Dodge 65%, Evaluate 78%, Search 67%



PRINCE HURD

Hurd is Gutheran's son. He too has heavy-lidded eyes, and long hair. Whereas Gutheran's expression is dragged by the weight of his doom, Hurd's is more sullen and resentful. He hates his birthright, but finds temporary relief from the curse of his blood by slyly tormenting his father. The only time Hurd shows any spark of interest in life is in the presence of an attractive female, but his mixture of sycophantic weaseling and lecherous panting is more than any woman can stand. Hurd at once wants to be King of Org and wishes he had never been born. He dies beneath the Hill, slain by his mad, blind uncle.



PRINCE HURD, age 28, son of Gutheran

Chaos 0, Balance 0, Law 0

STR 14 CON 13 SIZ 13 INT 10
POW 11 DEX 16 APP 10 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Shortsword 72%, damage 1D6+1+1D4

Dagger 57%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Armor: 1D6-1 (no helm), Black Leather

Spells: none

Bound Demons & Elementals: none.

Skills: Dodge 57%, Hide 88%, Leer 85%, Listen 74%, Lust 96%, Move Quietly 91%, Search 103%

VEERKAD

Veerkad is Gutheran's brother. He is lean and drawn, almost starved. His voice is cracked and uneven, his mouth twitches somewhere between a mad smile and a sneer. His eyesockets are ragged and empty. He was once king, but Gutheran seized the throne and blinded him, accusing Veerkad of practicing certain necrotic



magicks intended to raise the Ones From the Hill. This accusation was correct. Veerkad has been driven insane by the inevitability of his own doom, and seeks to ensure that the whole bloodline of Org goes under with him. He remains at court as a skald, a scarecrow minstrel filled with dirges and laments. Fatally stabbed by Hurd, whom he strangles, Veerkad dies beneath the Hill. The spilling of his blood precipitates Org's doom.

VEERKAD, age 55, former king

Chaos 0, Balance 0, Law 0
 STR 15 CON 8 SIZ 16 INT 19
 POW 20 DEX 14 APP 8 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4.
 Wrestle 25%, damage special

Armor: none
Spells: Bonds Unbreakable (3), Demon's Eye (1), Midnight (1), Necrology (3), Rat Vision (1), Speak With Dead (3), Summon Demon (1)

Bound Demons & Elementals: none
Skills: Art (Songs of Org) 126%, Brood on Doom 100%, Play Lute 76%, Sing 23%

THE HILL-KING

The King from the Hill is the last of the Doomed Folk. He is impossibly tall, with inhuman strength. Skin like withered parchment covers his fleshless bones, and he wears the tatters of ancient finery. His eyes are empty of life, and he speaks only with a whistling moan. Until the prophecy is fulfilled, he lies as if dead in his coffin beneath the Hill.

For statistics of the Ghouls of Org, see the *Elric!* rules.



THE HILL-KING, immortal, doomed to life

Chaos 0, Balance 0, Law 0
 STR 26 CON 30 SIZ 24 INT 17
 POW 29 DEX 8 HP 27

Damage Bonus: +2D6
 Claw 150%, damage 3D6
 Bite 75%, damage 1D10
 Grapple 100%, damage special

Armor: impervious to physical damage, even from Storm-bringer. Susceptible to fire.

Spells: none. However, an opponent is paralyzed with horror for the first round unless receiving a successful POW x5 roll

Skills: Wait in Darkness 100%

ARNLAUG

After the fall of the citadel and the death of the nobility, the brutish subhumans split into separate tribes. Arnlaug is one of the half-men vying for control of Troos. His right to rule is his incredible strength. He is capable of snapping a human limb with one quick twist. He is hunched and hairy, with an oversized bottom jaw and cruel eyes. Long, lank hair hangs over his ugly face. His nose is flat, his nostrils flared. Arnlaug's ears are long, and pierced with several loops of metal, in crude imitation of the jewelry of the now-dead nobles. His brow is sloping and furrowed. He drools. He wears shapeless and filthy garments.

ARNLAUG, age 33, the strongest of the submen,

Chaos 51, Balance 42, Law 40
 STR 25 CON 14 SIZ 12 INT 7
 POW 6 DEX 10 APP 4 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D6
 Cleaver 102%, damage 2D6+1D6
 Brawl 133%, damage 1D3+1D6
 Wrestle 177%, damage special

Armor: 1D2, thick muscle
Skills: Dodge 88%, Hide 32%, Jump 31%, Move Quietly 67%, Search 86%, Track 117%, Trap 64%

MORD

Mord is Arnlaug's enemy. He is a compact mass of sinew and muscle, built low and solid, and near indestructible. Cleaver blades have been known to shatter on his thick skull. He is a broad-shouldered beast-man with no neck. His mad eyes bulge under thick brows. His forehead slopes back, and his head is shaved. Thick stubble covers his chin, and his thin lips are parted in an evil but stupid smile, revealing twisted teeth. He is ape-like and savage, and wears the tattered remains of a fine woman's dress.

MORD, age 27, dim proud enemy of Arnlaug

Chaos 55, Balance 33, Law 39
 STR 18 CON 27 SIZ 13 INT 6
 POW 8 DEX 11 APP 2 HP 20

Damage Bonus: +1D4
 Cleaver 114%, damage 1D6+1D4
 Lump of Wood 84%, damage 1D8+1D4
 Wrestle 91%, damage special

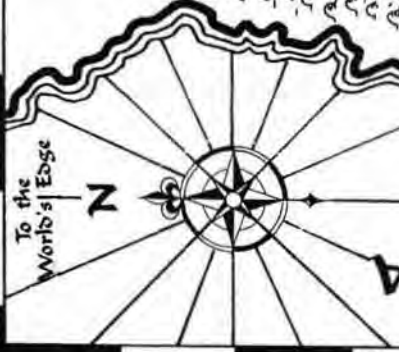
Armor: 1D6, deep muscle and thick, thick bone
Skills: Dodge 63%, Hide 78%, Jump 49%, Move Quietly 103%, Search 55%, Track 99%, Trap 52%. ☉



To the
Ragged Pillars
& the
Unknown East

A Chart of The Sighting Desert

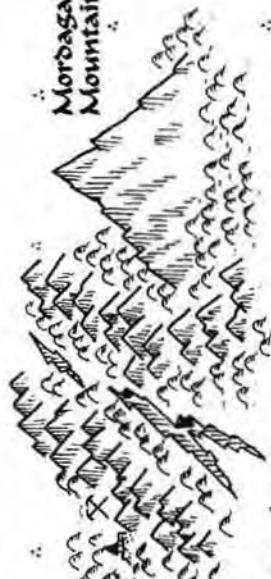
as Seen by Philias of Karas



To the
World's Edge

THE PALE SEA

Mordaga's
Mountain



Makara

Amud el'Quarnan

Hamada

Battuta

Silver Flower
Oasis

Quarzhassaat

The Nameless Mountains

Karlaak

Pura

The Bone Hills

Vador

VILMIRA

Bakshaan

forest of Troos

VILMIR

Nabsokor

Ilmar

THE SIGHING DESERT

THE SAND-SEA OF THE NORTH, CREATED
BY MAGIC, MADE LIVABLE BY COURAGE
AND FORTITUDE.

THE SAND BLEW as the wind rippled it so that the dunes seemed like waves in an almost petrified sea. Stark fangs of rock jutted here and there the remains of mountain ranges that had been eroded by the wind. And a mournful sighing could be heard, as if the sand remembered when it had been rock and the stones of cities and the bones of men and beasts and longed for its resurrection, sighed at the memory of its death.

— The Vanishing Tower, II, 3

THE MOURNFUL SANDS of the Sighing Desert drift across the Northern Continent, from the cold shores of the Pale Sea to the heat-haze illusions of the mysterious east. Concealed among the desert's dunes lie the cities of fabled Quarzhasaat and legendary Tanelorn. Created two thousand years ago by the misplacing of a rune, the Sighing Desert today is slowly expanding, at a rate of twenty square miles a year. Little by little, the grasslands of northern Ilmiora are being swallowed by sand. While its borders expand, the desert itself becomes more arid. As its scattered oases begin to dry, the previously united Nomad Nations begin to bicker and fight among themselves, and not even the reincarnate wisdom of their immortal Holy Girl can staunch the flow of blood.

HISTORY

TWO THOUSAND years ago the Sighing Desert did not exist. The north of the Northern Continent was a land of water-meadows and lush forests, a vast undulating plain grazed by herds of zebra, dewlapped cattle, and gnu. The dreaming

THE SIGHING DESERT AT A GLANCE

RULER: although the Six and One Other of Quarzhasaat still lay claim to the Sighing Desert, in truth their realm extends little further than the shadows of their city's walls. The clans of the Nomad Nations reign over the Sighing Desert, and they are ruled by elected councils of elders, who in turn defer to the Holy Girl.

POPULATION: 55,000 + Quarzhasaat's 23,000 people.

LONGEST RIVER: none.

HIGHEST PEAK: Grome's Shoulders, 12, 638 feet (4607m).

IMPORTS: Lapis lazuli, jade, shells, silk.

EXPORTS: diamonds, gold, hides, opium, rugs and tapestries, wool.

folk of Melniboné flew across it on dragonback, and held luscious and terrible feasts within its blossom-perfumed glades. To humans, newly evolved upright from scampering simians, the land was fertile and bountiful. Enslaved by the Melnibonéans, humans stole the secrets of agriculture from their alien overlords and built their first cities here three thousand years ago.

The greatest of humanity's early cities was Quarzhasaat, which grew as a flattery of Melniboné's outposts, and whose builders were at first encouraged by the Bright Empire in their labors, as are children encouraged in their crafts by doting parents. When Quarzhasaat went on to conquer her neighbors, the Melnibonéans laughed at these little wars, doing nothing to stop them. Not until Quarzhasaat and her citizens had the temerity to declare themselves independent of the Bright Empire's rule did Melniboné take notice, and then more with amusement than outrage.

THE NORTHERN CONTINENT



AN ENDLESS SEA OF SAND

A legion of Melnibonéan troops was dispatched to punish the Quarzhasaati.

The Bright Empire had no fear of humanity's first empire. No dragons were dispatched to deal with Quarzhasaat. Mere ground troops would be enough to win back the city. No doubt they would have been, had not the Quarzhasaati Sorcerer-Duke Fophean Dals attempted sorcery beyond his strength. Intending to smother the Melnibonéan army, Dals' misspoken spell went awry, engulfing the entire Quarzhasaatim Empire in sand.

The sudden creation of the Sighing Desert dramatically halted the development of human civilization in the Northern Continent. Scattered tribes of human folk, survivors of the Quarzhasaatim empire, fled south, many of them taking up residence in Lormyr. Quarzhasaat itself still stands, protected from the desert by its high walls, and protected by the seas of sand from contact with any but the nomads of the desert, who ignore Quarzhasaat altogether, as if a dream.

The Nomad Nations, comprised of numerous human tribes, are the dominant civilization of the Sighing Desert. Their unique language, Lesh, is thought to have its origins in the Unknown East. Nomad legends say that they fled to what is now the Sighing Desert to escape the wrath of Melniboné. Once here, they writhed under the harsh rule of the Quarzhasaati. With Quarzhasaat vanquished and the Bright Empire lost in narcotic stupors, the people of the Nomad Nations now roam the Sighing Desert as they will, constrained only by the lessons of sand, sun, and wind.

To the people of the Young Kingdoms, the Sighing Desert is a murderous enigma. Perceived as a sea of sand, utterly without life, only its western reaches are mapped. The first human explorer to penetrate the Amud al'Quarnan region of the Sighing Desert was an Ilmioran adventurer, Cesare Condottieri. Between 105 and 110 YK, Condottieri lived with the nomad clans, learning their tongue and mapping portions of the desert. Concerned mainly with the desert's trade potential, Condottieri cared little for botany and zoology. What is known of the desert's flora and fauna is largely due to the studies of Trithina Steadyhand of the Isle of the Purple Towns. Disguised as a man of the Nomad

Nations, T. Steadyhand spent more than a decade exploring the Sighing Desert, traveling as far as the Silver Flower Oasis. Her collected notes and sketches were published posthumously; she died in 312 YK of a disease contracted in the Forest of Troos.

In recent years the oases which support the nomads' herds have begun to dry up. Not every oasis is subject to this fate, but the water levels of enough wells have fallen low enough for the clans to be concerned. Western oases have been more affected than those in the east. Driven by desperation, battles between the clans over water holes have begun to occur. Accompanying this drying of the desert has been a lessening of the intensity and frequency of rain. No reason for this increased aridity is being divulged by the Holy Girl to date.

GEOGRAPHY

EVERY FEW MILES *the banks [of the road] descended to reveal the great desert in all directions a sea of rolling dunes which stirred in a breeze whose voice was faint here but which still resembled the sighing of some imprisoned lover.*

— The Fortress of the Pearl, I, 3

FROM THE PALE SEA to the Ragged Pillars, the Sighing Desert stretches unbroken for more than four thousand miles, an oceanic desolation of shifting dunes and barren rock. In the west, where the cold current of the Pale Sea sweeps down the coast past the Bone Hills, daily mists are common. The cool winds blowing across the Pale Sea are unable to hold much moisture. A little rain falls upon the coast, and the range which lines it.

The Bone Hills, called Tassili by the desert tribes, march down to the shore, their seaward slopes carpeted in tough, thorny vegetation, and scored by steep, swift streams flowing to the sea. These hills run north for many hundreds of miles, forming a massif whose western arm, interrupted only by *Makara*, the Rift Valley, reaches far to the east.



In the lee of the Tassili exists a semiarid region, Purda, where some nomad clans scratch spartan livings from the rocky soil. Further inland the Great Sandy Desert begins, *Amud al'Quarnan in Lesh*, extending east to the precipitous gulf which is Makara. Beyond the salt lakes and boiling springs of the Rift Valley the desert continues, now composed of cruel stones and barren rock. In *Hamada*, or the Stony Desert as this area is known, the rock grows hot enough to cook eggs and blister the skin. South of the Stony Desert are the sands of *Battuta*, the Haunted Quarter, shunned even by the nomads. The Haunted Quarter shelters the lost city of Quarzhasaat.

To the east, many days beyond Quarzhasaat, lie the Ragged Pillars, mountains beyond which stretch the mysterious lands of the Unknown East. Far to the north, beyond the *Tassili*, the desert becomes cold, eventually reaching a tundra region of ice and snow. Further north the world ends. A clan of the Nomad Nation is said to dwell in the frozen wastes, although they are known only in song.

The Sighing Desert is a label used only in the Young Kingdoms. The names of the desert's separate regions are used only by the nomads. To the people of the Young Kingdoms, the entire region is collectively the Sighing Desert. Save for the west coast, the desert receives no more than 10 inches (25cm) of rain per year. Up to 20 inches (50cm) of rain falls on the coast annually, while Purda receives 10 to 15 inches (25-40cm). Areas of the Sighing Desert have not had rain for decades.

What rain does fall usually descends in torrents, great sheets of water that hammer down from above. River beds which have been dry for years flood spectacularly and dangerously in such downpours. Such a flood's force gouges new channels and drives piles of boulders along in its wild rush. Only fools pitch camp in desert river beds. Such downpours are seasonal, and predictable.

A phenomenon anguishing to travelers occurs in the dry season, that of *ghost rain*. In this, clouds release visible rainfall only to have it vanish when it hits a layer of superheated air. It evaporates before reaching the ground.

For the most part the Sighing Desert is hot and dry, averaging 100° F (37° C) during winter, and 112° F (45° C) in

summer. Clouds rarely form above the desert, and humidity is low; usually the air's moisture content is less than five percent, allowing ninety-five percent of solar radiation to reach the ground. (In comparison, as little as one percent of solar radiation might reach the ground in the forests of the Weeping Waste.) Similarly, the lack of moisture in the air allows ninety-five percent of ground heat to escape from the rocks and sand back into the atmosphere, accounting for the subzero temperatures of desert nights.

PLACES OF NOTE

AMUD AL'QUARNAN

The Great Sandy Desert, or Amud al'Quarnan, is what most people think of when they imagine the Sighing Desert. It is a vast area of sand dunes, sometimes as much as a thousand feet high, an immense waterless sea. Pinnacles of weathered rock jut from the sand here and there, some solitary jagged monoliths, others like a field of giant stone spines. In the largest such outcrops, caves can sometimes be found, often used as temporary shelters by the desert clans. One such cave, a day's ride from Tanelorn, is the home of Lam-sar the Seer, who proves instrumental in the aid of the Eternal City in years to come. Tanelorn itself stands within Amud al'Quarnan, although its exact location is a mystery.

The Great Sandy Desert is also dotted with numerous oases, large and small, semipermanent homes to the clans of the Nomad Nations. As the years pass, many of these oases begin to dry up, in some cases leaving only cracked mud and dead trees to show that water ever existed within the desert's harsh terrain.

Dry river beds, called *wadis*, writhe across the sands of Amud al'Quarnan, and are prone to flash flooding after the occasional torrential downpour. In the Great Sandy Desert the melancholy moaning of the wind across the dunes is

constant. Bones of extinct beasts are sometimes revealed by the shifting sands, as are those of animals and men. Sometimes forgotten treasures are uncovered, and the crumbling remains of Melnibonéan or Quarzhasaatim ruins. The southern fringes of Amud al'Quarnan extend into Ilmiora, where the desert gradually gives way to rocky, arid land, dotted with wiry grass and low scrub. Such land is being engulfed by sand, as the Sighing Desert slowly extends southward.

THE HAUNTED QUARTER

Battuta, the Haunted Quarter, gains its name from the ghosts of the many caravans and armies who died here while seeking Quarzhasaat. Their moaning wraiths are sometimes glimpsed at night, or in sandstorms. Occasionally travelers already lost glimpse the ghosts from a distance, mistaking them for living men, and stumble after them, exhausting themselves further and becoming even more disoriented.

The Haunted Quarter lies in the lowest part of the Sighing Desert, in a great geological basin formed in part by the mountains which separate the sands from the Weeping Waste. This region is primarily a place of drifting, wind-blown dunes, which can advance as much as 165 feet a year. Occasionally the mournful winds reveal jewels and bones to the air before covering them once more in sand. There are parts of Battuta which are completely flat, the

sand extending unmarked to the horizon in all directions. The emptiness of the Haunted Quarter has been known to drive people mad. Several oases, some more than two weeks' journey by camel from each other, dot Battuta, the most important of which is the Silver Flower Oasis.

THE COASTAL REGION

The waters of the Pale Sea lap at low cliffs and pebble beaches, beyond which rise the Tassili, the Bone Hills. Thick mists are common hereabouts, coiling inland among thorns and twisted, hardy trees. The coastal region is uninhabited. Braying calls of wild donkeys echoes across the waves, for small herds of the beasts graze upon the cliff-top grasses. Cormorants, penguins, fur seals, terns, and pied oystercatchers also make their homes along the shore.

Numerous shipwrecks have occurred along the desert's coast, which in winter is scoured by shrieking storms. Occasionally flotsam and jetsam is cast up on the shale beaches, timbers from some foundered vessel, or the remains of its cargo.

HAMADA

Hamada is a desert of rock and stone. The prevailing winds from the northeast have blown the sand clear, exposing the rocks which lie beneath to the sun's pitiless glare. Hamada's stones are black, coated in manganese and iron ores.

FUTURE EVENTS — THE SIGHING DESERT

402 YK — Having purchased a map in Jadmar reputed to show the location of fabled Tanelorn, Elric almost dies in the Sighing Desert, but is saved by Anigh, a Quarzhasaati urchin. The political maneuvering of Lord Gho Fhaazi sends Elric on the quest for the Pearl at the Heart of the World, during which he is befriended by the Nomad Nations, and fathers twins upon Oone, a dreamthief. Lord Gho's manipulations also claim the life of Alnac Krieb, a dreamthief, and cast Varadia, the Holy Girl of the Bauradim clan, into a deathlike sleep. The Quarzhasaati's intrigues bring the wrath of Elric and Stormbringer down upon the city, which thereafter is deprived of a council and army, and learns somewhat the lesson of pride.

404 YK — A battle breaks out at the Silver Flower Oasis, when the Yaamanko clan, driven to desperation by the drying of their wells, attacks the Kashbeh Moulor Ka Riiz in order to take possession of the oasis. This tragedy forces the Holy Girl to seek after the cause of the desert's drying, sending dreamthieves and adventurers searching through this world and others in search of a solution to the peril that besets the clans.

405 YK — Urged on by the Pan Tangian sorcerer Theleb K'aarna, beggars attack a caravan bound for Tanelorn as it crosses Amud al'Quarnan. Thanks to Elric's sorcery the caravan is saved. After spending a month in Tanelorn, but unable to find peace, Elric rides out into the desert, becoming caught up in the affair of the Vanishing Tower.

408 YK — With the forces of Chaos already preparing for their victory, Duke Narjhan leads an army of beggars into the Sighing Desert from Nadsokor, cutting a swathe of horror across Ilmiora as they go. It is hoped in some quarters that the beggars go lemming-like to die in the desert or perhaps hurl themselves off the edge of the world. Instead, they march on Tanelorn, although hundreds of their number die crossing Amud al'Quarnan. Tanelorn is saved only with the aid of Lamsar the Seer, a resident of the Sighing Desert. A few months later, Elric, Dyvim Storm, Moonglum, and Rackhir cross the Sighing Desert while seeking Mordaga's shield, after which Chaos consumes the desert, and the world.

Reflected sunlight blazes from the glossy ebon rocks. Ground temperatures in the Stony Desert can climb as high as 185 F° (85° C), making travel on foot impossible. Although during the day Hamada is a burning hell, the region's temperature plummets at night to below freezing. Frost forms on the rocks, a source of water for the local wildlife when it thaws each morning.

KASHBEH MOULOR KA RIIZ

A remnant of the Quarzhasaatim Empire, the Kashbeh Moulor Ka Riiz lies to the north of Quarzhasaat, on a stony rise overlooking the Silver Flower Oasis. It is a weathered fortress of red stone, composed of a central, circular tower five stories high, surrounded by a massive wall of irregular height, its crenelations still strong despite the centuries since its construction. In the area between the outer wall and inner tower, which was once a parade ground for Quarzhasaati troops, a field of buildings has sprung up, some constructed by the nomads in an architectural style that could politely be described as original. A narrow span, carved from the living rock, forms a bridge across the chasm which lies before the Kashbeh's single gate.

The Kashbeh, a Lesh word translatable as home fortress, or fortified village, takes its name from the warrior who wrested it from Quarzhasaat shortly before sand engulfed the land. Moulor Ka Riiz was a wise king of the desert folk. The Aloum'rit dynasty, which he founded, still holds the Kashbeh for the nomad clans. They are the most respected clan of the Nomad Nations, proud and good-humored, noble warriors in helmets and breastplates of red-gold, their weapons of steel, inlaid with arabesques of brass and bronze and finely etched. Men of the Aloum'rit grow large beards, which they plait into two forks, and carry scimitars and round shields, while the women plait their hair similarly, and bear bows and slender spears.

The Kashbeh Moulor Ka Riiz is a shelter and refuge for anyone in need. Fugitives of all nations and creeds are welcome here, and are assured of a fair trial should their pursuers track them this far. Food and drink aplenty are proffered freely to the Kashbeh's visitors. The Aloum'rit uphold hospitality as a law, and also guard both the Kashbeh and the Silver Flower Oasis from Quarzhasaat. The lords of the Quarzhasaati have made many attempts to destroy the Aloum'rit and the Kashbeh Moulor Ka Riiz, for the humane principles that they protect are antithetical to the Quarzhasaati way of life.

THE LOST CITY

Concealed within a narrow cleft in the eastern reaches of the Tassili stands the lost city of Rabar. Thanks to its position high in the Bone Hills, this outpost of the Quarzhasaatim Empire survived the deluge of sand which claimed the remainder of the Empire. Forgotten by Quarzhasaat and the outside world, almost unreachable, Rabar's people believe themselves the only survivors of their once-great land.

In past centuries Rabar was the site of a prosperous Quarzhasaatim diamond mine. Uncut diamonds are so common in Rabar that they are used as doorstops and paperweights; these dull, dirty stones are utterly without value in the Lost City.

The people of Rabar are innocent of many of the world's evils, content to dwell in their carved city, which grows ever more elaborate with time. There is little to do in Rabar save hew further palaces and passageways from the rose-red cliff walls, and such tasks have become the city's obsession and occupation. Its many-pillared facades, echoing chambers, and miles of warren-like passageways lit by torches of burning bone, are largely empty, for Rabar's population is small despite its size.

Rabar survives due to the presence of a deep, dark subterranean lake, many days travel through winding, lightless caverns beneath the city. A constant stream of slaves and mules travels back and forth between Rabar and the underground lake, which is home to a powerful water elemental, trapped in a bubble in the rock by King Grome during the Elemental Wars. The Rabarites worship the undine, and over the centuries the creature has come to believe itself a god.

In recent years the elemental has grown greedy, diverting the flow of many of the Sighing Desert's springs to its lake in order to make its domain worthy of a deity such as itself. This is causing the gradual drying of the desert's oases. The elemental is unaware of this fact, but would not care if it knew. The thousands of years of its imprisonment have driven it mad. Force must be used to expel the elemental from its subterranean home; either by banishing it or killing it, or by successfully beseeching King Straasha to recall the errant undine. Without the elemental's interference, the waters will flow in their original channels, and the oases will be saved. Sadly, without the elemental to purify it, the lake will quickly become brackish, and Rabar, and its people, will succumb to the sand.

MAKARA

This great Rift Valley is named Makara by the clans of the Sighing Desert. Created during the Elemental Wars, when the battle between Grome and Straasha ripped open the earth, Makara predates the Sighing Desert by many thousands of years. At its widest point, the Rift Valley is fifty miles from cliff to cliff, although the average distance is only five miles across the valley floor. North to south, Makara stretches for over five hundred miles.

Much of the Rift's length is dotted with lakes and springs. Although the larger lakes are home to teeming fish, and fringed by papyrus and lilies, many have become increasingly saline over the centuries due to evaporation. Some lakes have dried up entirely, becoming gleaming pans of salt. The salinity of other lakes allow algae and small crustaceans to flourish, on which great colonies of pink flamingos feed. Plant life is rare in Makara. Mosses and lichens, and occasionally clumps of wiry razor grass sprout from the bare rock.

SURVIVAL IN THE SIGHING DESERT

ONLY THE INSANE and foolhardy enter the desert without preparation. Without shelter, an average person will lose nearly two gallons (about eight liters) of water through sweat each day. When the body is unable to replenish fluids, it gives up water stored in fat and tissue. Water is also taken from the blood, which becomes thicker and more sluggish, causing a dangerous rise in body temperature. In addition, the sweat glands will fail from overwork and violent sunburn. The body loses its ability to cool itself, leading to fever, delirium, and circulatory collapse, resulting in death. Thus, every adventurer needs to carry enough water to supply themselves with two gallons per day. Salt must be replaced also, usually through such foods as salted meat. In the desert, the wise adventurer sleeps by day and moves about by night.

Camels are the best mode of transport. Strong camels can travel about thirty miles daily for several weeks, and can be forced to go as fast as fifty miles a day for a few days. They can survive for up to two weeks without food or water, thanks to the water content of the fat stored in their humps. The camel can drink thirty or more gallons (about 110 liters) of water at one time. This is rapidly distributed throughout the animal's tissues. Under normal conditions, camels consume huge amounts of food, often thorny bushes whose prickly shoots and leaves contain much water. Given an adequate food supply a camel can rapidly build up a fleshy hump, which becomes slack and shrunken as they metabolize the stored fat.

A simple tent is enough to protect one from the sun's rays, although not from a sandstorm. The ferocity of a sandstorm is one of the great dangers of the Sighing Desert. Such storms form only in high winds, but during the summer months they can last for days. As the velocity of the wind picks up, small rivers of sand begin to snake across the dunes, gliding an inch or so above the ground. Within a short time these ribbons join, until a gigantic, unbroken carpet of sand is gliding at great speed over the desert. As the wind's speed increases, larger and larger masses of sand are blown into the air, until a blinding, abrasive cloud of sand whirls and rolls over the dunes.

Visibility in a sandstorm is minimal, usually only a few yards. As neither landmarks nor stars can be seen, it is unwise to move on, lest you become lost. When trapped by a sandstorm, the only thing to do is stay still and conserve energy, breathing through a damp cloth wrapped across the face, and keep drinking water. Static electricity and evaporation increase dramatically during a sandstorm.

To find water, look for birds near sunset, for they will fly in the direction of the nearest oasis. Similarly, greenery in the desert suggests that water may flow below the sand, although be warned, it could conceivably be many hundreds of feet underground. The pulpy flesh of cacti holds water, and in an emergency, it is possible to survive for a few days drinking blood or urine. Do not waste time hunting by day, as desert animals are almost only active at dawn and dusk, sleeping through the heat of the day.

Many of Makara's springs are volcanic, boiling up out of the earth. Here and there volcanic vents rumble, gouting superheated steam and thick smoke pungent with sulphur, the rocks about them encrusted with mineral deposits. Fire and earth elementals have been seen at play amongst the fissures and fumes of the Rift.

The Rift Valley provides the easiest pass through the Bone Hills, although few traverse its length, as game is scarce in some areas, and the air sometimes poisonous with fumes. Cold winds from the north funnel through the valley, sending clouds of steam and poisonous smoke rolling south across Hamada for many miles.

MORDAGA'S MOUNTAIN

Miserable, the giant Mordaga broods upon a high mountain north of the Tassili, where cold northern winds stir the sands beyond the Sighing Desert. Once a god, Mordaga was made mortal for his sins against the Balance, and is obsessed by the knowledge that he must one day die.

Mordaga's mountain home is a single crag, rising abruptly from the sands. The castle clings to the highest peak as if grown from the rock. The wind sobs endlessly about the mountain. It is a desolate place. Steps built for a giant wind up the mountain, and are guarded by sentient Elder trees, each with the soul of one of Mordaga's now-malevolent followers bound within their trunks. Their leaves are vampiric, draining one's life force as well as blood.

The stairs end in a gloomy tunnel mouth, which leads to a softly-turfed forecourt. The castle itself is a somber construction of granite and bluestone built to Mordaga's scale. As well as the giant himself, the castle also houses his retinue of 144 human warriors. On a clear day the edge of the world is visible from the battlements of the sad giant's tallest tower, as well as the miles of ice, tundra, and cold desert which lie between.

THE NAMELESS MOUNTAINS

Separating the merciless sands of the Sighing Desert (specifically, the Haunted Quarter) from the mist-wreathed plateau of the Weeping Waste, these jagged peaks thrust high into the sky. Although a narrow range, the slopes are steep and sheer. The higher peaks are capped with snow all year round.

To the north, the foothills are of treacherous scree, arid and barren, mostly impassible. The southern slopes of the mountains receive heavy rainfall as they descend to the Weeping Waste. Runoff to the north fathers many streams that run a short way into the sands, and disappear.

The tallest mountain in this range is the double peak Grome's Shoulders, 12,638 feet (4607m) high. Though several passes exist through the Nameless Mountains, all are treacherous, and prone to avalanches especially in winter. In 408 YK, Elric crosses the mountains in the company of Moonglum and Rackhir, while seeking the Sad Giant's shield.

Certain caverns in the Nameless Mountains may form the tombs of the Dharzi. Dark legends claim that not all the beast-folk are dead, but that they merely slumber.

PURDA

Just enough rain falls in semiarid Purda, in the lee of the Bone Hills, for small trees and plants to sprout from the rocky soil. The grasses anchor the soil, and thus prevent the desert's advance. Here the clans graze cattle and goats. Overgrazing destroys the grass, causing the erosion of the soil, and inviting the desert in. The greed or caution of the nomads on the desert's fringe helps the desert to advance, or drives it back, and the effects of this they can clearly see year by year. Should a clan overgraze another clan's range, it is an act of war.

Numerous oases are found in Purda. Vegetation rings fresh water welling up from underground, and follows the streams flowing out from the Tassili. The streams soon sink down through the soil or evaporate in the sun, but around the best oases the nomads have settled down in houses of mud-brick with roofs of thatch and palm fronds, growing crops through irrigation. Such communities are tenuous at best, entirely dependent upon individual springs and wells.

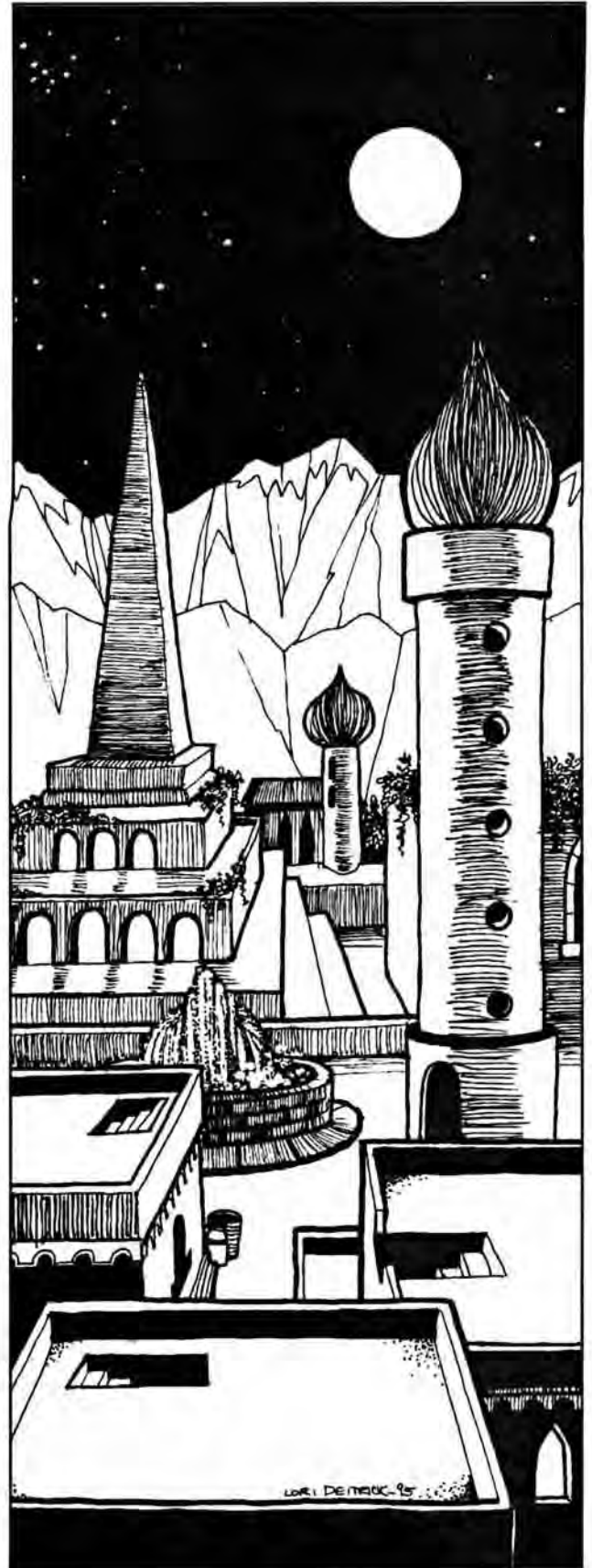
When a small oasis dries up, the clan strikes camp and moves on, driving their herds before them to another oasis and new grazing land. Violence is not unheard of among these people, when one clan must defend its water supply and lands from others.

QUARZHASAAT

Fabulous Quarzhasaat is a legend in the Young Kingdoms. Tales of the city whose streets are paved with gold are told to wide-eyed travelers in taverns across the Northern Continent. Some say Quarzhasaat never existed, others claim that the legends have a basis in truth, but that the city of which the stories are told was lost to the desert long ago. There are always dreamers and adventurers who believe in Quarzhasaat. More than one idle noble has lead a caravan into the sands of the Sighing Desert swearing to return laden with riches from Quarzhasaat, and never returned.

Quarzhasaat is a city of monumental beauty, untainted by foreign styles, as are the cities of the Young Kingdoms. Her curving ziggurats and cyclopean palaces; slender minarets and soaring towers; lush gardens and terraces overlooking cobbled alleys and tree-lined avenues; and fountains and watercourses are a joy to behold. Buildings in Quarzhasaat seem light and insubstantial, as if at any moment they might fade away, and are built of red terra-cotta and whitewashed stucco, silver granite, and cool marbles, inlaid with mosaics of gems and precious stones, painted with murals, and adorned with elaborately ornamental cornices, carvings and pillars.

The many wells, artificial streams, and fountains which play through the city are more prized than jewels, while gold is so common in Quarzhasaat that it is used to line the sewers. The city's water, which could be used to extend



QUARZHASAAT

farms and gardens beyond the walls instead goes to keep the city's parks and gardens as lush as they were at Quarzhasaat's imperial height. Water is the city's most valuable commodity, and the penalties for its theft are not described in polite company.

Streets in Quarzhasaat bear long, grand names reminiscent of her imperial past, such as the Boulevard of Ancient Accomplishments and the Avenue of Military Success. Places of note in the city include the slave market, (a good place to gossip) the lunatic stockade, and the long, low building, simple in style and devoid of architectural embellishments, which is the seat of Quarzhasaati power.

The wonder which is Quarzhasaat is surrounded by a gargantuan wall, its height all that saved the city from being engulfed in sand, as happened to her lands and empire. Constructed of heavy blocks of white marble by the Sorcerer Adventurer Mass' aboon, the outside wall is polished by constant sandstorms. The inner wall bears a painted mural depicting Quarzhasaat's history. In their arrogance, and the people's need to explain away their defeat and rationalize their lack of action concerning the Bright Empire, Quarzhasaati lore states that Melniboné was sunk beneath the waves two thousand years ago, by cunning sorcery, just punishment for daring to attack their own great empire. Believing Quarzhasaat to be the pinnacle of achievement, her people have no interest in the outside world. Because the city has stood for as long as they can remember, the Quarzhasaati believe it must stand forever, and thus they sustain Quarzhasaat and her traditions at any cost, despite its lack of purpose or function.

Intrigue is a way of life in the city; some would say her main industry. Quarzhasaat is ruled by a council of seven, known, in typically convoluted Quarzhasaati fashion, as the Six and One Other. The council's representatives are elected by the two most influential nobles in Quarzhasaat; Narfis, Baroness of Kuwai'r, and Duke Ral, each of whom own three seats. His honor the Master of Unicht Shlur and the Lady Talith are among the six councilors they control. The seventh member of the Council, who is nameless, called only the Sexocrat, has the deciding vote, and provides an alleged balance on the council.

Local costume consists of a long cowled robe, sometimes white, sometimes striped, loose white linen jerkin and breeches, and white linen shoes to the knees. When going out into the desert people wear a cloth mask, like a visor, to protect their eyes. The city's guards wear impractical ornate armor and carry engraved halberds, while their beards are oiled and forked in exaggerated shapes. The nobility of Quarzhasaat are decadent, their faces powdered and painted, their brows plucked or bleached, and modishly coiffured and clad. Excess is encouraged amongst them, be it in their luxuriously appointed palaces, their clothes, encrusted with gems and heavy brocade, or the rich food they serve, such as sugared mint leaves, glace dates, and honeyed locusts. The Quarzhasaati speak the Melnibonéan-derived Common Tongue of the Young Kingdoms, but with a thick accent. Opish is spoken as the city's Thieves' Cant.

The most notable class in Quarzhasaat are the sects of sorcerer-adventurers, warrior castes whose guilds include the Brotherhood of the Moth, black-clad, cowled and veiled assassins; the Yellow Sect, with their saffron-colored robes, shaved heads, and tattooed lips and fingernails; the Fox-glove Sect, their robes of pale green embroidered with flowers, a pattern repeated upon the cuffs, bearing tattoos on their wrists and eyelids; and the Sparrow Sect, notorious for their wizardry and cruelty. The sorcerer-adventurers are Quarzhasaat's heroes; they are bound not to fight one another, and once they have sworn to complete a task, death is their only excuse for failure. The sorcerer-adventurers are in the regular employ of various Quarzhasaatim nobles, and are played like chess pieces in their devious games. In losing one such game to Elric of Melniboné, the council which rules Quarzhasaat is slain, and the city's army destroyed in a single, terrible night.

THE SILVER FLOWER OASIS AND THE BRONZE TENT

Overlooked by the reassuring bulk of the Kashbeh Moulor Ka Riiz, the Silver Flower Oasis lies some hundred miles northeast of Quarzhasaat along the Red Road, the dry bed of a river on whose banks Quarzhasaat once stood. The oasis gains its name from the brilliant blooms which adorn the cacti growing about its waters. It is one of the gathering places of the Nomad Nations, who meet here at the time of the Blood Moon, when the rising lunar disk is stained crimson by the setting rays of the sun, and it is where they bury their dead in elaborate funeral mounds.

The Silver Flower Oasis is frequented by kings and princes, as well as snake charmers, comedians, and jugglers, parents and children. It is a place where wealth is traded, alliances are struck and news exchanged. Much is bartered at the oasis, not all of it conventional. When the nomads gather, a thousand tents and fires spring up among the palms, cypresses, poplars, fig trees, and cactuses of the oasis, and crowded corrals hold their camels, sheep, goats, horses, and splay-hoofed cattle. At other times the oasis is still save for the waving of the trees and the lap of water, although it is always watched from the Kashbeh by the Aloum'rit. The small lake which gives the oasis life has never run dry, its sweet, cold water welling up from deep within the earth.

Several days east of the Silver Flower Oasis rear the Ragged Pillars, worn and weathered mountains carved into fanciful shapes by the desert wind. Closer, only a day's journey across the sands, lies the Bronze Tent, the closest the Nomad Nations have to a temple. They go there to meditate, to debate with their inner selves, and to struggle with and overcome their weaknesses.

The structure stands in the fashion of a normal nomad tent, but is of exaggerated size, and fashioned entirely from thin sheets of bronze which flash and glitter in the sunlight. Within, tiny oil lamps hang above heaped piles of cushions and carpets. When Varadia, the Holy Girl of the nomads, is

cast into a ensorcelled sleep by the Quarzhasaati, she is carried here, and placed with tender reverence atop an exquisitely carved bed inlaid with jade, silver and gold in the great central chamber. Smaller chambers exist, where travelers may refresh themselves and rest.

TASSILI, THE BONE HILLS

These steep, scoured hills line the western coast of the desert, extending northwards, and east into the burning lands towards Makara. The coastal slopes of the Tassili, or the Bone Hills, are carpeted with tough, hardy vegetation thanks to the mists which often blanket the shore. The landward slopes of the Tassili, and the far eastern peaks of the range, are uniformly barren, although an occasional stream trickles down into the desert from the Bone Hills to lose itself amidst the sands. A rare oasis may form where such a stream flows down into Purda.

The Tassili are rich in gold, although few brave their harsh conditions to find it. The numerous streams rushing down the western slopes towards the sea carry gold dust in their waters, and prospectors can become rich panning the less turbulent stretches. An ancient Quarzhasaatim diamond mine lies in the eastern arm of the Tassili, while the bleached bones of mules and men testify to the cruel conditions which await those brave enough to roam the hills in search of gold-bearing ore.

FLORA AND FAUNA

DESPITE THE arid conditions which dominate the Sighing Desert, it is in no way a lifeless place. Numerous plants grow in the desert despite the lack of water. Desert plants are highly evolved in order to survive where they do. To prevent competition for space and water, many bear seeds which grow only after they have been swallowed by birds or animals, and later excreted some distance away from the parent; their tough seed cases dissolve while passing through the animal's digestive tract.

Cacti flourish in the desert, evolving thorns instead of leaves to prevent evaporation and to keep animals from eating them. Cacti store water; a full grown saguaro cactus, which can reach up to seventeen yards tall, can hold up to eight tons of water in its trunk. Saguaro cacti grow only in the foothills of the Tassili. Other cacti, found mainly in Purda, include the stone-sized parodia and the fruit-bearing prickly pear. The Hamada is too barren even for cacti; the only plants here are microscopic lichens which cling to the black rocks. Tussocks of wiry grasses grow at the fringes of Amud al'Quarnan, and sage and salt brush also. In shady valleys of the Tassili, wanderers may come across relics of the Quarzhasaatim Empire, gnarled and twisted cypress trees several thousand years old, or nodding fields of opium poppies growing in sheltered clefts between the rocks.

After the rare, brief rains, the sands become a riot of color as dormant seeds burst into life. An emerald carpet

stretches across Amud al'Quarnan and Purda after rain, the plants often growing, flowering, and dying in a matter of hours, leaving the desert bare for a decade until the next downpour.

Like plants, desert animals have evolved in unique ways in order to survive. As well as creatures such as sand-skating spiders, scorpions, and insects including crickets and antlions, several types of reptiles make the desert their home. Side-winding horned vipers, the sand snake, (actually a legless lizard which swims through the loose sand) several types of gecko, and the jeweled toad are among them. Some of the scattered permanent pools of the Tassili are home to crocodiles and unique species of fish, trapped when the earth was raised during the Elemental Wars.

The jeweled toad is an iridescent creature, whose tanned skin makes an attractive leather. Most of its life is spent in hibernation, buried in the sandy soil of Purda. When the rare rains soak the earth, the toad revives, crawling to the nearest pool, where it drinks until bloated, growing to the size of a football, before burying itself again. The jeweled toad prevents evaporation during its months of hibernation by sealing itself in a secreted, impervious membrane, ensuring that the water it stores can keep it alive until the next rain. Jewelled toads are a useful source of water for those who know where to find them, and usually sleep near dried-up pools or wadis in Purda. They live to breed, which may take up to thirty years of hibernation and brief activity before they meet a member of the opposite sex in a pool of water after a shower. After a frenzied copulation, the male dies and the female spawns, before dying also. Their eggs hibernate in the soil until the next downpour, whereupon they hatch.

Small mammals indigenous to the Sighing Desert include blind golden moles, the delicate fenec fox, whose huge ears act as radiators to disperse its body heat, and hopping mice, known as jerboa. Perhaps the strangest creatures dwelling in the Sighing Desert are firebeetles (described in detail in the *Eric!* rules) which, thankfully, do not hunt humans as a rule, preferring smaller prey. Small herds of addax, a species of splayfooted antelope, graze in Amud al'Quarnan, Purda, and the Tassili. Addax never need to drink, as they gain all the water they need from the tough vegetation they eat.

Other desert mammals include rock hares, jackals, and leopards (found only in Purda and the Tassili). Wild goats graze in the Nameless Mountains, and also in Purda, where they are herded. The nomads' domesticated goats, sheep, and horses graze in Purda, and at the many desert oases. The dewlapped cattle herded by the clans, with their great, curved horns, are called *zebu*. It is upon the zebu, and to a lesser extent their other beasts, that the clans survive, herding the animals from oasis to oasis throughout the year.

The most ubiquitous desert animal is the camel, herds of which roam wild, as well as being used as mounts by the Nomad Nations. Contrary to popular opinion, camels do not store water in their hump. Rather, they store their body's supply of fat, instead of having subcutaneous fat



PEOPLE OF THE SIGHING DESERT

spread evenly over their bodies, as do other animals. This allows camels to freely radiate body heat. Birds of the Sighing Desert include sand grouse, which use their breast feathers to soak up moisture from dew or desert pools in order to cool their eggs, drab-colored rock doves, vultures, and several species of falcon, including peregrines. The ugly gray vulture, with its naked, wattled neck, is the Sighing Desert's largest bird of prey.

WAY OF LIFE

ELRIC AND HIS companion reined in their mounts to watch, as fascinated by this vision as the scores of other nomads who walked slowly to the edge of the semicircle to witness what was clearly a ceremony of some magnitude. The witnesses stood in attitudes of respect, their various robes and costumes identifying their clan. The nomads were of a variety of colors, some as black as Alnac Kreb, Alnac Kreb some almost as white-skinned as Elric, with every shade in between, yet in features they were similar, with strong-boned faces and deep-set eyes. Both men and women were tall, and bore themselves with considerable grace. Elric had never seen

so many handsome people and he was as impressed by their natural dignity as he had been disgusted by the extremes of arrogance and degradation he had witnessed in Quarzhasaat.

— The Fortress of the Pearl, I, 4

THE SIGHING DESERT is home to the Nomad Nations, whose many clans are comprised of people from a wide range of cultures, dominated by an ancient bloodstock. In the past, inhabitants of other lands fleeing into the Sighing Desert, driven thence by war, plague, or persecution, have been welcomed by the Nomad Nations, marrying into the clans. Always such refugees have been accepted with grace by the Nomad Nations, whose clans consider themselves all part of one great, wandering tribe despite their many differences.

APPEARANCE AND FASHION

THE PEOPLE OF the Nomad Nations are typically tall and fine-boned, slender and long-limbed. They have strong, clean features; thin lips and noses, and deep-set, dark eyes. Their hair is generally dark in color, and thick and curly. Hair styles among the clans vary widely. Some grow their hair long, braiding or beading it.

Others shave their scalps completely, or encourage only a small clump of hair to grow, which may be oiled, or plastered with mud or fat. The men rarely shave their facial hair.

The desert folk are predominantly dark-skinned, although eastern clans are lighter skinned than those of the west. Black-brown pigmentation dominates among the western clans, lightening to olive-brown in the east. Originally the Nomad Nations were all black-skinned. Many clans still are, but newer clans may be copper-colored, olive-skinned, or white. At least two Nomad Nation clans are white-skinned and fair-haired. One of them, the Waued Nii, are the easternmost clan of the Nomad Nations, living on the fringe of the desert. They are usually the last to arrive at any gathering of the clans. The other white-skinned clan, the Sarangli, have produced many powerful witches and wise-women. The mother of the current Bauradim Holy Girl, Varadia, was of the Sarangli clan.

The fine robes, swathes of bright cloth and many adornments the desert folk wear serve to distinguish clan from clan. All members of a clan affect the same dress. The Waued Nii, who trade with Elwher for jade and lapis lazuli, wear clothes of rich lavender trimmed in gold and dark green. Warriors of the Aloum'rit, men and women alike, wear long turbans wrapped around the spike atop their helmets, breastplates of red gold, surcoats of brocade and cloth-of-silver, and high boots. Boots and surcoats alike are intricately embroidered. The Bauradim, a clan famed for their swift, sturdy camels, wear richly decorated green and gold robes, while the Sarangli adopt garb of crimson, long and flowing, sewn with glass beads and detailed embroidery in silver and gold thread. Only unmarried women cover their breasts; once married, women are expected to act with dignity. A woman who covers her breasts is seen by the clans as coquettish and flirtatious, and only young women are expected to behave thus.

Men and women proudly spend many hours making themselves beautiful. Loosely draped, brightly striped cotton; lovingly embroidered leather cloaks sewn with tassels and small bells; nodding ostrich plumes from the East; long, loose, hooded robes; shawls and turbans; wide-brimmed, conical hats woven of dry grass; a profusion of bracelets and earrings; beads made of leather wrapped in brass wire, or gaily painted wood, or ivory traded from the Weeping Waste; and countless charms, belts, and anklets are common costume elements. Shells, especially cowries, silver and gold thread, and silks and mirrors are among those objects most often traded among the clans.

CHARACTER, CUSTOMS, PLEASURES

GO IN PEACE. *Go in peace, and peace be upon your family and friends.*

Unnamed woman of the Nomad Nations to Alnac Krieb
— **Fortress of the Pearl, I, 4**

COMMON DESERT NAMES

MEN'S FIRST NAMES: Alnac, Amee, Baka, Bango, Bodaado, Direet, Dimoun, Gao, Intawella, Jani, Maaliki, Mokao, Moulor, Raik, Riiz, Subaajo, Yataake.

WOMEN'S FIRST NAMES: Dendi, Elatel, Fulbe, Gao, Hausa, Jiriu, Lito, Mowa, Munyal, Nebi, Niamey, Sabanga, Seem, Senyi, Tuwa, Varadia.

CLANS: Aloum'rit, Bauradim, Fulani, Intawella, Kasawsawa, Korony'en, Madal, Mridanjari, Medor, Nga'en, Sarangli, Vil'ishya, Waued Nii, Yaa-manko.

Many are the clans of the Nomad Nations, each of them proud, with an honorable history. The deeds of the clans are too many to detail. Of note are the Bauradim, with whom Rackhir the Red Archer rode for a few weeks in 401 YK, while seeking Tanelorn, and the Waued Nii, the easternmost nomad clan, who loot the cities and plains of the Unknown East during the winter storms. The Waued Nii boast that they once looted Phum itself, home to the warrior-priests of Tumburu, but the other nomad clans joke that it was no doubt some smaller nation they mistook for Phum.

The Nomad Nations are a good-natured people, open, honest, and vital. They welcome outsiders, and have many times in the past adopted foreigners, sometimes entire families, into their clans. This accounts for the diverse skin colors evident among the clans when the Nomad Nations gather at the Silver Flower Oasis, as witnessed by Elric in 402 YK. Despite the vast array of ethnic types which now make up the modern Nomad Nations, the many clans show surprising uniformity in their social habits, dating to the precursors of the clans, who fled into what is now the Sighing Desert in order to escape the expanding Bright Empire over four thousand years ago. Hospitality is important to them, as is honor. Peaceful and noble, they value formality, and set high store on prophecies. Duplicity is rare among the desert clans. To grip another's forearm as yours is gripped is the gesture of friendship among them.

These nomadic clans believe that life consists of equal periods of suffering and joy, always alternating, and that to avert misery also delays the period of happiness that naturally would have followed. Fortitude and patience are prized more than initiative among the clans. They live as their ancestors have for centuries. They also favor reserve and dignity; to act otherwise is to be uncivilized in their eyes. Because of this reserve, it is traditional never to look another person in the eyes while talking to them; such direct scrutiny is insulting to the nomads, since they interpret it as suspicion. Such reserve is important in light of the

THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

harsh environment in which the clans dwell, as well as their rigid and traditional social structure, which places women as inferior to men.

TRADITION

Tradition decrees much of how the clans live. Rituals, customs, and ancient wisdom, handed down through the ages, are guarded by the Holy Girl, the spiritual and temporal leader of the Nomad Nations. (See Religion, below, for more details concerning the Holy Girl.) Tradition, the clans say, is a path which must be followed from birth. To step aside from the path of tradition is to turn one's back upon the Nomad Nations. Thus, outsiders may become part of the Nations by following the traditions of a clan, but a clan member who disobeys tradition is outcast. In the desert, tradition is friendship, mutual assistance, and respect for others. Tradition is a heritage received at birth and treasured until death. To follow tradition is to be of the Nomad Nations, which is to be free.

Traditions among the clans decree who may marry whom, the honor in which elders are held, and even what portions of food are allocated to which clan member. Thinkers are favored over warriors, for the Nomad Nations say that to fight an opponent will bring his wrath upon the clan, while to outwit him is to truly defeat him. The wisest man in a clan is always served first at a feast, although if outsiders are present, and have proved their knowledge to the clan, the wise one will share his meal with them. Such an action gives the outsider great honor, and it is expected that they will reciprocate by sharing their wisdom with the clan.

Clans who dwell in Purda make their homes in small, roofless semicircular shelters, constructed from the branches of thorny trees, or woven of grass, which must first be pounded between rocks to make it pliable. Inhabitants of Amud al'Quarnan and Battuta live in large tents, often of gaily decorated silks, their inner rooms separated by hanging cloths, decorated with many scattered rugs and cushions, furnished with low tables of inlaid wood, and lit by hanging oil lamps.

(Natural pools of oil seep to the surface here and there in the desert. The clans trade the viscous, inflammable substance. Without it, their lamps must burn animal fat, which is smokier and smellier, although often the fat will be scented, and incense as well will be burned within the tent to cover the smell.)

According to tradition, such tents or shelters are lined up north to south at an encampment, with the eldest couple living in the northernmost shelter. This symbolically places them at the most distance from Melniboné, their ancient foe, thus showing the honor in which they are held by the clan.

As has always been their way, men among the Nomad Nations hunt for food and herd the cattle, goats, and camels which are their livelihood. Women rear the children, and care for their temporary encampments, and are responsible

for cooking, weaving, and carrying out other menial tasks such as caring for the fire and milking the zebu. While a woman's tasks are regular and rhythmic, with a woman tied throughout the year to the daily tasks allocated her, a man's activities and responsibilities vary throughout the seasons.

Children are important to the nomads; not only do they help their parents with the daily chores, they also look after them in their old age. A couple without children is like a tree without fruit, the nomads say, and will be alone until death. Until the age of five, children are the center of attention in an encampment. Because they are never alone, and are surrounded by love all their lives, not only from their parents, but also from their many relatives who travel with the clan, there is a high level of intimacy among the nomads, the bonds of love continually strengthened, like calcium laid down on a growing bone. It is of note that Lesh, the desert tongue, contains several words for degrees of aloneness, but no word to describe the feeling of loneliness.

At five years of age children are betrothed, their future wife or husband traditionally the children of their father's brothers or cousins. Marriage rituals follow over the next few years, with the couple joined in an unbreakable union at the age of eighteen, after the male has passed his trial of manhood. Men may take several wives, although it is only the children of this first, arranged marriage who inherit the father's property. Other wives are expected to be married for love, although it is not unknown for love to grow between a husband and his first wife.

Once they are betrothed, children are taught the skills they will need in their later life. Boys learn to herd and hunt. Girls are taught how to gather food, the art of drying gourds and making them into calabashes, as well as how to carve the traditional designs of triangles, half-moons, suns, and sinuous lines into the calabashes. Such designs are thought to protect both the dish, and what it will hold. These designs are often very elaborate, and are passed on from generation to generation. Girls also learn to cook, and other skills which will be useful after they are married. Girls with promise may be taught the skills of healing and midwifery; by tradition, healers among the Nomad Nations are always women, while killing and injuring is left to the men.

FESTIVALS

The preeminent festival of the Nomad Nations is the Festival of Flowers, described below. Other, minor celebrations are marked by individual clans throughout the year, for a variety of reasons. Such festivals include courting ceremonies (held by the eligible young men of two clans should they meet at an oasis during their travels, at which the men preen and stretch, and take part in leaping contests), weddings, and funerals.

Once every year, when the silver blossoms of the cacti which grow on the slopes below the Kashbeh Moulor Ka Riiz open, and their heady perfume hangs over the oasis, the clans gather. Thousands of desert folk gather for a great celebration, which lasts many weeks, until all the Nomad

Nations are present. Alliances, feuds, affairs, and trading are all conducted over these weeks. The highlight of the Festival of the Flowers is a great dance, in which every nomad takes some part, regardless of age, on the night of the new moon. The dance commemorates their ancestors' arrival in what is now the Sighing Desert, their refuge from the Bright Empire. The sight of the massed clans, in their robes and turbans, silken pantaloons and brocade, scarves and dresses, dancing in great interlocking arcs across the sand, weaving around the trees and through the tents, lit only by the stars and the moon's slimmest crescent in the west, is never forgotten by any who see it.

FOOD AND DRINK

The desert peoples' sustenance depends largely upon their herds of zebu, whose blood, milk, and meat provides the bulk of their foodstuffs. The staple diet of more than one clan is blood and milk, which they drink every day. In the grasslands of Purda, millet and wheat can be grown, from which soups, porridge, and unleavened bread can be made. Millet is traded with those clans whose territory is too barren to grow crops, in return for volcanic rocks used to kindle fires among other goods. In the desert's arid heart, commonly consumed foods include dates and other fruits, which may grow wild at oases, goat's milk cheese, zebu milk, and dried strips of meat. Such foods are always highly spiced, for the Nomad nations delight in aroma and flavor despite the simplicity of their meals' texture and content.

The clans regularly consume two beverages, tea and an opium-based intoxicant called *biibaajo*. Tea is always drunk in threes: the first and strongest glass is hard like life, the second sweet like love, and the third for pleasure. One may refuse the first cup if one dislikes strong tea, but if the second cup is accepted, it is considered extremely insulting to one's host not to drink the third. Like millet, tea is grown only in Purda. *Biibaajo* is distilled by the clans whose wandering take them near Tassili, where fields of opium poppies grow. The potent beverage is traditionally drunk from the palm of a friend's hand, with friends taking it in turns to pour one another drinks. Only men may drink *biibaajo*, and after they have consumed several palms full, they can be seen lurching drunkenly about the campsite. More than three drinks of *biibaajo* bestows visions; such visions are highly regarded by the clans, and are thought to be prophetic.

ARTS AND PASTIMES

The Nomad Nations practice many crafts and arts, including leather work, dyeing and weaving, and song. The adornment of their bodies and clothes is also considered an art. The choral chant, the singers' voices rising and falling like the desert dunes, is the favored form of musical expression among the clans, the rich and sad melodies often accompanied by drumming. Gongs and bells are also favored musical instruments, as are finger cymbals and tambourines. Among the eastern clans, a more droning, wailing style of music is preferred, with instruments played including sitars

A Love Poem

The whispering of the desert hides
my sorrowful sighs.
I toss and turn, I cannot sleep,
The soft cushions and silks,
Like he I love,
Will not comfort me. I weep.

Overhead, oh moon, you turn pale,
And waste away.
Can it be,
That you love him as do I?

Bodaado Intawella of the Mridanjari

— Translated from the Lesh by Duke Avan Astran

and flutes. Drums are played by musicians in all desert clans, and drummers are highly regarded. The rhythm of the drums is an obbligato accompaniment to desert life, celebrating a wedding or the birth of a child, inspiring folk dances, and expressing exultant joy at annual festivals.

RELIGION

AS A RULE, the Nomad Nations have no gods. That is not to say they do not recognize their existence, merely that they see no need to worship such temperamental and capricious beings. To need a god is to be weak, in the eyes of the desert clans. A member of the Nomad Nations might occasionally swear by *Kakatal*, whose blazing presence is constant in their lives, but more often by a memorable, and honorable ancestor.

The closest thing to formal religion that the clans observe is their meditation, in which they turn their minds inwards, debating with themselves and seeking to gain mastery over their foibles and passions, and even over their own flesh. The nomads meditate twice each day, upon rising, before they break their nightly fast, and each evening after dinner, to aid digestion and help them sleep. Meditation is a formal activity, and woe to any who disturbs an entranced nomad. Meditation creates a unique and profound state of restful alertness in its practitioners. The body is rested during meditation, its effects akin to deep sleep, and the mind is calmed. Some clans practice meditation communally, for others it is a solitary ritual.

A belief in reincarnation is maintained by the Nomad Nations, although they consider this a rare occurrence. Common folk do not reincarnate, only the Holy Girl of the Nomad Nation, whose soul is endlessly reborn among the clans. Whichever clan the Holy Girl is currently incarnated among, that clan receives the highest honor among the Nomad Nations, and its elders provide the wisdom by which all the

CONCERNING DREAMTHIEVES

UPON THIS PLANE, these enigmatic purloiners of dreams are recognized only in Elwher and by the desert clans. In the Young Kingdoms, only a few among the wise have heard rumor of them, let alone seen proof of their existence. Elric not only encounters two dreamthieves in his year of wandering, as Yyrkoon sits and plots upon the Ruby Throne, but travels on a journey into the dreams of the Bauradim's Holy Girl with a foremost member of the trade. In the company of Oone, Elric journeys through the many and marvelous realms of Dream. It is an unusual journey, described in detail in *The Fortress of the Pearl*.

True to their name, dreamthieves steal the dreams of sleepers and, twice a year, sell them at a certain marketplace located in the Lands of Dream. Dreamthieves are not native to the Young Kingdoms plane, and rarely visit here. Their constant explorations in dream allow them some knowledge of the past and future. Their knowledge gives them access to the natural and supernatural. It takes a minimum of five years training before one can safely enter dreams alone; even then, the dreamthief would be considered a novice. The seven lands of dream, which include the Land of Dreams in Common, the Land of Old Desires, and the Land of Lost Beliefs, as well as rules for dreamthieves, will be explored in detail in a future *Elric!* release.

clans are guided. Always such questions as the elders have, they put to the Holy Girl for guidance, for the Holy Girl contains all the clans' wisdom. She is a vessel for all lore ever gathered by the Nomad Nations, stored through her many lives. When the Holy Girl dies, the elders of all the clans gather at the Silver Flower Oasis, to begin the search for the new vessel which houses the Holy Girl's soul. Omens and dreams will lead them to her, although the quest has been known to take years. Often the seekers do not recognize the Holy Girl; it is she, wise before her years, who recognizes them.

Certain individuals among the Nomad Nations may turn to the worship of an Elemental god, or much more rarely, the gods of Law and Chaos. To turn away from tradition severs such an individual from the clan, and that person is no longer considered a member of the Nomad Nations. He or she may dwell in a solitary home in the desert, or sometimes travel to Quarzhasaat, to offer sorcerous services to the rulers of that devious city. Others also dwell from time to time in the Sighing Desert, away from the clans and Quarzhasaati alike. These are dreamthieves; more information about them occurs nearby.

Few desert clans believe in an afterlife, although the particularly suspicious claim that wicked souls find themselves trapped in the hell which is Quarzhasaat after their deaths. Most nomads believe that death is the end of consciousness; as the body dies, so does the mind. They do not fear death, for it is the natural end of the cycle of life, often coming to erase pain and sickness.

It is the desert people's fashion to honor the dead with a burial in accordance with their deeds in life. A dear relative might be buried with many seeds, so that come the rain, flowers spring up to make their grave a living testimony to their honor. The Bauradim bury their dead in high barrows at the Silver Flower Oasis; other clans, such as the Waeud Nii, cremate their dead, or wrap them in bandages and inter their crouched and grinning corpses in caves, where the dry heat soon mummifies them. A hated foe, when slain, is often left to rot, or their corpse thrown to the jackals. Few superstitions surround death, save for that which holds that a person shall surely die should a ritual funeral be held in their name while they are still alive. Elric is witness to such a ceremony, for the Quarzhasaati Lord Gho Fhaazi, held at the Silver Flower Oasis by the elders of the clans.

GOVERNMENT

THE CLANS OF the Nomad Nations are ruled, not by individual kings or queens, but by councils of elders, men and women elected by the members of a clan to speak for them. Elders discuss the future of the clan, deciding what is best for their people, and passing judgments upon wrongdoers. The desert folk believe it is better to share responsibility, and that the task of ruling is too heavy a burden for one person to bear. They take responsibility not only for their own lives, but for the lives of their friends and loved ones, and thus they are spared such dictators and tyrants as have plagued the Young Kingdoms.

When a clan's elders are faced with a decision they cannot make, or with a seemingly unanswerable question, they send a delegation to the current incarnation of the Holy Girl for advice. The Holy Girl is the spiritual leader of the Nomad Nations; she is also their head of state. Although theoretically without temporal power, the Holy Girl could call upon thousands of warriors to defend her should she desire. Whichever clan the Holy Girl is currently incarnated among receives the highest honor of the clans. The decisions of that clan's elders, coupled with the wisdom of the Holy Girl, guides the other clans, although all are free to ignore such statements as the honored elders make, within the limits of tradition.

In Elric's time, the Holy Girl is incarnate amongst the Bauradim. Raik na Seem, the Holy Girl's father, is the most revered elder of the Nomad Nations.

WAR

A door behind Elric opened and two tall desert warriors strode in... The men were dark-skinned, bearded, and their

eyes were deep-set beneath shaggy brows. They wore the heavy, wool-trimmed metal caps of their race, and their armor was not of iron but of thick, leather-covered wood.

— The Bane of the Black Sword, I, 3

The Nomad Nations' men receive training as warriors once they turn five. The threat they face is most often the inimical desert, although the decadent Quarzhasaati, and avaricious explorers from the Young Kingdoms are also their enemies. The desert tribes are an honorable folk, but if they are attacked, or if their hospitality is insulted, they are swift and merciless in retaliation. Their traditions and taboos allow them to be as deadly toward an enemy as they are loving of their clans.

Sometime after the conclusion of his training, the would-be warrior is sent out into the desert naked and without food or water, and armed with only a knife with which to slay a leopard or other large predator. ("Predator" includes the hated men of Quarzhasaat, warriors of currently enemy clans, and invading folk from kingdoms east or west.) A youth who finds his own food and water, and survives for a moon and a day is welcomed back as a man, and may thereafter ask the clan to sanction his marriage once he has reached eighteen years. One who survives and also returns to the clan with the hide of a predator is greeted with acclaim, and also given the weapons of a man. Returning before the month has expired is dishonorable; most would-be-warriors choose starvation in the desert to such a fate. A youth who refuses the trial of manhood remains a child, and may not marry nor carry the weapons of a man, nor do other members of the clan honor him.

Common clan weapons include scimitars and broad-bladed spears, and long shields of wood covered in painted hide. Some eastern clans favor archery from the backs of swift horses. Their powerful recurved bows are deadly, and much prized in the Young Kingdoms. If the desert clans wear armor, it is usually their unique wooden armor, fashioned from Purda's hardy trees. The wood is carefully carved and dried, and then covered in leather, which may be embossed and decorated with studs or paint. Skullcaps of a similar design, some fringed with fur or peaked with feathers, are often worn. Warriors of high station, such as the guards of the Kashbeh Moulou Ka Riiz, might affect armor gilded or plated, and more fanciful, although such cumbersome gear is generally only worn on parade, being too awkward for actual combat.

Although violence between clans is rare, it is not unknown. Occasionally one clan will attack another, seeking to steal their zebu or camels, or to drive them from a disputed oasis. As the desert expands, and the oases begin to dry up, such brief, bloody struggles become more common. More often, the nomads fight outsiders. Sometimes the impetuous young men of the Nomad Nations will leave their clans, hiring their swords to outsiders for a period of months or years, in order to return with enough wealth to marry a woman otherwise beyond their station. Desert folk encountered outside the drifting borders of the Sighing Desert are likely to be exiles, although this is not always the case.

PEOPLE

ALNAC KREB

The dreamthief Alnac Kreb is a rash young man of good humor, but no great learning. He is an aspect of that person fated to befriend the Eternal Champion, and die because of him, who in other incarnations is called Bowgentle, Jhary, and other names. Alnac Kreb learns something of his destiny, and of his brief, tragic friendship with Elric, in dreams. He is a dreamthief, although far from the best of his unusual trade. A servant of the Balance,



his personal creed is "live and let live, and celebrate the variety of the world". Alnac Kreb is not native to the Young Kingdom's plane, although he visits it more frequently than do most dreamthieves. He dies attempting to save the Bauradim's Holy Girl in 402 YK. His courage is greater than many, especially himself, suspect.

He is the foster-son of the chief elder of the Bauradim clan. Having proved both honorable and cunning in a minor adventure involving a forgotten secret and a lost heart, an affair which revealed Varadia to be the incarnation of the Holy Girl, Raik Na Seem declared Alnac Krebflesh of his flesh. As Raik's foster son, Kreb can call upon any of the nomad clans for aid. A young man, he is startlingly handsome, with dark eyes and black skin. His short curly hair is usually confined beneath a skullcap of black velvet decorated with peacock feathers. The jacket and breeches Alnac habitually adopts are similarly fashioned of black velvet, traded from the East, embroidered with gold thread, over which he wears a pale-colored djebella, or hooded robe. A lace handkerchief completes his ensemble.

ALNAC KREB, age 34, dreamthief from beyond

Chaos 31, Balance 76, Law 24

STR 13 CON 11 SIZ 12 INT 14
POW 16 DEX 17 APP 21 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Shortsword 81%, damage 1D6+1+1D4

Brawl 30%, damage 1D3+1D4

Armor: none

— continued

Spells: Hell's Razor (1-4), Flames of Kakatal (4), Speed of Vezhan (1-3)

Skills: Bargain 38%, Common 25%, Dreamthievery 35%, Fast Talk 56%, Lesh 70%, Million Spheres 05%, Ride Camel 68%, Scribe 15%, Unknown Kingdoms 12%, Young Kingdoms 19%

ANIGH

Although uneducated,

Anigh is not a fool. A thin boy, his skin has been deeply tanned by the sun during his life on the streets of Quarzhasaat. Anigh's wide blue eyes can seem guileless. In truth Anigh is a crafty urchin, who determines to better himself by whatever means necessary. During one of his regular visits to the Sighing Desert after storms, in the hope of finding treasures uncovered by the sand, Anigh stumbles upon a much-weakened Elric. Returning with him to Quarzhasaat in the hope of selling the albino as an usual slave in the city's markets, Anigh is instead caught up in the affair of the Pearl at the Heart of the World. Taken prisoner by Lord Gho Fhaazi, he is held as a bargaining chip in order to force Elric to complete Lord Gho's commands. Anigh escapes the slaughter of Quarzhasaat, and may indeed be one of the few compatriots of the albino Emperor of Melniboné to survive Elric's friendship.



ANIGH, age 9, Quarzhasaati beggar boy

Chaos 9, Balance 7, Law 5

STR 9 CON 6 SIZ 7 INT 13
POW 12 DEX 14 APP 10 HP 7

Damage Bonus: none

Dagger 65%, damage 1D4+2

Brawl 75%, damage 1D3

Wrestle 61%, damage special

Armor: none

Skills: Climb 65%, Common Tongue (thickly accented) 75%, Disguise 31%, Evaluate 50%, Hide 61%, Insight 37%, Listen 48%, Opish 55%, Pick Lock 27%, Search 43%

LORD GHO FHAAZI

Dwelling in the extravagant palace

he calls Goshasiz, the modishly clad and coiffured Lord Gho Fhaazi is a greedy, manipulative and ambitious nobleman of Quarzhasaat. His black hair and beard are teased into ringlets, while his eyebrows are bleached blonde. Lord Gho waxes his moustache, powders his plump face, and paints his lips. A large harem of slave girls are the unwilling vessels upon whom Gho slakes his lust. In an attempt to gain the Pearl at the Heart of the World, with which he can buy a seat upon Quarzhasaat's ruling council, Lord Fhaazi almost causes the death of Varadia of the Bau-radim, and poisons Elric. For his crimes, Elric forces Lord Gho to attempt to swallow the huge pearl when the albino returns with it from the land of dreams. Not even Lord Gho's appetite for power is great enough to accommodate the pearl, and he chokes to death upon it.



Lord Gho Fhaazi, age 33, Quarzhasaati noble

Chaos 37, Balance 9, Law 51

STR 11 CON 15 SIZ 14 INT 12 POW 14

DEX 9 APP 9 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Scimitar 67%, damage 1D8+1+1D4

Dagger 45%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Armor: 1D8 (helm off), ostentatiously gilded half plate

Skills: Art (Conversation) 53%, Art (Courtly Manners) 76%, Bargain 68%, Common Tongue (thickly accented) 75%, Evaluate 50%, Insight 61, Listen 25%, Scent/Taste 45%, Scribe 50%, Young Kingdoms 03%

LAMSAR THE SEER

Having made his solitary home in a cave in the Sighing Desert for many decades, the elderly but spry hermit Lamsar has come to resemble his desert home. Lamsar's weathered and wrinkled skin is the color of sand, and sand encrusts his long, matted hair and beard, and also his garments of oiled leather. His rare smiles are as a sudden fissure appearing in rock. Lamsar was befriended by Rackhir during the Red Archer's year spent with the Bau-radim. The Seer proves of great value to Rackhir and the

residents of Tanelorn during the defense of the Eternal City in 408 YK. A servant of the Balance, Lamsar's wisdom is matched by his sly humor.

Lamsar's high allegiance to the Balance allows him to invoke Grome with a high chance of success. In *To Rescue Tanelorn*, Rackhir calls upon the Earth King to petrify a group of assailants.



LAMSAR THE SEER,
age 70, desert hermit

**Chaos 47, Balance
149, Law 51**

STR 10 CON 13 SIZ 11 INT 18
POW 21 DEX 13 APP 8 HP 12

Damage Bonus: none

Armor: soft leather (helm off) 1D6-1

Weapons: none

Spells: Bonds Unbreakable (3), Bounty of Straasha (4), Breath of Life (1), Buzzard Eyes (1), Charm of Justice* (9), Flames of Kakatal (4), Gift of Grome (4), Hell's Sharp Flame (1-4), Liken Shape (4), Make Whole (3), Muddle (1), Summon Elemental (1), Ward (3), Wings of Lassa (4), Witch Sight (3)

* New spell. See sidebar, below.

Skills: Climb 67%, Common 125%, Dodge 53%, Fast Talk 147%, Hide 93%, Insight 81%, Lesh 90%, Million Spheres 37%, Natural World 60%, Oratory 90%, Potions 105%, Ride Camel 63%, Scent/Taste 46%, Scribe 75%, Unknown Kingdoms 25%, Young Kingdoms 85%

A NEW SPELL

★ CHARM OF JUSTICE (9) — Range is sight. Lawful. One weapon within sight may be charmed to strike at the unjust. If the attack is successful, the weapon automatically impales its target, assuming that the victim is unjust. This includes any servant of the Lords of Chaos, there being no justice in entropy.

MANAG ISS

This tall, gaunt man is a high-ranking member of the Yellow Sect of Sorcerer Adventurers, and kinsman to Councillor Iss of Quarzhasaat, one of the Six and One Other. Manag Iss has a dark face and black eyes, and does not smile often. His head is shaved, and tattoos cover his lips and fingertips, where his fingernails have been removed. Like all members of his sect, Manag Iss wears long, flowing robes of saffron and gold.



He and his guild are employed to counter Lord Gho Fhaazi's offer to Elric, and buy from him the Pearl at the Heart of the World. An honorable man in his way, were it not for the customs of his city, which he loves but which pit him against Elric, Manag Iss might almost have been the albino's friend. Elric kills Manag Iss in the council building of Quarzhasaat, minutes before bringing the Bright Empire's ancient sentence down upon the city.

**MANAG ISS, age 50, sorcerer-adventurer
of the Yellow Sect**

Chaos 27, Balance 31, Law 45

STR 13 CON 13 SIZ 15 INT 18
POW 18 DEX 14 APP 9 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Long Spear 97%, damage 1D10+1 +1D4

Armor: 1D6-1 (helm off), soft leather

Spells: Cloak of Cran Liret (1-4), Demon's Ear (1), Demon's Eye (1), Heal (1), Hell's Armor (1-4), Hell's Razor (1-4), Moonrise (1), Muddle (1), Rat Vision (1), Sinew of Mabelode (1-3), Speed of Vezhan (1-3), Suppleness of Xiombarg (1-3), Suppleness of Cran Liret (1-4), Tread of Cran Liret (1-4), Undo Magic (1-4), Ward (3), Witch Sight (3)

Skills: Art (Courtly Manners) 65%, Common Tongue (thickly accented) 90%, Dodge 67%, Hide 55%, Insight 45%, Jump 51%, Lesh 15%, Listen 67%, Move Quietly 73%, Natural World 50%, Pick Lock 65%, Ride Camel 74%, Scribe 48%, Track 60%, Young Kingdoms 03%

RAIK NA SEEM

Philosophical and wise, Raik na Seem is the most highly regarded elder of the Bauradim. The Holy Girl's father, he is respected by all the clans, as is his stepson, Alnac Kreb. Raik is a huge figure of a man, and despite his age his shoulders are unbowed, and his eyes yet bright. His tawny skin is creased and lined, with joy as well as care. Raik is known to lend a sympathetic ear to anyone who seeks him out. He is highly moral, and has a strong sense of justice.



RAIK NA SEEM, age 64, First Elder of the Bauradim

Chaos 73, Balance 143, Law 82

STR 13 CON 15 SIZ 18 INT 14
POW 16 DEX 10 APP 9 HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Scimitar 87%, damage 1D8+1+1D4

Brawl 112%, damage 1D3+1D4

Long Spear 71%, damage 1D10+1+1D4

Armor: Barbarian leather and wood (helm off) 1D8-1

Spells: none

Skills: Bargain 86%, Common Tongue 35%, Insight 90%, Lesh 86%, Listen 86%, Natural World 71%, Navigate 121%, Oratory 75%, Ride Camel 75%, Search 64%, Track 74%, Unknown Kingdoms 21%, Young Kingdoms 25%



OONE

Oone is a native of another plane's earth. She is a young woman, her voice musical, her heart-shaped face surrounded by thick brown hair. Of average height, Oone is slender and well muscled. Her clothes are invariably simple and practical: padded jerkins, soft velvet breeches, embroidered felt riding boots, and light cotton cloaks. She always carries a sword and an elaborate hooked staff of gold and ebony at her waist.



The daughter of a queen, Oone is trained in the arts martial and sorcerous. She is a servant of Law, and although Elric serves Chaos, she falls in love with the doom-laden albino and, unknown to him, bears twins to him in the earth's last years. As a dreamthief, Oone is without peers. She taught the unfortunate Alnac Kreb all he knew. She and her children presumably survive the Earth's doom by departing the Young Kingdoms, bound for Oone's own plane.

OONE, age 24, dreamthief from another Earth

Chaos 14, Balance 31, Law 83

STR 14 CON 16 SIZ 11 INT 14
POW 20 DEX 12 APP 17 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Broadsword 114%, damage 2D8+1D4

Dagger 84%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Thrown Dagger 81%, damage 1D4+1D2

Brawl 113%, damage 1D3+1D4

Armor: 1D6-1 (helm on), leather

Spells: Cloak of Cran Liret (1-4), Fury (1), Heal (2), Hell's Armor (1-4), Hell's Razor (1-4), Hell's Talons (1-4), Sinew of Mabelode (1-3), Suppleness of Xiombarg (1-3)

Skills: Climb 87%, Common Tongue 65%, Dodge 75%, Dreamthievery 107%, Hide 91%, Jump 53%, Lesh 75%, Listen 79%, Melnibonéan 37%, Oratory 46%, 'pande 115%, Physik 72%, Ride 112%, Scribe 30%, Track 41, Unknown Kingdoms 76%, Young Kingdoms 43%

VARADIA SHU RAIK

She is the daughter of Raik Na Seem, of the Bauradim. Physically, Varadia resembles her grandmother, who was of the Sarangli clan. A notable woman, Varadia's grandmother could charm whole tribes into believing they had died of disease. Already Varadia has outgrown her grandmother's teachings and skills, for she is the current incarnation of the Holy Girl. As the Nomad Nations' library, museum, religion, and culture personified, Varadia receives great honor from the clans. Her wit and wisdom are matched only by her amiability and her beauty.



Varadia is a slender girl, with tawny skin and long, honey-colored hair. Her eyes are a startling blue, and dance with quiet humor. Despite her usual solemn bearing and

supernatural knowledge, she is only a child, and has the tastes of any girl her age. In 402 YK, when she is thirteen, Varadia is cast into a sorcerous slumber on the order of the greedy Lord Gho Fhaazi. Quarzhasaat's Sparrow Sect trap Varadia in her dreams, in the Fortress of the Pearl. This enchanted sleep, which costs dreamthief Alnac Kreb his life, is broken by Elric and Oone, returning the Holy Girl to her people.

VARADIA SHU RAIK, age 16, Holy Girl of the Nomad Nations

Chaos 17, Balance 63, Law 17

STR 7 CON 10 SIZ 6 INT 18

POW 21 DEX 13 APP 16 HP 8

Damage Bonus: none

Weapons: none

Armor: none

Spells: Despite her apparent youth, Varadia has the memories and magical capabilities of her many previous incarnations. Although she shuns magic, at need Varadia has access to all spells and incantations, as appropriate.

Skills: Common Tongue 75%, Insight 175%, Lesh 98%, Listen 87%, Million Spheres 41%, Move Quietly 65%, Natural World 90%, Oratory 110%, Physik 112%, Scribe 83%, Unknown Kingdoms 43%, Young Kingdoms 73%. ☉

TANELORN

PEACE OF THE SOUL NOWHERE CAN BE TOUCHED, AND YET IS MORE VALUABLE THAN THE GLORIES OF LAW OR CHAOS.

BEYOND THE TALL and ominous glass-green forest of Troos, well to the north and unheard of in Bakshaan, Elwher, or any other city of the Young Kingdoms, on the shifting shores of the Sighing Desert, lay Tanelorn, a lonely, long-ago city, loved by those it sheltered.

— The Bane of the Black Sword, epilogue

IN EVERY WORLD of the myriad spheres of the multiverse, there exists a reflection of the realm of the Balance. Among the Young Kingdoms this image of perfection is known as the Eternal City of Tanelorn. Tanelorn may appear on one plane as a gleaming city of glass, while in another sphere it is a humble ring of stones on a forsaken hillside. Tanelorn's guise changes depending upon the expectations of those who seek it, and upon the world in which it is found. Its name may change. Its truth does not change.

In the Young Kingdoms, Tanelorn is a small and unassuming city in the Sighing Desert. Tanelorn is mythical in civilized lands. Only those individuals in whom the Balance is strong are capable of finding it. Tanelorn grants its inhabitants a rare peace, soothing the soul and quenching the pangs of loss and sorrow. Once within its walls few people choose to leave. Those who depart swear an oath never to reveal the city's location to the outside world, but the guileless city seems to physically shift locations, or may be found in fact only within those who have foresworn ambition and deception.

Many have sought Tanelorn and not found it. Scholars dismiss its existence as a legend, while the wise, when questioned about Tanelorn, shake their heads and smile. Maps truly locating Tanelorn do not exist in the Young Kingdoms or anyplace else, although some maps lie and place it where the maker fancies. Ballads evoke the city and render it keenly real to the heart, the place never visited yet greatly missed. Champions of Law and Chaos have sought Tanelorn for centuries, renouncing their allegiances for the

peace which Tanelorn bestows, persisting in their quests until one morning each takes one more step and suddenly sees before him or her the low-walled vivid town, and enters.

Thus the Lords of the Higher Worlds hate Tanelorn, for the greatest mortals choose it instead of them, and it mocks their every pretense. As a city of the Balance, gods cannot enter within its walls unless they are invited. Only Elric, of all the suffering and tormented individuals who have sought Tanelorn, is unable to find rest within this sweet harbor of the soul.

HISTORY

NONE KNEW when Tanelorn had been built, but some knew that she had existed before Time and would exist after the end of Time and that was why she was known as Eternal Tanelorn.

— The Vanishing Tower, III, 1

WHEN THE MULTIVERSE was created, long ages before Elric's birth or even the birth of the first Melnibonéan, Tanelorn came into being. The Eternal City is as old as the world, and will outlast it. In the Young Kingdoms, Tanelorn has had as many forms as the Time Cycles it has endured. During the previous age, before the Earth was twisted and tormented by the Doomed Folk, Tanelorn appeared as a sunlit glade, dotted with gay pavilions, within the confines of a dark and horror-haunted forest. Tanelorn was reborn in its present form when the Doomed Folk shattered the world.

Tanelorn is a peaceful, pleasant city. In this Time Cycle, the city was constructed by the Guardians, a race who departed the earth long before the Melnibonéans came to

TANELORN

the world. The Guardians were a prehuman people, tall and slender, with pale skin and sad, green-flecked eyes. They served the Balance, and were its agents in the new world. The Guardians built Tanelorn for themselves, a gentle city of marble domes and columns, mosaics and milky jade. After many centuries, sensing that their work upon the earth was done, the Guardians took themselves and their land out of the world and outside of time. Tanelorn, the last of their cities, remained behind, a gift from the Guardians to the races which would follow.

Once the Guardians had departed, the first new resident of Tanelorn was an Older One, the Lawful, immortal folk who ruled the earth before the Bright Empire. Despairing at the emotionless obsessions of her race, and their quest for purity and perfection, this Older One wandered the world for years, until discovering the Eternal City. In those days it was surrounded by a flower-dotted plain, rather than the desert which laps at its walls today. When she found it, Tanelorn was empty even of spirits, although handsome animals and abundant harvest awaited her everywhere, as if brought into being only moments before she stepped through the low walls.

The Older One settled down in Tanelorn, devoting her life to simple things. Over the following millennia Tanelorn has known countless other inhabitants. During the Melnibonéan Civil War, many of the Dragon Isle who remained faithful to the Balance took refuge in Tanelorn, alongside members of the Myyrrhn, who had previously fled the conquering armies of the fledgling Bright Empire. When Quarzhasaat, in whose contested dominion Tanelorn was most likely to be found, was engulfed by sand, the Eternal City survived, although the pleasant lands which surrounded Tanelorn were lost to the desert. For the last two thousand years, the majority of Tanelorn's residents have been human, although during the conflict between the Bright Empire and that of the Dharzi, several of the Beast Folk also found rest within her low walls.

Throughout the ages of its existence Tanelorn has survived attacks by Law and Chaos both. Law would conquer Tanelorn, while Chaos would destroy her if it could. During the Saga, the Eternal City is attacked twice, saved only by Elric's intervention. Such is the strength of spirit that Tanelorn evokes that its inhabitants swear to protect her against whoever would destroy her, even at the cost of their lives.

FINDING TANELORN

A CHARACTER whose Balance allegiance score reaches 100 will see Tanelorn revealed in a dream. Such visions are invariably vague but powerful, and they are never forgotten. Tanelorn's precise location is never shown in such dreams, only hinted at. The character must embark upon a quest to find Tanelorn. The visions, and the reward they promise, become powerful religious experiences which Champions of the Balance carry with them to the grave.

Sometimes the Eternal City is not always seen directly in these visions. The character may instead glimpse himself or herself in some distant future, relaxed, healthy, happy and content. Or see herself or himself battered and bloody, staggering through a sandstorm, when suddenly a light shines, transfigures the dreamer, and transforms the haggard face with a visage of glory.

Imbue the characters' quests with drama and symbolism. White doves should lead them onwards, and mysterious strangers visit them, offering wisdom, directions, and sometimes warnings. Rumors, dreams, prophecies, and omens become maps guiding the adventurers on towards the Eternal City. As Tanelorn is approached, the characters may hear drifts of ethereal music, or cheerful drinking songs carried on the breeze, or smell blossoms, or hear the musical notes of fountains drifting across the sands. Perhaps a bird flies overhead, dropping at their feet the most delicate flower the characters

have ever seen then the bird returns whence it came, singing beautifully the while. Maybe a mysterious radiance flickers from behind the next sand dune, the sight of which eases the adventurers' grief and pain.

If the adventurers themselves have not reached apotheosis, they might be called upon to accompany a companion who has, or be hired by a warrior who has renounced the ways of war, and who requires bodyguards to protect him on his quest for Tanelorn. It would be rare, in such circumstances, for the characters to see the City of Peace themselves, yet alone enter its walls. Those who enter Tanelorn, who are not yet ready to embrace its peace, soon grow bored with the relaxed life-style of the city's residents. There is no toll or tax upon entering Tanelorn; the act of finding Tanelorn is in itself proof of an adventurer's right of entry.

Unless personally drawn toward Tanelorn, characters will invariably be turned back at its gates. Departing, they will soon become lost in the desert and, no matter how hard they search, Tanelorn and their companion will never be found again. Those who come this close to Tanelorn, but who do not attain it, remember the aching sadness as they turn their backs on the Eternal City forever in their dreams.

FUTURE EVENTS — TANELORN

402 YK — Rackhir, called the Red Archer, finds the City of Peace after a long and arduous quest. His travails take him from Phum, to distant planes, even briefly to the Court of the Ruby Throne, where he is something of a hero in the eyes of the Melnibonéan ladies. Rackhir parts company with Elric in Menii, late in 401, thence journeying at length across the Northern Continent until he reaches Tanelorn.

405 YK — The Pan Tangian sorcerer Theleb K'aarna leads an army of beggars to attack a caravan bound for Tanelorn, but is defeated, thanks to Elric's sorcery. Having grown to hate Tanelorn and all it stands for, the Pan Tangian attacks again a month later, during which time Elric has been an unhappy resident in the Eternal City. With the aid of ancient Doomed Folk technology he discovers in Troos, Theleb K'aarna leads the Reptile

Men of Pio against the Eternal City. Thanks to Elric, Tanelorn is saved. Unable to find rest in Tanelorn, the albino wanders Eastward, returning some months later on dragonback, in the company of the Rose.

408 YK — A beggar horde, led by Duke Narjhan of Chaos, marches on Tanelorn. Rackhir, together with Lamsar the Seer, a resident of the Sighing Desert, quests through many planes, seeking the aid of the Grey Lords in Tanelorn's defense. Rackhir returns in the company of the Boatmen of Xerlerenes. The beggars are defeated with their other-worldly help. The forces of Entropy shortly thereafter engulf the world, reducing all to primal chaos. Only Tanelorn and its residents escape this doom, and go on to dwell in the new world summoned into being by Elric's blasts upon the Horn of Fate.

THE CITY

TANELORN had a peculiar nature in that it welcomed and held the wanderer. To its peaceful streets and low houses came the gaunt, the savage, the brutalized, the tormented, and in Tanelorn they found rest.

— *The Bane of the Black Sword, epilogue*

A SMALL CITY in circumference, barely a town in the numbers of its streets and houses, sometimes hardly a hamlet in terms of population, its houses are mostly modest affairs. There are a few villas, but no palaces. Even the eldest, of delicately-hued marble quarried before the Sighing Desert engulfed the plains on which the city once stood, are smallish and circumspect. Newer houses are constructed of whitewashed mud-brick, their roofs broad and flat. (On hot summer nights, many folk sleep upon the rooftops, so that they may be cooled by the breeze blowing off the desert.) Grander buildings exist, with pastel towers, curving domes, and thin spires, but these are few, constructed many thousands of years ago by Melnibonéans fleeing the strife which announced the alignment with Chaos and the founding of the Bright Empire. Tanelorn's founding race, the Guardians, built the oldest structures. Furnishings in homes are as simple as the dwellings. Surrounding all is a low stone wall, whitewashed as well.

The city's atmosphere of peace and ancient calm enriches every building. The air in Tanelorn is crisp and clear, as if after a storm, and made the more beautiful by the music of songbirds and fountains. The plan of light is clean and

luminous. Colors are brighter, more vivid here than elsewhere in the world. Food tastes fresher, water is more sparkling. All of Tanelorn is imbued with this quality of full realization. Everything in Tanelorn is the best it can be, rich and vital. Only here is the marble perfection of Law imbued with the heat and whimsy of Chaos. Even from a distance the City of Peace radiates this special quality. The air above its walls shimmers with a soft radiance, like a heat haze, or the glow of stars.

Tanelorn is an island of life and tranquility in the inimical desert. Fountains and communal wells are found throughout Tanelorn, their water constant and pure. Some residents hold the opinion that these wells spring straight from Straasha's realm, which is why their flow has never lessened. They may well be right. The wells irrigate numerous gardens, in which grow vegetables, flowers, and fruit trees bearing sweet oranges and succulent peaches. The soils of the town are never diminished. Evaporation from the fountains helps cool the streets, but heat is also snatched away by fragrant breezes. It is rare for each house in Tanelorn not to have a small patch of greenery about it, sometimes home to a hen coop, or a dovecote, or a small bee hive.

Most residents sleep through the hottest part of the day, and are active in the mornings and evenings. Hot desert winds blow over Tanelorn, often showering sand which the residents cheerfully sweep away. Loose clothing of undyed or bleached linen is the norm for most inhabitants, sensible clothing appropriate to the desert which surrounds them.

Among the buildings found in Tanelorn are a smithy, whose blacksmith was once an Blue Assassin in the Unknown East, but who now contents himself with beating out horseshoes rather than ending lives. A fire elemental dances singing in his forge. The garden of one home, the residence of a Jharkorian sage, who grew weary of the politics of her patron's court, is filled with mechanical marvels,

singing birds of gold and clockwork ivory squirrels, although their maker has long since grown bored of such trinkets, preferring natural animals over the most finely crafted toy.

The oldest building in Tanelorn, built by the Guardians of green marble and blue jade, houses the city's library, a grand collection of books and scrolls, containing hundreds of books long since destroyed, lost, or forgotten in the outside world. Many of its books are unique, penned by Tanelorn's residents, covering a wide range of topics, from biography to sorcery, history to art. Studying in Tanelorn's library can improve such skills as Art, Million Spheres, Natural World, Unknown East, and Young Kingdoms, as determined by the gamemaster.

At Tanelorn's center lies the town square, from which radiate cobbled streets like spokes on a wheel. Most terminate at Boundary Street, which circumscribes the city, running around the base of the city wall. Tanelorn has two gates, in the east and west walls, which invariably stand open. Only during sandstorms, or on the rare occasions Tanelorn is under siege, are the gates closed and barred. On the summer solstice, the sun rises directly in line with the east gate. Framed between the walls, its light sends long shadows lancing down through the streets. That night, the sun sets in line with the west gate.

Tanelorn's whitewashed ramparts stand only ten feet high, the edges of the blocks of stone from which the wall is constructed smooth by wind and sand. Within, a narrow wooden walkway skirts the upper section of the wall, a promenade as much as anything. Many buildings of the town are much higher. The true defenses of the city were laid down by the Balance at the beginning of Creation, immutable and invulnerable.

Only toward the end of the Time Cycle, when Chaos grows strong, can the Lords of Entropy muster force enough to attack Tanelorn. Even at the end of the world the combined might of otherwise triumphant Chaos cannot breach Tanelorn's defenses, and the shapeless sea of chaosplasm which engulfs the Earth can only lap listlessly at the walls. Of all, Tanelorn continues.

SOCIETY

Those who dwelled in her had loyalty neither to Law nor to Chaos and they had chosen to have no part in the Cosmic Struggle which was waged continuously by the Lords of the Higher Worlds. There were no leaders and no followers in Tanelorn and her citizens lived in harmony with each other, even though many had been warriors of great reputation before they chose to stay there.

— The Vanishing Tower, III, 1

Beyond Tanelorn's walls are the endlessly shifting sands of the Sighing Desert. Within the city all is constant, although not unchanging. The stagnancy of Law does not exist in the Eternal City, nor the wild vagrancies of unfettered Chaos.

TANELORN AND MAGIC

A **VEHICLE** of the Balance, Tanelorn does not block the expression of magic within it, though its defenses admit neither magic nor physical attacks. The magical capabilities of an entrant neither change nor pass away because a person enters the city.

Beyond this, gamemasters must choose how to characterize the play of magics from without, and whether only the city is immune, whether everything within the walls is defended, just how vulnerable new constructions are, and so on, through all the possible contradictions and awkward situations. The point to all of this is a proper tone and respect for a place that is realer than reality. Do not waste time trying to construct a magical system that covers every possibility.

A city of the Balance, Tanelorn is a contemplative place, with neither temples nor gods. Harmony and vitality are its watchwords. Priests of many religions make their home here, having turned their backs upon their past. Retired kings trim topiaries. Grizzled ex-warriors relax with a pipe and a friend.

Tanelorn's citizens are young and old, from all nations and all walks of life. All wear a look of contentment, and their eyes are full of an enviable peace. Although almost all in Tanelorn were once warriors of one kind or another, few maintain their skills once they take up residence in the city. The inhabitants of Tanelorn are more likely to practice painting and philosophy than the arts of war. The best gardeners are very highly respected.

Tanelorn is a place of tranquility. Tortured souls feel calm here. People are honest and open. Arguments are rare, and fights rarer. Disease is almost unknown. Save for accidents, or the occasional attack by Law or Chaos, the inhabitants of Tanelorn die of old age. They are buried in the city's small graveyard, by the south wall. Funerals in Tanelorn are marked with choral singing and melancholy wakes, but never with despair. It is said that the souls of those who die in Tanelorn journey to the realm of the Balance, there to dwell in peace and wonder for all eternity, in a realm of which Tanelorn is but the faintest flattery. Others say that Tanelorn's true gift is final death, a peaceful oblivion free from allegiances and after-lives.

Children in Tanelorn are rare, but not unknown. A birth in the Eternal City is greeted with joy, the child being raised communally. He or she knows no loneliness until adolescence. Surrounded by love, children born in Tanelorn still choose to leave when they come of age. Few return.

Tanelorn's society is friendly and equitable. People are honest. Property is generally communal and easily shared, because those who come here are free of greed. All residents have equal say in determining city matters.

The city's population is generally a few hundred men and women, although in times of upheaval, such as the Dharzi War and the end of the world, the city receives a flood of visitors, their apotheoses triggered by monumental events. Tanelorn never lacks for space. Empty houses can always be found to house newcomers. Furniture and furnishings last for centuries in the dry desert air. Neighbors donate food to new residents until such time as they are self-sufficient.

Cattle and fowl are tended by some residents (although they are rarely slaughtered for their meat) and a small number of camels and horses are reared in the city's stables. Tanelorn's inhabitants maintain a largely vegetarian diet, supplemented by milk and eggs.



CARAVANS, AND THE HEART'S DESIRE

Remarkably, this place that so deliberately shuts itself away from the world and that is defended so completely by the ultimate force of the multiverse is occasionally abandoned by one of those who once foresook everything else in order to find it. When a resident requires something (special manuscript paper or some rare tome, for instance) and cannot make it or borrow it in Tanelorn, he or she must get it elsewhere. The subsequent journey to Karlaak, Vador, or Quarzhasaat is arduous and reasonably dangerous.

If the thing to be obtained must be purchased, the pilgrim takes along some appropriate item from the communal trinket box as trade. The trinket box is a chest beside the western gate, wherein over time the newer residents come to deposit their once-prized but now useless weapons, medals, badges of office, bejeweled rings and golden torques, magical staves, princely crowns, sculpted amulets, ruby brooches, and all the precious things that once firmly bound them to the world. These dust-catchers do potential good in the trinket box, and their absence in the home cleanses the mind of the former owner.

But, having reached the worldly city and obtained what was perceived as so necessary, it happens that some cannot then find their way back to Tanelorn. Without knowing it, they have become tied to the world again. Tanelorn is lost to them forever.

And sometimes entire caravans are led to Tanelorn, for particular reasons, as Tanelorn is not a routine place and waits on no trade route. Rarely can any member of a caravan find the way to Tanelorn again.

RESIDENTS

CLOSE TO THE low west wall of the city lay a house of two stories surrounded by a lawn in which grew all manner of wild flowers. The house was of pink and yellow marble and unlike most of the other dwellings in Tanelorn, it had a tall, pointed roof. This was Rackhir's house, and Rackhir sat outside it now, sprawled on a bench of plain wood while he watched his guest pace the lawn. The guest was his old friend the tormented albino Prince of Melniboné.

— The Vanishing Tower, III, 1

BRUT OF LASHMAR

A massive, muscular figure of a man,

Brut harks from Shazar, where he was once a knight, and a devout follower of Law. He rode errant across Shazar, punishing the corrupt and cruel, and was revered as a hero by the common folk, although hated by many of his peers. In 401 YK Brut was shamed, and left Shazar, never to return.

He does not speak of what befell him, and grows angry if pressed on the matter. Upon leaving his homeland Brut sought out Tanelorn. After numerous adventures, including a passage on the Dark Ship with Elric and Corum, Brut staggers out of the Sighing Desert to find the Eternal City in the spring of 403.

With his bristling blond beard and mane of sun-bleached hair, Brut is a striking figure even in Tanelorn, as well as being one of the most noble and generous citizens of the City of Peace. Unlike most of Tanelorn's residents, Brut never ceases to practice the arts of war. In battle he wears his silver-plated armor and gauntlets, and wields an axe and spiked mace with deadly proficiency. His black steed's harness is adorned with silver trappings. When at rest, Brut prefers a battered, broad-brimmed hat, travel-stained clothes, and a patched yellow cloak. He is one of the few of Tanelorn's warriors not to be slain by Narjhan's beggar horde. When the tide of Chaos engulfs the Young Kingdoms, Brut stands by Tanelorn's gates, ready to repel invaders and welcome refugees.



BRUT OF LASHMAR, age 35, a knight once and true

Chaos 37, Balance 115, Law 81

STR 18 CON 19 SIZ 19 INT 12
POW 13 DEX 16 APP 14 HP 19

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Battle Ax 165%, damage 1D8+2+1D6

Heavy Mace 121%, damage 1D8+2+1D6

Lance 138%, damage 1D8+1+3D6

Armor: 1D10 (helm off), Young Kingdom's Plate

Skills: Art (Courtly Manners) 38%, Common Tongue 112%, Dodge 75%, Insight 115%, Listen 78%, Million Spheres 05%, Move Quietly 58%, Natural World 50%, Navigate 25%, Oratory 60%, Physick 73%, Repair/Devise 93%, Ride 117%, Track 47%, Young Kingdoms 37%

Broadsword 87%, damage 1D8+1+1D4

Great Hammer 65%, damage 1D10+3+1D4

Armor: 1D8 (helm off), Half Plate

Spells: Buzzard Eyes (1), Chaos Warp (4), Cloak of Cran Liret (1-4), Curse of Chardros (4), Demon's Ear (1), Demon's Eye (1), Fury (1), Hell's Armor (1-4), Hell's Hammer (1-4), Hell's Sharp Flame (1-4), Liken Shape (4), Midnight (1), Moonrise (10), Muddle (1), Rat Vision (1), Speed of Vezhan (1-3), Summon Demon (1), Visage of Arioeh (1-3), Witch Sight (3)

Skills: Art (Painting 75%), Common Tongue 75%, High Speech 32%, Insight 45%, Mabden 103%, Melnibonéan 51%, Million Spheres 19%, Natural World 49%, Potions 67%, Search 40%, Scribe 60%, Torture 81%, Young Kingdoms 23%

CARKAN

Once a low-ranking priest in the City of Screaming Statues, serving grim Balan, Carkan fell in love with a slave, and fled Pan Tang when his par amour was sacrificed (although not before avenging the youth's death by striking down the priest who murdered him). Thereafter Carkan traveled to Vilmir, in the hope of serving the gods of Law, but was reviled for his Pan Tangian heritage, and almost executed. These events caused Carkan to turn to the path of the Balance. Reaching apotheosis, he made his way to Tanelorn, which he finds in the year 400 YK.

Carkan is gaunt and swarthy, with long black hair which he keeps oiled, and a plaited black beard. He favors Ilmioran-style checkered cloaks and fur caps, quite unlike the metallic robes of Pan Tang. Carkan's dark eyes are peaceful, although they reveal the pain of his past. In the Eternal City he devotes his time to art, producing many fine charcoal sketches and watercolors. He is killed by the Elenoin in 405 YK, when beggars led by Theleb K'aarna attack a caravan as it approaches the Eternal City.

CARKAN of Pan-Tang, age 40, transfigured by love

Chaos 87, Balance 109, Law 34

STR 14 CON 11 SIZ 12 INT 19
POW 18 DEX 15 APP 13 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4



RACKHIR

He is Tanelorn's most famous resident, although he does not find the Eternal City until 402 YK. He encounters Elric near the damned city of Amee-ron, on a distant plane, to which he was banished by Vezhan of Chaos. Rackhir once served Vezhan in Phum, in the Unmapped East, where he was a warrior-priest. He abandoned Chaos in favor of thieving and learning.

Rackhir is a superb archer, and saw much of the Young Kingdoms and the East before being banished beyond the shade-gate. After being rescued by Elric in 401, he stays for a time at the Unholy Fortress, where he has a brief affair with the adventuress Sorana. Rackhir was a friend of Moonglum in the East.

It is Rackhir's habit to adopt garb of red, the only habit of Phum's warrior-priests he maintains. He is gaunt, tall, and wiry, with a firm, bleak voice. A thin beard fringes his narrow face. Rackhir has deep set eyes and an aquiline nose. He is sardonic, and a world-weary philosopher. Rackhir has foresworn his sorcerous powers, deploying his few spells only in emergencies. He dislikes heights.

After being saved from his exile by Elric, Rackhir dwells briefly in Imrryr, before leaving to find Tanelorn, even though he does not really believe it exists. He meets Elric again in 406 YK, while riding with one of Tanelorn's supply caravans. When Tanelorn is attacked by Narjhan's horde in 408, it is Rackhir who quests through five gates and planes in search of the aid of the Grey Lords. Returning



THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

to Tanelorn with Sorana, his old love, Rackhir thereafter rides out to find Elric in 408, when Chaos threatens the world. He dies on Stormbringer's blade, killed by Elric in Mordaga's castle.

RACKHIR the Red Archer, age 35, friend to Elric

Chaos 190, Balance 140, Law 91

STR 16 CON 19 SIZ 14 INT 15
POW 17 DEX 19 APP 12 HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Desert Bow 215%, damage 1D8+2
Shortsword 114%, damage 1D6+1+1D4
Thrown Dagger 109%, damage 1D6+2
Small Shield 87%, damage KB+1D3+1D3, 20 hit points

Armor: 1D6+1 (helm on), Leather and Rings

Spells: Demon's Eye (1), Flames of Kakatal (4), Heat (2), Summon Demon (1), Summon Elemental (1), Wings of Lassa (4), Witch Sight (3)

Skills: Bargain 149%, Climb 109%, Common Tongue 79%, Conceal Object 97%, Dodge 119%, Evaluate 82%, Fast Talk 65%, Hide 57%, Insight 74%, Jump 120%, Listen 88%, MelnibonÇan 20%, Million Spheres 21%, Mong 20% Move Quietly 75% Natural World 69%, Navigate 67%, Oratory 80%, 'pande 93% Physik 44%, Ride 151%, Sailing 20%, Search 69%, Swim 75%, Throw 89%, Track 64%, Unknown Kingdoms 85%, Young Kingdoms 43%

RACKHIR'S SIX LESSER DEMON ARROWS: fletched in red to match Rackhir's garb. Such an arrow can be reused if it can be retrieved. To anyone else it is a normal arrow. The six are identical. Rackhir would choose one above an ordinary arrow only in great need.

INT 3 POW 11

Ability: Demon Weapon, each adds 2D10 damage.

THE ROSE

The woman known as the Rose is encountered by Elric late in 405 YK. It is in the albino's company that she arrives at Tanelorn, born by the dragon Lady Scarsnout. The Rose is a proud and determined woman, who travels the planes and time-streams in search of revenge for her people, slain by the treachery of Prince Gaynor the Damned and Lord Mashabak of Chaos. She is the last of her race, whom



Chaos destroyed, and is not native to this world. The Rose has spent her days since her people's murder tracking Prince Gaynor through a thousand spheres. It was in this manner that she met Elric.

The Rose is muscular and full-hipped, with broad shoulders and a mass of red-gold hair. She wears simple clothes of russet and green, and carries a slender sword called Swift Thorn, and a dagger, Little Thorn. A powerful sorceress, her magic is of a slow but effective nature, intimately related to the natural world. The Rose is determined and cunning, her face brooding and unreadable. She soon wearies of Tanelorn, and the company of the morose and self-pitying albino, and departs to roam the million spheres once more.

THE ROSE, looks age 30, avenger of the Million Spheres

Chaos 23, Balance 85, Law 13

STR 15 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 17
POW 18 DEX 15 APP 10 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Swift Thorn 127%, damage 1D6+1+1D4
Little Thorn 103%, damage 1D4+2+1D4
Brawl 140%, damage 1D3+1D4
Wrestle 97%, damage special

Armor: 1D6-1 (helm off) Soft Leather

Spells: Bounty of Straasha (4), Buzzard Eyes (1), Flames of Kakatal (4), Gift of Grome (4), Rat Vision (1), Summon Elemental (1), Undo Magic (1-4), Wings of Lassa (4).

The Rose is also skilled in the summoning of the Lords of the Archetypes, and the Elemental Rulers, although she employs such magics rarely. Game masters should feel free to create other, earth-based spells for the Rose as desired.

Skills: Common Tongue 55%, Disguise 75%, Dodge 86%, Hide 75%, Insight 103%, damage, Listen 80%, MelnibonÇan 17%, Million Spheres 31%, Move Quietly 74%, Natural World 85%, Oratory 50%, Potions 75%, Repair/Devise 50%, Ride 86%, Sailing 43%, Swim 71%

SORANA

The lady Sorana, sorceress and adventurer, is a Champion of Chaos, serving Eequor, the Blue Lady of Dismay. She is a native of the Unknown East, where, among other trades, she learned piracy and sorcery. Sorana is utterly without conscience. She acts for the will of Eequor or her own convenience. Although almost 30, Sorana looks much younger. Her skin is pale, her eyes and hair dark. She wears a black jewel at the base of her slender throat, and loose black robes which flow as if in a breeze even when the air is still. As a Champion of Eequor, Sorana is capable of transporting herself to Eequor's blue realm in the blink of an eye.

In 401 YK, while dwelling at Yeshpotoom-Kahlai, Sorana becomes Rackhir's lover. When the Blue Assassins attack the Unholy Fortress, Rackhir abandons Sorana and flees. She survives, and goes out into the world as an agent of her Chaotic mistress. In 408 Sorana is captured by Rackhir, who carries her into Tanelorn over his shoulder, after defeating Narjhan's beggars. (Perhaps the Balance recognizes something fine within her, or perhaps Rackhir's love is great enough for two.) Although she elects to stay in Tanelorn, knowing something of the world's rapidly approaching doom, Sorana loves neither Rackhir nor the Eternal City. She spurns the Red Archer, to his grief and anger. An unrepentant agent of Chaos, she outlives both Rackhir and the Earth.



SORANA, appears age 18, Champion of Chaos

Chaos 135, Balance 87, Law 10

STR 13 CON 15 SIZ 12 INT 17
POW 21 DEX 18 APP 14 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Iron Claw 108%, damage 1D4+1+1D4
Quarterstaff 127%, damage 1D8+1D4
Dagger 95%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Spells: Bonds Unbreakable (3), Chaos Warp (4), Curse of Chaos (4), Demon's Ear 91, Demon's Eye (1), Fury (1), Heal (2), Hell's Armor (1-4), Hell's Razor (1-4), Hell's Sharp Flame (1-4), Liken Shape (4), Midnight (1), Pox (1), Refutation (1-4), Summon Demon (1), Summon Elemental (1), Undo Magic (1-4)

Skills: Art (Seduction) 90%, Climb 87%, Common Tongue 105%, Conceal Object 65%, Dodge 66%, Evaluate 40%, Hide 86%, High Speech 25%, Insight 71%, Jump 60%, Listen 60%, Move Quietly 60%, Melnibonéan 65%, Pick Lock 87%, Potions 50%, Ride 85%, Scribe 35%, Search 120%, Unknown Kingdoms 25%, Young Kingdoms 40%

SORANA'S LESSER DEMON ROBE: this loose black garment constantly swirls and undulates.

INT 2 POW 14

Ability: Demon Armor, 2D10

Need: to be washed in blood once a month.

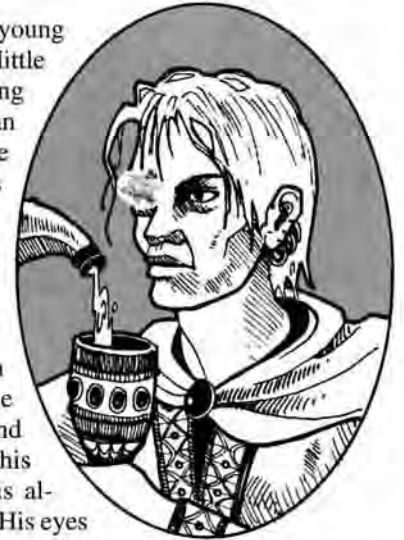
UROCH

Pragmatic young Uroch has little

time for sorcery, having fled Dharijor rather than be sacrificed to the Lords of Chaos by his father, a priest of Hionhurn. This traumatic experience drove Uroch to drink, and for several years he saw the world only through the bottom of a wine glass, spurning Law and Chaos both. Despite his lack of years, Uroch is already wasted by drink. His eyes

are set amidst puffy flesh, and broken capillaries dot his cheeks and nose. He is pallid and looks unhealthy. Uroch would rather drink than eat, and so is thin despite his constant boozing.

The Dharijorian is a newcomer, and is not yet entirely at peace within Tanelorn's walls. Uroch regularly joins caravans to Ilmiora, there to drink himself unconscious in the taverns of Bakshaan or Karlaak, but he always finds his way back to Tanelorn. In time, Uroch becomes accustomed to the Eternal City's placid pace, and ceases drinking entirely. He dies fighting the beggar horde lead against Tanelorn by Narjhan of Chaos in 408 YK.



UROCH OF NIEVA, age 22, foe of Hionhurn

Chaos 21, Balance 100, Law 12

STR 12 CON 10 SIZ 14 INT 13
POW 14 DEX 17 APP 11 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Cutlass 112%, damage 1D6+2+1D4
Short Spear 82%, damage 1D6+1+1D4
Round Shield 67%, damage KB+1D3+1D4

Armor: none

Spells: Flames of Kakatal (4), Hell's Armor (1-4), Moonrise (1), Speed of Vezhan (1-3)

Skills: Art (Singing) 46%, Common Tongue 85%, Craft (Brewing) 36%, Fast Talk 65%, Maudlin Reminiscence 50%, Mabden 15%, Ride 70%, Scribe 65%

ZAS ONE-HAND

He is a philosopher, wise in the ways of the Million Spheres. Born in Argimiliar, in his youth he led a Lawful peasant rebellion against the decadent rulers of his land. Zas was crowned King in the southern province of Andlermaigne shortly before the rebellion was brutally quashed. He was imprisoned, and was to be executed, but escaped, losing one hand in the process. For many years thereafter he wandered the world. A veteran of many battles, he has gray hair, and a lined and weathered face. Zas has a look of peace about him, despite his many war wounds. His right hand is missing, and his ears are ragged and torn as if chewed by dogs. Numerous scars crisscross his wrinkled face.



After decades spent in the thankless service of Law, Zas grew bitter, and abandoned the White Lords in favor of the Balance. He reached apotheosis in 308, although it was another two years before he found the city of his dreams. He is fit, although lacking the muscular bulk of his youth. Zas's thin arms still swing his longsword, its hilt a gilded lion, with good effect. Like many of Tanelorn's heroes, he dies protecting Tanelorn from Nadsokor's horde in 408 YK.

ZAS ONE-HAND, age 81, Tanelorn's oldest resident

Chaos 19, Balance 117, Law 41

STR 10 CON 17 SIZ 13 INT 14
POW 16 DEX 13 APP 9 HP 15

Damage Bonus: none.

Longsword 135%, 1D10+1

Kite shield 85%, damage KB+1D4

Armor: 1D6+1 (helm on) Leather and Rings

Spells: none

Skills: Common Tongue 70%, Evaluate 65%, Fast Talk 80%, Insight 115%, Listen 75%, Million Spheres 25%, Navigate 61%, Oratory 113%, Physik 93%, Repair/Devise 80%, Scribe 22%, Track 86%, Trap 67%, Young Kingdoms 75%. ☉

A Tale of Tanelorn

WHILE JOURNEYING THROUGH northern Ilmiora, attempting to locate a sage said to possess a crystal globe in which the futures of viewers were revealed. I heard a legend concerning a mystical desert city, Tanelorn. It is claimed to be a town where no one ever dies, whose well waters grant immortality to imbibers.

In Vador I met a wise desert nomad, ancient in years, who told me the city was real without a doubt. This elder told me he had smelt the scent of rare perfumes carried on the desert air late one night, and heard singing, but had been unable to trace them to their source. Although I suggested this could have been an illusion caused by the heat, he swore that the perfume he had smelt has surely blown from the lotus gardens of Tanelorn. Despite the lack of proof, he was unswayed in his convictions. An innkeeper in the same town remarked to me of gaunt-faced and trouble-burdened wanderers who occasionally stayed at his establishment before seeking this elusive refuge in the Sighing Desert. None of them ever returned, he said, but whether they had found their utopia, or were merely claimed by the heat and the sand, he did not know.

—Journals, Duke Avan Astran

STORY SEEDS

A SCENARIO IDEA FOR EACH CHAPTER.

COUNTLESS ADVENTURES await in the Northern Continent. Dozens are suggested or hinted at in the text of this book. Here follow some specific story seeds to be expanded upon into full-fledged scenarios. Gamemasters may wish to spend time watering and nurturing the following seeds, carefully encouraging their slow growth, or might prefer them to sprout spontaneously for a single session's play.

VILMIR

IF I COULD TORTURE THE ANIMALS

Duke Avan Astran wishes to open a zoo in Old Hrolmar. The adventurers are among the many groups called to an audience at the Ducal fortress one gray Vilmirian evening. As the sounds of hammering and sawing drift across the city, Duke Avan enthusiastically describes his vision; a garden in which animals from all nations of the Young Kingdoms, as well as plants, are exhibited for the public's edification and delight. He will pay well for specimens.

Traveling the Young Kingdoms is an adventure in itself, as is the task of capturing and transporting such creatures as the nalagrún, the tree-slinging gabberer, the mammoth, and the giant Melnibonéan salamanders. An added difficulty is the rivalry of the dastardly Manuel Malaga, adventurer, big-game hunter, and explorer, who seeks Duke Avan's patronage, and who will stop at nothing to outwit and rob the adventurers of their prey and glory.

Returning at length to Old Hrolmar, their captures ensconced in the newly-constructed zoo, it becomes apparent that the excavations Duke Avan undertook were upon an ancient Melnibonéan burial site. A demon is freed, and possesses first one of the zoo keepers, and then the animals. At first the possessed zoo keeper molests and disfigures the zoo's specimens; given time, it will move on to human prey. It cannot be banished unless its binding sigil, hidden in a

sealed-in chamber beneath the Pan Tangian tiger's cage, is destroyed. Otherwise it migrates from body to body if its host is slain. A possessed zoo keeper is bad enough; the mayhem when a great Black Ape becomes the host is unimaginable.

The demon must be overcome before the Church of Law can use the excuse of demonic infestation to embarrass and perhaps bring down Duke Astran. Saving the city from both demon and Inquisition places the adventurers in the Duke's favor, his gratitude proving long-lasting and richly rewarding.

ILMIORA

LOVE SONGS AND DAGGERS IN THE DARK

The thin, sharp-featured troubadour Matteus Tomaso was born in the city-state of Oberlorn, in Ilmiora's Central Highlands. Having just turned 25, Tomaso has abandoned the cold hills and boorish provincials of his home, and moved to Ilmar. Here he can be heard playing his lute in the salons of the city's nobility, and singing his raw, passionate love-songs in his distinctive, wide-ranging tenor voice. Tomaso is a favorite at the salons of Caterina Condotta, here he adroitly diverts the propositions of the eligible young ladies the match-making Councilor places in his path.

The adventurers might befriend Matteus at any of the establishments he frequents; given the life-style of most adventurers, a seedy seaside venue is more likely than a salon frequented by the nobility. Although shy, Matteus can be drawn out with a flattering word and a glass of wine. Once his friendship has been tempered, it proves unbreakable. Considerate and compassionate, Matteus is a good companion, and a trusting and trustworthy friend.

Unknown to Ilmar's demimonde, Tomaso is in love with the son of a harbor-side tavern keeper, a perilous affair, as the

youth's drunken and narrow-minded father has contacts among the Mereghn. Discovering his son's affections for the troubadour, the burly innkeeper does not look kindly upon their relationship, and takes out a contract on Tomaso's life. The minstrel turns to the adventurers for help in his predicament. He does not wish his relationship with the boy widely known, nor does he wish to die. Although such a relationship as between Tomaso and the 17 year-old youth is not specifically illegal, the boy in question is not of consenting age. Furthermore, Tomaso desires to be wed, preferably to a lady of wealth and title, and wishes to play the field until an appropriately convenient damsel presents herself (ideally, a lady who has as little use for a husband, save in public, as Tomaso has for a wife).

One solution might be to appeal directly to the Mereghn. Surely even the hearts of hardened killers might be softened by a tale of love, although the adventurers must be truly passionate in their oratories if this is their preferred option. Finding the Mereghn's Ilmar headquarters should be an adventure in itself, as would be fending off assassination attempts while the adventurers hunt for it. Saving Tomaso's reputation from the drunken slanders of his lover's bullish father is another aspect of this scenario the adventurers must take into account.

NADSOKOR

THE FRIEND OF ART

In some city not far from Nadsokor, beggars insult or steal from the adventurers. The next day, an elderly sorcerer, or perhaps the Mereghn if the adventurers have had any successful dealings with that organization, wishes to hire the adventurers to retrieve a special art object. It is a small painting in a gilt frame, the whole about ten inches by twelve. The subject is the head and shoulders of a young blonde woman wearing a blue gown, and a blue scarf on her head, an utterly ordinary portrait.

In itself, the painting is worth only a few hundred bronzes, but it also has a useful magical property. When a person holds the painting and examines it for a few moments, the expression on the painting shifts subtly but unmistakably to onlookers. Rather quickly, though imperceptibly to the holder, the painting comes to reflect the current state of mind of the viewer treacherous, honest, greedy, troubled, and so forth. When someone attempts to conceal an emotion, the onlooker needs a successful Insight roll to clearly understand the aspect's appearance.

The former owner does not know who took the painting, nor why, but he suspects a beggar band that was in the neighborhood. The client advances travel money. The reward for recovering the painting is fifteen hundred bronzes per person, plus training of one spell per person in the case of the sorcerer, or of one canceled contract on someone's life in the case of the Mereghn.

The beggars did steal the painting, and are headed full-speed toward Nadsokor. The adventurers can pursue, but the beggars cleverly use misdirection, disguises, and false trails to elude their pursuers. And they are well-prepared, having even created beforehand a false painting with which to confuse the adventurers. The chase ends in failure, as the beggars reach Nadsokor and disappear within its putrid walls. Their leader, Broko the Barber, enjoys taunting them from afar.

If the adventurers follow in, perhaps suitably disguised, they must survive Nadsokor itself, convince a succession of derelict and amoral people to talk, and chase the clues they provide toward the beggars. Presumably the beggars resent this sort of extended attention, and a fight follows, at the end of which the adventurers learn that the beggars have delivered the prize to King Urish. Urish is now using the painting to entertain and humiliate members of his court. Every night Urish interrogates new targets, and wrings out from them their worst secrets. Can the adventurers whisk away the prized painting from under the noses of the most desperate villains in the Young Kingdoms?

ORG & TROOS

AMONG THE MISSING

The adventurers are in Raalston, in Ilmiora, and are among those hired to protect a large herd of cattle being driven from Raalston to Ordis, just across the Vilmirian border. A disreputable speculator, Serazz the Slippery, is sponsoring the drive. He has just cornered the cattle market in Ordis, and must get a big cash return in order to pay his debts. The developing famine in Vilmir represents his best chance.

If they ask around about Serazz, the adventurers will be warned about him. Serazz will offer up to thirty bronzes per day, to be paid in Ordis. Small wounds and injuries are paid for at ten bronzes each, and a major wound or injury gets an extra one hundred bronzes each.

There are nearly 8000 head of cattle. Well-fed beef cattle are fetching nearly a thousand bronzes each in Ordis and points south, offering an enormous potential profit for Serazz. The cattle must be herded for about 250 miles, and they can be moved at no more than about ten miles per day, if they are to have enough time to graze, and thereby maintain good weights. Twenty drovers and wagon hands do the herding and cooking. Serazz hires another twenty individuals as guards, enough men to fight off Orgian raiders if they are alert, and lucky. He will travel independently by palanquin, and meet the herd in Ordis.

Naturally the adventurers will need to be lucky. Areena Flathand, the trail boss, has staffed her drovers with half of the desperadoes in Ilmiora. Serazz has hired the guards, who are reasonably honest and trustworthy, but Areena plans to drug and then give the guards to the Orgians in return for easy passage, kill Serazz, and steal profits which she calculates as between six and seven million bronzes. After she

gives B.50,000 to each drover, she'll still have five or six million for herself.

Some possible clues might include the presence of several Orgian half-breeds as drovers, the presence of three well-known Chaotic murderers, observing an interview between Areena and a personal representative of Cardinal Garrick (who is to get a kickback of another million or two), the complaints of area ranchers concerning Serazz's greed and their hopes that somebody cuts his throat, the magical detection of the presence of the sleeping potion in the adventurers' food, and other ideas as the gamemaster might think up.

The drive follows the Barlimm River upstream for about sixty miles, then swings south into the narrow passage (known by drovers as the Gullet) between the Forest of Troos and the hills to the east. This is the easiest and quickest route, but is only about five miles across, easy to observe, and is nearly twenty miles long, taking nearly two days to traverse. They will have to camp within the Gullet for one night, at least.

In the Gullet, Areena plans to send the half-breeds to invite the Orgians, then drug the guards that night and give their sleeping bodies to the Orgians. The Orgians will eat a couple randomly, but carry most back to Org, for a banquet and celebration, leaving no trace. Once the adventurers are captured by the Orgians, only magic or brilliant cleverness can much help them out.

Possible intervention might come from Serazz, who might be secretly tracking his hoofed fortune, or from one of the squadrons of Ilmari cavalry who routinely patrol the verge of the Forest of Troos. Serazz might be protected by a reliable group of mercenaries, or be the semi-prisoner of guards who work for the people to whom he owes money. And Cardinal Garrick might dispatch a party of pilgrims or volunteers across the lonely border to oversee *his* interests as well. The adventurers risk cruel deaths as well as the scrutiny and hostility of many powerful people.

THE WEeping WASTE

TEARS IN THE RAIN

The adventurers are hired as guards for a simple expedition into the Weeping Waste, mounted by a merchant working for Duke Elgar Esholta, Vilmir's Lord Protector. Their task is a simple one, to protect the expedition from the marauding warriors of the Waste. The purpose of the expedition is to harvest timber for Uhaio's shipyards.

Departing from Uhaio, the expedition travels first by sea to Mariol, in the Vilmirian protectorates, then upriver as far as the triple junction of the Stresh. From here the journey is overland. As well as the adventurers, several other guards accompany the expedition, led by a dour Vilmirian merchant, Ongar Zaragosa. Once enough trees have been felled, the party is told, the timber will be rafted downstream.

Reaching the rain-soaked plateau, the adventurers may glimpse diminutive figures which disappear rapidly into the

mist. The plateau's tribes shun the outlanders, neither attacking nor parleying. On the third day, a discovery is made. Scouts, perhaps even the adventurers, discover the bodies of a Waste family, victims of some virulent disease. Search rolls uncover the blankets that the family slept upon blankets of Vilmirian make. Physik rolls note the fleabites and buboes which disfigure the corpses. If the adventurers do not immediately make the connection, an Idea roll may allow them to guess that the family died of a plague introduced on the blankets. Track rolls discover the tracks of several large horses, their hooves shod, unlike the Waste's small, fleet ponies.

Soon afterwards a suitable stand of timber is reached, and the expedition's foresters set about felling the majestic trees. Now the Waste tribes attack. Their hit-and-run tactics are difficult to combat. Young Kingdoms rolls suggest that the Waste barbarians will honor a parley. A spokeswoman from the tribes, short, squat, every inch of her skin seemingly disfigured with deliberate and dramatic scars, accuses the expedition of being responsible for spreading the plague, in an attempt to prevent any opposition to their tree-cutting activities. Physik rolls may note that several among the gathered barbarians seem ill.

Swift speeches by the adventurers may be able to persuade the tribes that the expedition is not responsible for the disease. Evidence will be demanded; the easiest solution is to track down the foreigners whose tracks the adventurers have previously seen. With the trail already cold, tracking will be hard. As the adventurers draw closer to the mysterious outlanders, more disease-ridden Waste encampments will be found. Perhaps the adventurers themselves have been exposed to the plague, adding a sense of urgency to their mission. The remaining expedition members, meanwhile, languish under a death sentence, enacted by the ferocious barbarians, should the adventurers not return.

Eventually the adventurers discover the culprits responsible for spreading the plague: a small company of Vilmirians, led by an Inquisitor of Law. They are responsible for handing out blankets to the tribes they meet; blankets deliberately infected with the plague. Their orders come direct from Duke Elgar Esholta. They also carry an antidote, to prevent themselves from falling sick. The adventurers must obtain the antidote for themselves, and perhaps for the barbarians already sick; convince the Inquisitor of the wrong he is doing, or slay him and his men outright, for they will not easily abandon their task; face a desperate ride back to where the expedition is camped, arriving just as all are about to be put to death; and deal with the wrath of Duke-Protector Esholta, whose plans they have foiled. This later event may well form a major scenario in its own right.

TANELORN

ANXIOUS FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

In Karlaak, the adventurers meet a wealthy young man and his servants. Kurass is the young man, heir to a vast fortune. He says that he is on the edge of total enlightenment, and

wants to hire the adventurers to escort him to Tanelorn. He plainly believes what he says, but Kurass is quite insane. Since he is completely incapable of finding the city by himself, it has become his hobby to isolate captives in the great sand-sea, set them free, and use magic to observe them from afar, hoping that their trials will somehow lead them to Tanelorn. Three of his servants are actually sorcerers, who aid him in this. They should be a match for any adventurer mages, but not greatly more powerful.

Kurass leaves the adventurers to struggle in the desert. If they make it back to Karlaak, he magically appears, and chides them for not finding Tanelorn. Then he sets them out in the desert again.

Each episode can be played out, if the gamemaster is ingenious, or simply summarized in order to more closely link the interviews between Kurass and the adventurers. Sooner or later (probably sooner), the adventurers realize that the road to their enlightenment passes through Kurass' dead body, and contrive to kill him, or at least his sorcerers.

If the adventurers have pertinent magic, that might be used directly. If they do not have useful magic, their best bet is to split up, leave some deliberately traveling the desert, while the rest return to Karlaak and attempt to hire counter-sorcerers, to learn applicable magic, to enter his well-guarded mansion and assassinate Kurass, or to appeal to a respected man such as Senator Voashoon for his protection or intervention.

THE SIGHING DESERT

GOLDEN SANDS

A bustling market place such as that of crowded Bakshaan is the ideal location to begin the adventure. The adventurers discover a wild-eyed trader, his skin burnt a deep brown by the sun, selling curious goods from the Sighing Desert: wooden armor, exotically carved gourds, and unusual jewelry and fabrics. He wears curious robes, and a turban swathes his head. Among the items he has for sale is a map, found in a casket recently uncovered by a sandstorm. The merchant claims the map reveals the location of a gold mine in the Bone Hills. He offers to sell them the map for a mere 10 bronzes.

A close examination of the map, and successful Evaluate or Scribe rolls suggest that it is authentic; the fine, translucent vellum is extremely old, and the ink is faded. The map presents a sketch of the coast, with a twin-peaked hill clearly marked, from which flows a stream the map calls River of Gold in Melnibonéan (a more literal translation might be Blood of the Earth, given the subtle poetry of the Melnibonéan tongue, as a critical Language roll will tell.)

In finding the mine, the adventurers must face either an arduous trek overland, or an equally dangerous voyage along the coast, risking stormy seas and shallow waters. It is not difficult to find the location shown by the map, provided that the adventurers are sharp-eyed and keen. The gamemaster

may wish to insert appropriate encounters and travelogues along the way, drawn from the text, or require Navigate and Search rolls as desired.

The lower regions of the stream prove to be rich with gold dust, extricable by panning. If the adventurers explore a short way inland, they find that smaller, then larger gold nuggets become more common the closer they trace the stream to its source. After a grueling climb into the Bone Hills, they can find the point where the stream gushes forth from a small cave. At this point, it is almost pure liquid gold, the valley lifeless and bare, and the stream steaming. Entering the cave, the adventurers find that it becomes hotter the deeper they journey into the hill. Eventually they pass the stream's source, a deep spring. The source of the river of molten gold lies even deeper in the earth.

The gold flows from the veins of a greater earth elemental, which has been cruelly bound by a greedy Melnibonéan sorcerer. The wizard is long since dead, but this spell remains, as do the carven ruins of his subterranean home, now empty save for the dusty stone. Rich furniture and exotic silks were once to be found here, but all have since rotted away, although traces of them may remain. The river of gold flows in an artificial canal through the house. The elemental hangs from sorcerous bonds in a cavernous room at the rear of the house. Its molten blood sluices from an enchanted spigot inserted into its rocky veins. The spigot's STR 20 must be overcome to pull it free. The spigot is large enough for two people to take hold of it and combine their STRs. An automatic 1D6 points of damage are inflicted each round, due to the proximity of the superheated gold. Metal armor does not protect from such damage; indeed, it magnifies it. Leather armor withstands the heat for one round.

Once the elemental stops bleeding (its granite hide grows a quartz scab within moments) it will be strong enough to tear itself free from the age-weakened magical restraints. Assisting the elemental gains the adventurers 1D6 Balance points, as well as the elemental's thanks. It promises to aid them in some way in the future, and tells them its name. The adventurers may call upon the elemental once, and once only. It may assist with the siege of a castle by destroying one wall, halt an earthquake or a cave-in, or stop an avalanche. Limits to tasks it may perform should be set by the gamemaster. Furthermore, considerable gold lies slowly cooling within the cave and ruins, enough to make the adventurers wealthy beyond dreams of avarice.

If the adventurers do not free the elemental, it curses them in Grome's name. They lose 1D6 Balance points. Thereafter all earth elementals are predisposed to hate them. Such antipathy extends to Grome himself, who is the only creature that can lift the curse. Winning Grome's forgiveness should be a major scenario in itself. Supernatural enmity may not concern greedy adventurers, who after all, have access to considerable wealth if the elemental remains a prisoner. Such gold should bear its own unique taint, and attract unwanted attention upon the adventurers from Grome's faithful, whenever and wherever it is spent. ☉

CALENDARS

OF THE YOUNG KINGDOMS

BE HOPEFUL, if you like, and think of the dreadful past the earth has known, or brood upon the future. But if you would know the unholy truth then Time is an agony of Now, and so it will always be.

— The Weird of the White Wolf, II, 1

TWO CALENDARS are favored in the Young Kingdoms today. The first is of Melnibonéan invention, and is now only in everyday use on the Dragon Isle, although some human scholars and nobles are familiar with it. The second calendar, widely used, is of human origin and was invented in Lormyr. Both calendars are presented below. The names of the days of the week are common to both, although naturally in Imrryr the Melnibonéan form is used. For ease, the Common Tongue translation of the days and months are given here.

Each month is broken up into weeks of seven days. The names of the days are, in Common and present-day Melnibonéan respectively, Sunday (Othata), Moonday (Othom), Starday (Othlil), Earthday (Othgrom), Airday (Othlas), Fireday (Othak) and Waterday (Othstra).

THE MELNIBONÉAN CALENDAR

THIS CALENDAR has eight months, each of 45 days, plus five special days, making a total of 365 days in a year. The eight months of the year are named after the eight flowers most prized at the Imrryrian court: Taitoru (Anemone), Tuthai (Lotus), Nantiran (Chrysanthemum), Kelshaan (Rose), Chensha (Peach Blossom), Ichino (Lily), Liem (Orchid), and Hoitaru (Magnolia).

Five special, intercalendar days are celebrated at certain points of the year, marking the turn of the seasons and the beginning and end of each year. These days do not come within months, but between them. Every eight years two extra-special days are added to the calendar, falling

between the months of Nantiran and Kelshaan. This special occasion, the Kritoshu-Chaeric-Vanai, (or Celestial Octanial Carnival in the common speech) is particularly sacred to Duke Arioch of Chaos, and is marked by celebrations splendid even by Melnibonéan standards.

Melnibonéan reckoning dates from the Foundation of the Ruby Throne and the crowning of Sadric I, when the Melnibonéans swore allegiance to Chaos. Dates either side of this event are referred to as BC (Before Chaos) and AF (After Foundation). Thus Elric will be crowned in the year 10,041 AF, while the events described by Moorcock in Elric of Melniboné take place in 10,042 AF.

By Melnibonéan tradition, each year is retrospectively labeled with a title, based on the major event of the year. Thus 9641 AF is known as The Year of Insurrection, when the Young Kingdoms rose against the Bright Empire, 3564 AF is The Year of the Three Emperors, and so on.

Unknown to the Melnibonéans, the creation of a calendar and the invention of recorded history set boundaries on the realities of their world, restricting it to only one reality instead of infinite versions thereof. This imposition of Law upon a Chaos-created world was one of many acts which would, over millennia, contribute to the weakening of Chaos and to the downfall of Melniboné itself.

THE LORMYRIAN CALENDAR

THIS CALENDAR is in use in all of the Young Kingdoms, saving only Dorel and the Weeping Waste. Devised by Osric the Wise, a Lormyrian scholar, it dates from Lormyr's succession from the Bright Empire. Events are dated YK. (Young Kingdoms) if happening after this event, or IS. (In Slavery) if they happened during Melnibonéans rule. The Year of Insurrection, 9641 on the Melnibonéan calendar, is the year 1 YK, the first year of freedom in Lormyr, although the date was applied retroactively, as

— continued on page 139

A MELNIBONÉAN YEAR: 10,040 A.F.

TAITORU (ANENOME)

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
*	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34
35	36	37	38	39	40	41
42	43	44	45			

* *Oromiel*, intercalendar day, see below.

TUTHAI (LOTUS)

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
32	33	34	35	36	37	38
39	40	41	42	43	44	45
*						

* *Atalu*, intercalendar day, see below.

★ OMORIEL (NEW YEAR)

This day is the first day of any year, one of the five intercalendar days, and does not fall under any month. Coming as it does hard on the heels of Rielva, (or Yearsend) it is a time of celebration and quiet joy. Melnibonéans traditionally celebrate their birthdays on Omoriel Day.

★ ATALU (SUMMER'S END)

A festival to mark the end of summer and the start of autumn. It is a day of quiet contemplation and morbid ritual. Small ceremonies are often carried out on Atalu, usually involving mourning and the burial of slaves, sometimes alive, to commemorate the death of the world for another year.

NANTIRAN (CHRYSANTHEMUM)

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34
35	36	37	38	39	40	41
42	43	44	45			

* *The Kritoshu-Chaeric-Vanai*, see below

KELSHAAN (ROSE)

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
32	33	34	35	36	37	38
39	40	41	42	43	44	45
*						

* *Othro-ep-Chalai*, see below.

★ THE KRITOSHU-CHAERIC-VANAI

(Celestial Octanial Carnival) is held every eight years, over two days, between the months of Nanatiran and Kelshaan. The next carnival will occur in 10,046 AF).

★ OTHRO-EP-CHALAI (DAY OF THE DEAD)

The festival of winter, death and darkness, on which ancestors are remembered with great ceremony, and their graves visited. Often the cadavers of especially revered Melnibonéans are carried from their tombs, dressed in state robes and jewels, and carried about in sedan chairs or sat in thrones on Othro-ep-Chalai, so that the dead may feel that they are still part of life.

A MELNIBONÉAN YEAR: 10,040 A.F.

CHENSHA (PEACH BLOSSOM)

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
* 1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34
35	36	37	38	39	40	41
42	43	44	45			

* *Othro-ep-Chalai*, see below.

LIEM (ORCHID)

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
* 1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34
35	36	37	38	39	40	41
42	43	44	45			

* *Anai-ep-Shoto*, see below.

ICHINO (LILY)

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
32	33	34	35	36	37	38
39	40	41	42	43	44	45

*

* *Anai-ep-Shoto*, see below.

HOITARU (MAGNOLIA)

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
32	33	34	35	36	37	38
39	40	41	42	43	44	45

*

* *Rielva*, see below.

* ANAI-EP-SHOTO (FESTIVAL OF FLOWERS)

This day celebrates the return of spring and the world's rebirth. If Anai-ep-Shoto is fine, then the summer shall be fine and the harvests good. If it raining on Anai-ep-Shoto, Imrryrian tradition says, it heralds a year of storms.

* RIELVA (YEAREND)

The last day of the year and celebrations looking forward to the year ahead. The most debauched and hedonistic celebration of the Melnibonéan calendar, saving only state occasions such as weddings and funerals, and the Celestial Octanial Carnival.

A LORMYRIAN YEAR: 400 YK

ELORDAN

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40	41	42				

AUBECIAN

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	32	33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40	41		

SIGMURSAN

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40						

MONTFATH

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37
38	39	40				

THEOFRIC

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34
35	36	37	38	39	40	

MYRSAN

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40						

SATHRAN

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34
35	36	37	38	39	40	41

ARKENAN

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32	33	34	35
36	37	38	39	40	41	

DONBLAN

S	M	S	E	A	F	W
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	32	33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40	41		

(continued from 135)

Osric did not design his calendar until a decade later. Elric will be crowned Emperor of Melniboné in the year 401 YK.

The Lormyrian year has nine months. Of these, five have 41 days, the other four only 40. An extra day, known as Sigmur's Day, is added to Elordan every four years, giving it 42 days (as is the case in the current year, 400 YK, the next Sigmur's day falling in 404). Sigmur was an ancient Lormyrian hero who drowned while diverting flood waters, saving his village but dying in the process. So clever was Sigmur that he persuaded Grandmother Death to restore him to life, provided that one day every four years he returned to tell her stories of the world of the living. Sigmur's Day marks that occasion.

CONCERNING THE SEASONS

THE YOUNG KINGDOMS experiences the four seasons of summer, autumn, winter, and spring. Being a flat world, the Young Kingdoms has no equator, and thus a fairly stable climate from north to south. The lands east and west, being closer to the point where the sun rises and sets, are correspondingly warmer. The climactic variation which causes the seasons is due to the sun drawing closer to the earth or drawing further away at different times of the year. Tradition has it that this is because Kakatal's relationship with Lassa is a fiery one, and that after several months of closeness, an argument drives Kakatal away, and it is several months before he returns to his wife's side.

By Melnibonéan reckoning each season lasts two months. Thus summer begins in Taitoru and ends on the 45th of Tuthai. Autumn lasts from Nantiran to the last day of Kelshaan, Winter covers the months Chensha and Ichino, while spring begins in Liem and ends in Hoitaru. Each season is marked by an inter-calendar day.

In the human nations, where the Lormyrian calendar is employed, things are slightly more complex. Of the four seasons, each lasts for two months save spring, which lasts for three. Thus, summer begins in Elordan and ends in Sigmursan; autumn covers Theofric and Aubecian, Montfath, and Myrsan are the months of winter, while spring, the longest season of the year, and the most eagerly awaited by lovers, farmers, and poets, begins in Sathran and ends in Donblan. As spring is the season of sowing grain and lambing, and being thus the season when the peasants are busiest in the fields, it was long ago decided in feudal Lormyr that spring should be the longest season of the year. ☉

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