

PATHFINDER CHRONICLES

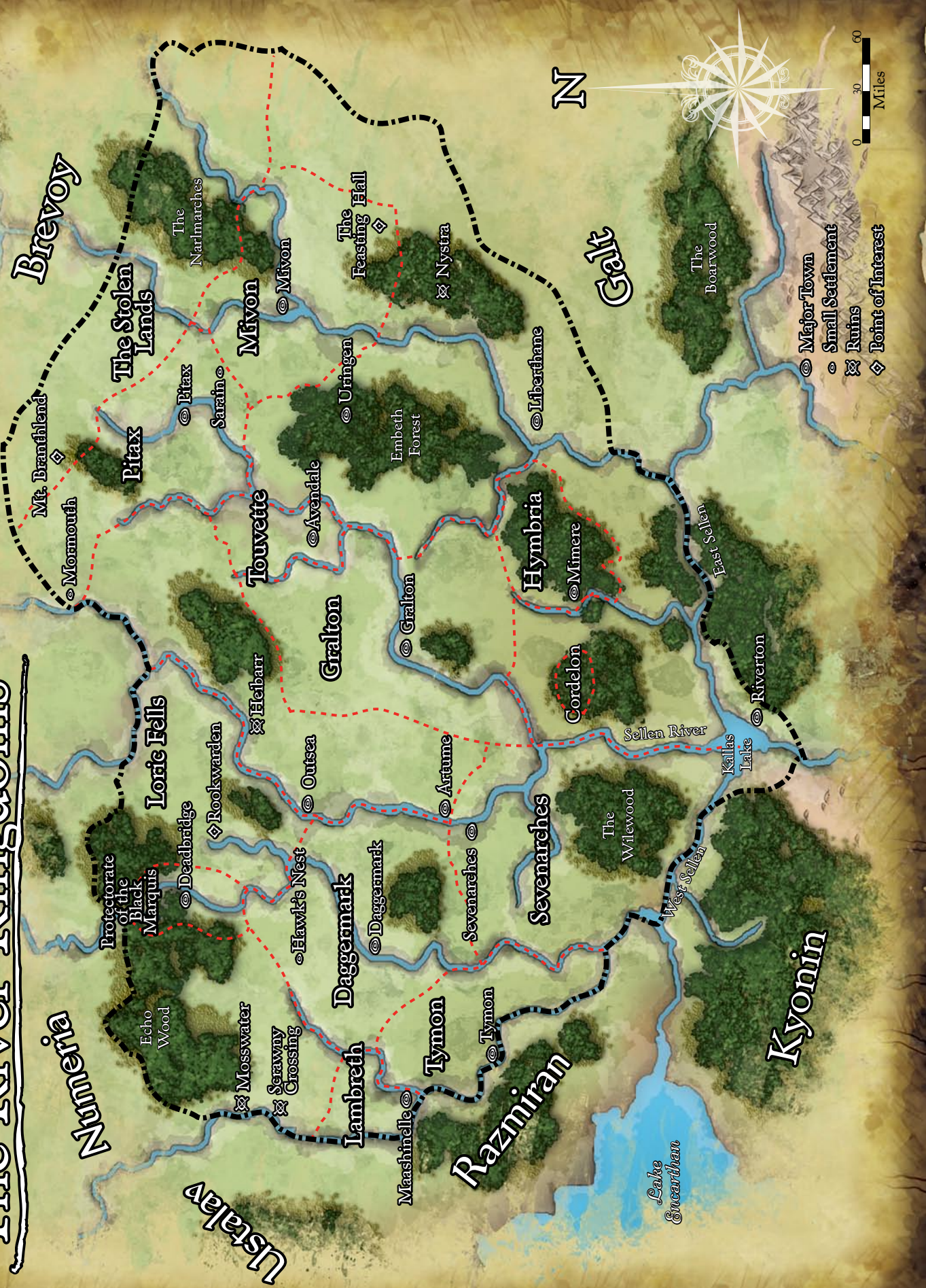


GUIDE TO THE RIVER KINGDOMS

China Miéville, Elaine Cunningham,
Chris Pramas, and Steve Kenson

DAN SCOTT

The River Kingdoms



Brevoy

The Stolen Lands

Pitax

Mivon

Touvette

Galton

Hlymbria

Galt

Numeria

Loric Fells

Daggermark

Sevenarches

Protectorate of the Black Marquis

Lambreth

Tymon

Razmiran

Kyonin

Echo Wood

Mosswater

Hawk's Nest

Sevenarches

Tymon

The Wilewood

Mt. Branchland

Mormouth

The Narimarches

Avendale

Embeth Forest

Nystra

Liberthane

The Boarwood

Deadbridge

Rookwarden

Heibarr

Outsea

Artume

Cordelon

Sellen River

Kallas Lake

Riverton

Seraway Crossing

Lake Suanthan

- Major Town
- Small Settlement
- Ruins
- Point of Interest



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GUIDE TO THE RIVER KINGDOMS

Pathfinder Chronicles Supplement

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Credits

Authors: Eric Bailey, Kevin Carter, Elaine Cunningham, Adam Daigle, Mike Ferguson, Joshua J. Frost, Steve Kenson, Rob Manning, Alison McKenzie, Colin Moulder-McComb, China Miéville, Brock Mitchel-Slantz, Jason Nelson, Richard Pett, Chris Pramas, Jeff Quick, Sean K Reynolds, F. Wesley Schneider, Lisa Stevens, Neil Spicer, Matthew Stinson, and John Wick

Cover Artist: Dan Scott

Cartography: Rob Lazzaretti

Interior Artists: Jeff Carlisle, Billy George, Andrew Kim, Muyoung Kim, Craig J. Spearing, and Kieran Yanner

Editor-in-Chief: James Jacobs

Managing Editor: F. Wesley Schneider

Editing and Development: Christopher Carey, Rob McCreary, Sean K Reynolds, and James L. Sutter

Editorial Assistance: Jason Bulmahn

Art Director: Sarah E. Robinson

Senior Art Director: James Davis

Production Specialist: Crystal Frasier

Publisher: Erik Mona

Paizo CEO: Lisa Stevens

Vice President of Operations: Jeffrey Alvarez

Corporate Accountant: Dave Erickson

Director of Sales: Pierce Watters

Sales Manager: Christopher Self

Technical Director: Vic Wertz

Events Manager: Joshua J. Frost

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Paizo Publishing, LLC

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BY JEFF QUICK

THE RIVER KINGDOMS

In the far-distant past, when forests covered much of Avistan and elves were the dominant race, the land now known as the River Kingdoms was verdant and lively. Streams ran quick and clear, and the land was green and firm. This territory adjoining Kyonin and Lake Encarthan was a place for high nobles and their courts to enjoy hunting and sport. The elves called it Telvurin, translated today in Taldane as “The Shifting Lands.” The departure of the elves gave the human race new territory to explore, putting them in conflict with lizardfolk, frog-men, and suspicious fey. With its dozens of tributary rivers dividing the region into countless small territories, it became a natural place for outcasts, rebels, and petty tyrants to stake claims and declare themselves rulers of whatever land they could grab and hold.



Millennia later, the pleasantness of the land remains. Unfortunately, so does the chaos. Very little stays static in the River Kingdoms. The rivers slowly shift boundaries over centuries, and kingdoms can trade hands yearly. Banditry is a national pastime, and security is a distant hope for commoners, reserved for people in other lands.

The River Kingdoms are a collection of often-fractional neighbors united only by their common geography and their near-anarchic independence. When the local lord may change from year to year, the nearest “king” is actually a bandit with delusions of grandeur, and the only thing protecting a rancher’s livestock is how well he can use a sword, the strong learn to depend on themselves and distrust those who break their word or exploit others. Though the leaders of the River Kingdoms are varied and ever-changing, the people—as stubborn and contrary as they may be—mark the character of the River Kingdoms: survivalist adaptability and stubborn endurance.

The first section of this book covers the geography of the River Kingdoms, how this region survives as a political entity despite not having a unified leader, the many types of governments that exist here, relations with other countries, and what life is like in this land. Any discussion of the River Kingdoms, of course, must address its bandit problem, its strange local deities, and the Six River Freedoms held common throughout the kingdoms.

The remainder of the book is a gazetteer of 22 of the most significant territories within the River Kingdoms. Eight of these are the largest and most stable: Daggermark, Galton, Lambreth, Mivon, Pitax, Sevenarches, Tymon, and Uringen; though little more than city-states with ambiguous borders, these eight major kingdoms conduct trade and engage in diplomacy with nearby countries where smaller or newer kingdoms may be laughed off by merchants and foreign leaders. The other territories are smaller, more isolated kingdoms which may yet survive long enough to establish a permanent foothold in the manner of Daggermark and the other major players, or else places that lie fallow after wars, plagues, or unknown events. The Stolen Lands is the setting for the Kingmaker Adventure Path; whether or not you plan to run a campaign using that Adventure Path, this area is ripe for exploration and can easily be the site of a custom home-brewed campaign of conquest for ambitious PCs.

RIVER KINGDOMS GEOGRAPHY

The lay of the land is the direct result of the Sellen River and its many tributaries. The rich, damp soil supports ancient trees and traps water, creating dozens of isolated boggy areas with their own ecologies and pockets of native creatures.

The Sellen River

This wide, lazy river system drains across the gentle slopes of the River Kingdoms into Kallas Lake, and eventually empties into the Inner Sea. The Sellen is the main transport system

of this region, as it or its tributaries touch most kingdoms in the nation. Thanks to the Third River Freedom (see page 7), these waterways are clear of any official obstruction to trade or travel. However, bandits and pirates ply all parts of the river, so travel and commerce are never certain. Merchants mainly move food around the kingdoms, but steady traffic in arms and armor makes traders both good targets for bandits and well prepared for them. Travelers also use the Sellen daily, and the western and main branches are highways for crusaders headed to Mendev. Of course, crusaders often feel obliged to halt wrongdoing along the way as well, or to stop and collect some much-appreciated “donations” to the cause.

In most places, the river is less than a mile wide and around 12 feet deep, best suited to barge travel. Bridges seldom last outside of the stable kingdoms, so ferryboats are common along the waterway.

Outsiders find it confusing that on many maps the tributaries are also called “the Sellen River.” The turnover of sovereignty leads to frequent renaming, making most names too temporary to be useful. When it’s relevant, the river is referred to by its three main branches: West Sellen, Main Sellen, and East Sellen, with specific sections of the river named according to the nearest kingdom through which it flows. When conversing with a native about one of these confusingly named rivers, understanding the particulars of directions and locations requires a DC 15 Knowledge (local) skill check.

Forests

Over a dozen discrete forested areas cover much of the River Kingdoms. During the time of the elves, woods blanketed much more of the land in one or two vast forests that rivaled the size of the modern Verduran, but logging, blight, and fire culled many of the trees over the ages. The larger forests are still home to secretive fey, and all of them are havens for bandits and other undesirables.

Swamps

The many waterways are known to flood and shift over time, and what was once a fertile plain can become a shallow lake in a particularly rainy season, eventually transforming into a bog. Conversely, the source of a swamp’s water may drift farther upstream, causing the swamp to dry out and revert to a forest or even a plain. Most plants of the River Kingdoms can adapt to wet or dry situations, though some thrive better in one or the other and are replaced by competitors when the environment changes too far from their optimal setup.

The waters carry silt and nutrients to all parts of the River Kingdoms, and crops grow well here, leading some enterprising settlers to plant on dry areas or small, clear-cut sites, moving their plots as the terrain accommodates these alterations. This constant change means that



maps drawn a decade ago may contain significant errors regarding wilderness areas, and those from a century before may be all but unrecognizable except for the names of settlements.

THE PRIZED PROFESSIONS

In most countries, food producers are at the bottom of the pecking order. Large nations need tons of food to feed their populace. Not so in the River Kingdoms, where smaller, scattered populations require less food, and a willingness to take charge of crops or livestock is practically an act of defiance. Able farmers and herders earn respect for daring to do their jobs. Indeed, food suppliers are local heroes, and wise lords court their involvement, especially since the Third River Freedom makes standard feudalism impossible. Mistreated farmers or herders can leave and receive a hero's welcome a day's walk away if they're willing to contribute their skills to that community. This makes farming and ranching among the noblest professions among Riverfolk, the work of the courageous few who feed their families and safeguard communities against raiders and the hazards of nature.

Soldiers are the other laurelled professionals in the River Kingdoms. A lord may have only a few dozen loyal soldiers, with the rest of his military made up of mercenaries. Anyone can carry a spear, but a soldier trained with weapons, steeled to battle, and devoted to a king is worth more than his or her salary. Few kingdoms bother to differentiate between military and city watch—soldiers handle both roles. An experienced, loyal soldier is respected by local Riverfolk as a guardian. This appreciation has a bolstering effect on soldiers who guard a kingdom. Some remain tied to the people of the land, and accept new lords as they come and go as long as the common people are treated well; others prefer to find a more compatible liege in another kingdom when the local ruler changes.

THE THREAT OF INVASION

Many a roving eye has looked at the fine pastures and fields of the River Kingdoms with intent to claim them. The pickings look easy, but the doing has proven difficult. Rulers in the River Kingdoms are fractious neighbors, but common enemies bind them like *sovereign glue*.

Razmiran, Numeria, and Galt are the foreign governments most frequently making claims to land here, but none have made a long-standing claim to more than a section of the River Kingdoms. Generally, chaos within the kingdoms—disorganization, madness, or simple stubbornness—prevents these other countries from mounting a unified offense, but the land proves tricky to hold. The people are recalcitrant, and the rivers favor entrenched defenders. Furthermore, the River Kingdoms represent one of the geographically larger political entities in Avistan,

comparable in size to Varisia or Chelixa, and larger than Andoran or Qadira. Taking the land might be relatively standard warfare, but occupying it is another matter. Few nations have the army to hold such acreage. Thus, the River Kingdoms remain unconquered by external forces. Only small-scale, internal strife leaves its mark.

The Outlaw Council

Consisting of leaders from the most significant kingdoms, the Outlaw Council provides the only political stability the land has ever known. Rulers from all kingdoms are invited to attend this yearly council in Daggermark, but only lords from Daggermark, Gralton, Lambreth, Mivon, Pitax, the Protectorate of the Black Marquis, Sevenarches, Tymon, and Uringen are truly respected. Other kingdoms are considered too transient to merit full consideration in the proceedings, though in the spirit of unity they are allowed to attend and speak occasionally. Unlike in other meetings, mere representatives are not allowed to speak—a lord must attend personally to have a voice.

Topics of yearly discourse include negotiating treaties, defense against mutual threats, food distribution, recognition of sovereignty, and solving smaller, interpersonal matters before they become armed conflicts. The meeting hall where the Outlaw Council gathers is considered neutral territory—no king rules any other there, even Livondar, Lord of Daggermark. However, Daggermark's famed assassins are on silent duty as servants throughout the meeting, making the Outlaw Council meeting the worst time of the year to attempt a Daggermark coup.

FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

Nearly every type of government imaginable has been attempted within the River Kingdoms, and will likely be attempted again. Below is a list of the most common government types that appear in the River Kingdoms. Government types can be mixed, such as an ethnocratic oligarchy. Types include:

Anarchy: The complete absence of organized government. This state exists intermittently throughout the River Kingdoms, but sustaining it as a form of actual policy is exceptionally difficult.

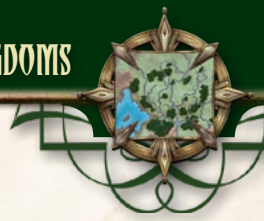
Aristocracy: Rule by a hereditary class of people. Usually subsumed under a monarchy.

Autocracy: Government in which one person has sole, unrestricted rule. Also known as despotism. The majority of River Kingdoms are ruled by autocrats.

Bureaucracy: Rule through a system of departments or bureaus, arranged in a hierarchy of authority. Department heads and staff are usually appointed rather than elected or openly decided.

Confederacy: Rule under a union of states, organizations, or individuals.

Democracy: Majority rule by the people. Rulers are elected from among the populace.



Dictatorship: Although a form of autocracy, a dictator has no plans or aspirations for hereditary rule.

Ethnocracy: Government in which rulership is limited to those of a particular ethnicity or race.

Feudality: A loosely defined form of government consisting of binding agreements between lords and vassals. The River Kingdoms make traditional concepts of feudalism difficult to sustain, but versions of this agreement frequently crop up in unstable regions.

Gerontocracy: Rule determined by the eldest—usually a group of elders, rather than the single oldest person.

Gynarchy: Explicit rule by females. See “matriarchy.”

Kritocracy/Kritarchy: Rule by judges. The former is rule by a judge’s personal opinion, whereas the latter is rule by comparison to an external standard, such as “natural rights.”

Magocracy: Rule by secular magical authority, usually a single wizard or sorcerer.

Matriarchy: Rule by a mother figure, within a familial social system.

Meritocracy: Government by those who demonstrate talent or ability in a certain position.

Militocracy: System of rule where the military holds full authority (another River Kingdoms favorite).

Monarchy: Government where supreme authority is held by one hereditary ruler, typically referred to as a king or queen. Many River Kingdom autocrats declare themselves monarchs.

Ochlocracy: Rule by a mob with no formal authority.

Oligarchy: Rule by an elite few.

Patriarchy: Rule by a single father figure, within a familial social system.

Pedocracy: Government by the learned or scholarly.

Plutocracy: Rulership by the rich. Although the wealthy always have power over government, plutocracy is explicit, literal rule by the wealthiest.

Republic: A form of government where the people ruled can indirectly affect the government through representatives.

Syndicracy: Rule by a business group.

Theocracy: Though technically meaning direct rule by a deity, theocracy is often defined as rule by clergy who act on a deity’s dictates. Also known as a hierocracy or emirate.

Within the River Kingdoms, “kingdom” is considered acceptable shorthand when referring to an autonomous state, and “lord” is the generic term of address for a ruler, regardless of a ruler’s form of government or sex.

RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS

The nations surrounding the River Kingdoms absorb and mirror some of their chaos. Many are in or close to civil upheaval, too disorganized to threaten the River Kingdoms’ major powers. No sovereign neighbor has both the ability and inclination to challenge River Kingdom hegemony. Some try anyway.

Brevoy

King Surtova is embroiled in a pending civil war and wary of turmoil in the River Kingdoms spilling over into his lands. To provide a buffer between his country and Pitax, he encourages ambitious folk to settle in the broad strip of land bordering Brevoy and the River Kingdoms, called the Stolen Lands (see page 50). Surtova hopes that by founding small colonies there, the “kings” of these realms will deal with aggressive Lord Irovetti of Pitax, or at least slow down any invasion force before it gets to Brevoy.

Galt

About once a generation, a Galtan leader decides to enforce some ancient treaty or deed entitling him to a swath of River Kingdoms territory. Since Galt doesn’t border any of the well-established realms, the offensive usually overruns an independent lord’s stake. Galt is in such a calamitous state that these forays never permanently enlarge Galtan holdings. But even in less tempestuous times, Galtans haven’t held the land for long, always losing their grip to some bandit king or charismatic rebel.

Just to make sure this remains the case, the lords of Gralton (who are mainly exiles from Galt) quietly supply mercenaries and aid to defenders in the River Kingdoms, without directly appearing to be involved; they do not wish to be hounded by their enemies and errors from the homeland any more than they already are. The only Galtans who have occupied a kingdom for any length of time are those in Gralton, and then only as their own fiefdom, not actually as an arm of Galt. The Oakstewards of Sevenarches claim this is the legacy of the elven chaos-land that the River Kingdoms were in millennia past.

Kyonin

Though the works of the elves are beautiful and awe-inspiring, the haughty behavior of the elves clashes with the inflated egos ruling the motley River Kingdoms, and fails to endear them to the lords of the Outlaw Council. Queen Edasseril and her court are keen to reclaim Sevenarches, but the ruling druid circle, the Oakstewards, do not allow elves inside their borders, and will meet with no emissary from the elven kingdom.



Kyonin has attempted to maneuver around this obstinate behavior by buying allies in Gralton and smaller kingdoms along the eastern border of Sevenarches. These alliances have gained little traction yet, as the elves find the turnover in leadership too quick to build “proper” relations.

Other kingdoms would love to deal with the elves, but Edasseril’s court officially disdains the lords of the Outlaw Council. Any kingdom other than Sevenarches attempting to treat with Kyonin on its own terms has its ambassadors politely and firmly halted at Greengold.

Numeria

Kellid nomad tribes constantly menace the northern edge of the River Kingdoms, from the Echo Wood all the way over to Pitax. These same tribes also make fine mercenaries when a northern lord wants to bolster his army. Automaton sometimes cross the borders on silent, murderous errands for their Technic League masters. Meanwhile, Numerian steel trickles into various River Kingdoms, and flows down the Sellen for profit.

Individual reactions to the River Kingdoms’ northern neighbors vary. The bloodthirsty Black Marquis of Deadbridge demands vicious revenge for every slight done to him, and a running feud between his men and local Kellid tribes seems to invigorate rather than deplete both sides. Irovetti of Pitax, on the other hand, barely seems to notice depredations onto his lands, although his bards have some scathing rhyme-chants in Hallit impugning the manhood of the raiders. The barbarians who hear them are reportedly so infuriated that they make easy targets for Irovetti’s archers.

Meanwhile, some folk consider Hajoth Hakados one of the River Kingdoms, despite being claimed by Numeria.

Razmiran

In living memory, Razmiran was one of the River Kingdoms (and by some reckoning, still is). The various rulers of Lambreth, Tymon, and Sevenarches hold predictably dim views of the theocracy next door. Lord Arnefax in Lambreth is particularly quick and brutal in repelling Razmir’s clergy, though worshipping the Living God is not forbidden—that would violate the First River Freedom. Some lords find the carrot more expedient than the stick, offering bounties for Razmiri religious symbols and literature, and letting their own people do the discouraging. The people need little incentive; they are as distrustful of Razmiri missionaries as they are of any outsider.

The bullying style of Razmiri proselytizers finds little purchase among the independent Riverfolk, who are well versed in repelling violent assault. Gentler priests bearing kind deeds and honeyed words, however, find an audience—selflessness and courage can sway hearts. Tales of the Living God find a toehold in some border settlements, no matter how the local lords rail.

Ustalav

The counts of Ustalav are too insular to have significant dealings with the River Kingdoms. Conte Ristomaur Tiriatic, count of the Varno territory, travels too often to plot against or with his immediate neighbor, Lord Arnefax of Lambreth, or any of the smaller kingdoms that rise and fall across the river. Arnefax finds little to dislike with this arrangement.

Political strife and civil war are traits both sides share, but this highlights their differences, rather than commonalities. Ustalavic commoners feel superior in that, even though they war, their rulers are nobles, and not trumped-up bandits. Meanwhile, the Riverfolk believe their freedom and self-determination make them superior to the trapped serfs. Fortunately, the mutual disdain doesn’t overly hinder trade. Fish, ore, and all manner of crafted goods (especially weapons) cross the borders in both directions, depending on whose food supplies are less secure this month.

Both Ustalav and various River Kingdoms lords claim fishing rights on the river they share, and skirmishes break out occasionally. Some lords, hard up for resources, send raiding parties into Ustalavic lands, while another group of counts has considered backing a tiny puppet regime just to provide stability along the border, seeking a likely candidate even now.

LIFE IN THE RIVER KINGDOMS

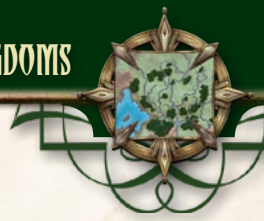
Passing crusaders headed to Mendev complain of the chaos in the River Kingdoms, but this is hyperbole. Far removed from the horror of the Worldwound, the River Kingdoms are as predictable as a cauldron—you never know what will come bubbling up, but you can be sure the whole thing is hot. This heat makes the River Kingdoms a singular place to live.

The River Kingdoms are split into more than two dozen sovereign realms, ruled by despots of varying temperament. Tyrants who raise a keep in the River Kingdoms often hail from surrounding lands, but are almost always castoffs, criminals, or wayward offspring of more important folk. Most rule by force, though some are gentler than others.

Life in the River Kingdoms is harsh. Bandits can attack at any time, local governments shift like riverbanks, invading armies pillage the land, and unexpected monstrous and magical threats occur with alarming frequency. Every family has lost someone to sudden violence. The perilous uncertainty keeps everyone tense, suspicious, and often angry.

Trust is paramount. Anyone unrecognizable is not just a potential threat, but also a potential vanguard for an army of threats. “Trust costs more than money” is a common Riverfolk aphorism.

For all this danger, though, the land is still beautiful and bountiful. Even the marshes and forests are fertile. Raiders, not the land or weather, make farming hard. Wheat, corn, oats, and rice are quick and plentiful crops grown throughout the kingdoms. Livestock grow fat on the rich grasses fed by the hydra-headed tributaries of the Sellen River.



Riverfolk love politics, and talk about it in the same manner as farmers talk weather: maybe they can't do anything about it, but they discuss it endlessly. Any given Riverfolk has an opinion about which form of government is best, how the local leader is doing, and how all the neighboring kingdoms' leaders are doing.

Living in the River Kingdoms requires protection. Farms and livestock pens are small and well defended, as though each were a small fortress. Moats and earthworks surround the better-established ones, and most farms also have a defensible cellar into which farmers and their families can retreat. Even hamlets and thorps have their own stockade walls, and most commoners wear weapons openly, "to keep everyone honest."

Trades that require complex support, such as alchemy, are rare and short-lived. Functional, relatively mobile livelihoods thrive here, including tanning, herding, brewing, and other forms of craftsmanship.

Bandits

Far more bandits roam the Kingdoms than one would think the population could absorb. Criminals and castoffs from nearby nations, as well as natives, frequently take a turn at banditry here. The law is flexible, and the Sixth River Freedom subtly encourages it.

Despite the fierce reputation of River Kingdoms bandits, many young men and women only try banditry as a side job, or as a found opportunity when they happen upon treasure left in weak hands. For a few, it's the only way to retrieve what was stolen from them first. Other bandits are mercenary soldiers turned out of their previous jobs. They would rather fight than steal, but they'd rather live than starve.

Commoners are a hardscrabble lot, so for profit, bandits target wealthy outsiders. Most cities contain lookouts for bandit crews, gathering information on likely visiting targets, or offering guide services to lure visitors into traps. The locals are always wise to these tricks, and for a handful of coppers, a local can usually identify the lookouts... assuming he isn't one of them himself.

For a charismatic few, banditry is a path to legitimacy. Bandit gangs past a certain size gain their own gravity; highway robbery becomes usurpation at a surprisingly low threshold in the River Kingdoms. More than once, a bandit leader has ended up taking over a keep that he only meant to plunder at the outset.

Yet the River Kingdoms are far from lawless; it's just that the laws they adhere to appear lawless in practice. The Six River Freedoms receive a lot of lip service, but the primary law of the River Kingdoms is that power rules. The members of the Outlaw Council would be quick to inform would-be philosophers that all nations follow this rule; the River Kingdoms just aren't shy about admitting it.

The Six River Freedoms

Frequently invoked—and occasionally trampled—the River Freedoms are the ideological backbone for common Riverfolk. Outsiders who expect to lead Riverfolk must quickly make themselves aware of the subtleties of the River Freedoms, as those who repeatedly flout a beloved freedom find themselves deposed by a mob. Indeed, the River Freedoms find their most curious interpretations in the folkways of common Riverfolk. A quick-witted wag who quotes a freedom to justify her actions can sway hearts to accept the most egregious behavior, and a misinterpretation of words can get an honest paladin driven out with malice.

Philosophers and scholars who study the political landscapes of the River Kingdoms rank the River Freedoms in order from least to most grave—after all, no one seriously believes in unfettered freedom to speak at all times. However, slavery is





as serious an offense here as in Andoran, and nothing is so sacred to Riverfolk as the freedom to keep what one holds.

Say What You Will, I Live Free: The freedom to speak is not the same as freedom from consequences of speech. Outsiders, drunkards, and fools are the only ones who vocally invoke this freedom. All others respect it, and live with it accordingly.

Still, criticism of government is more common here than in other lands. Cruel despots occasionally get an earful from their subjects, and the wise ones do not harshly punish such vocal rabble. In the River Kingdoms, subjects are earned by withstanding criticism rather than suppressing it. Pride sometimes intervenes, but a long-lasting lord is one who lets tongues wag.

This freedom is especially tantalizing for bards and anyone using charm magic. No one attempts to limit a spellcaster's speech, and a *silence* spell is a suspicious abrogation of rights.

Oathbreakers Die: The flip side of free speech in the River Kingdoms is the gravity of oath-breaking. Petty liars are common, but in a land where tomorrow can bring a gang of mercenaries, the people in charge must know whom they can trust. Common oaths include "I swear by the Sellen," "May Hanspur take my sons," and "My freedom is my bond."

Riverfolk who undertake oaths of this nature keep them, or die trying. This attitude trickles down to business transactions, but can ironically make things more difficult—it's hard to get a Riverfolk trader to fully commit to anything. Standard contracts contain a "Gyronna clause" which voids a contract in case of unforeseen calamity. This would seem a perfect dodge for scoundrels, but associating with Gyronna is the worst omen a Riverfolk trader can invoke. No one deals with a trader who admits affliction by Gyronna, lest the association rub off.

Walk Any Road, Float Any River: This freedom implies no safety while traveling, especially from the local lord. It merely prevents lords from blocking land and water travel, or charging tolls for passing (except for non-Riverfolk). Of course, any ruler who doesn't want people on his roads can bar them without erecting a single block—threats, bribes, political pressure, or hiring "bandits" are just as effective.

However, in practice, it means no lord can take his or her people for granted. Most Riverfolk do not leave their homes for anything but essential travel, no matter who is in charge (and poor Riverfolk usually have nowhere else to go), but they might still move to a new kingdom if their lord is abusive. This escape is rarely necessary. A lord who wants a functioning kingdom knows not to treat subjects too harshly, or the best ones will disappear, leaving a half-empty kingdom behind.

Courts Are for Kings: Buried midway down the list is one that undergirds them all: law within the River Kingdoms is malleable, and the rulers of a kingdom do as they wish. In

their lands, one must obey. Whether a visitor is a commoner or a neighboring king, all are subject to a lord's law within his own territory, and anyone who disobeys must be prepared for punishment or a declaration of war.

As a result, rulers seldom visit each other directly. Intermediaries do the talking, even when lords are scant miles away. When face-to-face negotiations occur, the monarchs often take great pains to protect their own sovereignty, even going so far as to set up camp tents on shared borders, talking across a rope line hung with pennants from both kingdoms. The major exception is the yearly Outlaw Council, where the meeting hall is considered politically neutral.

Slavery is an Abomination: Nothing is so secure in the River Kingdoms as freedom for escaped slaves. Unlike Andorens, Riverfolk won't leave their homes to free slaves, but a runaway in the River Kingdoms is a slave no more.

Some estimates say that one-third of the Riverfolk alive today are escaped slaves or descendants of slaves. Riverfolk welcome thousands of escaped slaves to all kingdoms each year, to fill ranks in armies and agriculture. Escaped slaves are usually the fiercest proponents of the River Freedoms, as these conventions are the first taste of freedom in their new lives.

Because of this freedom, Hellknights of the Order of the Chain and other slave-takers cannot operate openly here, and any Andoren Eagle Knight can dispel most Riverfolk's natural distrust of strangers by showing her insignia—and get a free drink and a barn to sleep in.

Depending on the local custom, this abolition can extend to indentured servitude. Spellcasters are warned to be circumspect when summoning monsters in the River Kingdoms, lest their magic be misinterpreted.

You Have What You Hold: In contrast to many other civilizations on Golarion, this freedom draws a moral distinction between robbery and mere stealing. Taking something by force is considered acceptable, even begrudgingly praiseworthy. Burglary, on the other hand, is punishable under common law. The difference is in allowing a victim the ability to resist, the opportunity to face his or her robber, and to plan for repossession if so desired. This allows for a rough honesty, letting Riverfolk know and face their enemies.

RELIGION

In addition to having temples and shrines to Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Erastil, Norgorber, Desna, and even Lamashtu, the River Kingdoms are home to many strange cults, some of which actually have a source of magic behind them. The elves say the magic of the land responds to belief, and many local tales tell of mysterious creatures of the woods who can grant boons in exchange for a sworn oath or devotion, with a few even having true clerics (though strangely limited by distance to their patron). The best known are Gyronna and Hanspur, who are actual (if minor) divinities and whose priests retain their magic throughout Golarion.





GYRONNA

The Angry Hag



Goddess of hatred, extortion, and spite

Alignment: CE

Domains: Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Madness

Favored Weapon: dagger

Gyronna's origin is uncertain, and few entities care to treat with her for any length of time to find out the truth. Some believe she may have once been a creature of the First World, cast out for some infraction against a fey queen. Others say she was born a green hag and became a favored priestess of Lamashtu, gaining divinity from some ancient pact. Still others suggest she was a rival or rebellious child of Baba Yaga, banished to a far land until her penance was paid. The goddess and her worshipers don't speak of her past and like to single out those who ask too many questions.

The goddess only allows females into her priesthood, and attracts the castaways and undesirables of society—those suspected of witchcraft, adulterous wives, old prostitutes, and so on. The Riverfolk fear her clergy for their ability to poison the minds of others with hate, turning friends against each other and making enemies out of allies (though they are not above knifing someone in an alley if it suits their purposes). They have been known to swap infants for demon-tainted creatures from their own horrid wombs (though it is unknown if these corrupted offspring are the norm for them, the result of evil magic, or require actual demonic couplings). They seem to only exist to prey on others, demanding coins from passersby, harassing solitary travelers with verbal and magical curses, and making visitors feel unwelcome; most Riverfolk pay the hags a few coppers to be left alone and move on. Gyronna has no book of scripture—at least, none has been found on any priestess's corpse.

Her priestesses favor loose black smocks, typically ragged at the bottom (called a "shabble" by Riverfolk). Some priestesses claim to have the "evil eye," and an unusual number of them have a bulging, bloodshot eye which appears to be the point of origin of their cast spells.

Gyronna's followers do not build temples, only small shrines throughout the land where offerings are left for her. The average shrine is just a pile of rocks topped with a fist-sized, spherical stone inscribed with an iris and vein-like tracings. Some actually have a large cat's eye gem instead of a common stone, and folk whisper that the goddess can see anyone near the stone—and curse those who dare defile the shrine or steal the gemstone.

Clerics of Gyronna may prepare *eyebite* as a 6th-level spell.

HANSPUR

The Water Rat



God of rivers and river travel

Alignment: CN

Domains: Chaos, Death, Travel, Water

Favored Weapon: trident

Some legends say that Hanspur was once a mortal priest of Gozreh; murdered in his sleep by a traveling companion, he was raised by his god as an unstable guardian of the waterways. True or not, Hanspur is said to ply the Sellen River from its northernmost point to where it empties into the Inner Sea, using the guise of a common riverman and sometimes accompanied by a pet dire rat. Grizzled and damp, he is usually dour and speaks little, though he can be quite friendly to those who respect the river. His doctrine comprises the Six River Freedoms and includes only a few other simple statements about the changing nature of things, how life is a river, and death on the water is a good end to an honorable, simple life. He dislikes dams that completely block a river, though ones that merely divert it or create a reservoir with an exit flow are acceptable.

Hanspur's faithful sometimes build driftwood shrines on the shore, or even float them downriver on small rafts. When a worshiper builds a temporary raft, it is customary to set it loose afterward to follow the river so that someone farther south might find it in a time of need. His priests have no set uniform, but tend to wear waterproofed, short-legged pants, and waterproofed ponchos (which can double as tent cloth or small sails), and often go barefoot. Most are proficient fishermen, whether using nets or poles. They make sacrifices to their god by drowning animals, unwanted infants, or convicted criminals (though evil priests are said to murder in his name, especially to prevent disastrous floods). The Water Rat's priests are highly transient and rarely stay in one settlement for more than a few days, trading news, magic, and mail in exchange for goods and shelter. Some hire themselves as guides or steersmen.

The great shrine of Hanspur stands on the northern shore of the Kallas Lake bordering the River Kingdoms and Kyonin. Technically a dozen rafts lashed together, it is home to a tiny community of priests, with its membership (and component rafts) changing on a weekly basis.

Hanspur's priests are clerics, druids, or rangers. His druids may prepare *water walk* as a 3rd-level spell, and his rangers may prepare *water breathing* as a 2nd-level spell. Most druids and rangers have dire rat animal companions, though some prefer donkey rats, fish, frogs, otters, or even swimming snakes.



ARTUME BY NEIL SPICER

Amid rolling hills and fertile plains, the kingdom of Artume lies along the western fork of the Sellen River within a day's ride of Daggermark, Gralton, and Sevenarches. The settlement first formed around a large keep built by Lord Drellis Artume in 4672 when the nobleman's family and retainers fled the People's Revolt in Andoran. After successfully organizing local ranchers to coordinate their defense against bandit raids, he eventually proclaimed himself king—a social reach he further cemented by granting lands and titles to those swearing fealty to him.

ARTUME

Large Town conventional (regent); **AL N**

Base Value 2,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 2,650

Type humanoid (human 86%, gnome 7%, half-elf 4%, half-orc 2%, other 1%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Sir Bransen Waike, regent (LE male human ex-paladin 5/low templar 2); **Lady Sovella Artume**, queen in hiding (NG female human aristocrat 4); **Merit Ablestain**, magistrate of the Riverdock Gears (CN female gnome expert 3/sorcerer 2)

Unfortunately, after repeated disagreements with the Outlaw Council, Drellis fell victim to Daggermark poisoners in 4690. His wife, Queen Sovella, left the kingdom in the hands of Sir Bransen Waike, a visiting templar and veteran of the Mendevian Crusades, to serve as regent until she could give birth to Artume's son. Unknown to Sovella, however, the duplicitous Waike forsook his Crusader's Oath and led his men to abandon the front lines of the Worldwound and find fortune elsewhere. After publicly gaining authority over Artume, Waike secretly tried to assassinate the queen and blame it on Daggermark. Sovella escaped and now raises her son, Edryd, in hiding until she can prepare him to reclaim his father's crown. Waike claims the queen perished at the hands of her attackers, while retaining the throne for himself.

Government

Having usurped power, Regent Waike and his thugs find themselves increasingly challenged by the rigors of governing. Gralton lures away his best warriors with mercenary pay even as amphibious nagas surface along the river to attack barges, keelboats, and watering holes. The snake-people grow bolder with each encounter, venturing inland to assault homesteads among the tall grasslands. Rather than deal with these problems, Waike's templars ride from Artume's gates to commandeer supplies and collect "tribute" from the locals. Waike realizes the people's mounting resentment over this situation may soon

blossom into open rebellion, so he works to collect as many spoils as possible before abandoning Artume.

Notable Sites

The kingdom has three significant civilized locations and dozens of monster lairs.

Artume: By far the kingdom's largest settlement, Artume bears its founder's name and still stands as a testament to his martial spirit. The defensible white walls and towers of Gildtmede Keep rise from feldspar cliffs overlooking the Sellen River and surrounding plains. Below the city, gnomes maintain a warren of tunnels and excavated caverns leading to waterwheels whose gears power hoists capable of raising and lowering cargo for arriving barges. As a result, many view the otherwise unreachable vaults within the connecting caverns as the most secure storehouse for trade goods along the entire river valley.

Everbloom: The remote monastery of Everbloom cloisters quiet priests devoted to Milani, the goddess of hope and devotion. In times of peace, they primarily serve as healers and counselors, manufacturing and selling rosewine to support themselves. More recently, Milani's devotees have adopted a new cause, training as monks and embracing the rebellious aspects of their faith while they hide Queen Sovella and young Prince Edryd and prepare to overthrow Waike.

Fort Tanveh: The wooden stockade of Fort Tanveh guards Artume's northern border against poachers and wild hippogriffs preying on the kingdom's cattle pens. **Otoniel Marks** (NG male half-elf ranger 5) commands the outpost and bears little love for Regent Waike and his tax-collecting templars.

Resources

Despite constant challenges from bandits, the ranchers of Artume produce some of the best livestock and leather goods in the entire region. They also boast a reputation for excellent horsemanship and well-trained steeds. A distinct lack of timber, however, has led to the use of stone as Artume's primary building material, chiefly supplied by gnome rock quarries. Shipbuilders generally import lumber from Sevenarches or the Embeth Forest.

Adventurers

Artume embraces adventurers, relying on them to solve many of the kingdom's toughest problems—a policy initiated by Drellis and now continued by Waike. Whether rooting out nests of nagas, helping river barges and cattle drives reach faraway markets, or eliminating new threats to Waike's continued claim on the throne, the adventurers are rewarded with seemingly important titles and deeds to monster-ravaged lands. More rarely, Regent Waike assigns payment from the royal treasury, an expense he quickly recovers through further taxes.



CORDELON BY ROB MANNING

What is now the kingdom of Cordelon was once a staging facility for elves returning to Kyonin. Abandoned by the elves for unknown reasons three centuries later, the region now plays home to a small number of half-elves and their human families, living simple lives in tune with nature and emulating their elven ancestors' habits. Now a loose-knit tribe of isolated humans claims the area for its own. The result of half-elven and human interbreeding for generations, these people show faint traces of elven blood—a slight point to their ears, larger than normal pupils, and a thin but sinewy muscle tone—but most are otherwise fully human. While awkward and quiet around outsiders, even in the village streets of Novoboro, native Cordelans are wily and resourceful in their natural habitat.



NOVOBORO

Village oligarchy; **AL** N

Base Value 500 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 488

Type humanoid (human 98%, half-elf 2%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Saloc, chief (N male human rogue 4); **Ostrovo**, enforcer (N male human rogue 3); **Anino**, seer (N female human adept 3);

Kin-Khu, leader of the hunters (N male human ranger 3)

Thorny acacias and honey locusts grow abundantly along the tree-lined borders of Cordelon, and stinging nettles and poison sumac choke out other plants in the underbrush. Druids tell tales of the wall of thorny plants a hundred feet thick that surrounds this territory. To keep the area safe, the natives nurture and tend the plants, encouraging the growth of their lands' natural defenses—though callous explorers and those willing to exploit the land often chop or burn their way through the barrier to reach the natural treasures within.

Notable Sites

Visitors report only one community open to outsiders, Novoboro, though those flying over the land claim the existence of other villages deep within the trees.

Bacul Gruui: This village was once second only to Novoboro, but a group of mercenaries under the command of a foreign merchant named **Petchki** (NE male human expert 4/rogue 2) took over and enslaved the locals, forcing them to harvest

the local exotic woods and animals. The people serve out of fear, for Petchki's men killed chief Otok and display his head at the center of town; floggings for laziness are common. Technically the villagers are not slaves, as Petchki doesn't want to violate the Fifth River Freedom and draw bad luck to his operation, but he pays them barely anything and leaves them almost no time to gather food or hunt for themselves.

His mercenary teamsters pull wagons of loot to the edge of the wood, where his contacts take the cargo farther down the Sellen. Petchki plans to "marry" one of the dead chief's daughters to further legitimize his rule.

Novoboro: Built long ago by elves, this place lies behind a fortified stone wall on the riverside. It boasts a dozen buildings made of timber

and a two-story stone tower overlooking the river, with keen-eyed archers watching for approaching hostiles. The place is starting to become a neutral trading post, and painted markers or trees bearing the village's tattered crow-banner mark the path to the village. The locals are superstitious about the many crows that nest here, and killing crows in town is a crime punishable by death.

Resources

The human natives produce high-quality hides from an alligator-like lizard that lives in the swamps and river inlets, creating strong, supple leather with beautiful scale markings. Cordelon's most unusual export is a thick, black oil that bubbles from the ground or tar pits in the area; alchemists have found they can refine this muck into high-quality lamp oil and stranger alchemical materials. Several merchants have had limited success convincing the locals to provide this oil or allow outsiders to harvest it, and bandit attacks have become more frequent, as thieves seek easy profit by scooping up barrels of the stuff for sale in Uringen and other wealthy settlements.

Adventurers

The locals distrust outsiders, though elves are welcome, as many pictures and descriptive texts leftovers from founding days tell of the superiority of elves over other races. The villagers in Novoboro are more receptive to foreigners and reward those heroes who can rid their hunting grounds of the numerous strange beasts that have taken over in the last few months—or deal with the thugs in Bacul Gruui. Petchki and his men have no tolerance for outsiders causing trouble in their town but are willing to hire evil adventurers to help his cargo make its ways safely down the Sellen.



BY JOSHUA J. FROST

DAGGERMARK

If the River Kingdoms are where desperate men and women go to escape lives of boredom or persecution, then Daggermark and the region it controls are the beating heart of their desperation. The people of Daggermark are polite but nearly paranoid in their civility; as the town is publicly known for guilds of assassins and poisoners, life is cheap, and it is easy to have a rival suitor, competing businessman, or annoying political rival assassinated. Daggermark is relatively safe from outside predation, but the biggest threat to its people is its own citizenry—and in this aspect, it may be a perfect microcosm of the River Kingdoms as a whole.



DAGGERMARK

Metropolis nonstandard (anarchy); **AL** CN

Base Value 16,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 27,460

Type humanoid (human 96%, dwarf 1%, other 3%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Martro Livondar, Lord of Daggermark and Lord Captain of Horse (CN male human fighter 10); **Lord Captain Jallor Clovesh**, Lord Captain of Foot (CN male dwarf ex-paladin 2/fighter 6); **Lady Janna Smilos**, Supreme Vessel of the Assassins' Guild (NE female human rogue 7/assassin 2); **Tragshi the Herbalist**, Chief Poisoner of the Poisoners' Guild (NE female half-elf druid 5).

The City of Assassins was founded 300 years ago by the tattered remnants of the assassin army of His Supreme Highness Athanasius, from the destroyed city-state of Yenchabur deep inside the interior of Casmaron. As his people fled the firestorm that destroyed their beloved home, Athanasius vowed to found a new city, one that kept his people safe through the Three Precepts of his assassins: Life, Death, and the Vessel Between. After battling his way through the nations of Casmaron, shrugging off skirmishes in Brevoy, and leading his people through the bandit-infested River Kingdoms, Athanasius finally came to a small town on a hill overlooking the Sellen River. It had everything he needed: ample farmland, river access to the sea, and a defensible position. He gave the residents of the small town (then called Rivermark) the choice to flee, join, or die. Most chose to join.

Over the centuries, Athanasius and his progeny built Daggermark into a fortress town with double curtain walls, a fortified dock, and a heavily patrolled road system that fed farm and free range goods into the city. They established a school for assassins, plainly called the Daggermark Assassins' Guild, that trained anyone willing to be taught in the methods of the Yenchabur warriors. This nearly lost art was a rare fighting style comprised of stealth, agility, and secrecy that turned a man or woman into a holy warrior called the Vessel Between (so named because the Yenchabur quietly escort their targets from the kingdom of the living to the kingdom of the dead). The citizens of Daggermark, under the leadership of the Yenchabur, rid every inch of the nearby plains and woods of bandits, and for a while life in Daggermark was ordinary.

Everything changed 90 years ago when a Chelish poisoner settled in Daggermark. Count Ambras Imre was escaping the turmoil of his homeland, seeking a place to practice his illegal art. In no time after arriving, he'd established the Daggermark Poisoners' Guild, allied himself with the Yenchabur at the Daggermark Assassins' Guild (after agreeing to teach them his methods), and possibly killed the last King of Daggermark—for within a few months of Imre's arrival, His Supreme Highness Athanasius XIII choked to death at dinner and was unresurrectable.

During the ensuing upheaval, the two guilds organized things a great deal from their end. They sent emissaries to all of the regions of the River Kingdoms, suggesting a council be formed to address larger issues that affect multiple kingdoms. They dubbed this the Outlaw Council, and the year after Athanasius's death, despite the chaos of the City of Assassins, the Outlaw Council met for the first time and officially codified the Six River Freedoms (which had already held informal sway for generations). Specifically, the representatives of Daggermark championed the Fourth Freedom ("Courts are for Kings"), showing that a deep rift had been building for some time between the nobility of Daggermark and the common citizens, oddly represented by the Yenchabur assassins and the newly formed poisoners' guild.

Thereafter, Daggermark fell into anarchy, led by no one but occasionally organized through mob rule, or at least widespread consent. This allowed Daggermark to function for a while, but stagnated the city's growth, and the lack of an organized military in the city led to the rise of banditry. When thousands nearly starved to death in the winter of 4657–4658, the people started to grumble that maybe bringing back authoritarian rule wouldn't be such a bad thing.

On hearing these grumblings, the assassins' guild made a strange and city-shaping decision: it announced that student assassins needed work to practice their art. Though the masters were still available for more daring or discreet endeavors, Daggermark citizens could now, for a fair price, hire one of these students to "send a message" to anyone. There were two rules: you could only hire a student assassin once per year from the guild, and you couldn't target a member of the military for assassination. As the city lacked an official military, the people immediately realized that forming one and joining it would be a good idea, if only to prevent some angry neighbors from ordering their deaths. It was about this time that a man proclaimed himself king—and was killed in half a day. After that, no one tried to use the title "king," but there were several lords, a few dukes, and even a prime minister. Most were assassinated before the next new moon, leading to the joking title of "lord of the new moon." While few of these lords lasted long, some of them left enough of an impression to help form a stalwart militia, crush the rising banditry, or reestablish trade relations with neighbors. Others simply rose to power, stole what they could, and fled the city. Still others bucked the odds and reigned for a number of years, helping to build and maintain the anarchic peace of Daggermark.

Over time, this odd system of assassination-ruled chaos resulted in a stable society. In a given month, five citizens of the Daggermark region die from assassination or poisoning, but murder and similar violent crimes are rare and property crimes are nearly unheard of within the city walls. Daggermark maintains a 1,500-person army of heavy footmen and cavalry; the footmen are commanded by the charismatic dwarf Jallor Clovesh, while the cavalry is controlled by the city's current

Poisons of Daggermark

Through the combined efforts of Daggermark's assassins' guild and poisoners' guild, the City of Assassins has become known for several poisons unique to their city.

ACONITE ROOT

Type poison, ingested; **Save** Fortitude DC 25
Onset 1 minute; **Frequency** 1/round for 5 rounds
Effect 1d3 Dex damage, 1 Con damage, and nauseated for 1 round; **Cure** 2 saves
Cost 1,800 gp

BANEBERRY

Type poison, ingested or injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 15
Onset 1 round (injury), 30 minutes (ingested); **Frequency** 1/minute for 5 minutes
Effect 1d3 Strength damage, 1 Con damage, paralyzed for 1d3 rounds; **Cure** 2 saves
Cost 90 gp

CALOTROPIS

Type poison, ingested; **Save** Fortitude DC 14
Onset 1 hour; **Frequency** 1/minute for 6 minutes
Effect 1 Wis damage and 1d3 Dex damage; **Cure** 1 save
Cost 120 gp

SHAMWEED

Type poison, contact; **Save** Fortitude DC 18
Onset immediate and 1 week, see effect; **Frequency** varies, see effect
Initial Effect +1 Con/day for 1 week; **Secondary Effect** all Con gained from initial effect removed, 1d6 Con damage/day for 7 days; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves
Cost 6,500 gp

THORNAPPLE

Type poison, contact; **Save** Fortitude DC 11
Onset 10 minutes; **Frequency** 1/minute for 6 minutes
Effect 1 Int damage, 1 Wis damage, 1 Con damage, and blind for 1 minute; **Cure** 2 saves
Cost 90 gp

ruler, Martro Livondar, a shady man who many suspect is only running the city to make money off the endeavor. To prove this rumor, the citizens have tried five times to kill him, three in his first week. These attempts on his life stopped when he declared he was now also the lord captain of the city's cavalry, making him exempt from assassination. So long as he keeps the city running and isn't too obvious about his thievery, it's likely the assassins' guild will maintain its neutrality. If he gets too obvious, however, the citizens may agitate for a change in the guild's rules.

Government

On its surface, modern Daggermark is an exercise in anarchy. There is usually someone, currently Lord Livondar, who declares his or her intent to organize and rule the people of Daggermark, but these lords are never truly in control. With assassinations and poisonings so common, anyone can choose to scrape together some coin and order the death of the city's elite, and those who choose to lead Daggermark usually do so out of greed, pomposity, or (sometimes) a belief that they can change the city for the better. Lord Livondar is a greedy man, seeking to take Daggermark for all he can before leaving, but he's wise enough to know that any indication of his intent would result in more marks of execution than his loyal bodyguards could ever possibly hope to thwart, military or not, so he bides his time and uses his tenuous self-titled position as Lord of Daggermark to slowly bleed off the city coffers while spending money to improve roads, train Daggermark's army, and improve merchant traffic. Individual towns and hamlets under Daggermark's wing have various types of government, from military dictatorships to town councils to standard mayor-and-sheriff setups, but all are under Daggermark's umbrella.

Notable Sites

The most populous of the River Kingdoms, Daggermark includes an eponymous city and several notable towns.

Daggermark: The City of Assassins is the heart of the region controlled by Daggermark. The inner curtain wall surrounds Dagger Home, a small hill upon which the wealthy of the city maintain their villas and estates. Each neighborhood in the city has a citizen-captain who represents the neighborhood in complaints to the authorities—those being either the current ruler or the assassins' guild. Hostility between neighborhoods is common, especially between those populated by the descendants of Yenchabur and those primarily comprised of other River Kingdoms denizens. While this enmity hasn't broken out into open fighting, it has been the source of several high-profile assassinations of neighborhood captains. The city is home to the Daggermark Assassins' Guild, a school for the Yenchabur method of assassination—chiefly, assassination that's quiet and clean—as well as the Daggermark Poisoners' Guild. The former is run by Lady Janna Smilos, a descendant of Galtan nobility, and the latter is run by Tragshi the Herbalist, an elderly half-elf with golden-tan skin who hails from lands far to the east and wanders the city with dozens of venomous snakes crawling about her person.

Hawk's Nest: The fortress home of the Yenchabur assassins, the Hawk's Nest is an impressive structure built with only one passable entrance carved into the long cliff face below the fortress's walls. The path includes two wooden bridges that can be collapsed or burned in the event of a siege. A tunnel below the fortress descends more than 1,500 feet into the earth and connects the Hawk's Nest to a natural aquifer as its protected source of water. Full members of the Yenchabur assassins



reside here, awaiting assignment either as a Vessel Between or as a teacher at the Daggermark Assassins' Guild. All Yenchabur assassins must teach at some point during their service, and must serve at the Hawk's Nest as well. Outsiders are not permitted within the fortress walls—instead they must wait at the base of the cliff until they're noticed or acknowledged; sometimes for days. After Galt fell, remnants of that nation's armies targeted Daggermark as a new home and tried to lay siege to the Hawk's Nest to ensure the assassins wouldn't be able to aid in Daggermark's defense. The siege lasted 8 days and ended in a single night with the deaths of more than a dozen Galtan officers. It's still not entirely clear if the Yenchabur killed those officers, but the rank-and-file soldiers didn't stick around to ask. There have long been rumors that below the Hawk's Nest lies a secret city, home to the families of the assassins in the fortress above. The residents of the Hawk's Nest shrug off such suggestions and claim their lives there are spent in quiet solitude and study.

Saad: The hamlet of Saad is notable as the home of Daggermark's cavalry. The hamlet comprises two dozen large timber buildings surrounded by a motte-and-bailey with several tall timber towers that look out over the surrounding plains. Outside the hamlet proper are dozens of well-guarded horse farms. All of these horses are the interbred stock of the original Yenchabur stallions brought west in 4402 and are trained for war. Saad is also the primary trade center for all merchant traffic coming from Tymon, and as such is the most focused point of bandit aggression in Daggermark. The trade routes across this region are plagued by thievery, much more than the Daggermark cavalry can stop.

Solanas: Solanas is a frontier town through and through. Though it has a sheriff and a mayor, the true authority here is a coalition of citizens called the Solanas Concern, which constantly threatens assassination to get its way. The beleaguered sheriff does all he can to keep the peace, but the Concern—little more than a gang of criminals—stops him wherever he interferes with its interests. Crime in Solanas is rampant, with deaths or serious injuries just about every day. The mayor has an emissary in Daggermark, begging the new Lord Livondar for help, but so far the Solanas Concern seems to have full control of the town. Oddly, Solanas is home to a relatively large Pathfinder Society lodge, complete with a main hall, a dormitory, and a stable full of fresh horses. The lodge is guarded by mercenaries and sees regular traffic. Whatever the Society is doing in Solanas, it must be significant.

Wilkesmont: The town of Wilkesmont is the former home of the bandit lord Miklos Jakab, self-proclaimed ruler of the Shroudwood and the last serious bandit threat to Daggermark. Though Jakab was killed in 4566, his followers swore fealty to Daggermark and now live on as a small protectorate of that city. Because of Wilkesmont's past as a bandit fortress and because of its location inside the Shroudwood, relatively cut off from the rest of the Daggermark region, each time the Daggermark

military falls apart, Wilkesmont suffers. The town has been burned to the ground three times, and each time rebuilt bigger than before. The town lacks any fortifications, instead relying on the heavy woods to keep most threats away. Recently, an uppity bandit lord from Sevenarches has been making noise about claiming the Shroudwood as his own. While this has the people of Wilkesmont on edge, they have several assassins from Daggermark on retainer for just such an occasion.

Resources

Daggermark's highest-profile resource is the sale of assassinations and poisonings; though in no way on the same scale as the Red Mantis, the fact that the guilds here work openly and at reasonable rates drives desperate and evil folk here seeking violent solutions to problems. The kingdom also does a brisk trade in mundane industries like lumber, mining, fishing, and farming.

Adventurers

Locals look upon adventurers with suspicion, but anyone willing to follow the rules (or the lack thereof) tends to get along fine. Ignorance does not excuse outsiders from the threat of assassination, and sometimes visiting adventurers choke to death in their sleep because of some egregious slight to a resident of Daggermark. Adventurers can gain some grudging respect by killing bandits, for while the cities are safe, trade caravans are frequent targets for raids. Slaying monsters can improve the attitude of locals, and there are constant rumors of wyverns or younger dragons lurking in the woods, possibly even advising bandit groups. The people of Daggermark are wary of anyone from Razmiran, for they believe the Living God's priests are fomenting banditry as a way to test the disorganized kingdom's defenses before an invasion.

Adventure Hooks

In addition to bandits, Daggermark has several unique threats.

Den of Serpents: The PCs are sent to Daggermark to find a missing merchant and must dig through the myriad complexities of Daggermark society while avoiding being assassinated themselves.

Rock of Razmir: Gossip that Razmir's faithful are crawling across the countryside near Saad forces the hamlet to hire adventurers. When the PCs destroy a small band of cultists and find the brigands under the influence of a glowing orange rock strapped to the back of a pack horse, the mystery of Razmir's presence in the Daggermark region gets even stranger.

Secret City: Bizarre creatures plague the aquifer beneath the Hawk's Nest, and the Yenchabur have made the unprecedented decision to hire adventures to handle the menace—though the PCs may never talk about it, or even acknowledge that they were there. When the PCs enter the aquifer, they find themselves in a secret city teeming with the families of the assassins but frightened of what might be coming up from below.



BY ALISON MCKENZIE

GRALTON

Death, carnage, and instability make the kingdom of Galt a dangerous and dolorous place to live as the continuing horror of the Red Revolution harvests the heads of the best and brightest—or simply those unfortunate enough to speak out against the mobs. Unwilling or unable to continue a Galtan life of suffering and fear, many Galtan citizens flee the kingdom to seek a new life outside its borders. Those that make their way to the River Kingdoms find a home in Gralton, a small nation of ex-Galtan nobility, exiles and refugees from the war. There, outside their bloodied homeland, they start anew, though few forget their past and what they left behind.



GRALTON

Small City conventional (governor and council); **AL CN**

Base Value 4,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 9,200

Type humanoid (human 90%, halfling 7%, half-elf 2%, other 1%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Governor Marnius Cherlorne (CG male human aristocrat 5/warrior 1); **Lord General Halidan Tarne**, (CN male human aristocrat 2/fighter 3); **Sheriff Casal Tarne** (LN male human expert 4/rogue 2); **Lady Dela Morgayn** councilor, head of the Wise secret society (N female human aristocrat 3/sorcerer 2).

Gralton was carved out of the River Kingdoms by men and women who were no strangers to hardship, physical or emotional. Its founder, Obidas Nauzil, a wealthy bank owner from the Galtan city of Edme, fled Galt when his bank was forcibly taken over. He gathered with him as many friends and other misplaced noblemen as he could, and together they sought a new land to call their own, away from the madness of the Red Revolution. They found it in the River Kingdoms, a small piece of land bisected by the Sellen River. It was already occupied, but the men who lived there were weak and starving, having been attacked by brigands multiple times and had most of their supplies stolen. The occupants foolishly tried to fight off the newcomers but were quickly overpowered, and the land was reclaimed as Little Galt. Nauzil became the mayor of this new town, and he set to work expanding and defending it. As the city grew, things quickly fell out of Nauzil's control, as he was not prepared to rule what was rapidly becoming a small "kingdom." In response to the complaints, he appointed an advisory council, and they effectively ruled Gralton until Nauzil's death 2 years later. The council appointed a new leader, an ambitious man named Hannan Gralt, who was the first to openly suggest that his people organize to reclaim their land in Galt. Under his rule, Little Galt was renamed Gralton (mostly by ex-noblemen who found the name "Little Galt" to be demeaning), and since then the governor and the council have shared somewhat equal rule over the city-state.

The most noteworthy event in Gralton's history since its founding was a large-scale invasion of brigands from the north in 4687. They were repelled before reaching the river, but not before they had set fire to some of Gralton's farmland, its city hall, and a few residences. Fifteen citizens died, among them Governor Gralt himself. Lord Marnius Cherlorne was appointed his successor, and he worked quickly to quell fears that the huge loss of resources—both from the fire and from the necessary rebuilding and recovery that resulted—would spell an end to Gralton. Now, while Gralton is not thriving, it is certainly surviving, and many Graltoners thank Governor Cherlorne for that.

Gralton is still growing as refugees continue to flee Galt, but it is a dangerous trek to Gralton. Forests thick with bandits and roads watched by thieves make up most of the journey. Some escape the bloodshed of the Revolution only to be robbed or killed on the path to relative safety. Those that make it find themselves in a new land with nothing of their own, no wealth or possessions beyond what they can carry. Many become depressed when the full reality of starting from scratch finally hits them. The majority of Gralton citizens were once nobility, unused to having to earn their food and shelter. The first few days in the kingdom are often painful, with newcomers feeling lost, overwhelmed, and defeated. Those few who hope to find a paradise in Gralton quickly lose their illusions and accept that this new life will not be easy, knowing anything is better than Galt in its current state. Those who don't either perish or are driven out to try to find a place of their own somewhere else.

Regardless of previous expectations, each citizen of Gralton finds his own niche in society and works at it as best he can. Blacksmiths, tailors, merchants—many nobility who have never worked a day in their lives soon find themselves with trades of their own, often even working with their hands. They recognize that Gralton needs business to survive, and that without smithies and shops there will be no supplies. They also learn to rely on each other, as everyone is in the same boat. This does not mean, however, that everyone is friendly toward each other, and beneath their strained politeness there is bitterness and rivalry.

Gralton is not a pleasant place to make a home. The River Kingdoms are dangerous, and the citizens are desperate and unhappy, mourning the loss of land, wealth, power, possessions, and often friends and family they were forced to leave behind. Most do not intend to live in Gralton indefinitely, and come to the small kingdom looking only for a relatively safe place to plot and gather resources for their return to Galt to take back what they lost. This itself causes much tension, as there are many different plans for returning to Galt which often conflict or require the aid of fellow citizens who have plans of their own. As a result, there is much hostility between residents of Gralton.

However, Graltoners' fear of another civil war is greater than their anger and frustration toward each other, and so they are cautious when arguing over politics and plans. Such discussion is often quiet, wary, and somewhat secret, and generally broken off if it is clear that the two discussing parties greatly disagree. Thus, like-minded people here tend to gravitate toward each other, forming large groups who meet in private to discuss their plans. These groups eventually become secret societies with elaborate schemes to reclaim what was lost in Galt. This way, open arguments and violence are avoided, but at the same time it breeds distrust against those outside these societies.

Some Graltoners choose not to follow the societies' mandate of secrecy and are open about their plans and desires. Even those who are not privileged or interested enough to join a

Secret Societies in Gralton

To avoid political arguments that could lead to violence, Graltoners discuss plans and politics in secret with other like-minded citizens. This has led to the development of several secret societies, both official and unofficial. The most prominent ones are listed below.

The Hand That Takes: The largest society in Gralton, The Hand That Takes supports the idea of building an army to storm portions of Galt by force, but believes Lord Tarne's methods are too rash and that his "army" is not prepared for battle.

The Wise: Called the Gabbers by outsiders, the Wise find diplomacy and bribery to be better tools than violence, and hope to slip back into Galt with power already in their hands. They are led by the Lady Dela Morgayn, who currently sits on the council.

Nameless: This unofficial and unnamed society strives for peace in Galt and an end to the Red Revolution. They believe it is unsafe to return to their home country until the fighting is over.

Order of Vengeance: The Order of Vengeance preaches reclamation through force, though with a focus on revenge. They openly follow Calistria, and one of Calistria's temples is devoted almost entirely (but quite unofficially) to members.

secret society are eager to see change, either in Gralton's current state or back in Galt. Lord General Halidan Tarne, one of the few ex-nobles of Galt who can rightfully consider himself a noble of Gralton, has been gathering an army in Gralton for years to invade Galt by force and has erected strange, makeshift barracks that can hold 300 of his 500 soldiers. Most of these "soldiers" are not properly trained, despite the efforts of **Gallar Porswan** (N male human fighter 4), an ex-military officer of Galt thought long dead by those back home. What the Gralton soldiers lack in training they make up for in enthusiasm. Driven by dreams of reclaiming old glory and happiness, they would gladly raid Galt, Lord Tarne riding at their head, but travel logistics and lack of a clear target in the old homeland limit their ability to act, and the army is starting to lose soldiers to delays. Occasionally, a smaller group strikes out (led by Tarne or an officer) to hit Galtan towns, but their lack of discipline costs them and they return days later, bloodied and with fewer numbers.

Halidan's cousin Casal Tarne does not agree with the idea of simply raiding Galt, believing that Halidan's troops should wait to attack until they are more numerous, stronger, and better organized. He worked for years as Halidan's unofficial advisor but found that his cousin never heeded any of his advice. After the two nearly came to blows, their shaky friendship ended, and now Casal is quietly waiting for Halidan to die in one of his foolish battles, at which point Casal will take over

the army. In the meantime, Casal is currently acting as sheriff and heads the city guard.

Over the years, the desire to return to Galt has escalated into a kingdom-wide obsession. Secret societies are becoming even more secretive, and much of their scheming has been going in radical and bizarre directions, with plans becoming more and more ludicrous. More people are becoming vocal on the streets, urging their fellow Graltoners to take action with a frightening intensity. Those who stand up and openly try to build an army of their own are either assimilated or driven out by Tarne's men. Similarly, many citizens are turning to religious fanaticism, hoping the gods will help them in their mission. Nearly two dozen temples to Calistria have been built in the last 4 years, crowding out and sometimes forcibly taking over temples of other gods. Adding a bit of confusion to the general hostility present is the fact that regardless of radically differing opinions on how to reclaim what was lost, the goals of most of the citizens are very nearly the same. Citizens must also rely on each other to keep Gralton alive, and many Graltoners owe their lives to their fellows due to frequent bandit attacks or similar near-tragedies.

Gralton is known to be a desperate place, and its reputation draws outsiders who hope to take advantage of such emotional people. Religious speakers, swindlers, and self-proclaimed miracle-workers flock to the small kingdom seeking followers or a fast fortune. Unscrupulous peddlers come from other parts of the River Kingdoms or more distant lands, bringing cheap medicines and good luck charms that are usually worthless, as well as maps and news of unreliable quality. False prophets foretell doom or peace, speaking of disappointed gods, necessary sacrifices, and great change. The people of Gralton welcome such visitors and eagerly supply them with business. When those visitors leave Gralton, they spread stories of its strange, distraught people, their odd behavior—a false politeness that can be chilling—and the locals' obsession with some great return to Galt. As a result, rumors abound that Gralton is not normal, and that its people are possessed by vengeful spirits, or perhaps even by Calistria herself.

Government

Gralton is ruled by an oligarchy of six citizens consisting of the governor and five council members. Though the governor is generally considered to be the leader of the council, as he is the public face of Gralton's government, in truth the governor and the council members share power equally. The governor and council members serve for life, barring optional retirement or a majority vote of removal. Council members appoint the governor and new council members in the case of a vacancy. The governor has no official say in the selection of new council members, though he is expected to provide an opinion on the matter. Current governor Marnius Chelorne is best known for his assistance in Gralton's recovery after brigands set much of northern Gralton on fire.



Notable Sites

Most of the interesting locations within Gralton's territory are within the town itself.

Barracks: The city barracks house many of Lord Halidan Tarne's would-be soldiers. It started as one building—which had been a playhouse—and spread gradually to the surrounding buildings, shoddily attached to each other by makeshift passageways, the soldiers tearing down some walls and erecting new ones. The barracks is situated in Gralton's southwestern corner, near the river, and is surrounded by small, shabby residences for the soldiers for whom the barracks itself has no room.

Black Gardens: When bandits burned large portion of Gralton's farmland, a man named **Elizious Baraclor** (N male human druid of the Green Faith 5) claimed a small plot of land where a house had burned (as the family who owned it had perished the fire), took the shell of the house, and cleaned and rebuilt enough of it for the structure to be safe to enter. He then turned the entire property into a garden, which the public calls the Black Gardens for the charred exterior of the building. The yard outside the house is mostly vegetable gardens, and the vegetables that Baraclor sells at the market are locally famous. Inside the house, herbs and flowers are planted anywhere they can fit: on shelves, hanging from the ceiling, in windows, and in trenches in the floor. The Black Gardens are a famous visiting spot for travelers, and Baraclor charges a small fee for guests to explore its interior. It is also rumored to be the clandestine meeting spot for one of Gralton's secret societies.

Preacher's Way: While Graltoners generally keep their political beliefs quiet, a few are very vocal about their opinions and strive to convince others to adopt their point of view. These outspoken Graltoners tend to flock to the street called Preacher's Way, the most socially acceptable place for such talk. A small avenue that runs between two of Gralton's main streets (Market Street and Bank Street), Preacher's Way is littered with notices and other documents aimed at persuading whoever might read them to follow a certain course of political action. Spaced along the street itself are public speakers who hope to catch the ears of passersby, calling out their ideas and beliefs and urging those around them to follow suit. Though it is commonplace for listeners to ask questions, it is considered exceedingly rude to insult or openly disagree with a speaker.

Resources

Many Graltoners are farmers, and farmland is spread throughout Gralton, surrounded by watchtowers and other fortifications manned by the city guard. These farms primarily produce grain, a good portion of which is exported to other River Kingdoms that have few farms of their own. The bodies of foiled thieves are often displayed at the edge of the land they trespassed on as scarecrows and warnings to other bandits. Fishing is also a popular profession, and locals

sell salted fish to traders in exchange for other meats, sugar, cloth, and tools. The hunters and trappers of Gralton also produce a small amount of fur and deer leather. The largest export in Gralton, however, is timber—still abundant in the fast-growing southern forest, but mostly used for trade, as the fire of 4687 taught the locals that stone is a safer material for construction. The chief import of Gralton after food is ore, which is usually refined and turned into armor and weapons.

Adventurers

Gralton welcomes all travelers with enthusiasm and hospitality, especially if said travelers bring news, goods, or medicine. The warmest welcome, however, goes to mercenaries and adventurers. Being right in the middle of the River Kingdoms, Gralton can always use more defenses against potential threats from all sides, as well as internal dangers that local soldiers and mercenaries are too busy to deal with themselves. More importantly, there isn't a reclamation plot or secret society in Gralton that couldn't use some more muscle, whether just as a precaution or as an integral part of the scheme. Adventurers in Gralton find themselves being coyly approached by a steady stream of citizens hoping to recruit, offering payment in gold or promises of wealth and renown as soon as they have been reestablished in Galt. Most of these recruiters are polite and accept rejection with little more than mild disappointment, though there are rumors that some of Halidan Tarne's soldiers were bullied and threatened into joining his ranks. Beyond attempted recruitment, adventurers are generally ignored and allowed to do what they need to, as long as they don't break any laws or cause any trouble. They may be privately hired to retrieve items or even people left behind in Galt, or to act as bodyguards for those who attempt the retrieval themselves. If an adventurer's actions directly benefit Gralton as a city, Governor Cherlorne dutifully rewards him, though the governor's gifts are usually in the form of land and titles in Gralton in the hopes of encouraging the adventurers to settle down there.

Adventure Hooks

Between Galtan turmoil and secret societies, there is always something going on in Gralton.

Society of Death: There are whispers of a growing secret society in Gralton that even the most informed gossips know little about. No one knows how many members it has, who they are, or where they meet, but it is said that their philosophy is that Galt cannot be salvaged, and that for it to be a peaceful kingdom again, it must start from scratch. Rumors say that the society has plans to kill everyone in Galt in one swift blow.

Vanishing Traders: Recently, any peddler who sets up shop at a particular spot on Market Street disappears overnight. Travelers are beginning to avoid Gralton due to rumors that foreigners are being kidnapped or murdered, and Governor Cherlorne is offering a reward to anyone who can stop the disappearances.

HEIBARR BY BROCK MITCHELL-SLENTZ

Heibarr was founded as a trading post in 3756 by Theodric, a priest of Aroden, along a tributary of the Sellen River. As it grew and prospered, it expanded to both sides of the river. Fearing the settlement on the opposite shore would become independent and cause Heibarr to lose trade and taxes, the town's mayor, Ioseph, ordered the construction of a bridge to span the river without interfering with river traffic. The townsfolk completed the work in 4109 using a combination of hard labor, magic, and clever engineering. The Great Bridge, also called Ioseph's Bridge, became a symbol of and a monument to Heibarr undivided.

Over the next 3 centuries, Heibarr grew into a bustling town with upward of 3,000 people. In 4434, Mayor Aindon, looking for a way to increase revenue, decided to tax travel through the city by river. Below the Great Bridge he built the River Gate to control ships moving through Heibarr. Unrest among travelers grew quickly at the sudden limitation and taxation of their movement, which in turn made the townsfolk unhappy because it disrupted trade. Then came the Black Sisters of Gyronna with their poisoned tongues and whispers of hate. The witches took a people who were already unhappy, whipped them into a fury, and pointed to their neighbors. Before the year was out, the city was at war with itself, and by the end of the following summer, everyone was dead or gone and the River Gate was destroyed.

To the superstitious in the River Kingdoms, the fall of Heibarr is remembered as a lesson of what happens to those who disrupt the River Freedoms. By building the River Gate, Heibarr violated the Third River Freedom, and in doing so brought about the gate's own destruction—a manifestation of some curse, or perhaps the fate of any city that defies the River Freedoms.

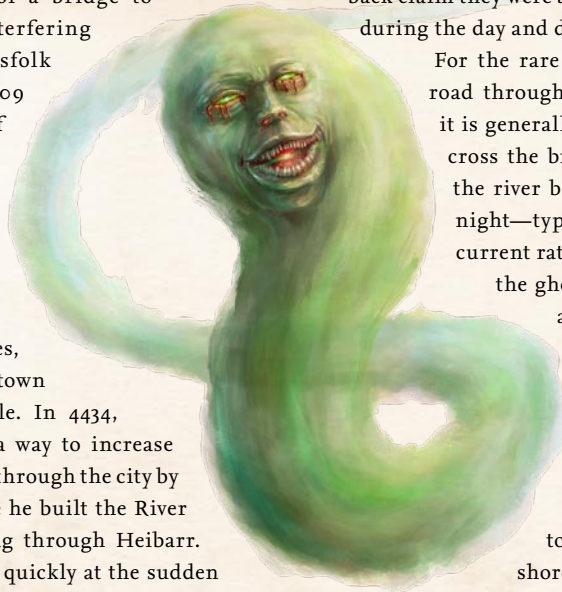
In the years after the destruction of Heibarr, a sizable number of looters and bandits went to the town to see what they could steal, but few returned. In 4604, a priestess of Aroden named Cerona led an expedition to reclaim Heibarr. She took her warriors in first to make sure that the city was safe, while the settlers waited in their boats by the Great Bridge for her signal to land. That night, the settlers saw the ghosts of Cerona and her guard standing at the shore. The spirits watched them forlornly, then one by one turned and faded back into the city. Shaken by the experience of

seeing their dead leader, the settlers returned home and spread this story. Though two other major attempts have been made to reclaim the town or liberate its valuables in the last century, none have attempted to resettle the lost territory. Some folk remain curious about its history and reputed treasures, and every so often adventurers gather together to explore the dead city, but most of these looters disappear and are never seen again. Those who have come back claim they were able to leave only because they entered during the day and didn't try to take anything.

For the rare traveler that chooses the expedient road through the city rather than going around, it is generally considered safest to enter at dawn, cross the bridge, and leave on the other side of the river before dusk. Those who come near at night—typically rivermen floating by on the current rather than foot traffic—sometimes see the ghostly shapes of the dead staring back at them from the edge of the city or the river's shores.

Made of stone and consisting of two gentle arcs over the water with a broad abutment in the middle, the Great Bridge still stands, stretching from the central plaza on the east bank to the temple of Aroden on the western shore. As Heibarr was a place of trade in its day, all the wealth of the city presumably remains there, waiting for someone skilled enough to take it. Of course, most trade goods should have rotted away by now, but coins, gems, and metal valuables might still be worth salvaging. Yet nobody knows if the city's wealth is cursed, or if it is the city itself that encourages the dead to linger. Poor, ambitious adventurers speculate that someone with access to teleportation magic and a priest of strong faith could repel the undead long enough to reach a storehouse or vault, fill a *bag of holding* with their loot, and teleport away; of course, any who have that much power and initiative know of easier ways to make money than robbing a dead river town.

Literally thousands of incorporeal undead roam the city—every person who has died there since Gyronna's hags appeared has risen again. The dead are quiescent during the day, though they tend to awaken if their remains or haunting places are disturbed. At night, they reenact old fights, reliving the riots and murders that ended the city nearly 300 years ago, though the Great Bridge and other main avenues are sparsely populated even in the hours of darkness. Gyronna's priests consider it a testament to their power, and some priestesses make a pilgrimage to the edge of the city, leaving copper coins, rusty knives, and other tools of their faith in the hopes that the Angry Hag will bless them with her cunning.





HYMBRIA BY ELAINE CUNNINGHAM

Just to the south of the Embeth Forest lies a dense woodland. A branch of the Sellen River cuts through the westernmost part of the forest, providing a path for those who seek Hymbrian goods. The forest kingdom was established by elves from Kyonin as a base from which they will, eventually, reclaim the ancient elven site of Sevenarches. Kyonin's elves don't wish to exterminate the humans who hold this territory—at least, not until they've exhausted all other options. The Hymbrian elves, however, have become less patient, and look to their contacts in Daggermark as an important step toward the reclamation of Sevenarches.

Hymbrian elves get along well enough with their neighbors, as long as those neighbors keep a proper distance. Trading outposts are situated on either side of the river, but only elves are permitted beneath the trees of Hymbria, and most members of other races who trespass are slain on sight. The elves' traffic with Daggermark is earning them an increasingly dark reputation, but so far none of Hymbria's neighbors suspect the elves' true purpose.

Government

Hymbria's current leader is **Feriel Nellmyr** (N male elf rogue 7), a man quite adept at balancing the various factions within and beyond Hymbria: the elven fighters who protect the boundaries of the forest, the solitary rangers who patrol it, the druids who nurture the plants and creatures that bring Hymbria her fortune and her notoriety, the various Riverfolk who travel the Sellen to do business with Hymbria, and the elves of Kyonin, whose hold on the outpost kingdom is becoming increasingly tenuous. Kyonin is, in part, to blame for this state of affairs, due to the practice of sending "restless" fighters and troublesome rogues to swell Feriel's ranks. To say that Hymbria is a dumping ground for elven criminals and malcontents would be overstating matters, but only slightly.

Notable Sites

Most of the locals live in small, temporary camps, and there are only two permanent locations known to outsiders.

Goldleaf Glade: In the northern part of Hymbria are two glades, connected by a natural spring and surrounded by ancient trees. This is the primary meeting place for the elves, where everything from weddings to political meetings to seasonal celebrations takes place. A shrine to Desna is

located in the center of the spring, and elves visiting the grove often stop to fill flasks and waterskins with blessed water. Only elves are permitted in the glade, and elves from outside Hymbria must be accompanied by a Hymbrian elf who vouches for his or her conduct.

Mimere: This village on the eastern bank of the Sellen serves as a trading outpost and boasts a sturdy dock, several small shops, an inn, and an alehouse. River pirates have learned not to attack the seemingly helpless village, because at the smallest threat elven warriors descend from the trees like autumn leaves. This is widely known, for Hymbrian custom is to leave one would-be attacker alive to tell the tale, and to leave him with enough scars to convince any audience of his veracity. But for the most part, visitors find the elves to be friendly, even convivial, enjoying gossip from other kingdoms and delighting in music, dance, and stories. The alehouse is a lively place and the inn is clean and comfortable. Anyone who slips away from either during the night can expect to be followed by elves determined to ascertain motive and purpose and who are not particular about how they gather this information. The village has shrines to Calistria, Desna,

Gozreh, and Nethys; no priest is assigned to look after the shrines, but the faithful in town leave offerings and keep the sites clean, relying on visiting clergy to deal with other spiritual matters.

Resources

The Hymbrian elves are celebrated for their savory, nourishing combinations of dried mushrooms and herbs unique to this forest, brought from Kyonin (and, some whisper, Sovyrian itself) and cultivated in hidden glades and shadowy fens. The elves also make a potent distilled mead from the honey of bees who feed upon these exotic plants. It's enjoyed by Hymbrian natives but not well tolerated by other races, including foreign elves who haven't been exposed to the forest's rare plants. A small amount can be more debilitating than several mugs of dwarven rotgut, which, for a number of reasons, makes Hymbrian mead a popular trade good.

In addition to their food and drink, the Hymbrian elves have another product line, just as well known but less openly discussed: they supply the assassins of Daggermark with a wide variety of unusual tools, such as tiny translucent fish that, when slipped into a mark's bathwater, tunnel into any available orifice, where their poisoned spines cause a slow, agonizing death; insects that burrow into flesh and brain tissue, secreting poisons that foster suicidal madness; and a wide variety of poisonous mushrooms and herbs.





BY JASON NELSON

LAMBRETH

The wrinkled hills and watered dells of Lambreth make up a tiny corner of the River Kingdoms, cupped between the mighty Sellen River to the west and the swift-running Tolemaida to the east. Its folded topography makes large farms uncommon, but the copses are thick with deer and glades teem with smaller game (rabbit, pheasant, and wild hokie in particular), often nesting in the ubiquitous tangles of river blackberry that give Lambreth its nickname “the Blackthorn Dells.” Innumerable moss-banked streams and tumbling waterfalls feed the two rivers that frame Lambreth, descending from the Juviler Hills that mark Lambreth’s northern verges.



MAASHINELLE

Large Town conventional (dictator); **AL NE**

Base Value 2,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 2,977

Type humanoid (human 75%, half-elf 11%, gnome 8%, elf 5%, other 1%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Lord Kamdyn Arnefax, dictator (NE male human fighter 10); **Cenestin Maesner**, Master Gardener (NE male gnome druid 9); **Nevet Maesner**, Mistress of the Kennels (NE female gnome sorcerer 10); **Luana Laken**, mayor (N female half-elf expert 4/druid 1); **Arick Lazacek**, Ustalavic ambassador (N male human aristocrat 6); **Seoane Marcovina**, high priestess (N female half-elf cleric of Calistria 7).

Few records exist of Lambreth before its current incarnation. A fledgling domain called Alban lasted only a few generations before being overrun in 4071 by goblins, who called their lands the "Kingdom of Zog." A dynasty of seven barghests using the name of Zog held sway until 4217 when the Yellowtongue Sickness ravaged the goblin ranks and they were overthrown by a loose coalition of rivermen, half-elves, and adventurers. Numerous small villages sprang up in fertile valleys, but few towns of consequence, and even those were hardly stable; the largest, the ramshackle pirate haven of Troxell on the Sellen River, burned to the ground in 4328 after a tavern brawl erupted into a full-fledged riot.

Lambreth as it now exists arose from the union of three rival merchant families. The Cullertons are Lambreth's oldest family, founding Maashinelle in 4355 at the confluence of the two rivers, followed by the Angelidis founding Lockridge in 4394, and the Vizcarra founding Sezgin in 4424. Each controlled a tiny city-state, just strong enough that it could not be picked off easily, but small enough to pass beneath the notice of larger neighbors. Yet all three families feared annexation by stronger rivals, especially after the small domain of Dalzell, south of the bend of the Tolemaida, was absorbed by Tymon in 4492. In 4502, after 10 years of delicate negotiations, Leoda Cullerton proposed a union of the three families, gathering among them all of the isolated villages between the Sellen to the west and the Tolemaida to the east. They would rule as the Triunes of Lambreth, a three-family oligarchy. Still no match for the raw power of Daggermark or Tymon, Lambreth's wealth and political and trade connections, especially with northern lands farther up the Sellen, granted a modicum of security until the last half-century.

In years past, the borders of the River Kingdoms once extended to all the tributaries of the Sellen, with dominions like Prochnau, Marroquin, and Camillus stretching from the Vergan Forest (now called the Exalted Wood) to Ustalav. When Razmir the Living God came to power, however, he was not satisfied with his first annexations but continued

to spread his power by word, sword, and flame for over a decade. The establishment of his capital of Thronestep in 4672 was no culmination, but merely a pause while he turned his eyes upon the fragmented dominions that once guarded Lambreth's riverward flanks. With each lord looking out for his own interests, by the beginning of 4674 those realms had crumbled before bribes, subversion, infiltrative charity, and finally threats, sedition, and outright war, and Razmiran's iron-masked fanatics held the western bank of the Sellen to the Ustalav frontier.

The Triunes' wealth and influence failed them, as the faceless cultists seemed immune to graft, and infiltrators could make no headway against the ruthless mental conditioning of Razmiran's acolytes. The other River Kingdoms were marshaling their own defenses against this new threat and had little succor to give, and soon Lambreth was itself being infiltrated by provocateurs from Razmiran, from humble mendicants spreading the word of the generosity of the Living God to poisoners and assassins the equal of any in Daggermark. Hemmed in and desperate, the Triunes were unexpectedly visited by an exiled Andoren knight named Kamdyn Arnefax. Arnefax promised a solution to the Razmiri problem. With some hesitation, the Triunes accepted, even acceding to his outrageous demands (including lordship of Lambreth), assuming he would be killed in a suicidal delaying action that would at least buy time to rally other River Kingdoms to their aid, or—if he did unexpectedly well—could be murdered later. Unfortunately for the Triunes, in their desperation they turned to a man they did not fully understand.

Marshaling his own household guards with Lambreth's piecemeal army and refugees from the fallen kingdoms, Arnefax added not only mercenaries bought with Triune coin but shadow-beasts and hellspawn from the infernal reaches. Astride nightmare steeds and flanked by packs of shadowy hounds, Arnefax and his personal guard, backed by the infamous Catspaw Marauders of Ustalav, launched a devastating sneak attack upon Razmiran's armies, slaughtering their officers while his Riverfolk crossed the Sellen by night. The Razmiri camp became a killing field, with precious few escaping the slaughter, and this victory is still celebrated every 26th of Calistril as the Moonlight Massacre of 4675.

The elated Triunes prepared a welcome celebration in Maashinelle, but when Master Tandre Cullerton suggested a delay in the recognition of Arnefax's lordship, the knight coolly snapped the man's neck with his bare hands. Lady Cullerton swiftly met the same fate when she rushed to her fallen husband's side. Over their corpses, Arnefax proclaimed: "Betrayal is a crime, and any crime must be punished twice; once for a lesson learned, and once for a lesson remembered. Remember always who rules in Lambreth." The Angelidis and Vizcarra families both swore fealty at once, while the Cullertons were dispossessed and exiled under penalty of death.

Arnefax's dark legend has grown with passing years, as repeated assassination attempts from Razmiran and rivals within the River Kingdoms have ended only in public torture and execution (often with thornvines grown through the victims and painstakingly crafted into cruel topiary), followed by devastating retaliation by Lord Arnefax and his minions. His most famous punitive act was in 4698 with the burning of three manor houses of merchants and lordlings conspiring against him—all the more remarkable since the manors were in Daggermark, Sevenarches, and Druma, and all were burned in a single night.

Justice in Lambreth is harsh even for small-time rustlers and poachers, with two lives forfeit for every beast taken. Arnefax is hardly loved by his people—though he nominally honors the River Freedoms, the “encouragement” of his Black Eagles ensures that most citizens live virtually imprisoned within Lambreth. Still, while Arnefax is prone to bleak moods and his underlings carry a sinister reputation, their eyes rarely fall hard upon the common folk. True, citizens do simply disappear from time to time, but in this dangerous and often lawless region commoners see their lot as perhaps better than most, hoping all the while that dark rumor exaggerates and that, even if true, at least such things will never happen to them. Many commoners actually take a perverse pride in knowing that under Arnefax's rule tiny Lambreth is not a dominion to be trifled with, by bandit, pirate, merchant, or mad theocrat, a shield that holds masked armies and the encroaching wild at bay.

Government

Lambreth is ruled in an absolute dictatorship by Lord Kamdyn Arnefax, a man of mature years and an imposing specimen well over 6 feet tall, broad-shouldered and thickly muscled, with angular features suggesting elven heritage. Knowledgeable and practical, he is wholly without mercy or compassion for those who cross him. Coming to the River Kingdoms originally for privacy, he has tightly seized the reins of power in this small dominion and bends all of his will to maintaining his position.

Arnefax's only true friends are a pair of gnome siblings. Master Gardener Cenestin Maesner is the man responsible for cultivating Lambreth's river blackberries into the labyrinthine Thornward, a hideous hedge maze infested with assassin vines and used for Arnefax's more festive executions. Cenestin's sister, Nevet Maesner, is called “Mistress of the Kennels,” and has tamed packs of shadow mastiffs and yeth hounds as guards and hunters.

Arnefax's rule is enforced from the former Cullerton Manor in Maashinelle by the Black Eagles, a dark reflection of Andoren Eagle Knights. These heavily armed horsemen range across Lambreth collecting taxes, delivering official edicts, and pronouncing judgments of life and death upon its citizens. Like their master, the Black Eagles are much

feared but warily respected, as they protect the citizenry with ruthless efficiency when necessary. The common folk believe a network of fey spies also carries tales to Maashinelle, and many leave offerings for the fey to avert their ill will.

Each village has its own council, and an elected mayor may bring requests or complaints of malfeasance to Lord Arnefax. Wary of rousing his ire, most mayors travel to Maashinelle only upon matters of utmost importance. Even mayors Morissa Angelidis of Lockridge and Sanger Vizcarra of Sezgin tread lightly, as neither wishes to suffer the Cullertons' fate.

Notable Sites

Most visitors to Lambreth only concern themselves with the kingdoms' three large towns.

Lockridge: Where the Sellen River emerges from the high-bluffed ravines cut through the Juviler Hills, Lockridge overlooks rapids passable for skilled pilots and small craft, but the site has long been a portage for heavier cargo. In 4394, the Angelidis family demolished the shantytowns on the old town site of Troxell, replacing them with stone wharves and warehouses built along a set of newly constructed canal locks that bypassed the cataract. While the family carefully respects the freedom of the river itself, many river traders pay to take advantage of the locks for larger craft, including those hauling quarried Juviler granite and polished agate.

Maashinelle: In the lowlands where the Tolemaida joins the Sellen River lies the town of Maashinelle, the largest settlement in Lambreth and seat of Lord Arnefax. The town has a large dockside section along both rivers, including slips for boat building and repair as well as taprooms and inns catering to stopover traffic. Meanwhile, numerous smithies monopolized by Lord Arnefax produce export-quality metalwork, from military ironmongery to prosaic necessities like pots and cutlery.

The largest farms in Lambreth surround Maashinelle, including several fine vineyards and numerous ranches, and several trainers of dogs, falcons, and horses for use in the hunt or in battle reside nearby. Maashinelle's most famous product is the marvelously soft wool loomed here, famous across Lake Encarthan as “Cullerton wool.” After the Cullertons' exile, the shrewd Luana Laken began recruiting their former suppliers while she purchased their old looms from Lord Arnefax. Within 2 decades, “Laken wool” had exceeded the prestige of its former name, and by 4698, Laken had built enough wealth and influence to be named mayor of Maashinelle.

Sezgin: Sezgin was originally more of an elaborate chateau and hunting lodge than a town, attracting skilled hunters to its trackless thickets containing rare whitehorn deer and savage boars. It became notorious when the local lord, Igan Varklein, was discovered to be trafficking in humanoid slaves to hunt for his own and his patrons' amusement. Outraged by Varklein's defiance of the River Freedoms, Marstead Vizcarra led a coup



and installed himself as lord in 4424. With his personal wealth and family mercantile connections, he built and improved roads linking the villages of the area to the rest of Lambreth, culminating in the building of the Raven Bridge across the Tolemaida in 4449 to make a permanent link to the Daggermark Road. Over the years, the Vizcarras set up tanneries outside the town and built up Sezgin's reputation for fine leatherworking, as well as making it a center for the fur trade in river marten, otter, and beaver along the Tolemaida's tributaries and farther north into the unclaimed lands around Echo Wood.

Resources

A small domain, Lambreth is mostly self-sufficient, and of the River Kingdoms it suffers least from the theft and banditry rife throughout other domains through the protection of local militia, the Black Eagles, and the personal rides of Lord Arnefax himself. Lambreth's wealth is primarily in the form of fur, leather, wool, and ample foodstuffs. It possesses ample hardwood forests and fine quarry stone, but there is nothing of such outstanding material value here as to attract the eye of the powerful. Lambreth has a small appetite for imported luxuries, from Kyonin wines to fine glass and silks, but Lambreth's only notable imports are ore and metal for work in Maashinelle's smithies, plus a small but steady trade in breeding stock for horses, hounds, and hunting falcons.

Adventurers

Lambreth welcomes visitors but never troublemakers, and hence it has a love-hate relationship with adventurers, who bring much coin but also much tumult in their wake. Many adventurers find Lambreth a dour place, observing the forms of welcome but with a heaviness of spirit and a brooding, veiled malice just waiting for a misstep to bring harsh retribution. Newcomers who draw attention to themselves can expect a visit from a Black Eagle setting forth the importance of not disturbing the peace. Those spreading around sudden wealth are likely asked to explain its source, and their tale had better be convincing lest they be arrested for banditry. A "donation for the common defense" of 10% or more is often expected from treasures liberated within Lambreth's borders when PCs prepare to leave the country. Adventurers who gain official favor may be hired for tasks normally handled by the Black Eagles, such as helping to root out dissidents against Arnefax's rule, infiltrating such groups and exposing them to the lord's justice, or working as spies or strike forces against Razmiran or other enemies of the state.

Lambreth is a small state and generally pacified, and as such is not rife with well-known dungeons, though the goblins of Zog left behind many pits, delves, and hidden cave complexes untouched since the fall of their kingdom. Lambreth is more often a way station than a destination for fortune-seekers en route to or from parts north, including crusaders taking the more direct but more dangerous route to Mendev along the Sellen, yet wild places linger among its rugged patchwork of

Silverlight

Arnefax's minions purloined a spell originally penned to combat devils from Cheliox but have found it quite useful in taming and controlling the blackthorn dryads.

SILVERLIGHT

School evocation (light); **Level** bard 3, cleric 3, druid 3, paladin 3, sorcerer/wizard 3

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M (1 sp)

Range touch

Target object touched

Duration 1 minute/level

Saving Throw Fortitude partial (see text); **Spell Resistance** No

As *daylight*, except the object touched sheds bright silvery light in a 20-foot radius. In addition to providing illumination, the area of bright light is painful to creatures that are susceptible to alchemical silver. A creature with DR/silver that begins its turn within the light of this spell is automatically dazzled and becomes sickened unless it succeeds on a Fortitude save. These effects disappear 1 round after the target leaves the *silverlight*. A creature that leaves the area and then returns must make a new saving throw. This spell provides dim light up to 40 feet away, but only creatures within 20 feet are subject to the above effects.

villages and farms, separated by thickets, dells, and valleys. The merchants and mayoralty of Lambreth's towns often hire adventurers as guards within and beyond their borders or to root out river-trolls, wild and untamed shadow hounds, barghest-led goblin bands squatting in abandoned farmsteads, or giant and ogre clans in the Juviler Hills.

Adventure Hooks

With the Black Eagles crushing internal problems, most threats to Lambreth are external.

Moonlight Feud: A clan of reclusive wereboars has lived along the twin river valleys since before Lambreth was founded, but has recently been pressed by a powerful werewolf from Ustalav and a gang of wererats operating out of Daggermark. The wereboars, fearful of revealing themselves openly to the Black Eagles, look to heroes from outside Lambreth to unmask and destroy their encroaching enemies.

Troublesome Pirates: River pirates are menacing traffic along the Sellen River between Lockridge and Bastardhall in Ustalav. A mysterious patron hires the PCs to find the pirates' hidden coves and destroy their operation. The patron is a representative of Arnefax, who cannot act directly against the pirates because of the River Freedoms but nonetheless wants the threat eliminated.

LIBERTHANE BY CHRIS PRAMAS

Liberthane is a glimmer of hope and idealism in the cutthroat milieu of the River Kingdoms. From here an old revolutionary continues his fight for justice, his passion undimmed by the terror in his homeland of Galt.

FORT LIBERTHANE

Hamlet conventional (military dictatorship); **AL** LG

Base Value 200 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 170

Type humanoid (human 95%, halfling 4%, other 1%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Lord Achille Parsall, knight (LG male human aristocrat 2/ fighter 2/paladin of Milani 4)

Achille Parsall is the scion of one of Galt's oldest noble families. As with many Galtan lords, Achille was sent to study in Andoran; when revolution broke out, Achille wanted to return and do his part. His parents, concerned by the tone of the street rhetoric, ordered him to remain where he was.

Parsall joined Andoran's own revolt and became one of its most passionate advocates. When a baron refused citizenship and barricaded himself in his castle, Parsall led the charge that breached the walls and took the castle. The baron refused to surrender, and Achille slew him in the courtyard as his comrades cheered him on. This made Achille a hero of the revolt.

Parsall remained in Andoran until the new state had been firmly established. Then he returned to Galt, hoping he could bring some of that stability to his homeland. He wanted liberty but found tyranny, sought freedom but found terror. His parents and siblings had been guillotined, and mobs ruled the streets. He stayed in Galt and tried to build a power bloc of like-minded citizens, but most of the moderates were already dead or in exile. After surviving several assassination

attempts, he reluctantly left Galt with his few followers and headed back to Andoran.

Revolution turned into politics; Parsall despaired for Galt and for the cause of liberty, until he was inspired by a fiery speech from a cleric of Milani, who spoke of the power of hope and the struggle for freedom. Achille pledged himself to the church of Milani and left Andoran forever. He spent the next 20 years championing oppressed people everywhere. As he moved into middle age, however, he realized he could not lead with his sword forever, and his homeland of Galt still suffered. This led him to the River Kingdoms, where he could light a beacon of liberty near Galt and do what he could to save his homeland. He led a score of followers into the River Kingdoms and seized a rundown fortress from a notorious bandit. Renaming the place Liberthane, he began recruiting young idealists to his cause, swearing to free Galt or die trying.

Liberthane idealism is an anomaly in a land where the strong rule and the weak suffer. Although Parsall's ultimate goal is freedom for Galt, much of his energy is directed toward unifying the smaller kingdoms. He also has many local enemies, primarily the noble exiles of Gralton who view Parsall as a traitor to his class, and have made more than one attempt to silence him forever. In their view, Galt does not need another revolution, but rather the reinstatement of noble rule no matter what the cost.

Government

Achille runs Liberthane as a military protectorate; those who choose to live here must obey his orders, as he and his soldiers are what keeps them safe.

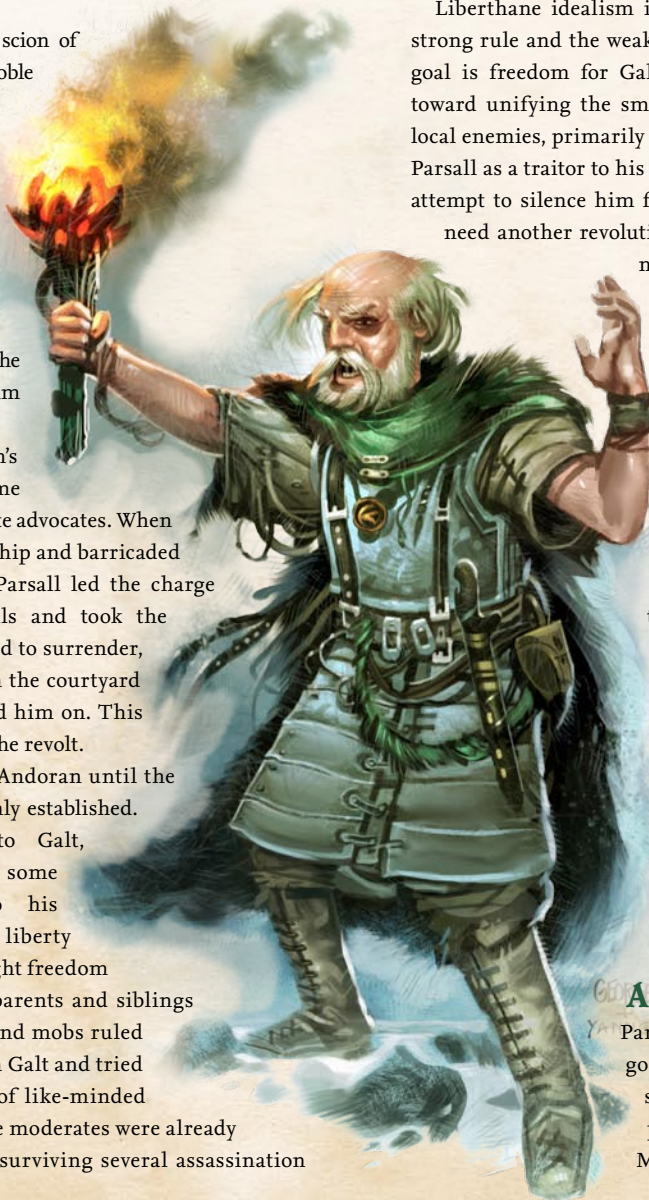
Notable Sites

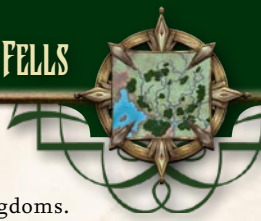
There is only one place of interest in this tiny kingdom.

Fort Liberthane: This small fortress is home to approximately 50 soldiers. These numbers wax and wane as Achille sends followers on various missions. Several farming and ranching families have settled in simple houses nearby, but are always ready to fall back to the protection of the fort.

Adventurers

Parsall welcomes adventurers with good hearts and the courage to stand up for hope and redemption, particularly followers of Iomedae, Milani, and Sarenrae.





LORIC FELLS BY ERIC BAILEY

The untamed region called Loric Fells is a gloomy, troll-haunted wilderness of dense forests and rocky canyons. Travelers to this realm must contend with a constant icy mist that hugs the land, concealing the lairs of fowl beasts and sudden drops into churning gorges. For centuries, raging highland streams have scoured the soft limestone surface and carved miles of tunnels beneath the earth. Shambling mounds, mohrgs, and river scraggs are among the best-known hunters of these dark places, and will-o'-wisps haunt this region in large numbers, leading the unwary to their doom among the fog-shrouded chasms. Within these hills also lie the crumbling skeletons of a dozen settlements, each built by a ruler driven to find and claim the fortress of Rookwarden, abandoned by a clan of dwarves almost a half-century ago.

Decades before the first walls were erected at Galton, a dwarf miner named Deigal and his clan held the remote outpost of Rookwarden and its outlying hills, known as the Rookwarden Fells. This sturdy fortress stands atop a granite bluff near the headwaters of the Wyvernkill River and overlooks a now-flooded marble quarry. Under dwarven rule, the marble cut here was of peerless quality, easily fetching double the normal market price in nearby Galt. The Red Revolution robbed Deigal of his most profitable marketplace, and his clan swiftly abandoned the quarry. Almost overnight, hordes of goblin tribes overran the deserted outpost.

From this easily defended spot, goblins and worgs descended upon the Fells. During the early months of 4669, these tribes, joined by murderous bugbears under the banner of a goblin calling herself the Worg Queen, eradicated nearly all human settlements within 10 miles. Beyond the Fells, infighting among the lords of the River Kingdoms inhibited any coordinated response, leaving the region uncontested for nearly a full human generation. The monstrous populations of the Fells flourished.

In the summer of 4693, a wealthy Taldan prospector named Loric led an expedition up the Wyvernkill seeking the legendary mineral riches supposedly contained within the region's gorges. He lost a third of his men to a goblin assault before the second night had passed. Enraged, he spent his family fortune equipping a small mercenary army for the sole purpose of exterminating the goblins. For 6 years, Loric scoured the Fells, all the while



mocked for a fool in the courts of the River Kingdoms. But Loric appeared each year in the Outlaw Council, throwing down the standards of slain goblin chieftains before the assembled rulers. Though he had not yet found Rookwarden nor faced the Worg Queen, he began to earn a measure of respect from the Council. In the seventh year of Loric's crusade, the Outlaw Council acknowledged his rule over the region, consenting to call the wilderness "Loric Fells."

But for all Loric's strength of arms, he failed to realize that his vengeance had merely shifted the region's balance of power. With the goblin tribes diminished by Loric's relentless attacks, a powerful covey of green hags deposed the Worg Queen and drove her out of Rookwarden. Former allies of the Queen, these hag sisters controlled over half a dozen large families of river trolls, and the few goblins who tried to resist fell swiftly to the trolls and their bloodthirsty matriarchs.

In early spring of 4701, as Loric proudly returned to the wilderness that bore his name, a massed tribe of scraggs ambushed the mercenaries and slaughtered his army to a man. When Loric failed to appear at the Outlaw Council the following year, his disappearance ignited the imaginations of dozens of would-be bandit lords. Many have since mustered small militias and plunged deep into the wilderness of Loric Fells.

Notable Sites

Other than scattered goblin camps and troll lairs, the one remarkable feature of Loric Fells is the old dwarven fortress.

Rookwarden: Built of solid granite by dwarven masons, this fortress has high walls and is easily defended by even a small number of skilled warriors. Dwarven miners insist that a network of tunnels extends under the fort, perhaps leading to secret entrances that may be the key to retaking it without an extended siege.

Resources

An abundance of marble, granite, and precious quartz waits to be claimed near Rookwarden, but getting these minerals to market represents a great hardship that even the dwarves found difficult to overcome. In addition to their mineral wealth, the cold highland streams of the Fells teem with fish. Trees here are short, knotted, and ill suited for logging. The rocky ground and pervasive, cold mist throughout the region similarly inhibit most types of farming.



BY COLIN McCOMB

MIVON

When Choral the Conqueror began his bloody conquest in 4499, certain families of the Aldori swordlords fled south into the River Kingdoms and watched their homeland burn. They thought they were in the vanguard of their people. Instead, they were first in flight, as many of their compatriots remained behind to fight the invaders. Though 200 years have passed, the Aldori of Mivon still worry at the memory of their ignominious retreat, and rather than admit the cowardice of their ancestors, have turned the existence of Brevoyn itself into an insult to their honor. “Coward” and “Brevoyn bird” have become among the gravest insults one can bestow on the Mivoni Aldori, and those who lived here before the exodus have picked it up as well.



MIVON

Small City nonstandard (meritocracy); **AL CN**

Base Value 4,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 10,870

Type humanoid (human 86%, dwarf 6%, elf 6%, gnome 2%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Raston Selline, mayor (CE male human fighter 10); **Gaspar Tellick**, adjutant swordlord (CE male human fighter 9); **Lady Andara Gisvet**, speaker for the Houses in Exile (N female human fighter 7).

The land of Mivon is, like all the River Kingdoms, heavily crisscrossed with rivers. Much of the low-lying land is marshy, and the locals have built high and arching stone bridges for their flocks of sheep and herds of cows, who feed on the high hills and in the highlands of the southeast. To the southwest, the kingdom's borders give way to the Embeth Forest, and in the northeast lives a tribe of exiled elves. The northwest of Mivon shares an uneasy border with Pitax, and though hostilities have largely ended between the two kingdoms, the history between them suggests that the longstanding enmity is never far from the surface.

The Aldori exiles have brought their love of dueling to Mivon, and here they have formalized its status: the basis of Mivon's current society is the List of Suitors, a monthly publication that lists the results of the previous month's duels. Fortunes rise and fall on the basis of a duel, governmental positions are won or lost, and scores are settled with a quick thrust or lunge.

Additionally, the central square of Mivon hosts the Sevier, a weekly gathering for swordsmen and swordswomen who wish to prove themselves in public. They simply appear, present themselves to the judges, and proclaim whom they wish to duel. Duels are usually not held without formal insults, and thus it is customary that a participant in the Sevier studies the list of names, calculates an insult, and delivers it within earshot of at least two witnesses. Many of the Mivoni Aldori have no wish to create everlasting enemies, however, and so must craft an insult that will create a great enough grievance for a response, but not so great that it requires a duel to the death.

Attendance among the Aldori is not mandatory; indeed, those who have settled reputations and positions tend to absent themselves from the affair unless they have been specifically challenged to appear.

The rules of Mivoni dueling are:

- The challenged picks the weapon and armor.
- The two parties must agree on the victory conditions of the duel; if they cannot, the duel is canceled and both suffer dishonor. Potential conditions include first blood, until one party is disabled, until one party concedes, or until death or otherwise mortal wounding.

- The two parties must agree on the stakes: money, position, a spot on the List, or some other defined object.
- Anyone between the ages of 16 and 60 may duel. Minors may not enter the List, no matter how great their skill, and those who achieve seniority may rest upon (or suffer) their reputations thereafter.
- Both men and women may participate.
- Only Aldori are eligible to win governmental positions.
- At the Sevier, one may fight only three duels per week, and no duel may last more than 15 minutes.
- All duels must be witnessed by at least one friend of each participant; otherwise, any fatalities resulting from a duel are considered homicide.
- A duel's outcome is irrevocable, and shall not be cause for vendetta.

Most Aldori of Brevoiy regard Mivoni Aldori as part of a subfaction of the swordpact, and many seek duels with the Mivoni to prove the superiority of their own branch of the tradition. The Mivoni conduct regular duels and face constant incursions from bandits and other fame-seekers drawn from across the River Kingdoms, and so their style has necessarily adjusted itself to become a broader, more encompassing net, a defensive style from which strikes and counters spit like lightning. Swordlords from Brevoiy come to Mivon to test their skill and the strength of the Mivoni, and those who return to Brevoiy—many of them grievously wounded—report that the Mivoni swordpact flourishes.

Non-Aldori winners who achieve some measure of fame in the List may be offered additional Aldori training, provided they have shown interest in the style. Rostlander Aldori may or may not recognize the trainees of Mivoni Aldori as members of the swordpact, depending on whether they wish to insult the bearer of the title.

As with most of the River Kingdoms, the early history of Mivon is fragmented, much of it lost to time and the constant eradication of its previous residents. The bandits who cycle through the region ensure that the legends of the land are full of bloodshed, petty and major. The Aldori exiles have shaped the character of this portion of the River Kingdoms, subjugating the more recent inhabitants, who in their turn put down the original settlers to occupy the area. Of the major River Kingdoms, Mivoy is one of the most stable—not that this says much. The kingdom has a few more settlements than others, with palisades and guards, and some of the Aldori have been working intermittently on construction of stone keeps along the rivers leading to and from Pitax. Historians and their assistants have likewise come to Mivon to study the ancient dwellers of the land, some of whom are still said to lurk in the marshes and fens of the kingdom.

Government

When the Aldori arrived, they decided that they'd both create a more unified government for the area and bring with them



Rostland's government-in-exile. Unfortunately, the major families of Rostland remained behind to do battle with Choral the Conqueror and his dragons; the nine major Houses that fled had no clear line of succession from the court among them, and neither did the 20 or so minor Houses, and so the exiles began their struggle for supremacy almost immediately, even as they put down the bandits who had lived in Mivon before them.

The leadership of Mivon is commonly held to be a meritocracy. The Aldori swordlord Raston Selline is the titular mayor of the city, guiding Mivon through the treacherous waters of River Kingdoms politics. He claims that the city will pass to the hands of whoever can defeat him in a fair contest; first, though, a challenger must pass through a gauntlet of the lesser lords of Mivon, fighting his way up the List of Suitors.

Selline seems genteel enough, and is even a bit of a gossip. It's said that nothing passes in the salons and streets of the city without his knowledge, and he frequently lets drop juicy tidbits regarding rivals and up-and-coming duelists—never quite enough to provoke an insult (for his reputation is such that he can be bolder in his statements without danger), but certainly enough to cause some shame or embarrassment. He is proud of his network of informants, and whether it is as pervasive as he claims or this is mental trickery, none can—or will—say.

As Selline grows older, one of his compatriots, a younger swordlord of devastating skill named Gaspar Tellick, has voluntarily declared himself Selline's inferior—and thus anyone wishing to take the city's government must first pass through Tellick. This allows Selline to teach Tellick how to manipulate the hidden strings of the city and its intrigues, and how to deal with troublesome interlopers. The city whispers that Tellick will strike out at Selline sometime soon, but for now, they keep their friendship public and ostensibly tension-free.

Other powers exist in the city: the High Council, who officially advise Selline and unofficially control his network of informants; the League of Merchants, who ostensibly provide protection against river pirates in this and neighboring kingdoms, but who are said to be little more than organized thugs controlling the pirates; and the Houses in Exile, whose Aldori members proffer legislation and speak for the nobility in the politics of the city.

The Houses, according to popular opinion, agree on little. Mivon has no army; rather, each Aldori House fields its own militia, flies its own colors, and swears fealty to a master, rather than to Mivon as a whole. The Houses compete with each other for the right to provide security in the city, patrol the land around the city, and other such necessary military duties. Selline plays a complicated game in rotating these duties among the Houses, balancing the desires of the swordlords against the city's needs, and

sometimes he fails—on more than one occasion, militias being shipped to the frontier have spilled their successors' blood in the streets.

Notable Sites

Other than a dozen walled villages, only two places attract the attention of visitors to Mivon.

Mivon: The largest city in the kingdom, Mivon is the seat of government for the area. It's a walled city built at the confluence of two major rivers: one reaching to Restov and the other to New Stetven. The stone walls of Mivon have seen a number of sieges, and their foundations constantly sink into the marsh that surrounds the city. Still, the walls offer some protection, and they bristle with crossbowmen, as do the wharves and jetties lining the river that flows through the city. The great Council Hall (formerly the palace) sits in the central plaza of the town, and is itself surrounded by stronger walls. The square outside is the market square, filled with as much bustle as a kingdom the size of a barony can assemble. The structures inside the city are largely wooden, mostly one- and two-story buildings, though a few have expanded. The walls also contain granaries and livestock pens, to which the populace can drive any herds they might own in case of a raid. The greatest part of the Mivoni population lives here.

The ramshackle huts of the lower quarter, where most visitors stay if they're just passing through, line squalid, muddy streets. Half the houses here are places of ill repute: brothels, gambling dens, drug parlors, and worse. No fewer than three different gangs—the Fast Fallen, the River's Edge Cutters, and the Half-Deads (said to be servants of a vampire)—vie for control over the quarter, and their nightly battles always leave a few corpses in the street. Even the Aldori militia doesn't come down here in groups of less than four.

The nine great Aldori Houses and their holdings, along with a patchwork of smaller walled villages and communal farms surrounding those, create a wide ring around the city. Each of the larger families has constructed its own keep of stone or wood on the hills, to which their tenants can flee during raids, and from which the Houses can conduct raids of their own. Permanent communities here are walled and gated, with guards, mercenaries, and soldiers protecting them from the depredations of the bandits and opportunists that ply the rivers.

The Feasting Hall of Cayden Cailean: In southeastern Mivon, there is a bald hill—no trees or grass grow on its surface, and a ring of standing stones decorates its crown. Every few years, though not on any fixed schedule, the standing stones spontaneously expand and change to become the walls and roof of a grand and mysterious feasting hall, rumored to be that of Cayden Cailean himself. Anyone who comes to the hill on that evening can disappear inside



for a night or a decade of feasting and festivity. Music, laughter, and sounds of revelry spill from every lighted window, and the morning after, when the stones resume their normal appearance, the hilltop stinks of spilled ale and wine. The last time, though, villagers who approached the hilltop afterward found blood—a lot of blood—among the stones.

Resources

The city of Mivon fills a small, low-lying valley, and sits at the confluence of two branches of the Sellen River, neighboring a large fen. The kingdom's greatest exports are eels and fish—fishermen and drab eel catchers haunt the byways and sodden trails of the marsh, and drag their catch to market. The swampy land is home to quicksand and sudden pools, and someone not native to the area might see a slow and gruesome death in the sands.

Occasional bogs provide excellent sources of peat in more far-flung corners of the kingdom, and the Aldori exploit these as much as possible. Additionally, enterprising would-be lumber barons have started logging in the north of Mivon. Their only concern is the band of elves who've taken that forest; each side appears bent on total destruction of the other.

The chief exports of Mivon are bands of mercenaries trained in the Aldori swordpact. Every year, the Houses in Exile assemble select members of their militias and send them off to fight for the highest bidder, with the money coming into House coffers. It's not unknown for Mivoni mercenaries to be fighting on opposite sides of the same war; indeed, if one side hires a House, in many cases the other side immediately seeks a delegation from a different House. For the Houses, this has a dual benefit: it sends the hottest heads away, and it earns the Houses a significant sum.

Adventurers

For the most part, Mivon encourages foreign visitors. With adventurers come foreign trade and caravans, and this city, more than most, requires significant economic activity in order to maintain the lifestyles of the Aldori overlords. Further, more foreigners means more duels, and as any duels raise one's social standing, these foreigners become an easy rung for Mivon's social ladder.

Still, the kingdom has enough of a dark underbelly that it'd be easy for an outsider to come in and spoil someone's fun. Whether Selline or his cronies are connected to that underbelly is a matter better left unsaid, unstated, and skirting implication—but digging too deep into the criminal world in Mivon is a sure route to “a duel in the fishponds.” It is best for foreigners to keep themselves on the legitimate side of things, and not to try to link any of the Aldori Houses to the corruption that seeps up from the river's edge.

Adventure Hooks

Mivon's current problems stem not only from its location, but its history.

From the Old Country: Brevoy's criminals have long considered Mivon a place to start over—or, more often, to flee the long arm of the law and continue their predation someplace significantly less policed. Of late, it seems that Brevoy's jails have grown empty, for there's a far greater influx of these criminals than usual. They're taking hill steadings and violating the laws of the river, as if they were daring someone to come and dislodge them. They're still primarily in the north, but they've recently allied under a female chief called Rainbow's Daughter, so named for her habit of withdrawing to lure her enemies to a place where she can strike them down.

The Mysterious Plume: Orange smoke rises intermittently from the center of the Embeth Forest, and serves as a beacon for adventurers. Some few of them have returned to tell of an ancient ruin hidden within the forest's depths, but to a man these haggard wrecks shudder and refuse to say any more on the subject. Most who venture out never see the light of day again.

The Red Revolutionaries: Galtan bounty hunters are branching out throughout Mivon, operating with near-total disregard for the laws laid by Selline. The bounty hunters never approach major towns, but they take citizens with impunity and brutality. Rumors along the rivers say that they are in fact the predecessors of a more powerful force preparing to move on the Aldori and take control of Mivon for themselves. The Houses in Exile are said to be drafting a resolution to empower outsiders to eliminate the problem: in effect, putting bounties on the heads of the bounty hunters.

Saber-Rattling: The kingdom of Pitax is making noise again on the borders. The small towns that lie between Mivon and Pitax report an ever-increasing frequency of raiders and skirmishers near their homes, as well as foreign loggers heading toward the Embeth Forest. Most of these “loggers” are heavily armed and armored, as if there's something besides wood they're going after.

Simple Thuggery: The people of Mivon face constant danger from roving gangs of bandits, thugs, and thieves. Because of the difficulties in transporting goods safely to and from the settlements, some of the more enterprising residents have begun working on ways to create safe trading passages. So far, their best solution has been hiring more and better guards for each trip, but this is a temporary solution that leads only to escalation. Word is that they're leaning toward paying protection money to the League of Merchants, but they haven't got enough cash on hand nor the inclination to invite the League into their cities in force. They'd rather hire mercenaries or adventurers to solve the problem for them.

MOSSWATER BY MATTHEW STINSON

In the eastern reaches of the River Kingdoms, Glow Water Lake moves with a constant choppy gray ripple. The surface of the water is thickly covered with minuscule plants that clump together and resemble shed fur, and these diminutive plants give the lake its metallic color during the sunlight hours. After nightfall, the plants begin to shine with a pale white light that mixes with the silver tint of the moon. Small threads of these “glow fibers” cling to anything that makes contact with the water’s surface, causing that object or person to glow faintly for hours.

Upon the eastern shore of Glow Water Lake sits the ruined town of Mosswater with its pale stone wharf. Two cobblestone streets lie parallel to the waterfront, flanked by long-abandoned manors and decrepit, roofless warehouses. Constructed from the same pale gray stone as the wharf, every dwelling stands at least two stories tall. The dirt streets have given way to waist-high grasses and wild sunflowers, and ivy claims every building within reach. Most of the buildings’ wooden flooring has rotted away, and their slate-shingled roofs have collapsed, giving these structures an open atmosphere and a palpable sense of sadness—a serenity broken by the leavings of its current inhabitants.

Thousands of bones, all gnawed upon, cracked, and sucked free of marrow, litter every free space; bleached white by the sun, they provide a grim warning for all to avoid this desolate place. These bones are the remains of the town’s original inhabitants and those who have tried to retake Mosswater since it was conquered nearly 50 years ago by inhuman monsters.

Mosswater was founded by Artoor Geera, an egomaniacal merchant exiled from Ustalav. He and his entourage settled here, seeking a quiet life of fishing away from his numerous enemies. His apothecary discovered a method for manufacturing luminous dyes and inks from the radiant fibers of the lake plants, marvelous substances that glowed in darkness the longer they were exposed to light. Artoor hired more alchemists to manufacture these dyes, and the small fishing village quickly became quite wealthy as its goods found markets in Brevoy, Galt, and Ustalav. A decade later, Artoor’s success had gone to his head, and he believed he could extend his political influence into the surrounding nations and gain recognition from the Outlaw Council. He was promptly assassinated for his hubris, and his son Laztoor

inherited his wealth and property. The younger Geera had no talent for business, preferring exotic drugs and prostitutes, and rival interests began to take over the market.

In 4664, a family of merrow—amphibious, aquatic ogres—moved into the lake from farther upriver. Two weeks later, they attacked the town. The few survivors mentioned pale, glowing, ogre-like creatures wearing bone armor and wielding massive hooks, which they used to spit townsfolk and drag them back into the water. Over the years, several foreign merchants have attempted to reclaim their holdings in the town, but the merrow make quick work of anyone foolish enough to stay overnight.

In 4688, troops from Razmiran invaded and claimed Mosswater for their Living God, but managed to hold the town for less than a week. After only 6 days, they retreated with half their original troops and horror stories of soldiers torn apart and eaten alive by the hungry, lake-dripping brutes and their hooks.

With no more easy victims within reach of the abandoned town, the merrow have taken to raiding farther afield, but are unusually clever in planning where and who they attack. They rarely strike out against merchant or supply ships navigating the Sellen River, instead favoring the pirates, bandits, thieves, and ill-prepared foreigners that are in abundance within the River Kingdoms. As a result, this stretch of the Sellen River has recently become one of the safest areas in the region (at least where banditry is concerned), a fact which draws even more luckless travelers for the merrow to prey upon. But since the creatures haven’t yet become a true threat to neighboring kingdoms, the local lords have left them alone, secretly happy that something is preying on troublemakers near their lands.

The family of ogres does not spare any who trespass overnight on the shore of the lake. Campsites, anchored ships, wagon circles, and larger temporary settlements are attacked and overrun, usually on the first or second night. Despite the danger that the ogres present, the promise of easy wealth from harvested glow fibers continues to draw the greedy and the desperate, especially as a Tymon youth recently discovered a small crate of finished luminous dye in one of the buildings and sold it for over 1,000 gold pieces. As a result, a consortium of merchants in Tymon, apparently unconcerned with the fates of previous would-be conquerors, is currently recruiting mercenaries for a heavily-armed expedition to Mosswater to recover all of the valuable dye left in the abandoned town and, if possible, end the ogre threat once and for all.





NYSTRA BY RICHARD PETT

Once a thriving place envied for its valuable silk, Nystra is now eerily empty. Decay gnaws away like a cancer in the forest where once a town thrived, where goodwives laughed and sang on the balconies of marble-columned townhouses. Now there is only silence. The hilltop citadel owned by dozens of petty warlords over the last hundred years is humbled and broken by thick boughs; nature dislocates its walls and her roots shatter its back. Yet the silence and stillness conceal strange life and a stirring danger.

The land near the citadel is rich in mulberry trees that provide a bountiful harvest for a specialized native creature called a silkgoyle. These creatures resemble insect-like gargoyles, though they lay eggs and their young grow into man-sized silkworm caterpillars before metamorphosing into their adult, gargoyle-like form. Silkgoyles think coldly but no less cruelly than their more familiar kin, and the silk the caterpillars spin is of legendary quality. About a century ago, a group of greedy merchants led by Count Nys subjugated the silkgoyles and established the citadel town of Nystra. Carefully harvesting the silk from the boiled cocoons of the giant larvae, the merchants grew wealthy from their monopoly on the abundant silk.

However, the silk merchants were cruel and callous men, prone to playing strange and often depraved games with the hearts and lives of their townsfolk. One such game resulted in the death of the family of Tharl Grimull, a Taldan druid who helped control the larval silkgoyles and was frequently out of town rounding up strays. Rather than throwing away his life in a direct attack on the merchants, Tharl plotted a slow revenge on his employers and all who were willing to stand idly by for the sake of gold.

After months of careful cultivation, Tharl developed a strange new breed of plant. He planted its great violet seed in the garden at the center of town, watering it with his tears and blood, and spread the news that on midsummer's night it would bloom with flowers that would cause the silkgoyle larvae to mature faster, bringing faster profits to the people of Nystra. Meanwhile, he worked with the few silkgoyles that had managed to avoid being enslaved by the Nystran merchants, stealing larvae belonging to the town and allowing them to turn into adults rather than being boiled alive for their cocoon silk.

By midsummer's day, Tharl's plant had grown as large as a house, and the townsfolk were eager to see its effects on their

captive silkgoyle larvae. As the villagers gathered around the plant, the merchant lords pressed close to witness the event firsthand. At noon, the dozens of violet flowers bloomed simultaneously and released a sweet pollen that entranced all who were near it—giving the blooming, mutated yellow musk creeper plenty of time to bore into their heads and turn them into yellow musk zombies. As the other townsfolk tried to flee, dozens of free silkgoyles (including their metamorphosed, rescued offspring) swarmed the citadel, snatching up villagers and returning them to the violet creeper. None escaped.

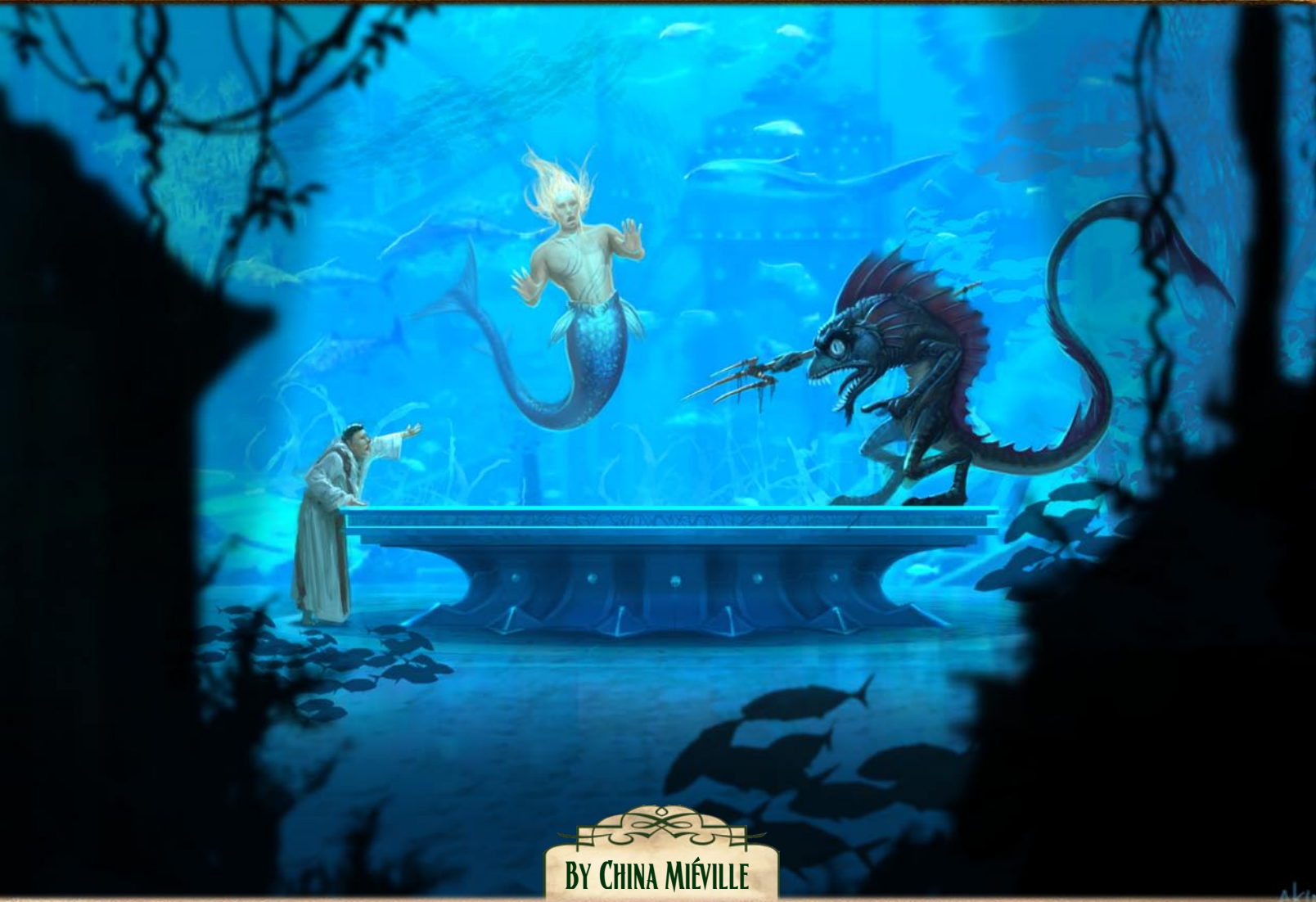
Now the creeper has overgrown all of Nystra, creating a dark briar of vines and mulberry trees, all festooned with curious violet flowers. The silkgoyles, immune to the powers of the plant, guard their new home, hiding amid the thorns and the ruins of human homes, sometimes idly sifting through the bones and treasures of their former masters. They nurse a terrible hatred for humankind, those who enslaved them and killed their children for silk, and tolerate no trespass.

Some who approach Nystra see the flying shapes of the silkgoyles at night and mistake them for demons, and glimpses of man-sized maggots suggest horrors that have escaped from the Worldwound, or perhaps servants of the demon Treerazer of Kyonin. The wise take heed of such disturbing sights and turn back before reaching Nystra proper. Those who ignore the warnings blunder foolishly forward like so many before them, only to fall victim to the beautiful but deadly violet musk creeper.

The strangest part of Nystra's tale is that Tharl was present at the moment of his vengeance and allowed his plant to consume him even as it killed the ones who murdered his family. Somehow, his will lingers on within the briar, steering its growth, animating its vegetation, and sometimes warning the silkgoyles of approaching intruders. Though it lacks intellect or true memory, the creeper still commands some power, and the insectoid rulers of Nystra pay it homage in something akin to worship; in time, Tharl's creeper may become one of the minor gods of the River Kingdoms—an inhuman thing focused on vengeance, reproduction, and defense of its territory.

But the far-off markets of Absalom, Katapesh, and even Tian Xia still covet the rare and beautiful Nystran silk once produced here. Stockpiles of the rich fabric have finally been depleted, textile warehouses sit empty, and it is only a matter of time before foreign trade interests begin sending their own expeditions to Nystra to reclaim the town or capture live silkgoyle larvae to manufacture the legendary silk for themselves.

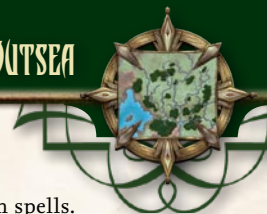




BY CHINA MIÉVILLE

OUTSEA

The peculiar history and unique geography of the fiefdom of Outsea makes it both a haven and a prison for most of its inhabitants. Centuries ago, a sahuagin state in the Inner Sea was gradually losing a protracted war against an aggressive merfolk empire, a struggle dramatic enough to have dragged in several other races. Unable to win in open battle, and blocked at the Arch of Aroden by the merfolk army, the sahuagin plotted a guerrilla strategy, an incredibly ambitious long-distance surprise attack. They would send an elite battalion of sahuagin, allies, and mercenaries north against their enemies' stronghold by the coast in Conqueror's Bay, and they would get there overland—or almost.



OUTSEA

Small City monstrous (council of inhuman generals); **AL** N

Base Value 4,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 6,700

Type humanoid and monstrous (merfolk 34%, sahuagin 36%, human 20%, elf 5%, other 5%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Various Councilor Generals (N male or female ceratioidi, merfolk, nagas, sahuagin, sea hags, skum, tritons);

Danglosa, localized deity (N male-female fish-godling)

The plan was daring, and many said suicidal. Several thousand sea-raiders would swim upriver from the ocean, accompanied by spellcasters who—with the help of know-how passed on by aboleth mages—would keep them alive by bringing a section of sea with them. They would travel stealthily in a town-sized bubble of brine, up the river Iseld, through caverns in the Menador Mountains to the other side of the slopes, downriver into Lake Encarthan, upriver again between Nirmathas and Fangwood, through submerged waters in the Mindspin Mountains, and downriver toward where Korvosa is now. They would attack their enemies suddenly, pouring out of an estuary from a completely unexpected direction. The lunatic ambitiousness of this plan underlined both the outgunned sahuagins' desperation as well as their not-entirely-unjustified faith in their spellcasters.

So a briny blob of weaponized ocean—soldiers, mages, and followers of several races, food-flora and -fauna, and coral accoutrements in tons of seawater—traveled secretly up-country through rivers for a commando raid.

Of course, it all went appallingly.

The journey was incredibly arduous. The war turned against them in their absence, and the merfolk armies, entering the sahuagin homeland, discovered details of the plan. Realistically the merfolk back home had little to worry about, but the sahuagin generals' bluster about their soldiers got the invaders nervous. So the merfolk sent their own elite units, with triton allies who hated the sahuagin even more than they, upriver to meet whatever supposedly terrible force faced them. They didn't have the magic of their enemies to bring the sea with them, and traveled instead in tanks of brine on the decks of hired human craft, bad-temperedly issuing orders, and suffering horribly.

The two sides met in Lake Encarthan. The sahuagin retreated east past the Isle of Terror, upriver by Xer, into the swamps and tributaries of what would become the River Kingdoms. The merfolk pursued them, each side pounding the other in a brutal, exhausting fight. A skirmish on the grounds of an unfortunate human town mortally wounded some of the sea-wizards keeping the bolus of seawater moving, and the sahuagin leaders had to let it to settle into place in the

bayou, keeping the freshwater temporarily at bay with spells. They knew it would not hold.

The two forces were lost, hundreds of miles from home, and beginning to realize they wouldn't make it back. Those few on either side who could tolerate freshwater had long abandoned the mission; those who remained were all salt water-dependent. They hadn't heard from their commanders for months, and hardly cared anymore: both had been terribly depleted by illness and fighting. Eventually the remnants of the merfolk forces, in their boat-top tanks above the hated river, begged parley. They asked their former enemies to let bygones be bygones, so that all the sea-dwellers could work together to survive in this festering freshwater hellhole.

They collaborated, grudgingly at first, combining magics with desperate energy to keep the life-saving seawater from dissipating. That was centuries ago. Their home countries have long since gone the way of all flesh. But, amazingly, the accidental settlement has not just survived, but from a certain perspective, thrived.

Outsea comprises a town, farmlands, rivers and canals, pools, and swampland in the River Kingdoms—all saturated with seawater. Where the freshwater and salt meet, Outsea's edges are maintained by walls and a complicated combination of magic and beautifully engineered water gates, locks, and sluices that keep the distinct waters from bleeding into each other—though there's always a bit of brackish overspill into the wider rivers. A regulated amount of freshwater is allowed into the settlement through salination devices—powered by alchemy, magic, and the sulky efforts of bound salt mephitis—where it is turned to seawater to replenish Outsea.

The sprawling, walled town of Outsea contains streets and many more canals, with buildings above and (mostly) below its waterline. It is on the site of a preexisting human settlement, and while much construction has occurred since its founding, some ancient human buildings remain, and are even in use, both above water and submerged.

Below, most buildings and burrows are built from coral or oceanic materials, barnacle-crusting and seaweedy where landlords are lazy. There are sea-farms, sea-orchards, stretches of coral reef, and wilder places where young Outsears misbehave. Ocean animals are abundant: octopi are pests in the trash-heaps, schools of fish dart about in the kelp-canopies, and so on.

Most of Outsea is relatively shallow, but there are a few places where deep pits have been excavated, or water has spilled into preexisting cave or tunnel systems, plugged hurriedly by engineers and mages, leaving large sections seawater-flooded. These provide habitat for those who prefer deep water, and the extensive submerged ruins make for unique and dangerous ecosystems in flooded dungeons—perfect for parties of water-breathing adventurers.



The population includes air-breathers of various sentient races, including humans and elves living in the above-water houses, but the majority of the city is underwater. As their ancestors were thrust together for survival, the aquatic population, extremely unusually, combines all sorts of different species that would in other situations be fighting to the death, descendants of both armies and their allies. So sahuagin rub fins with merfolk (the two majority populations), along with saltwater nagas, tritons, sea hags, the mysterious ceratioidi, a few chuul, and even gillmen and skum, the many-times-great-grandchildren of troops lent by the sahuagins' aboleth allies. There are no aboleths in Outsea, however; they helped with magic and soldiers for their own enigmatic reasons, but were not so foolhardy as to take part in the expedition themselves.

The truce is no longer uneasy: there is no hatred between the races of Outsea, as they have been thrust into collaboration and comradeship over too many generations. They are of various species, but they are all Outsears: even mixed marriages are not unheard of. The aquatic citizens tend to consider themselves somewhat superior to their landlubber fellow-citizens—the air-breathing minority—even those of families resident for generations. For their part, people born as Outsear landlubbers often make good adventurers, as many can't wait to get out and go exploring (though many, in later years, feel a surprising nostalgia for their unique homeland).

Water-breathing Outsears generally resent their strange exile and loathe the rivers that surround and trap them. They reserve most of their snobbery for freshwater beings of all kinds, like the local boggards (though this does not overcome their pragmatic willingness to trade with them if necessary); they depict themselves as aristocratic by virtue of oceanic lineage, as compared to these unspeakably bumpkin swamp-breathers. They endlessly perpetuate a myth of return, that one day they will go back to the sea, bringing their harmonious government with them. The name of this future utopian oceanic city, of which Outsea is, they insist, a strange displaced foundation, shall be Outsea-Insea.

This will never happen, as the more perspicacious Outsears know, though they'd generally forebear saying so publicly. While it isn't impossible once in a while, with enormous preparation, for individual Outsears to make the incredibly tough journey hundreds of miles to the sea, it would be quite impossible to relocate the whole polity. And there's also a dim awareness of how ocean sahuagin, merfolk, and others would respond to such a strange, multiracial country.

Outsea, for all its defenses and magics, is vulnerable. If its locks and magic were overcome, the freshwater would overwhelm the little patch of ersatz sea and kill the saltwater inhabitants. For that reason, over generations,

as they've been forced to trade and work not only with traditional enemies but with landlubbers and outsiders, much traditional antagonism has been diluted.

Outsea sahuagin, skum, chuul, and other traditionally "evil" monsters, for example, are on the whole not so any longer: they're wary and guarded, certainly, but will not attack or kill outsiders on sight. They are competent warriors, ready to defend their town, but no more xenophobic or genocidal than most others in the River Kingdoms. This, of course, is extremely disorienting to travelers more used to their oceanic stereotypes, let alone to River Kingdom natives who go to sea, if they forget that their courteous neighboring chuul are not exactly typical.

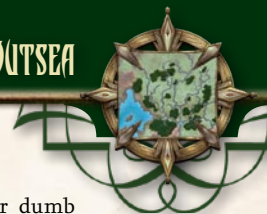
Resources

Outsea has thriving trade with nearby kingdoms and the frequent travelers on the river. Its local seafood—transplanted saltwater fish from the Inner Sea—are in demand for being much fresher than those brought smoked from the coast. It also maintains a strong tradition of (rather odd) water magic, with much of it for hire from the local sorcerers. Though its ties to the sea and knowledge of great powers have weakened over the years as the old mages died off and their lore was forgotten, the raw talent has also undergone strange mongrelizations: merfolk magic cross-fertilizing with sahuagins' and others', including local landlubber hex-craft, leading to spells and charms that are unique to this kingdom.

In addition to farmers and scholars, Outsears are soldiers, though the water-dependent ones are not very useful beyond the city walls. Outsea has obligatory militia service for all water-breathers (who all, therefore, carry rank, though only some are full-time soldiers). A few Outsear landlubbers also serve, in voluntary specialist land-battalions; these volunteers are considered unusual and honorable by their water-breathing compatriots.

Government

The town and its holdings, both terrestrial and aquatic, are ruled by a military democracy headed by the Council of Generals, representing the various sentient water-breathing races of Outsea. Only generals are eligible to stand as candidates. Landlubber Outsears vote for an advisory circle, which represents their interests to the Council of Generals, making requests and suggestions. The generals are not obliged to act on such input, but often do so, aware that, while rather second-class, landlubber Outsears are invaluable citizens. This is particularly the case not just with regard to air-breather soldiers, but to the small cadre of Outsear landlubber heralds, who, able to travel overland and through freshwater, operate as ambassadors, scouts, traders, and messengers on Outsea's behalf. They are well paid, trained, and respected—the landlubber elite. The most important



people in Outsea are the mages and engineers who keep the seawater from spilling out and freshwater from coming in. They are a varied bunch, of various races.

The strongest and most mysterious by far, and the power mostly responsible for keeping Outsea from dissolving into the swamp, is the city's singularly uncommunicative living god/goddess, Danglosa. Danglosa lives deep in the saltwater tunnels, somewhere below a submerged, coral-overgrown, and reconsecrated human church, where rather hurried and rote praise is sung and boons are requested of it by the church's part-time priests. (The priests all have other jobs; none have ever successfully interacted with Danglosa, and no Outsear is entirely convinced that the god/goddess gives two hoots about them, but they continue to go through the motions, just in case.)

Danglosa is the only inhabitant of Outsea still alive who was on the original raiding trip. At the time it was a water mage, but over the years its power has grown. Not quite strong enough to teleport itself to the ocean, it is trapped in the seawater along with the rest of Outsea. Everyone knows it is primarily Danglosa's efforts that keep Outsea going.

Danglosa's origins are disputed, but many say it is the result of aboleth experimentation. It has been generations since anyone has seen it in the flesh, but rumors and sacred texts describe it. Danglosa, or the only half of it generally ever noticed, resembles a huge, squat, bloated, immensely intelligent anglerfish. It is the size of a house, invisible in the gloom but for the uncanny phosphorescent lure that dangles at the end of a stalk before its colossal mouth. The size of a human head, the lure glows faintly in the crushing water, whispering enticingly and shifting between the ghostly features of those Danglosa has previously eaten.

Like most anglerfish of its type, Danglosa exemplifies amazing sexual dimorphism: it is a dual entity, with the male living as a tiny parasite on the female. He long ago mated with and fused to her, drawing sustenance straight from her body, and is now a nub of flesh on the back of the female's large body. The male's mind, however, is as sharp as ever—a genius-level intellect—and without the distractions of hunting or experiencing the world via senses, has given over centuries to abstruse theorizing. The female, who constitutes the enormous bulk of Danglosa, is no less intelligent, but as a predator aware of her surroundings she is slightly more worldly, which complements her mate's outlook. However, the two have been fused for so long that the question of "he" and "she" is largely irrelevant: Danglosa is a couple, in whose conjoined mind continues an ongoing discussion of immensely powerful magic between powerful water-mages, whose strength is largely given over to maintaining Outsea's water-defenses.

The flesh-lure is a strong charm, capable of snaring desired prey from far away. Danglosa has to eat (though its slow metabolism means this is less often than its size might

imply). Often it is content to prey upon the larger dumb animals of Outsea—sharks, dolphins, sea-tigers, and the like. But periodically—and so far as anyone can tell, without any particular malevolence, Danglosa being not "evil" but rather absolutely alien to humanoid understanding—Danglosa takes sentient prey, from which it derives not just physical but magical sustenance.

Far below the water, the lure glows, and someone, somewhere within Outsea, chosen by random or by logic opaque to all observers, acts suddenly smitten as if by a siren song. He ignores all interaction, and swims down through the dark toward Danglosa's lure. Usually this victim is a water-breather. Very occasionally it is a landlubber, in which case Danglosa's magic allows him to hold his breath all the long way down.

It is considered very bad luck to follow or to interrupt one of Danglosa's "called," as they are termed officially, or "snacks," as witty Outsears refer to them in whispers. If anyone tries to stop them, they fight ferociously to continue on their awful pilgrimage; otherwise they ignore all interaction. Outsears typically respond to Danglosa's occasional ensnarings with something like embarrassment, or great sadness if it's a friend who's taken, but maintain a philosophical acceptance of what's necessary. There is no reason to suppose that one day a visitor to Outsea might not be called by Danglosa's lure.

Outsea has a rare and powerful minority, the ceratioidi. They are, seemingly, the descendants of Danglosa, perhaps also created by those rumored aboleth experiments. The females are powerful, flabby, humanoid fish-women, whose fat faces are those of anglerfish, and from whose foreheads project bioluminescent lures. The males are fish the size of rats. Both sexes are very intelligent: the women are both physically adept and magically gifted. When they mate, the male attaches himself to the back of the female's neck, communicating telepathically with his host. Like Danglosa, a mated ceratioid is both a female and a parasitic male, in constant unspoken communication. They can survive some hours out of salt water, but need to submerge to remain healthy. They are often bureaucrats, underwater rangers and mages, able to share spells in their two minds. They have inherited Danglosa's unique ensnaring ability—though, thankfully, in weakened form. Ceratioidi can make their lures twitch and glow, which hypnotizes most creatures that see them (as *hypnotic pattern*). Those mesmerized come forward dumbly to stare at the light, mindless of safety or anything going on around them, if they don't break the spell; those within 5 feet of the lure are considered dazed. The ceratioidi often use this ability as part of a fighting technique, cutting down stupefied enemies who are enthralled by the flesh-lures; this makes them Outsea's elite force—at least, in or near the seawater. For more information and statistics for the ceratioidi, see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #32.



BY MIKE FERGUSON

PITAX

Long a haven for thieves and smugglers, Pitax is a hub for trade in the River Kingdoms. It aspires to be a center of culture and higher learning as well, but cannot escape its more unsavory origins. Threats and plots from other lands—as well as from within the borders of Pitax itself—have the potential to tear the small kingdom apart. Greedy adventurers eye the rich land on its northern frontier and picture themselves as rulers of their own kingdoms, collecting taxes that this kingdom so desperately needs for itself. Only the actions of Pitax’s shrewd leader, Lord Irovetti, have managed to stave off this downward spiral to ruin—at least, for the moment.



PITAX

Small City autocracy (single ruler); **AL** CN

Base Value 4,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 8,790

Type humanoid (human 90%, halfling 4%, elf 3%, other 3%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Castruccio Irovetti, lord of the city (CN male human bard 9); **Irsei Caelysse**, captain of the guard (NG male elf ranger 7), **Kharne Vereel**, guildmaster of the thieves' guild (NE male gnome rogue 9), **Joravin Pyathe**, shipmaster of the yard (N male dwarf expert 3/fighter 3), **Atalia Gitaren**, headmistress of the Academy of Grand Arts (NG female half-elf bard 4/ranger 2), **Xapiri Yasmina**, owner of the Serpent's Breath Trade House (LE female human expert 3/sorcerer 3).

Pitax's origins lie with brigands from their neighbor to the north, Brevoy, who sought sanctuary amid the forests of the River Kingdoms. The most famed of these brigands, a rogue with sorcerous powers born with the name Cesare Cattanei but better known as the Silver Fox, took to hiding his band of vicious thieves in a riverside hamlet known as Pitax. As they visited there year after year, the ill-gotten gold of the Silver Fox slowly transformed Pitax into something considerably larger than a simple, sleepy fishing village. Eventually, when the Silver Fox and his followers grew tired of their larcenous ways—and when the prices on their heads in Brevoy became too great—they settled in Pitax permanently, building walls around the village and hiring sellswords to help defend against their enemies. With this, Pitax became a permanent fixture of the River Kingdoms, able to survive and thrive for nearly 4 centuries while others around it withered and decayed.

Most of Pitax's history has been embroiled with strife. The small kingdom constantly battles with its neighbor Mivon for control of the fertile territory along the border that they share. Numerian brigands regularly attack the northern reaches of Pitax, and are given covert support by the Numerian crown. Brevoy, though it has never struck at Pitax with its formidable might, always threatens to do so, forcing Pitax to keep a vigilant eye to the east. Small factions within Pitax always squabble with one another for control of the kingdom. The two largest of these factions are the Cattanei and the Liacenza families. The Liacenzas, renowned for their fruit orchards near the town of Sarain, ruled Pitax for the better part of the last century. Though the family's rule bordered on the thuggish—their dealings with potential rivals tended to be brutal and clumsy—few people within the borders of the small kingdom complained, for they kept the orchards and the vineyards flourishing and gold coins flowing into their coffers from Brevoy and Numeria. Most importantly, they brokered the Grand Tournament of Sarain, which kept the prized vineyards near the village protected from the constant border wars with Mivon. Under their guidance, Pitax remained small but secure for decades.

This changed in 4702 with the arrival of a Numerian bard named Castruccio Irovetti. With a silver tongue and a sack filled with gold coins, Irovetti bought most of the trading houses in Pitax, and managed to talk his way into profitable partnerships with the rival merchants of the Liacenza family. On one fateful evening, Irovetti invited the leaders of the Liacenza name—the brothers Lothaire and Berengar, warriors renowned for their skills with the rapier—to a card game at one of his warehouses. Somehow, no one present could later recollect the events of that card game, or any part of that strange evening. However, when the sun rose the next morning, Irovetti owned a signed document legally handing over all the possessions of the Liacenza family to him, including the crown of Pitax.

Born from the blood and sweat of criminals, Pitax was initially conceived as nothing more than a den of thieves, where bandits could hide from authorities. Though this criminal haven has grown into something far greater, with much influence among the other River Kingdoms and many legitimate businesses driving its economy, its heart remains unchanged. The real goings-on in Pitax take place at night under cover of darkness, where the thieves and bandits who control both the city and the kingdom—a group including the kingdom's leader—conduct most of their business.

Hoping to give Pitax the illusion of respectability, Irovetti formed the Academy of Grand Arts shortly after taking over, hoping to turn the small city into a bastion of fine arts and high culture. Unfortunately, this plan proved to be disastrous. Irovetti insists on carefully controlling whatever the various artists, musicians, actors, and other performers of the academy create or do. As a result, the talented sorts that Irovetti hoped to attract to the academy never come, instead leaving only those with limited talents and great delusions of grandeur to enter its gates.

Government

A small, slight man who walks with a pronounced limp, Lord Irovetti is not physically intimidating or particularly handsome. He is, however, a charming fellow with a gifted memory, one who knows even the smallest of details about those with whom he speaks. Additionally, his most prized asset is hidden in plain sight—his cane, a silver curiosity that Irovetti “liberated” from his estranged father. In reality, the cane is a Numerian artifact, one that acts in a manner similar to a *rod of rulership*. However, Irovetti's cane only has a limited number of uses, something he knows well, so he makes use of its power only when necessary.

Irovetti has a gift for studying other people and learning their wants and fears. During his years as lord of Pitax, he has managed to stay out of the way of his enemies—of which there are many—by successfully pitting them against one another. Observers have noted that Irovetti's methods seem to be the work of a shrewd genius at times, and a raving madman at

The Academy of Grand Arts

While not as popular as some of the great bardic schools of the Inner Sea, Pitax's Academy of Grand Arts still manages to attract some students seeking greater specialization.

Focused Performance

Bards who have successfully mastered the strict curriculum of Pitax's Academy of Grand Arts to graduate are more adept in their assigned field of performance, at the expense of versatility in other areas. Such bards have the focused performance alternate class ability, which replaces versatile performance.

Focused Performance (Ex): At 2nd level, a bard must choose one type of Perform skill. The bard gains Extra Performance as a bonus feat, usable only with the chosen category of the Perform skill. At 8th level, and every 6 levels thereafter, the bard gains Extra Performance as an additional bonus feat. The additional uses of bardic performance gained from these feats cannot be used with any category of the Performance skill other than the one chosen at 2nd level.

others. Whatever the endgame of the Numerian bard might be, the only thing known for sure by anyone—save Irovetti himself—is that it is complex, ambitious, and likely to take years, if not decades, to reach.

Notable Sites

Three settlements in Pitax stand out as focal points for conflict in this kingdom.

Mormouth: The small hamlet of Mormouth, located in the northwest corner of Pitax, is a reluctant part of both the River Kingdoms and Pitax. Tradition ties Mormouth to Pitax, but common sense and a desire for gold and other finer things in life edge it ever closer to Numeria, its stronger neighbor. Mormouth was founded not long after the establishment of Pitax as an actual kingdom. Beginning as a humble fishing outpost, the hamlet remained a sleepy, unassuming place for many years. When Pitax underwent a great period of civil unrest a mere hundred years ago, and split into the rival kingdoms of Pitax and Corvonn, Mormouth found itself in Corvonn, which allied with Numeria. When Corvonn merged back into Pitax a few decades later, all of the Numeria-based prestige and affluence gained by the people of Mormouth vanished, transforming the bustling town back into a simple fishing village. Some welcomed this change, but many others did not. Now the residents of Mormouth are strongly divided on the issue of where their true loyalties lie, enough so that violent unrest has been known to spill out onto its streets over the matter.

Pitax: Pitax is a strange and disparate city, with distinctive sections. The original city sprang outward from the keep built long ago by the Silver Fox. However, the western half of Pitax partly burned to the ground during its rebellious war

with Corvonn nearly a century ago, and only under Irovetti's direction has this ruined section of the city been rebuilt. Sailors and newcomers to Pitax keep to the eastern parts of the city, known as Troutmouth. The merchants and rogues who have long controlled Pitax stay in the central heart of the city, known as the Shattered Ward. The newcomer artists and musicians keep to the west, in the New Ruins, where the Academy of Grand Arts resides.

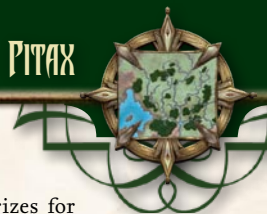
Until Irovetti's arrival in Pitax, the various merchant Trade Houses of the city—and the families that controlled those houses—ruled over the city. Though they only retain a fraction of the power they once possessed, the Trade Houses still control the city's docks and warehouses, and also maintain strong financial ties with influential people in Numeria, Brevoy, and the other River Kingdoms. Most travelers staying in Pitax for more than a day or so invariably wind up allying themselves with one of the houses, as trying to accomplish anything in the city without the support of a house typically proves to be a complete waste of time.

The Thieves' Guild of Pitax effectively controls the city. No shipments of goods may move in or out of the city without the guild's blessing. Even the most honest of merchants know that they must pay bribes to the guild on a regular basis in order to avoid the unnecessary plunder of their caravans. Rumors abound that the guild's headquarters lie far beneath the city, and are guarded by a large labyrinth filled with minotaurs who also serve as the guild's enforcers. Those seeking to commit any illicit activity in Pitax would be well served to apply for membership in the guild, or at least seek its blessing, lest they face its formidable wrath.

Sarain: This town lies close to the border between Pitax and Mivon, meaning that Sarain has changed hands from one kingdom to the other over a half-dozen times in the past 200 years. The reason for this is simple—whoever controls the village controls the wondrous vineyards that grow nearby. Many a border war has been fought between the two small kingdoms over these vineyards, as Sarain vintages are renowned throughout Avistan. Unfortunately, an unintended consequence of this constant fighting has been the vineyards' occasional destruction.

Resources

Pitax has long been known for its prized orchards and vineyards. In particular, the lush area near Sarain has supplied all the lands of the Inner Sea with fine wines for over a century. Many of the forests of Pitax have been transformed into grand orchards producing apples, oranges, plums, and pears. Though much of this fruit can only be sold to the other River Kingdoms or nearby lands before spoiling, the various ciders and ales that come forth from the Pitaxian merchant houses are almost as popular as the wines, and Pitaxian dried fruit is a staple aboard most merchant ships set to sail across long expanses of oceans. Additionally, a few cunning alchemists have used the various fruits to create a wide variety



of exotic paints, something quite appreciated by the many artists making their home in Pitax.

The recent influx of artists and musicians into Pitax has also cultivated a slow but steady growth in the number of artisans producing fine musical instruments. Though many of the performers utilizing these instruments have little talent, the instruments themselves have proven to be of phenomenal quality. In particular, a Pitaxian craftsman named Nicolo Gramati has created many masterwork stringed instruments which are coveted by bards and musicians at the finest courts across Golarion.

The needs of Pitax are quite simple—metal and stone. Apart from a few sparse limestone quarries, Pitax possesses neither. These limitations keep the number of blacksmiths working in Pitax to just a handful. Swords and other tools wrought from metal are often in short supply, which is why Irovetti seeks constantly to acquire them with generous trade agreements from the other River Kingdoms and from Numeria. Irovetti constantly monitors the black-market sales of weapons in Pitax with great interest—he actually doesn't mind that they are brought into his small kingdom, provided that they aren't turned against him.

Much of the reason that other River Kingdoms pay attention to Pitax these days is because of its market for strange drugs. Many of the artists and musicians who travel to Pitax to become great performers often resort to taking mind-altering substances, hoping to foster their creative abilities, and this creates a demand for pesh from Katapesh, odd elven plants harvested in Kyonin, and exotic leaves and animal parts from the Mwangi Expanse.

Adventurers

Pitax is a veritable haven for bards and rogues. Though the streets of its quiet hamlets seem quite benign to travelers, there lurks within a covert world of intrigue. In Pitax, adventurers may find themselves able to buy, trade, or sell exotic items that simply cannot be found in the other River Kingdoms—provided, of course, that the seller is part of the thieves' guild. Although it officially does not exist, Pitax's thieves' guild has flourished under the reign of Irovetti. Crimes committed in Pitax without proper guild sanctioning bring harsh retribution against those responsible, both from the officials of the law and the guild. Criminal sentences for non-guild rogues tend to be much more severe than those meted out to guild members—a handsome result of the gold flowing from the guild to Irovetti and his cronies.

Pitax's focus upon the only to fall victim, arts tends to draw bards to the small nation like moths to a flame. With the various theaters and festivals spread out among all the towns of Pitax, jobs are plentiful for those who can entertain. In particular, the taverns of Pitax enjoy holding singing competitions, sometimes for those who have the best voice, other times for those who can compose the most beautiful

song, or the bawdiest one. In all such cases, the prizes for these competitions can be handsome indeed for a novice performer—a sack of gold, a handful of gemstones, or even a small magical item about which little is known. Bribery among the judges of these contests runs rampant, and winners are often confronted in the back alleys of Pitax by sore losers armed with swords.

Fighters, rangers, and druids may find work among the farmers of the various vineyards and orchards in Pitax. These places are constant targets of bandits from Brevoy, as well as roaming monsters. Most farmers just want hired warriors to protect their lands, but a few hire mercenaries to actively seek out and destroy potential enemies before their farmlands can be threatened, and a druid's green thumb is usually welcome.

Many wizards and sorcerers can make a handsome living by using their alchemical skills to partake in the illicit trade of narcotics—and many other good-hearted magic users seek to stop their less scrupulous brethren.

Adventure Hooks

Intrigue, double-crossings, and backstabbing are all part of daily existence in Pitax. Most events here revolve around the thieves' guild, the Trade Houses, or the Red Crescent Theater.

The Dark Theater: Those involving themselves with the Red Crescent Theater quickly learn of the underground drug trade that pervades the theater and the Academy of Grand Arts. Anyone seeking to stop the drug trade in Pitax—or at least slow it down—need only start in the basements of the theater, where some academy students also dabble in alchemy and the dark arts of magic. Longtime residents of Pitax also speak of dark portals lying beneath the theater, which was built on the ruins of a forgotten temple. According to legend, these portals lead to hellish domains if opened correctly, but also to great realms of treasure and power.

Serving the Trade Houses: Various merchants and craftsmen scattered all over the kingdoms deal with the various Trade Houses of Pitax. The Trade Houses often require guards to accompany their caravans to protect them from the assorted brigands lurking in the wilds of the River Kingdoms. They often need the services of explorers as well—to find treasures in the 12 abandoned towers near Pitax, or to find possible mines of ore in the hills east of Mormouth.

Steal and Re-Steal: The Thieves' Guild of Pitax always has openings for enterprising adventurers, and gladly waives typical initiation fees and rituals in exchange for performing simple tasks. The guild often looks for newcomers to Pitax willing to “liberate” certain items from the warehouses and ships of the city; likewise, the original owners of those objects often seek to have their property liberated in kind from the guild. Daring adventurers can earn handsome rewards from the richer merchants of Pitax by stealing from the guild, although doing so may be tantamount to signing one's own death warrant if caught.

THE PROTECTORATE OF THE BLACK MARQUIS

BY JOSHUA J. FROST

In 4700, a Chelish corsair prince named Morgan the White had a dream: he wanted to find a piece of land somewhere adjacent to ship traffic, build a small community of fellow pirates, and extort that ship traffic for every copper he could. His plan had a catch, though—he needed to find a place with water-going traffic that wasn't already guarded by some enormous empire's bristling navy. The answer was the River Kingdoms. He gathered every pirate ally he had from the Sodden Lands to the Mandagara League in distant Vudra and convinced them to "retire" to a choice piece of land astride a tributary of the Sellen River in the northern reaches of the River Kingdoms. With these fellow pirates, he created a complicated protection racket known as the Pirate Pact, established through the Marquis Convention (a loose contract of obligations and rules) and crowned himself the White Marquis of an area he called the Protectorate of the White Marquis. For 2 years, Morgan the White's plan worked flawlessly: hundreds of pirates, scoundrels, thugs, and freebooters arrived from all over Golarion each month, bringing weapons, ships, and their skills, and very quickly the protectorate was boarding a large percentage of the river traffic bound for Numeria and the crusades in Mendev beyond. The White Marquis attended the Outlaw Council in Daggermark during the protectorate's first year and guaranteed the other leaders of the River Kingdoms that his activities would never directly jeopardize the livelihood of those flying flags of their kingdoms and that they would instead rob outsiders of everything they could. Given that this idea didn't violate any of the Six River Freedoms—which only apply to Riverfolk—the Outlaw Council accepted the protectorate into its ranks.

DEADBRIDGE

Large Town conventional (pirate despot and council); **AL CN**
Base Value 2,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 4,113

Type humanoid (human 90%, halfling 6%, gnome 2%, elf 1%, other 1%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Urdul Bazzak, the Black Marquis (LE male human rogue 6);
Elggen Hurt, wharfmaster (CN male half-elf fighter 3/rogue 1);
Wylia Greensword, captain of the *Seabitch* (N female human fighter 4/sorcerer 2).

In very little time, the ship traffic that regularly traveled the western waterways wised up and began stopping in the pirate capital of Deadbridge on the way north or south to pay a

toll. So long as a vessel paid the toll, it continued unmolested across the remaining 30 or so miles through the protectorate's territory. Those who attempted to sneak past Deadbridge or chose to fight off the protectorate's protection racket were boarded and slain, their vessels commandeered in the name of the marquis, and their goods sold off into black markets from Tymon to Restov in Brevoyn.

The success of Morgan the White inevitably led to his downfall as one of his strongest allies, a Vudran maharaja buccaneer, slew the White Marquis in his sleep and usurped power in a bloody coup. Though his name is not remembered, this despot styled himself the Crimson Marquis and led for a brief period before a half-orc ally of the White Marquis named Ultrar Duneshifter (who took power as the Rogue Marquis) jailed him. These events, piled so quickly one on top of the other, destabilized the Pirate Pact, and for several years the region devolved into thievery and chaos.

During this time, three different marquises all claimed power and ruled from the three towns of Deadbridge, Farhaven, and Bodie's Haunt, effectively cutting their branch of the river into three different protection rackets. In 4707, one of the residents of Deadbridge, a porcine man from Numeria named Urdul Bazzak, decided he'd had enough and made a deal with his home nation that if they would send armies south and smash Bodie's Haunt for him, he'd reduce their prices for all Numerian traffic on the river. The Numerians reluctantly agreed, and while Bazzak sat astride his horse on a nearby hilltop, he watched as the marquis of Bodie's Haunt was drawn and quartered and the entirety of his community slain. He immediately sent word to the marquises of Farhaven and Deadbridge that the same was about to happen to them, and in a matter of weeks went from a nobody in Deadbridge to the self-styled Black Marquis, the current enforcer of the Pirate Pact.

Today the protectorate knows relative peace. It continues to extort river traffic through its territory, and has made deals with Numeria, Mendev, and Brevoyn to reduce the likelihood that one of these three nations will crush it out of existence, and holds a loose alliance with the current ruler in Daggermark. There are troubling stories brewing from inside the Echo Wood, though, that giant spiders and other web-spinning creatures are building vermin-infested nests throughout the Azlanti ruins scattered about the wood, but no one has bothered to explore too far away from the river to confirm the accounts.

Any who are willing to work for the protectorate may do so, but they must first swear loyalty to the Black Marquis and work for at least 6 months as deckhands on one of the ships before being recognized as full members of the Pirate Pact, with all the wealth-sharing and responsibility that comes with it. Adventurers are frowned upon here, as are crusaders, Pathfinders, and anyone else who might disrupt the way things are.



Government

The protectorate is ruled by a single despot, but guided by the principle of shared wealth. Anyone willing to work gets a cut from the protection racket, but the ruling marquis gets the lion's share. The effectiveness of any given marquis in the protectorate (there have been seven of them in 10 years) is entirely dependent on that individual's philosophies and ruling styles. Some marquises have been lenient, careful rulers while others (the current one included) are greedy, vindictive thugs who jealously guard what power and money they have and brutally strike down any perceived opponents. Beneath the marquis, there is a loose council of men and women who represent potential future marquises. They have nearly as much wealth and power as the current despot and constantly war for expanded control—openly and otherwise. The Black Marquis is an effective diplomat (despite his brutality) and keeps the members of this ramshackle council constantly at war with each other. However, the history of the protectorate, as short as it is, shows that the so-called Pirate Pact never holds up in the long term, and a new marquis is always just around the corner.

Notable Sites

While the Protectorate technically claims the Azlanti ruins within the Echo Wood, few locals or visitors have the opportunity to explore them, as trouble is drawn to the kingdom's settlements.

Bodie's Haunt: Completely destroyed by the armies of Numeria, Bodie's Haunt is today a ruined maze of muddy streets, stone piles, and burned-out hovels. The souls of the pirates slain here wander the streets, angry and lost, and most who enter Bodie's Haunt never return.

Deadbridge: The heart of the protectorate is Deadbridge, a run-down old hamlet built nearly 50 years ago that was but an abandoned hovel when Morgan the White settled here and established the protectorate. The pirate capital is made up of broken huts, shacks, and sheds in between which run foul, muddy streets filled with refuse and animal corpses—and sometimes two-legged ones as well. Most of today's Deadbridge is built atop a wharf that extends far out into the Sellen River atop ancient piles that were once part of a stone bridge some forgotten kingdom built here and then abandoned. The homes, buildings, and warehouses on the wharf are of the finest construction, and this is where the marquis resides when he's in town. His most loyal men and women jealously guard the wharf, and anyone caught there who doesn't belong is either cut down by swordplay or tied to barrels and drowned in the river.

Farhaven: Farhaven is the only decent town the protectorate has. It actually has a city guard numbering 20 or so, protected cattle pens and guarded farms, and some legitimate merchant traffic with other River Kingdoms. Of course, it's still a pirate town, so it has the requisite black markets, bar fights, and docks crawling with scallywags, but of the two towns of the

protectorate, on a good day Farhaven might actually be called a decent place to live.

Adventure Hooks

The presence of so many rowdy pirates all but guarantees conflict with visiting PCs.

All For Greed: The PCs hear tales that good money can be made in Deadbridge working for the Black Marquis. When they arrive, however, they're arrested and accused of stealing from ships that fly the flags of the River Kingdoms. They must escape the clutches of the marquis' men before they're smuggled out of the kingdoms and sold into slavery.

Pointing Fingers: The lure of the Azlanti ruins in the Echo Wood is too much to resist, and the PCs find themselves on the wharf at Deadbridge, disguised as simple travelers. Rumors quickly circulate in Deadbridge that crusaders are in town disguised as pirates, and when the town turns to anarchy to find these alleged do-gooders, the PCs must flee before they're discovered as outsiders and accused of plotting against the pirates.



RIVERTON BY STEVE KENSON

Some 50 or so years ago, the elven swordsman Naerel, a traveler from Kyonin, came to the River Kingdoms to explore the ruins of Sevenarches in secret. He chanced to engage the services of a guide who was a worshiper of Hanspur. One night, the guide chose to drown Naerel as an offering to the Water Rat, and as the elf flailed and fought for breath and life, he heard a watery voice speak to him and saw visions of a lakeside community serving Hanspur. Cajoled and invigorated by these things, Naerel surged from the waters of the Sellen and drowned his would-be murderer.

RIVERTON

Village magical (theocracy); AL CN

Base Value 500 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 572

Type humanoid (human 88%, half-elf 9%, other 3%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Brother Naerel Twice-Born, the River Preacher (CE male elf fighter 1/cleric of Hanspur 6); **Sister Maella**, shrine attendant (N female half-elf cleric of Hanspur 3)

Now calling himself Twice-Born (“once of woman, again of water”), Naerel began preaching Hanspur’s word, and eventually gathered a small group of followers around him who established a camp on the shore near their god’s floating temple in Kallas Lake. Refugees from the surrounding lands sometimes found shelter at the camp, and a small community of zealots grew up around it.

Worship of Hanspur is at the heart of life in Riverton. Anyone joining the community is expected to undergo the water-born rite: a baptism where dedicants are held underwater until “the spirit of Hanspur” touches them and they fall unconscious, at which point the River Preacher lifts them up and forces them to cough out the water they’ve inhaled. Religious services are held daily at dusk, and all community members are expected to attend. Naerel leads the worshipers in a walk out from the shore into the waters of the lake, where the spirit of the god sometimes seizes the River Preacher, causing him to thrash in the shallows as he cries out the contents of his visions. These have often provided insight or protected the settlement and the shrine from danger, but have also condemned intruders, blasphemers, and unbelievers to death in the depths.

Many visitors assume Naerel Twice-Born is a cunning con artist, living a life of luxury as the

leader of a cult—at least until they see the spartan conditions of the village and the appearance of the River Preacher himself: long hair tangled and spiky with mud, which almost constantly spatters his face and clothes save when he has been freshly immersed in the waters. His pale blue eyes glitter feverishly, and his voice is a rich and penetrating tenor, able to cut through other sounds. It is clear from both the shrine’s chosen female attendants and the number of half-elves in Riverton that Naerel frequently bestows “the love of the River God” upon his followers.

Government

Riverton is a theocracy, where the word of the River Preacher is law.

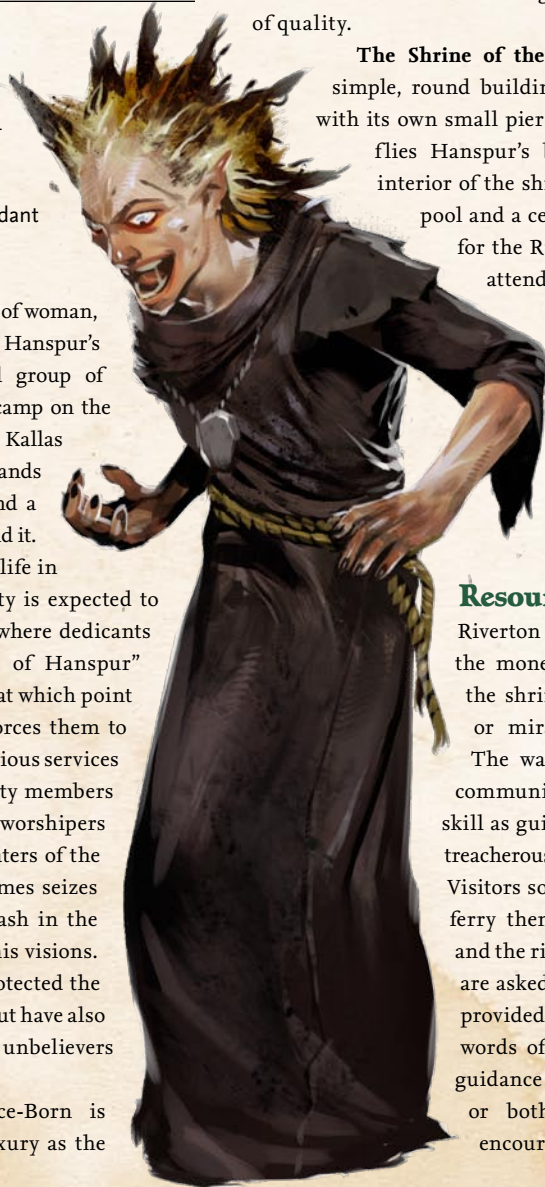
Notable Sites

Within the ramshackle village there is only one building of quality.

The Shrine of the River God: This is a fairly simple, round building of local stone and timber, with its own small pier flanked by a carved pole that flies Hanspur’s banner in fair weather. The interior of the shrine has a shallow ceremonial pool and a central altar, as well as quarters for the River Preacher and the shrine’s attendants. The head attendant of the shrine is Naerel’s oldest daughter, Maella, a devoted follower of Hanspur since childhood. She is unmarried, and no one in the community would dare approach her, given her fierce devotion to the god.

Resources

Riverton survives on fishing and on the money brought in by pilgrims to the shrine, mostly seeking the advice or miracles of the River Preacher. The water-born—the faithful of the community—are also known for their skill as guides and pilots along the often treacherous waters of the River Kingdoms. Visitors sometimes hire a raft or boat to ferry them upriver or across the lake, and the right price ensures no questions are asked. Riverton welcomes travelers, provided they are willing to hear the words of Hanspur, looking to pay for guidance through the River Kingdoms, or both. Otherwise, strangers are encouraged not to linger.





SCRAWNY CROSSING

BY KEVIN CARTER

At the edge of an abandoned ferry crossing in the eastern River Kingdoms, a moldy wooden sign reads, “Scrawny Crossing.” Carved into the old, rotten wood directly under the name is a more recent message: “They only come out in the rain,” with the word “they” underlined by three quick slashes of a rusted hunting knife which still protrudes from the sign post, left there by whoever originally carved the warning many years ago. This cryptic message remains one of the few communications left behind by the settlers of Scrawny Crossing before they disappeared entirely from the River Kingdoms. Once a tiny hamlet sometimes used as a caravan stop, Scrawny Crossing is now only a collection of empty farmsteads, an abandoned inn, and dilapidated ferry docks sagging into dark, silt-laden waters.

Clues are scarce as to who, or what, caused the disappearance of the populace. All that is known is that travelers found Scrawny Crossing suddenly and inexplicably abandoned after a fierce rainstorm in 4706. In addition to the ominous message carved into the sign at the edge of town, the empty streets were strewn with river weeds and crisscrossed with many muddy tracks left by long, slender feet with webbed toes. Since the disappearance of the settlers of Scrawny Crossing, most travelers in the River Kingdoms avoid the abandoned settlement and only refer to it by its new nickname, “Deadwater Crossing.”

The few travelers who have visited the crossing in recent years report that it remains utterly abandoned—not even birds nest there—and that a sinister presence now hangs about the area. Several individuals even claim to have glimpsed strange shapes lurking along the shore at twilight, but these accounts have yet to be substantiated by a reliable source.

Only one person claims to have spent the night in Scrawny Crossing since the disappearance of its settlers—an old grave robber named Eric Grayling. Since returning from Scrawny Crossing, Grayling has succumbed to alcoholism and paranoia, but if found near his shack in Tymon and plied with free drinks and soothing words, he reveals what he remembers about his encounter at the abandoned ferry. Grayling journeyed to Scrawny Crossing with a gang of thieves to salvage any riches left behind by the town's missing populace; though not expecting much from such a small settlement, they believed it would be easy pickings.

While there, he and his gang were forced to take shelter in the empty inn as a fierce thunderstorm gathered overhead. As darkness fell and the downpour drummed across the inn's dilapidated roof, Grayling and his gang were ambushed by what he describes as “fish-trolls.” The thieves were soon overwhelmed by packs of these trolls whose flesh knit back together in the pouring rain. Grayling claims the monsters were led or controlled by other, larger things that remained

in the river. He never got a clear look at the mysterious creatures through the driving rain, other than a harrowing glimpse of serpentine limbs and tentacled growths. According to Grayling, these strange commanders used some sort of magic to enchant several members of his group, driving them mad and forcing them to attack their former comrades alongside the advancing trolls.

Grayling escaped only by abandoning his gang at the inn and sneaking away into the countryside under the cover of an *invisibility* spell. He has since moved to Tymon, where he struggles to make ends meet as a failing locksmith, and huddles fearfully inside his shack whenever it rains. Few people have heard his story, and fewer still believe a word of it, but Grayling's encounter was genuine—there is a great evil that now lurks in the river near Scrawny Crossing.

What the nearby kingdoms have yet to discover is that Scrawny Crossing has become the base of operations for a band of aquatic slavers. The “fish-trolls” Grayling described are scrag crossbred with skum to produce hardier soldier minions for their mysterious master. They look like normal scrag except for wide, frog-like heads with toothy mouths, and fish-like frills which vary from one individual to another.

The gang is led by a trio of monstrous creatures. One of the leaders is an iridescent-scaled naga called Lord Slissk; another is an aberrant scrag sorcerer named Thult-Lorth, whose flesh is bound to a symbiotic mimic; and the third is a grotesque sea hag known as Mother Slug.

These monsters all serve another master, a telepathic overlord believed to be an aboleth, and are charged with gathering fresh humanoid stock from the River Kingdoms and bringing them to its hidden lair for experimentation and crossbreeding purposes. To cover their activities and make the best use of the scrag's regeneration, the creatures only attack in heavy rainfall, though their master's demands for more slaves may soon push them to attack travelers or the people of Lambreth even when the skies are clear.





BY JEFF QUICK

SEVENARCHES

Just stepping into civilized Sevenarches eases the mind. The land is fairer, the grass softer, the weather milder, and the sky a brighter blue than only a few yards outside the territory. Sevenarches is possibly the largest River Kingdom in land area, although Gralton and Pitax have decent competing claims to this title. It also has a shocking stability compared to other River Kingdoms, thanks to its sizeable standing army and the hyper-vigilant oversight of the ruling druid sect known as the Oakstewards. Once an elven settlement, and continuously occupied for thousands of years, the territory is now primarily home to fey and the humans who have learned how to live with them.



SEVENARCHES

Large Town nonstandard (mayor and druidic oligarchy); **AL N Base Value** 2,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 4,340

Type humanoid (human 88%, fey 5%, gnome 4%, halfling 2%, other 1%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Esmet Silkenlock, mayor (N female human rogue 3/expert 1); **Dethenesthen Carcusian**, Captain of the Underbrush (N male human ranger 4); **Leoti**, Voice of the Wind (LN female human druid 9).

Life in Sevenarches is less civilized than in other River Kingdoms. Settlements are small, rough, and fortified. Rather than the loose spreading of a village every few miles that characterizes other civilized settlements in the Inner Sea region, small towns tend to clump together every dozen miles or so, with lightly patrolled farmland in between.

Dirt roads with stone mile-markers are the most advanced thoroughfares in the kingdom. Very few roads exist, with those that do primarily running from the city of Sevenarches out to the towns and farms along the rivers. Wild animals, including dire animals, roam freely across most of the realm. Travelers are warned to stay in groups, and hire protection if going very far. The branches and tributaries of the Sellen are the main mode of transit, and most villages and farms are located within a few miles of a riverbank. Civilized Sevenarches strings along the north and east borders of the realm, leaving the interior wild—about 70% of the land is uncultivated, left to the fey and wild creatures.

Fey are a notable minority, even living openly among humans in the town of Sevenarches. Though generally helpful, some fey do tend to steal things, replacing them with junk (or sometimes magical items that seem like junk, such as a *feather token*). Because malicious or troublemaking fey often try to lure people off roads with false pleas and *dancing lights*, local humans have learned to ignore strangers calling or signaling to humans for help; “Stay in sight, all is right,” is a Sevenarches truism.

No one in Sevenarches goes hungry, and bandits are noticeably less common here compared to other kingdoms. But the price for stability is paid in liberty. By law, the ruling Oakstewards may demand up to 90% of a person’s holdings without question—whether or not that person is a citizen of Sevenarches. Rebellion brings banishment; armed rebellion is punishable by flaming execution.

Oaksteward demands are rarely so drastic—a typical command is to care for a sickened wild animal, to grow a certain kind of plant for a year, or to escort a trespasser to the border. However, in one instance, the Oakstewards demanded the abandonment of an entire village with no explanation, and no assistance in relocation. Over the years, the Oakstewards

have become increasingly draconian and unsympathetic in their demands, but the boil is so slow that most residents don’t notice. That said, the Oakstewards are hardly micro-managers. Some Sevenarches residents go years without encountering one. Nevertheless, when one approaches, the druid’s commands must be obeyed.

Sevenarches is exceptionally difficult to conquer. The strong fey aspect of the place overwhelms most would-be invaders, as terrain seems to shift, invisible enemies swarm supply lines, weapons are replaced with tree branches, and officers are kidnapped from their campaign tents. A larger power with intent to seize the land could overcome these problems, but a typical River Kingdoms despot with a few hundred soldiers can barely travel a mile without getting lost or turned around. Those who do must then face the wrath of an unknown number of powerful druids on their own territory.

Sevenarches remains on civil but distant terms with other kingdoms (although both the civil authorities and the Oakstewards maintain a mutual disdain for Tragshi, the poisoner from Daggermark, who keeps trying to collect rare herbs that grow in the enchanted gardens of Sevenarches).

The overbearing mystery of the Oakstewards strains neighborly relations. However, food policy in Sevenarches covers many sins. Druidic magic ensures that the kingdom of Sevenarches grows abundant crops. They then supply neighboring kingdoms with surplus grain at reasonable prices, even in famine years, regardless of the buyer’s ideology or morality. This food source allows the southwestern end of the River Kingdoms to survive through harsh political shifts, and endears the Oakstewards to commoners who live near Sevenarches territory, no matter what their lords may think.

Government

The Oakstewards are the true rulers of Sevenarches and lead with a hand that is alternately detached and heavy. The druids seem unmoved by cries of human injustice, but act quickly to defend land and citizens against despoilers, springing from within the trees themselves to prevent harm to their demesne.

The Oakstewards operate in infuriating secrecy, keeping silent even when communication would help their causes. No one knows exactly how many Oakstewards exist. Four roles among the druids communicate with the outside world, chosen each year during the winter solstice. The Voice of the Wind serves as the speaker to outsiders, and the foreign affairs diplomat. The Root of the Sapling encourages growth of crops and children. The Bloom of the Harvest ensures proper food distribution to Sevenarches residents and foreign buyers. The Sharp of the Bark defends the borders, waters, and roads of Sevenarches. There are more than four Oakstewards, and probably more positions that the druids hold internally, though the druids share no further information on this topic.

The revolving nature of the Oakstewards’ governance makes it difficult for outsiders to build relationships. A different



Voice of the Wind attends every Outlaw Council. Policy remains consistent, but the different druids have displayed wildly varying diplomatic abilities.

The Oakstewards meet and confer in a secret lodge in the Elderwoods. The lodge exists within a series of enormous, ancient oak trees, joined via branches and other growths to create one great internal room.

Notable Sites

No settlement in the kingdom of Sevenarches can truly be categorized as a city. Only around one-third of the territory is what other civilized societies would even consider “inhabited.”

The Den: About 10 years ago, a pack of awakened dire wolves left the Wilewood and claimed the southeastern corner of Sevenarches. Now, about 20 of them live in an empty stone granary in an abandoned village they call the Den. The wolves speak Sylvan, and attack anyone in their territory without warning, even Oakstewards. Human survivors of the wolves’ appropriation moved north, but many still resent the loss of their homes and personal treasures. Several abandoned villages remain largely intact, as the wolves eat looters but care little for their treasures.

The Elderwoods: This stand of ancient oak trees in the south, near the Kyonin border, is older than the Oaksteward organization, and thick with treants. The Oakstewards do not allow logging here, regardless of the immense sums of money they have been offered for this virgin, millennia-old timber.

Sevenarches: The eponymous main settlement of Sevenarches has a wall, overgrown with ivy, and openings that lack gates. A remnant from the distant past, the wall is all but useless as a defensive structure and could never repel an assaulting army. The town itself is a creepy jumble of elven ruin and human architecture. Flora covers the city, and many streets are draped with resilient ivy thatch, springy to the touch, but thick enough to withstand heavy draft animals.

Sevenarches is the first major stop for pilgrims and traders headed north on the Sellen. The town is home to two bustling supply companies, Sellenmark Supply and Auldwell’s, two fiercely competitive shops that sell all major and minor adventuring necessities.

In a cobblestone courtyard at the center of town, seven stone arches with subtly shifting colors stand in a circle, each 20 feet high, radiating faint illusion magic. These are reported to be magical elven arches that might serve as passage to the First World (though this actually is a lie; the Oakstewards assembled these arches and established this place as a diversion for onlookers wanting to study or use the true arches.)

The mayor of Sevenarches, Esmet Silkenlock, is a reformed thief, a Keleshite from Katapesh made good in the River Kingdoms. Esmet is an indefatigable leader and administrator, overseeing as much of the town as possible, with the help of her staff of four. Having learned from the example of the Pactlords, she lets trade and travelers have a free hand. Chosen for the job

by the Oakstewards, Esmet has complete operational authority over town matters, except for the occasional Oaksteward fiat (a state of affairs she finds annoying).

The army of Sevenarches (which protects the entire kingdom as well as the town itself) consists of about a thousand soldiers known as the Underbrush. Led by Captain Dethenesthen Carcusian, a disgraced former Taldan envoy to Kyonin, these defensive guerilla fighters rely heavily on elven skirmish tactics to demoralize and drive off enemies. Carcusian and 200 Underbrush soldiers are based in Sevenarches, but he regularly tours the territory with a retinue.

But for the Oakstewards, the violent vicissitudes of the River Kingdoms would overwhelm Esmet’s light touch and Carcusian’s small military. Leoti, the current Voice of the Wind, appears in town about once a week. A middle-aged Kellid woman with a world-weary demeanor, Leoti is friendly, but no-nonsense in dealing with outsiders. She loves to hear stories of happenings in Numeria.

The River Sellen: The great river comes within a mile of the city of Sevenarches, where caravans take merchants, mercenaries, and other travelers to the settlement. A direct walk to the city is discouraged, as the way is waterlogged, and marsh fey sometimes steal from travelers on foot. A gang of pixies working for the town accompanies each caravan, some invisible, some not. They use their detection spell-like abilities on anyone who looks remotely suspicious (which includes all adventurers), looking for sign of elves trying to sneak into the territory. Watery fey and the occasional water elemental also keep watch on the river, and usually report crossings to the Oakstewards.

The Seven Arches: Somewhere within the Wilewood, found on no maps (and by few humans), is a great clearing hundreds of feet across. Arranged according to some arcane design, seven arches stand in the clearing, carved from gray-brown basalt quarried nowhere in the River Kingdoms. Time and nature have challenged but not defeated the true arches. Vines climb the sides, and moss half covers the stone carvings of animals and magical beasts. Each arch is a different size and shape; the highest towers 50 feet overhead and 30 feet wide, brushing the lower forest canopy, hinting at the size of what could be summoned through it. Those who sense magic find the arches’ presence nearly overwhelming, bright as bonfires on a moonless night. Others find the clearing unsettling, possessed of a high ringing in the ears, or a vague acrid smell.

Ten thousand years ago, these arches were powerful gates to strange places, including the First World, and the elves used them freely. Now they have somehow become mistuned, perhaps leading to otherworld realms, but certainly degenerated into portals of fey disease that disgorge evil monstrosities known as the gorgas. Gorgas come in a bewildering variety of animalistic shapes, but all have teeth, claws, and eyes of pure shadow. The sacred charge of the Oakstewards is to protect Golarion from the gorgas that emerge from these portals. What else can be summoned through is a mystery to all but the Oakstewards.



The Oakstewards have also learned that elves who come near the portals are stricken with an unnatural plague, one which not even the druids can treat or cure. Known as the Obnubilate Plague, the malady destroys not only an elf's body, but also his memory. Oaksteward lore says the plague is highly contagious, so the druids do not allow infected elves to leave the clearing again, lest they pass it on to others of their kind. The druids suspect that a cure might lie on the other side of one of the portals, but none of their exploratory parties have ever returned, and they don't even know if their search parties chose the right portal.

Every few human generations, a band of elves breaks through the Oakstewards' protections intent on reclaiming their former holding. The arches become more active when elves are nearby—the gorgas on the other side of the portals can sense their approach. This is detrimental to both the elves (as the plague strikes quickly) and the kingdom of Sevenarches (since the gorgas ravage the kingdom until the Oakstewards can slay or banish them).

For these reasons, the Oakstewards ban elves from entering Sevenarches. They dare not even explain their motive, because they believe Kyonin's Queen Edasseril and her court will be too proud to listen to mere human counsel. Believing in their own ability to handle the dangers, the Oakstewards think the elves would bring in an army and unwittingly spread the Obnubilate Plague to every elf on Golarion. While the Oakstewards do not think highly of elves, neither do they want them dead.

The Thinlands: This broad, flat area near the Tymon border is both frightening and wonderful. All along this stretch of ground, observers see shadows of a forest that isn't there. In the winter, the shadow branches are bare, while in summer, they thicken, creating blocks of shade. Some parts of the land are covered in full shadow all year long presumably from an unseen mass of trees too thick to allow light. Crops grow well here, and the human residents hardly notice the strangeness, but for the occasional breakthrough from the First World. The walls between planes are thought to be especially thin here. Creatures from the First World sometimes appear unbidden, and disappear hours or days later.

Wilewood: The largest forest in Sevenarches contains an unknown number of fey, treants, centaurs, and assorted forest denizens. The Wilewood is not home to any strictly evil creatures, but all are wild and dangerous, especially to those here without Oaksteward permission. The wildness of this forest is unlike the manicured woods of Kyonin or the human-subdued forests of the Inner Sea region; rumor has it that nearly one in 10 adult animals encountered in the Wilewood are permanently awakened by fey magic. Though intelligent, few of these beasts tolerate trespassers.

The fey here think of themselves as a sovereign nation within Sevenarches, and are unfriendly to all outsiders at best. Lacking the same ideals or ethics as mortal creatures, the fey

make unauthorized visits dangerous even to those of innocent heart and benign intent. The fey don't consider themselves strictly aligned with the Oakstewards, but recognize the druids as friends of the wood, and work with them as their chaotic nature permits.

Resources

Agriculture in Sevenarches is superb. The Oakstewards' oversight grants Sevenarches the ability to outproduce every other River Kingdom in grain, fruit, and honey. The realm also produces and exports meat and livestock, as well as hides and tanned leather. Its timber is top notch, although most of it is used domestically and the Oakstewards have little interest in exporting it. Sevenarches has few mineral resources, and imports almost all of its ore and worked goods.

Adventurers

In accordance with thousands of years of tradition, the Oakstewards treat adventurers in one of two ways. Anyone asked to serve, or who formally requests Oaksteward permission to accomplish a specific task within Sevenarches (the explanation must be short, clear, and of obvious benefit to the Oakstewards) may be given a barkwrit, a heavy, rectangular slab of oak bark carved with a druidic rune, as a token indicating safe passage. Anyone bearing a barkwrit receives free food and lodging in civilized Sevenarches, and respect (though not guaranteed safety) in wilder parts of the kingdom. Alternatively, adventurers are as free to wander the kingdom as any other wild creature. In this case, the Oakstewards offer no protection, and may appear at scenes of peril to act as witnesses, not saviors. Foreigners who do significant harm to the land or its occupants may well face the Sharp of the Bark in high dudgeon. Of course, if an outsider is elven, the Oakstewards summarily act to expel the trespasser.

Adventure Hooks

The Oakstewards work hard to keep Sevenarches safe, but are not above occasionally calling for outside intervention.

Early for the Party: The Wilewood fey are due to return for their centennial wilding in 4711. However, some have decided to show up early, and their rambunctious celebrations are causing problems. The Oakstewards would rather not disrupt delicate relations with the fey, and ask the PCs to handle it.

Gorgas Escape: Two gorgas escaped into southern Razmiran, where a high-ranking priest captured them for exhibition in her personal menagerie. Kyonin has gotten wind of it, and asked the PCs to retrieve the creatures, dead or alive.

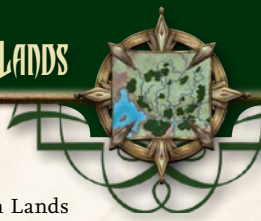
Wolves at the Door: The awakened dire wolves of the Den in southern Sevenarches have multiplied and formed a splinter group. These younger wolves are looking for new territory, but rather than attacking directly, they have begun harassing ranchers, extorting livestock in exchange for not going after humanoids. The Oakstewards seem disinclined to interfere.



BY F. WESLEY SCHNEIDER

THE STOLEN LANDS

Across the northern frontier of the River Kingdoms runs a hinterland not even the most brazen bandit lords dare to claim. Sharing borders with strange barbarians and the scions of a proud kingdom, this wilderness invites few intruders, out of fear of provoking the ire of empires. For untold decades this land has lain fallow, left to the devices of nature and deadly beasts, while strange things lurk amid its swamps, forests, and peaks, and the remnants of an ancient, near-forgotten history sleeps amid ruins and weeds. These are the Stolen Lands, a lordless realm having defied untold conquerors, yet ripe with potential for any bold enough to prove themselves its masters.



The regions called the Stolen Lands takes its name from Brevo, which claims this realm as rightfully its own. The fertile plains of the Brevic demesne of Rostland spill into the region, coloring the fractious nation's claim on the wilderness. This makes the border between the River Kingdoms and the northern realm hotly contested, with the descendants of Choral the Conquer—the unifier of modern Brevo—and ancient Rostlandic nobles claiming right to lands as far south as Hooktongue Slough and the Kamelands, and some brash families asserting their reach extends as far south as the bandit city of Pitax. Beyond the plains, to the east stretch the craggy forests of the Narlmarches and rugged hill country that gradually rises in the wall-like mountains called the Tors of Levenies. To the west, the many rivers and bogs of the Hooktongue Slough transform the region's lowlands into a vast swamp, eventually giving way to the Spinefields, weedy plains threaded over with bony crags, with the forest of Thousand Voices and the steeps around Mount Branthlend beyond. Diverse in both vistas and dangers, the Stolen Lands hide a variety of dangers, from tales of hauntings and eerie lights in the west to claims of ruins from forgotten empires scattered across the east, with the dens of bandit gangs, strange recluses, and deadly beasts scattered throughout. Those who travel the land, whether as traders or conquerors, find it a rugged, unforgiving region, one that has defied ages of settlers as if it consciously preferred to remain a realm of brutality and beasts. Yet endlessly, new generations enter the land with ambitions and steel, ever hoping to carve out a piece of the Stolen Lands for themselves.

Notable Sites

Largely uninhabited by civilized folk, the Stolen Lands hold ample opportunities for profit and adventure. Noted here are several of the regions and noteworthy sites within the northeastern River Kingdoms, along with numerous rumors and legends that tempt glory seekers and treasure hunters to these secluded reaches.

Candlemere: Leaves from the Narlmarches collect year round within the clear depths of the Candlemere. In spring and summer, the lake reflects the colors trapped below in vibrant greens and rainbow bursts of flowering hues. By autumn, fiery reds, oranges, and yellows blaze through the water. In winter, the oft-frozen surface hides depthless blacks that make the lake appear as unfathomable as the night sky. Legends say that drinking from the Candlemere can, depending on the season, grant long life, cut a life short, intoxicate, or invigorate. In the middle of the lake lies a hilly island covered in mysterious willows, surrounding the ruins of an ancient, crumbling tower. Eerie witchlights glow above the tower on summer nights, and will-o'-wisps congregate here throughout the fall, perhaps holding eerie councils or plotting whatever motivates their inscrutable deeds.

Dunward: This easternmost frontier of the Stolen Lands borders the steppes of Casmaron and the ancient ruins of Iobaria. Tribes of barbaric centaurs regularly traverse these low, grassy plains, seeing no distinction between this region and their pastoral homeland. Proud and suspicious of humanoids, these tribes avoid what they consider human lands, holding to an ages-old unspoken truce, and are both easily and violently provoked should their plains feel humanoid boots. Although the Brevic city of Restov lies nearby, the lands south of the river have traditionally been held as existing beyond Brevo's borders and are trod at great risk.

Glenebon: The black hills of Glenebon march from the Stolen Lands into Numeria. Moody gray grasses and tangled scrub meander over rocky hills, regularly blasted by fierce winds in the spring and autumn and by summer brush fires. Few trees stand above the craggy hills and little shelter exists in the dusky land, with the hilltops mounted by barren stone and the valleys filled with scrub and scree. While rain comes too often to transform the hill country into true badlands, the rugged plants that thrive in the area mean that little more than beetles, rodents, snakes, and mangy wolves prowl these hills. Several small prides of manticores find the region to their liking, however, and range from the Branthlend Mountains across the hills and into Numeria, fighting each other for dominance and impaling any creature larger than a hare that falls under their shadow.

Hooktongue Slough: Beyond the Narlmarches sink the lowlands of the Stolen Lands, a great murky swamp of rotting trees and moldy mosses. Threaded through with hundreds of slow-moving rivulets and algae-clogged brooks, the Hooktongue Slough sprawls in a massive slime pit, home to all manner of stinging insects, sickly rodents, and croaking predators. Among the northern reaches, large snakes and strange water-striding creatures hunt in close proximity to Lake Hooktongue. To the south, several tribes of boggards inhabit high mound-islands, defending their lands against all interlopers while avoiding the ill-reputed northern lake. Trolls also make occasional forays into the southern swamps, but in wariness of the frogfolk and their strange magics rarely attempt to expand their territory. With such obvious dangers and countless more unknown, few humans would even consider entering the slough were it not for the azure lily, known to grow only amid the bogs just south of Lake Hooktongue. Reputed to be able to cause paralysis in any creature that breathes its grainy blue pollen, the elusive lily has long been hunted for by bandits and assassins of all walks. While most believe the plant to be nothing more than a myth, occasionally a few pinches of a dangerous blue power appear in Pitax or Daggermark, spurring renewed interest in and searches for the plant. Such hunts, however, usually culminate in nothing more than more deaths and disappearances in the depths of the Hooktongue Slough.

Kingmaker

The Stolen Lands serve as the setting for the Kingmaker Adventure Path. The sixth Pathfinder Adventure Path—found in *Pathfinder* volumes #31 to #36—Kingmaker leads PCs from their place as agents in the service of Brevoy to rulers of a fledgling country. With new rules allowing players to explore every step of the region and a subsystem for building and running a country included along with all the adventures, characters, encounters, and monsters that color a complete campaign, Kingmaker delves into the Stolen Lands in expansive detail. Check out *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #31: “Stolen Land” and the *Kingmaker Map Folio* for additional insights, maps, encounters, and details on this fateful frontier.

The Kamelands: Rolling hills of brown and yellow grass sprawl across the eastern Stolen Lands, the patchy, sand-colored waves and dusky tarns broken by countless rocky mounds called kames. With grasses ranging in height from mere inches to lashing blades over 4 feet tall, and uneven rises rife with hidden rocks, the hill country poses a daunting barrier to travel and settlement, accounting for much of the region’s continued wildness. Amid the hills and grass loom the mysterious kames. While most of these mounds of ancient stone and debris stand quiet and purposeless, in many corners of the region they display strange patterns, with mounds suggestive of waymarkers, ancient barrows, or even long-crumbled walls or foundations. Aside from a few small herds of wild horses and goats, few large animals inhabit the Kamelands, with wolves, foxes, hares, and multitudes of rodents and snakes being the primary occupants. Frequently, wyverns from the western tors wing over the region, seeking easy prey from above, while bears, boars, owlbeats, and other savage creatures from the eastern forests regularly range into the hills. While the horses of the region are reputed for their vigor and surefootedness, those from the southern River Kingdoms who attempt to capture such mounts often run afoul of the trolls of the southern Narlmarches, making such attempts too dangerous to regularly risk.

Lake Hooktongue: Deep and snaking, the murky gray-green waters of Lake Hooktongue slither through the northern bogs that make up Hooktongue Slough. Some might say that the lake and the slough are one and the same, Lake Hooktongue merely forming the deepest reaches with the surrounding swamps and their ever-changing runnels, mounds of damp earth, and boggy plants connecting to form a single massive, shallow body. Hidden almost completely by the pike-like hemlock and moody willow trees that flourish in the swampy surroundings, only the lake’s westernmost shore emerges from the bog, presenting a pebbled beach patrolled by legions of geese and egrets.

Few visitors come to the lake, though, as the moody, secluded place shares a deadly reputation with its famous ancient resident, the Hooktongue orm. Said to live deep in the cold, murky water where it might sleep for years amid the mud and dead leaves, Old Hooktongue snakes its way throughout the lake and even into the deeper waterways of the slough, feeding upon whatever it pleases. Said to resemble a black water snake of prehistoric proportions with jaws strong enough to snatch up a bear and a ridge of razor-sharp fins, the lake orm rules as the undisputed master of all the Hooktongue waterways. While many dismiss the beast as legend, sightings occur too often and furriers and trappers disappear near the lake too regularly for the tale to quietly fade away. Hunters venturing near the lake always leave a part of their kills on the shore as an offering and appeasement to Old Hooktongue.

Lake Silverstep: The cleanest and clearest source of water in the Stolen Lands, Lake Silverstep draws from countless pristine streams and rivulets cascading down the steep tors to the east. Dozens of small waterfalls and foamy cascades make the lake’s eastern shores places of eldritch beauty, where ancient willows spread mossy canopies over islands of flowering reeds and lilies. Several small bands of fairies and faerie dragons dwell along the most secluded shores. Welcoming to those who don’t threaten their misty paradise, the fey tell of a wise old silver dragon who once laired amid the falls and from whom the lake takes its name. More than one eager wanderer, incited by fairy tales of gems and dragon silver, has discovered the caverns hidden behind several of the lake’s falls, just at its waterline, and below. Those who return speak of connections with caverns that run deep beneath the Tors of Levenies, of monstrous ossuaries, and of strange eyes that glow in the depths. Most, however, are never seen again.

Mount Branthlend: From amid a cloak of low, forested mountains and high hills rises Mount Branthlend, the Peak of Broken Promises. Distinctive not for its incredible height—though it does stand as the largest in the surrounding Branthlend range—but for its barren summit, the mountain rises like a bald pate upon a monk’s head. Reaching a height of more than 5,000 feet, the mountain’s knob-like pinnacle of stark white stone stands completely bare, except for some particularly tenacious scrub and a few standing snags and windfalls along the forested rim some 450 feet below. Kellid tales claim that Noarra, the first love of the barbarian lord Tagran, wailed curses from this peak after the warlord took another woman as his queen, and that amid a storm of stone and fire the peak was scoured and she was transformed into the blade-scaled dragon that legendarily rampaged across eastern Numeria. This fantastic myth draws desperate souls from across Numeria and the River Kingdoms to Mount Branthlend’s peak even today, where rumors claim that frightening and



ancient powers of darkness and fire pay oaths of vengeance special heed.

The Narlmarches: Splitting the Stolen Lands in half, the Narlmarches—or Narlmarch Woods, as they are sometimes known—sprawl across the region’s lowlands, hiding deep ravines, craggy hills, and languid streams beneath its boughs of oak, beech, and rushleaf. Within range proud herds of elk, rivercats (a mossy-furred breed of bobcat), black bears, boars, brush thylacines, and numerous breeds of especially large rodents. More unusual creatures also inhabit the forest, including giant owls, will-o’-wisps, various aggressive plant creatures, and a healthy owlbear population. Several small troll gangs also occupy the forest’s southern reaches near the Candlemere, their seclusion affording them a simple life as hunters and scavengers, though, like most of their kind, they take eager sport in ambushing weaker humanoids. The ruins of numerous forgotten bandit hideaways also mold within the Narlmarches, leading to countless tales of lost riches and trap-laden tombs of fantastic treasures.

Rushlight: A small lake only a dozen or so miles north of barbarian-ruled Pitax, Lake Rushlight has a dichotomous reputation for both good and terrible luck. The lake takes its name from the strange and seemingly natural lights that regularly flicker across its surface, eerie flames of green and blue that flash into life, cut wavering paths over the water, and then vanish. By day, the pale lights prove difficult to see, though occasionally a flash of color blooms with special brilliance and streaks across the water like a falling star. Witnessing such “daylights” is said to bring good luck. At night, though, the lights become far easier to see, illuminating the water with a spectral glow. It is said that those who look upon these colors risk being hypnotized and coaxed by the weird spirits of the lake to enter the water and drown amid the flames. A small island also floats near the center of the unusually deep lake, covered in stands of hemlock, dense shrubs, and tall reeds. A strange breed of slight egrets lives here, which possess beautiful rainbow plumage. These rushlight egrets are rarely captured, though, as they are disquietingly still and silent, rarely blink, and are said to scream like women when slain.

Thousand Voices: Among the densest wildernesses of the River Kingdoms, the forest of Thousand Voices holds untold varieties of life and an almost equal number of mysteries. Also called the Forest of Breath, it is a strange place, and nearly all who come within sight of the misty old-growth realm of tall beech, white oak, hemlock, and veined orger trees speak of strange lights and whispers that rise and fall through the foliage. While moaning wind and sparkling dew amid the hanging, hag-hair lichen account for a measure of the strange accounts, tales of unexplained disappearances, ghostly beckoners, and winding paths that open and vanish with a glance grant the forest its sinister

reputation. Numerous fey beings and fairy-kin are known to linger among the gnarled forest trunks, and while many prove content to merely harass those who intrude upon their woodlands, others prove far less forgiving, especially of those trespassers bearing flame and steel. Bandit rumors also speak of much stranger things hidden by the forest, like massive but slow dragonsnails, the ancient Trees That Weep, Ghogas the Tick Mother, and the ivy-exploded Castle of Knives. For all its tales of danger and treasure, though, all rumors of the woodland carry with them the same warning: avoid the Forest of Breath, where men are unwelcome.

Tors of Levenies: Looming over the eastern Stolen Lands, the Tors of Levenies jut up violently from the rolling grass of the Kamelands. As if thrust skyward by some ancient upheaval, the mountains stand wall-like against the western reaches, all cliffs and streaked escarpments, some over 300 feet high. From the east, the mountains ascend more slowly, climbing gently to the rocky ridges that give the summits a distinctive appearance, reminiscent of walls and ruins of impossible size, scoured by weather and countless ages. Gnarled willows and brownish swards climb many of the eastern slopes, ascending nearly to the stony summits. Such growth hides numerous pits, shallow valleys, ravines, and tarns, making climbing the seemingly even slopes a surprisingly treacherous affair. Craggs and openings into caverns below also dot the mountains, revealing vast cave systems hidden below. Those explorers who return from such depths bring tales of lairing wyverns, great blind snakes, and poisonous stones. Perhaps most unnerving, though, are reports of massive sculptures and ancient, flaking cave art brooding in the dark, the works of forgotten and impossibly-sized artists of the past.

The Tuskwater: Cliffs and steep hills hide this brown, rocky lake from almost every direction, though following any river through the Kamelands or Narlmarches inevitably leads to its waters. Sounders of boars frequently visit its shores and favor the thick briars and berry tangles between its western shore and the forest, these beasts granting the great arching body its name. Swelling with the spring thaw, the Tuskwater floods seasonally, spilling into swampy ravines all along its length but mainly to the west. This creates muddy gullies and pits of standing water where fierce swarms of mosquitoes, stirges, fat snakes, and assassin vines prey upon whatever falls into the quicksand-like muck. At more significant depths, the Tuskwater proves bountiful, with pike, longnose gar, bluegill, and—more dangerously—fanged eels. While fanged eels are well known for their slippery skins and vicious, painful bites, elder eels in the lake are known to grow up to 8 feet long and can ably reverse the stakes on any fisherman who tries to make a meal of them. Nevertheless, Tuskwater fanged eels are a delicacy on the tables of New Stetven in Brevoy to the north, making the reward well worth the danger.



TOUVETTE BY JOHN WICK

When Touvette's king Aven died, his whelp of a son took over, and everything in this once-stable kingdom fell apart. Aven the Second was a lush and a fool, and due to his negligence the borders fell apart as neighboring kingdoms snatched at Touvette's land. Lacking a strong central authority figure, rival churches filled the void in the people's hearts and holy war erupted up in the streets. This was when General Cabol Voran stepped in. He united the army, overthrew the besotted king, and established the current government. The General reclaimed the kingdom's borders, evicted the treacherous churches, brought a harsh peace to the people, and never let anyone forget that their safety and prosperity was due to his actions. Now the General is the sole authority in Touvette—a realm with no kings, churches, or foreign influences, only free men who serve to protect their lands and neighbors.

AVENDALE

Small City conventional (military dictator); **AL LN**

Base Value 4,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 11,280

Type humanoid (human 89%, halfling 9%, other 2%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

General Cabol Voran, High Lord Protector (LN male human fighter 9); **Lieutenant Jekh DuVre**, Chief Investigator (LN male human fighter 3/wizard 3); **Lieutenant Baljaron Tou**, Master of Knights (LN male human fighter 6)

When the General took control of Touvette, he had his enemies—the bishops, high priests, and young king—brought before him, and found them guilty of betraying the kingdom. All priests and clerics were given 30 days to leave, under threat of death. The few who tried to remain were publicly flogged, their bloody bodies tied to carriages and driven through the streets of the capital, where the people threw rocks at their heads and burned their holy books.

Finally, the General turned to the borders. He fought back his neighbors with the same ruthlessness he had shown his previous enemies. When he conquered a foreign general, he crucified his opponent and carried him like a banner into battle. His own men feared the General mad, but he secured his borders from his adversaries, and was free to reshape Touvette in his own image—hard, unyielding, ruthless, and effective. Now every morning, the families of the kingdom begin the day with a ceremony of thanks to the General for liberating them from the tyrannies of laziness and faith and protecting them from evil.

Government

For decades, the center of nearly every town and village in Touvette was a temple. After clearing out the clerics and

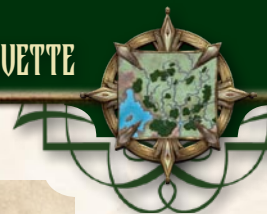
priests, General Voran transformed these temples into what he called “charities.” A Touvette charity is a combination school, hospital, and government building (see Notable Sites).

The General demands all young men of age be trained as soldiers in the kingdom's army. A boy must serve for at least 4 years, and may serve more if he wishes. Young men report to their local charity and receive training from professional soldiers. At the end of their training, if they choose to leave the army, they keep their gear (spear, sword, shield, and armor), knowing their kingdom may call upon them to fight. This means every village, farm, and city in Touvette has a permanent standing garrison of trained and educated soldiers ready to move at the General's command, and all male citizens aged 30 and younger have at least 1 level in the warrior class.

The General's knights guard the roads of Touvette and are tasked with patrolling the countryside to protect the citizens from bandits, monsters, and other threats to their safety. The General hand-picks the knights—a great honor—and they answer only to him. A knight serves as a kind of “road judge,” who may try and execute criminals if he sees fit to do so. Knights have special privileges in Touvette: they pay for no service. Taverns gladly feed them and inns put them up for as long as the knights are in need of lodgings. If a knight's sword has suffered damage, the blacksmith happily repairs or replaces it. A knight pays for nothing because of his sacrifice for the kingdom and his obedience to the General.

The General's Code of Law recognizes two kinds of crimes: crimes against the kingdom and crimes against the people. The Code recognizes that, while crimes against the state are of course the most dire, crimes against the people deserve severe punishment as well. A criminal may be found guilty of three crimes against the people: theft, assault, and murder (in order of severity). A thief must repay the value of what he stole (regardless of whether or not it was returned) and loses the use of his right hand. He is then exiled from the kingdom. Assaulting a citizen is punished by a public stoning. Murder is the most severe civil crime, and the offender is treated as a true enemy of the people: if found guilty, the criminal is flogged, stoned, hung, and disemboweled.

The only crimes against the kingdom are treason and trespass. Speaking or acting against the General or the kingdom is punishable only by death. Enemies of the kingdom are tortured in the town square, stoned, hung, disemboweled, and decapitated, their heads put on display for all to see. If a foreigner seeks to enter Touvette, he must do so through one of the kingdom's way stations. There, soldiers ask his business in the kingdom, and if they find his answers acceptable, they give him a traveling pass. His pass allows him to move on official roads between the way station and the village, town, or city of his destination. Once he arrives, he brings his paperwork to the town's charity,



where he identifies himself as a foreigner. When he finishes his business, he receives a new travel pass from the charity and returns to the border way station to leave the kingdom. If a knight stops him on a road he has no permission to travel on, he is guilty of trespass. If a foreigner crosses the borders of Touvette without a travel pass, he is brought before a judge, found guilty, tortured, and hung until dead. Then the General's knights return his wrecked and ruined body to his native land: a reminder of what happens to those who send spies into the kingdom.

The people of Touvette do not see this punishment of criminals as cruel, but rather simple justice for those who would harm the people and sabotage the General's rule. They remember the bad times of the last king and see the ongoing chaos in Galt, and thank their good luck for the General's wisdom and discipline—at least publicly.

Notable Sites

The capital city of Avendale, the city of Seredain, the town of Voluse, and the handful of smaller settlements in Touvette are essentially the same except in terms of size. The most unique feature of each is the settlement's charity building.

Touvette Charities: The General established his charities so the people could thrive. The citizens of Touvette are the most educated in the River Kingdoms: 8 out of 10 adults can read and write. If a farmer falls ill, workers from the charity treat him until he is better, and work his crops so the village has food for the season. If a blacksmith loses a hand, the charity takes him in, finding work for him so his family does not starve.

Any and all citizens are free to enter the charity building. Here they learn how to read, write, and count. The charities also organize workers to repair damaged buildings, teach farmers how to plant new crops, and build homes for the homeless. If a storm strikes or monsters invade, the people head to the safety and sanctuary of the charity. If a legal grievance arises, the people go to the charity where a judge—appointed by the General—sits in judgment on the case. Portraits of the General (and his great deeds) decorate every charity.

The charities train Touvette's soldiers, and all men of adult age are ready to protect the people from external dangers—including adventurers with foreign ideas about liberty and justice. Their loyalty to their kingdom is strong, and to the General it is even stronger.

Resources

Touvette is blessed with a large area of open, dry land, suitable for farming and ranching. The kingdom produces enough wheat, vegetables, beef, and pork to support itself, with a small surplus used to trade for metal and hardwood.

Touvette Defender

For your kingdom and the General, you may strike down enemies who threaten your homeland.

Prerequisite: Touvette affinity

Benefit: Once per day, you may attempt to smite an enemy of Touvette with one normal melee attack. You gain a +4 morale bonus on your attack roll and deal 1 extra point of damage per level. For the purpose of this feat, an enemy of Touvette is any person or creature that is not a citizen of Touvette. You can only use this ability within the borders of Touvette.

Adventurers

Because the people of Touvette view all foreigners—especially openly religious ones—with suspicion, they generally dislike wandering, undisciplined adventurers. Visiting adventurers with legitimate business and who show proper respect to the General, his knights, and the laws of Touvette may pass through the kingdom safely, but extended stays are forbidden.





BY LISA STEVENS

TYMON

When visitors enter the city-state of Tymon, they more than likely hear the roar of the crowd coming from its famous gladiatorial arena as its eager fans cheer their favorite gladiator on to victory. The city's gladiatorial college churns out some of the best fighters in Avistan and they test their mettle on the arena's floor for money, honor, and fame. But with the country of Razmiran at its doorstep, and the faithful of the Living God constantly harassing Tymon's borders, there is an uneasy tension floating beneath the blood sport that has made this town famous. The arena draws crowds and coin, but also creates heroes to defend Tymon's borders.



TYMON

Large Town conventional (benevolent dictator); AL LN

Base Value 2,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 2,564

Type humanoid (human 80%, half-orc 12%, other 8%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Ullorth Ungin, champion (LN male half-orc fighter 10/ barbarian 4); **Erevil Antelo**, dean of the gladiatorial college (NG male elf fighter 5/wizard 4); **Barven Freth**, arena fight manager (LN male human fighter 8).

The city-state of Tymon was founded by the famous Taldan gladiator Maldar Tymon in 2021. Maldar was the star of the Oppara Arena, but felt the need to test his skills further. Along with his squad of gladiators, Maldar joined the Taldan Fifth Army of Exploration and helped to conquer and map out the lands that would become the River Kingdoms. In return for his heroism, Maldar was given a piece of land that included much of the Exalted Wood and the mandate to rule this land for Taldor. He set about building the town of Tymon and many of his fellow soldiers stayed on to tame the wilderness.

Maldar's intent was to create a beacon for gladiators everywhere to come to Tymon, hone their skills, and achieve fame and fortune. However, before he could see his dream come true, his body failed him and he found himself dying of old age. Never willing to give in to insurmountable odds, Maldar sought a way to cheat death. He found an unusual ally in the druids of Sevenarches. In exchange for promises to protect Sevenarches, the Oakstewards reincarnated Maldar as an elf after he died, thus allowing him to extend mortal life and continue his vision for Tymon.

Maldar knew that the knowledge of his "immortality" could never be made public, so to address this, he established the Law of Succession, which would allow him to unseat his former identity and thereby allow him to continue his rule indefinitely. Entrusting only his most loyal confidants with his plan, Maldar was able to successfully create a ruse that allowed his newly reincarnated elven form (using the name Karth Valknar) to defeat and kill a warrior disguised to look like his old human body. In this same way, Maldar has been able to live for over 2,700 years, going from reincarnated body to reincarnated body.

However, the Oakstewards have become more critical of Maldar's methods and have recently told him that his continued flaunting of the natural birth and death cycle is an anathema to them, and they have withdrawn their support for his plans, despite his promises of tribute and aid. Now living as the half-orc Ullorth Ungin, he seeks an alliance with a new druid capable of continuing his "immortality" scheme.

Government

It should be no surprise that Tymon, founded from a battalion of arena fighters, has a single leader: the Champion. This

militaristic style of rule suits those hardened in the forges of the arena, and the rules of law are simple, pragmatic, and harsh for those who disobey them. Maldar created the Four Rules of Law to govern his kingdom, and no additional laws could change or reverse these original four.

The Law of Blood: Maldar wanted to protect his most important asset—those who had proved themselves in the arena—so he enacted this law to give those arena fighters who were deemed "bloodied" extra rights and privileges under the law. A fighter is considered "bloodied" when he has won 10 battles in the arena. Only "bloodied" fighters can own land, carry open weapons, or own businesses in Tymon. Also, the word of a "bloodied" fighter carries more weight in the court of law, and woe to the outsider who causes harm to one of Tymon's "bloodied" warriors.

The Law of Defense: Maldar knew that Tymon, being a frontier state, would have its oppressors trying to take his land from him. Thus he instituted the Law of Defense to make it mandatory for all "bloodied" warriors in Tymon to rally to the defense of the kingdom whenever it is attacked from the outside. This became particularly important during the rise of Razmiran and is more than likely the main reason why the Living God's forces haven't overrun Tymon. The law also allows the government to conscript other able-bodied men during times of crisis, which thankfully have been few.

The Law of Grievance: Maldar knew that his arena fighters were a temperamental lot, so he enacted the Law of Grievance as a way to resolve disputes in an orderly way. Any person who has a grievance that cannot be settled to his satisfaction through traditional means can challenge his offender, whether he is "bloodied" or not, to a duel in the arena to decide the dispute. These duels tend not to be to the death, but occasional blood feuds are put to rest in a final and irrevocable manner on the arena floor. Most issues are dealt with outside the arena through the local magistrate or over a few pints of the local ale, but the Law of Grievance allows large problems to be settled in a controlled manner, and crimes of vengeance such as murder are rare in Tymon because of it. Those who break this law—such as by trying to kill a rival outside of the arena, setting fire to a competitor's business, and so on—are stripped naked and set in the arena against dire bears, girallons, or worse, with nothing but their fists to defend themselves. Needless to say, few last more than mere seconds and the carnage makes this a favorite of the arena's fans.

The Law of Succession: This law is simple—any fighter who has won 100 battles in the arena can challenge the Champion to a one-on-one duel to the death, with the winner becoming the new Champion. In this way, Maldar has been able to retain his rule of Tymon and "retire" his old personality. To the outside world, this Law has been working well, with a steady supply of new leaders over the years. Maldar's ability to reincarnate is an escape hatch in this rule, so that if he is ever defeated on the arena floor, his newly reincarnated body could

win back rulership. Only once has he had to win back his rulership using this plan, when in 3256 the half-orc Kallern Ulron bested him with a lucky blow (though Kallern's rule only lasted 5 days, for he fell prey to a trap in the Champion's Fortress). If the position of Champion is unfilled due to the untimely demise of the ruler, then a Champion's Prize tournament is called where any "bloodied" warrior can enter for the chance to win the ultimate accolade.

Notable Sites

Most places of interest in Tymon are within the main settlement or its immediate environs.

Arena of Aroden: The Arena of Aroden dwarfs the surrounding buildings and is the centerpiece of the town. Able to seat 2,000 patrons at capacity, the arena was built in the style popular in Taldor almost 2,700 years ago. A labyrinthine series of passageways under the arena allows for the storage of weapons, beasts, and props used in the various battle formats. Each official team has its own area where its members can change, practice, and plot their way to the year's championship. Currently, there are 10 official teams, each with its own official color and insignia. Arena fight manager Barven Freth lives in a grand apartment attached to the arena and can be found in his offices working late into the night.

Fans that attend the various festivities at the arena have their pick of various seating choices, from the grand box seats with catered dining and the best view of the carnage, to the premium seats down close to the action, to the grandstand bleacher seats where fight fans cram onto stone benches and elbow each other to get a better view. Vendors weave their way through the crowds selling ale, turkey legs, and rotten fruit and vegetables which fans can use to show their displeasure with a certain gladiator. In the Grand Concourse, other vendors sell banners with the colors of the official teams, and children can buy wooden replicas of the armor and weapons that their favorite warriors use in the arena.

The Champion's Fortress: The Champion lives in a fortress within the walls of the city proper. The large structure is overshadowed only by the arena, but stands up well even in comparison to that structure. Built around the same time as the arena, the design would fit well in Oppara's Imperial Square. By law, the current Champion owns the Champion's Fortress until he relinquishes his reign. Because Maldar in his various incarnations has been the Champion for several millennia, a certain style has been maintained through the ages. The time has also afforded Maldar the opportunity to dig an extensive network of rooms and tunnels beneath his home where he keeps his most secret and treasured possessions guarded by wicked traps and guardians. A long tunnel leads from the fortress to the Arena of Aroden and the Champion's private sanctum there. The Champion's personal visitors can stay in the spacious suites on the top floor of the fortress and roam the vast gardens within its

walls, but guests are told to stick to the main corridors for their own safety.

Smine's Weaponworks: One of the most important shops in all of Tymon is the weaponworks of **Holgarin Smine** (N male dwarf rogue 5/expert 3), the dwarven master smith. Holgarin set up shop in a large forge near the arena over 40 years ago, and since then, wielding one of his weapons (colloquially called a "smine") is considered not just good luck, but a must for the serious gladiator. The dwarf has three undersmiths working with him, but spends most of his time creating master weapons for which an insatiable demand has arisen as a result of his fame. Holgarin loves to hear tales of adventure and valor, and plies his customers for stories of forgotten artifacts, hidden tombs, and other lost secrets.

What most locals don't know is that Smine's Weaponworks is really a front for the Pathfinder Society's lodge in the region. Smine is the second venture-captain to work here, and set up the smithy as a means to finance various expeditions in the area and also as a way to ply his customers for information that may be valuable to the Society. Many are the tidbits of information that Holgarin has uncovered in the last 44 years he has been a citizen of Tymon. Visiting Pathfinders can sleep in the apartments over the smithy for the price of a tale.

The Temple of Gorum: After the rise of Razmiran and the loss of the Exalted Wood, Maldar realized that he needed access to more divine magic if he was to keep his holdings from becoming part of the growing kingdom of the Living God. Because of his love of war and battle, he approached the high priests of the Lord in Iron with a mutually beneficial proposition. If they would set up a temple in Tymon and administer to his troops and gladiators as needed, he would make theirs the official religion of Tymon and allow them to preside over the arena's battles, which he would dedicate in their god's name. In addition to tending to the ripe flock residing in Tymon, the priests of Gorum find ready converts in those heading to battle in the Worldwound, Ustalav, and other dangerous places farther north. In return, they have buoyed the Champion's forces, and a cleric of Gorum can always be found with an official military patrol. Mercenary groups that sell their services to other governments in the River Kingdoms and beyond often hire temple priests to tend to them while they are on their missions.

Tymon: This settlement is a walled town on the banks of the Sellen River. All of the major landmarks of the kingdom are within the city's walls. The rest of the land is held by the various "bloodied" arena warriors who earned enough gold to establish their own holdings, though they remain extremely loyal to the Champion. Because of the closeness of Razmiran, Tymon landowners build fortified manors and employ their own warriors for protection; these warriors often form arena teams. Competition among the teams is strong, and the annual Belt of Aroden tournament is the most prestigious team award in the kingdom.



Most of the businesses in Tymon cater to either the warriors of the arena or the visitors who flock to this distant city-state to see some of the best gladiators in Avistan do battle. A smaller secondary business caters to travelers moving up the Sellen River or traveling the River Road toward Numeria and the Worldwound. Tymon is the last provisioning stop until Castle Urion to the north, so all manner of pilgrims and crusaders stop here for a day or two to rest, reprovision, and perhaps catch some blood sport.

Valknar Gladiatorial College: Founded by the second Champion, the elf Karth Valknar, the Gladiatorial College is one of the best outside of Oppara and draws from all over northern Avistan those who want to test their mettle in the arena. Students at the college bunk in dorm rooms attached to the campus. Only 40 students reside at the College at any one time, with 10 in each class going through the 4-year program. While attending the Valknar Gladiatorial College, students are encouraged to gain real-world experience in the Arena of Aroden against other students and sometimes summoned monsters, but always under much more controlled circumstances than are in place during normal bouts.

The current Dean of the College is Erevil Antelo, the son of the second Champion. In addition to being one of the few who know the secret of the Champion and his longevity, Erevil watches over a staff of 10 of the best teachers one can find in such fields as swordplay, battlefield tactics, monster biology, armor and weapon care, fitness, and others areas of interest to future gladiators. The College also has one of the most extensive libraries of militaristic lore in northern Avistan and military officers come from far lands to seek permission to plumb its treasured shelves.

Resources

Tymon is rather poor in traditional resources. A small amount of fishing takes place on the Sellen River and some hardy farmers have planted crops like corn, potatoes, and wheat in the fields surrounding the city-state, as well as various vegetables that are sold in the thriving city market, but almost all of the crops grown in Tymon stay in Tymon. Small herds of cattle provide beef, and pork is commonplace on kitchen tables in the kingdom. Caravans plying the River Road or boats traversing the Sellen River bring in rare culinary ingredients.

However, the primary resource of Tymon is its mercenary squads. Each of the gladiator teams that populate the Tymon countryside is available for hire. When a local lord for some small kingdom or another is in need of some military muscle, he goes to Tymon. Champion Ullorth encourages the hiring out of his gladiatorial teams, but retains control of which teams these are and how many are gone at a time so as not to endanger his defenses. Many times, Ullorth gets favors in return that he can call upon in times of need.

Adventurers

Adventurers are always welcome in Tymon, especially if they wish to show off their skills in the Arena of Aroden. Parties of adventurers are encouraged to form teams that can be pitted against the popular regular teams, creating quite a draw to the arena. Fans love these fights because adventurers are big unknowns, so anything can happen. Some adventuring groups do so well that they never leave town.

Tymon also is a great jumping-off point for adventures farther north or even in other areas of the River Kingdoms. Adventuring parties can find key provisions, weapons repair, and even a weaponsmith capable of further enchantment of masterwork weapons. The taverns and inns of Tymon are also fertile ground for tales of treasures, some real and some imaginary, but just spending the night in the common room of one of these places can get an adventurer's blood churning.

The only area where adventurers sometimes get tripped up in Tymon is obeying the four Rules of Law. But if they keep their wits about them and their swords sheathed, they should be able to make it out alive.

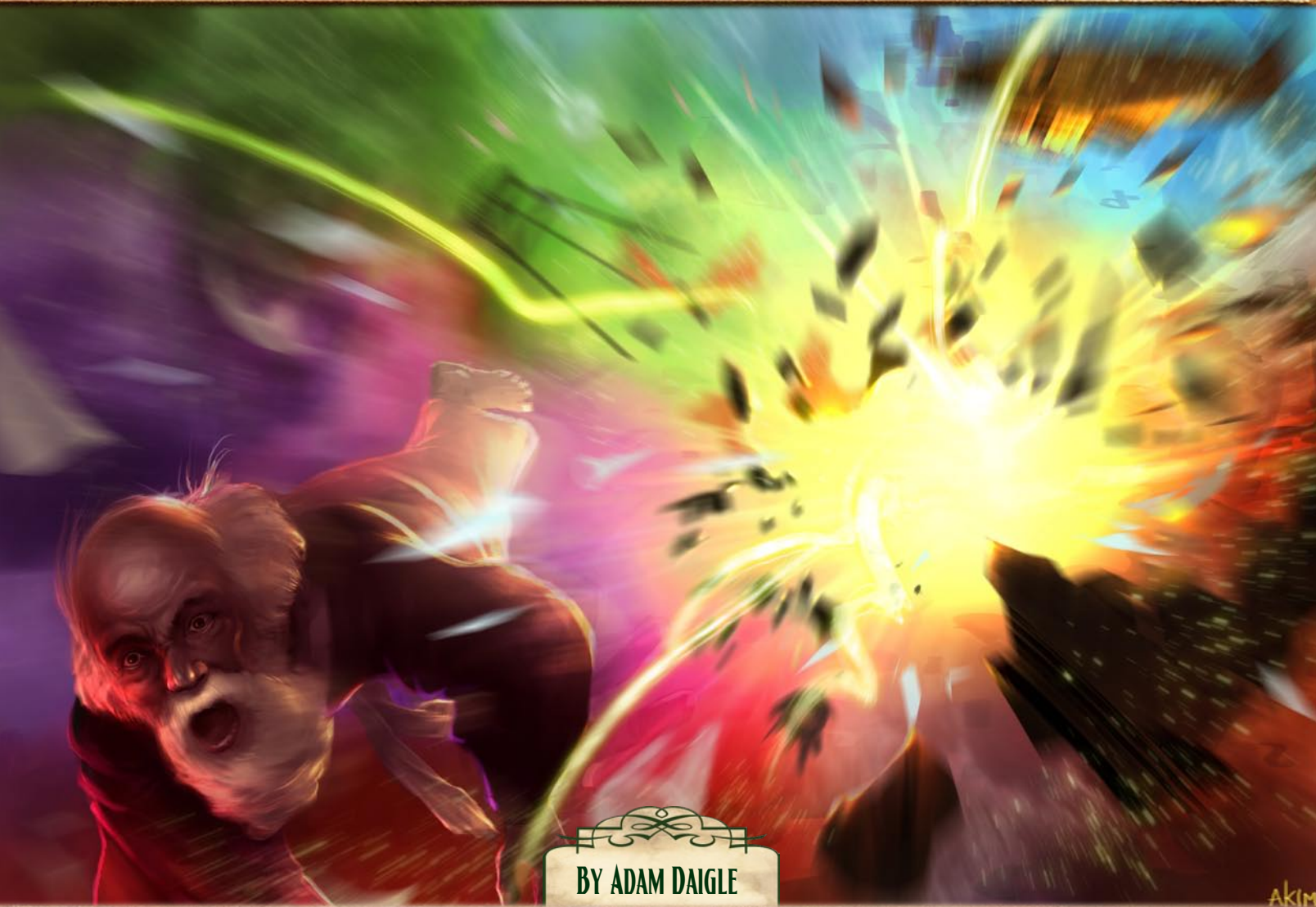
Adventure Hooks

As Tymon sits on the border of the River Kingdoms, adventures there are often tinged with the threat of war.

Race to Lambreth: One of the Champion's mercenary teams has taken a job without the Champion's permission and now Razmir is moving into position to attack. The Champion needs help from his fellow lords of the kingdoms. The PCs are sent to Lambreth to call in a favor that Lord Arnefax owes the Champion, but Razmiri thugs somehow know of the plan and try to prevent them from reaching their goal. Can the PCs return in time with Lambreth's cavalry?

Second Starfall: Holgarin Smine's greatest work, the sword *Starfall*, was lost in the Exalted Wood during the fight against Razmiran that led to the defeat of Tymon's forces. Reportedly crafted from a piece of a fallen star that hit the ground near Daggermark, this blade guarded its wielder from all harm. The venture-captain sends the characters deep into the Exalted Wood to the final resting place of the famed warrior Tenbar Sevenbones—the last man to see the weapon—to learn its whereabouts. The PCs will need to defeat the dreaded blood boars, avoid the attention of Razmir's faithful, and deal with the restless dead who feel abandoned by their fellow warriors.

Unmasked Agent: The PCs catch wind that popular gladiator Tarn the Thunderbolt is really a Razmiri spy who plans to kill the Champion and take his place, allowing Razmiran to annex Tymon. First, he needs to get 100 wins and challenge the Champion, but he doesn't plan to fight fair—rumors have it that the Razmiri have developed a way to imbue spells on a person in a way that makes them magically dormant and undetectable until the trigger word is spoken. Do the PCs stop the plot themselves, warn the Champion of this betrayal, or look for ways to profit from the ensuing chaos?



BY ADAM DAIGLE

URINGEN

Uringen exists as two parts of a whole—two similar cultures, one living in the central part of town that comes “unstuck” from Golarion and fades in and out of reality, and the other in the surrounding “static” portion that stays in this world. Experts in horological devices perform potentially world-changing experiments, while skilled woodsmen guide wayward travelers and clash with vengeful fey. The land is a vibrant tangle of nature, scattered with vagabonds and criminals interested in remaining hidden, and opportunistic alchemists running secret labs seeking profit from the rare plants found in the marshy lowlands of the Embeth Forest.



URINGEN (UNSTUCK)

Small Town conventional (mayor); AL CN

Base Value 4,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 1,213

Type humanoid (human 85%, half-elf 9%, gnome 5%, other 1%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Lady Aurelia Ogden, mayor (LN female human wizard 9);

Lugaid Ibarra, sheriff (NG male human expert 3/fighter 3);

Titor Restivo, mayoral advisor (N male human bard 6);

Navin Mayeda, high priestess (LN female human cleric of Pharasma 7)

URINGEN (STATIC)

Small Town conventional (mayor); AL LN

Base Value 2,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 1,713

Type humanoid (human 85%, half-elf 12%, gnome 2%, other 1%)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Knavar Mieren, mayor (N male human fighter 3/rogue 3);

Issan Deald, sheriff (N female human fighter 3/ranger 2);

Secha Brook, high priestess (NG female half-elf cleric of Ersastil 6)

While no major parts of the Sellen River flow through the Embeth Forest, creeks and tributaries weave through the region. The entire forest rests in a low-lying area dotted with stagnant marshes and rising knolls. The land here does not lend itself well to travel or farming of any sort, but the dense wood allows for a hidden refuge. Filled with spiteful sprites and hungry beasts, the region is avoided by most travelers.

Nestled firmly in the River Kingdoms and surrounded on all sides by other principalities such as Mivon, Gralton, and Pitax, Uringen sees few raids from its neighbors. Likewise, bordering nations like Numeria and Galt never push far enough into the River Kingdoms with aims of conquest. Many see nothing worth taking in the wood—a situation well suited to the citizens of Uringen. Not concerned with grabbing for power, Uringen is content to remain hidden and protect their trade secrets. An ingrained sense of self-defense and the desire to keep out of sight and untouched has created some of the best guerrilla fighters in the region.

The Ulfen skald Birji Uringen settled in the River Kingdoms after a long career of adventuring. Infamous for never keeping his ego in check, Birji named the settlement after himself. Shortly after arriving, he and his wizard companion Rhona Ambros (the better mind of the two) began construction of a complex clock tower, bringing in a number of settlers from his home to the far northwest as well as settlers from Ambros's birthplace in Ustalav. This mix in the original population led to a blending of languages, and many people in the kingdom speak a dialect of Skald cobbled together with Common.

The clock tower is a massive device built following instructions in a stolen manuscript on time alteration magic. Due to improper assembly, curious tinkering, or arcane power surges from the ancient fey circle beneath its foundations, the device malfunctioned when first activated and brought the tower and its immediate surroundings into a pocket dimension partially outside of time, lodged between Golarion and the First World. This temporally unstuck area encompasses the central third of the town, including the large public square south of the clock tower. While most of the tower holds complex precision machinery, shelves line nearly every available wall, holding painstakingly recorded notes of every tick and whirl of the device.

In addition to the town's mysterious condition, Uringen makes itself difficult to find, so that it never seems to be exactly where it is supposed to be. The woodsmen of Embeth Forest (see The Embeth Camps), despite their refusal to enter the town, remain the most reliable source of directions to Uringen. The quiet nomads act as guides for people seeking the town, managing to eke out a basic living with the bartered proceeds from this service.

The citizens of Uringen lead quiet lives. Most keep to their tasks, working the alchemical labs or providing services for those who do. Inhabitants of the static portion of town lead a relatively normal existence, though they are always on the lookout for harassment by fey. The town is orderly and people leave each other to their business. Those dwelling in the static side of town rarely do business in the unstuck portion for fear of being whisked away. When they do venture in, they make their visits short. Residents of unstuck Uringen behave more casually, welcoming their haphazard life. While hard work constructing curatives and alchemical goods goes on in this side of town, the taverns are typically filled with gregarious patrons who carry on in a festive manner. Only the most adventurous travelers choose to spend the night in unstuck Uringen's inns, and it is common knowledge that over the years many visitors have disappeared overnight while the central part of town was out of phase with the rest of Golarion.

In recent years, the kingdom has gained a reputation for powerful potions. Whether obtained from the town itself or strange travelers in the wood, the region's concoctions give rise to few complaints concerning their reliability or cost. In addition to the natural protection lent by geography, Uringen supplies Daggermark with local ingredients for poisons, a partnership contributing to their relative safety. While the two parts of Uringen produce very similar goods, a marked demand for unstuck Uringen potions and salves exists, as buyers feel those products perform better.

In particular demand is a plant called nightmoss, which grows in towering cypress trees throughout the Embeth Forest. A handful of Uringen residents know the secret formulas to brew the moss into powerful potions aimed at strengthening the body and healing physical conditions.



SALVE OF THE SECOND CHANCE

Aura moderate transmutation; **CL** 7th

Slot none; **Price** 1,600 gp; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

Under tutelage from Embeth Forest sprites, Mother Nightmoss developed this potent salve from the distillation of nightmoss. When smeared on a body or body part from a recently deceased creature, the salve mimics the effects of a *reincarnate* spell. If this salve is used on a creature during the night of a new moon, roll twice on the *reincarnate* table and have the recipient player or NPC choose his preferred result.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *reincarnate*; **Cost** 800 gp.

Nightmoss, if prepared and distilled properly, replicates the effects of a *potion of cure light wounds*, while other variants aimed at restoring sight and purging diseases reportedly exist.

Government

As Uringen maintains a unique dual nature, each portion of the town has its own mayor. The kingdom operates as an autocratic diarchy, with each mayor looking after those in his or her domain. Lady Ogden and her advisor, Titor Restivo, actively attempt new experiments to rectify the settlement's unique condition. Lady Ogden leaves most of the mundane duties to Sheriff Lugaid Ibarra. Knavar Mieren oversees the remainder of the town and protects any nearby encampments as mayor of the static part of the settlement.

Both mayors meet once a year prior to the Outlaw Council to determine who will represent the kingdom. This decision, although prefaced by debate and attempts at guile, more often than not falls to a game of chance such as dice or cards.

As keepers of mysterious knowledge regarding the town's condition, the two mayors do not need to leverage violent abuse or tyrannical control over their citizens. Most people reside within Uringen to take part in the potion and alchemical trade, find a tolerable place to start a new life, or hide from an existing one.

Notable Sites

Uringen's strangeness attracts unusual folk, many of whom choose to live outside the town itself, though the fey marshes and forests are not automatically safer.

The Embeth Camps: Bearing a quiet and solemn composure, a band of nomads called the Embeth Travelers makes its home in the dense, marshy forest. Led by an avid woodsman named **Jamel Visser** (NG male human ranger 6), the group made clear its concerns about the dangers of the unstuck town and felt the fey-led raids put the settlement in significant danger. These citizens agreed to self-imposed exile shortly after the town's first return to its proper time and place. They vowed to

never return to Uringen proper. Not wanting to abandon the town completely, the Travelers also pledged protection for the settlement from those who would wish to harm it.

The group dresses in simple green and gray outfits and display great skill with the longbow. The Embeth Travelers maintain a number of camps throughout the forest and make the best guides for those wishing to find the town, clusters of nightmoss, or other points of interest within the Embeth Forest, though they typically avoid the northern part of the forest and Spry's Heart. The Travelers are all passably skilled at tracking and have a reputation for being stealthy fighters. Other kingdoms occasionally attempt to hire the group as mercenaries, yet the Travelers refuse to leave their forest and abandon their wards. Constant clashes with an evil grig named Mather Nithra and his violent assortment of dark fey honed the Travelers' skills at stealth and planning quick, decisive battles. With few outside aggressors, evil fey remain the primary enemies of Uringen, though the Travelers sometimes clash with neighboring mercenaries and the more unsavory residents of Nightmoss Camp.

The Travelers breed a particularly skilled variety of hunting dogs, called Embeth hounds, capable of tracking throughout the dense marshes and tangled forest. Hunters claim Embeth hounds can track a grig across a frozen marsh. These large dogs weigh around 100 pounds and have short, dense coats composed of mottled patches of white, black, and gray. Their eyes are usually light in color, and having two different-colored eyes is common. Fond of water, fiercely loyal, and skilled at tracking in difficult areas, these dogs provide a great boon to this group of rangers.

Nightmoss Camp: Having stolen the secret of nightmoss's healing properties, **Erinin Thulgath** (N female human druid 7) created her own camp on the southeastern edge of the Embeth Forest. Known as Mother Nightmoss, she and the scraggly group that gathers under her banner brew potent alchemical products. The most famous of these are elixirs and salves distilled from nightmoss, and it is said hers can do things that the best alchemists in town cannot accomplish, such as bringing back the dead (see sidebar).

Little more than a haphazard collection of tents and lean-tos covering cauldrons and workbenches, Nightmoss Camp looks like a portable, woodland factory. The population of Nightmoss Camp contains equal parts ruffian and alchemist. Eager to capitalize on the region's reputation for alchemical goods and curatives, many a dishonest salesman claims heritage from Uringen. The quality of these products (and those who sell them) is always in question; however, there are a number of genuine articles among a sea of charlatans. Many of these tricksters reside in Nightmoss Camp alongside true practitioners of the art of alchemy.

Spry's Heart: This especially dark and tangled part of the forest seems to attract evil fey or corrupt good fey to wickedness. The grig Mather Nithra lives here in the hollow of a tall, dead



tree, counting coins and human finger bones while he plots ways to make life miserable for the people of Uringen.

Uringen: Buildings in Uringen typically possess steeply pitched roofs, with stone and timber construction. A faint haze lingers in the streets from dozens of chimneys exhaling puffs of smoke in a multitude of colors, with unsmiling citizens easily recognized in their distinctive black-and-white clothing. The main thoroughfares, paved with flat stones, line up like the arms of a compass rose with a large public square at the town's center. The clock tower stands to the north of this square while a carved stone well makes its centerpiece.

Built upon an ancient fey circle, the clock tower dominates the center of town. Four clock faces, each running a different calculation of time, grace the top of this massive structure. One runs quickly, while its opposing face slowly trudges through its circuit. The third face ticks away a more accurate account, while the fourth moves erratically, sometimes even running backwards. The domed top of this structure opens to the sky, allowing those within a view of the constellations as they flow across the night.

While the unstuck portion of Uringen is outside of the current time stream, the townsfolk maintain a rope perimeter around the missing portion (which looks like an empty, uninhabited field when the town is gone) to prevent any accidents when it returns unexpectedly. It is unclear where in the stream of time the unstuck portion of town goes when it vanishes. Those whisked away with one of the town's jumps find themselves in a dense forest not unlike the Embeth. However, when someone travels outside the settlement, all the roads circle around to deposit the traveler back in town.

A recent increase in the frequency of vanishings causes worry, as mayor of the unstuck portion of Uringen and primary researcher Lady Aurelia Ogden believes that the settlement draws closer to the First World with each switch. While the settlement remains outside the time stream, the raiding fey cannot reach them, but other, stranger threats menace the settlement when it becomes unstuck. Lurid creatures lurk just outside of view and haunting images plague citizens' dreams.

While humans compose the majority of the population, the two halves of Uringen contain a large number of half-elves, as the citizens are tolerant of outcasts and deeply understand the desire to be left alone. Gnomes find the seemingly random nature of the vanishing settlement exciting, and many make their homes there. Of the gnomes residing in the static portion of town, a few claim to have the ability to walk between the two districts while the unstuck portion is away. Opposed to the ruthless nature of Mather Nithra, about a dozen pixies and grigs make their homes within Uringen as well, helping the community in various ways. Seripan is a female grig who performs three times a week at a tap house called the Oaken Knot Tavern in unstuck Uringen. A pixie named Cerotious, rumored to assist Lady Ogden in her experiments, provides fey insight into the vanishing settlement.

Resources

The forest and swamps hold a wide range of fauna that provide meat for the citizens of Uringen, but grain is hard to come by. Uringen must import grain and other vegetables with a capacity for long-term preservation. The town makes a good living from selling alchemical items and its powerful curatives, so their storehouses and granaries remain well stocked. Due to its exotic trade goods, Uringen has a higher base value for available goods than other towns its size.

Adventurers

As Uringen is not exactly "on the way" to anywhere, most travelers looking to find the town visit for a specific reason. Adventurers who call on the town's services are usually looking for fine alchemical concoctions and strong curative potions. The citizens of Uringen are always happy to make a trade, but tend to lack hospitality when it comes to strangers staying for an extended period. Most of the residents hold cautious feelings for the powerful magic practiced in the clock tower, and many fear what could happen if the site fell under the control of an evil mage or any similar sinister master. For this reason, citizens get tight-lipped when strangers ask too many questions about the clock tower or the unique nature of the town itself.

The Embeth Travelers make themselves known to all who travel within the wood, frequently acting as guides through the tangled marshes. They provide excellent services to adventurers in the Embeth Forest. The Travelers like to barter goods such as the potions and alchemical items available in the settlement, as well as trained Embeth hounds, though they prefer to receive foodstuffs to supplement what they forage.

Adventure Hooks

Time and the creatures of the First World are the enemies and allies of Uringen.

Easy Accusations: After a series of recent fey raids on the town, citizens suspect there may be a spy among them. The townspeople point their fingers at four of the sprites who make their home in the town, accusing them of reporting to the nefarious grig Mather Nithra. A saddened pixie by the name of Lisenbey pleads with the PCs to help prove her husband Ukay is innocent and determine if there is, in fact, a spy.

Evil Fey Alliance: The dangerous grig Mather Nithra has gained the trust and companionship of a gang of vexgits (hammer-wielding cockroach-gremlins, see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #19) and plans to send them in an assault on the clock tower in Uringen proper. A group of Embeth Travelers asks the PCs to assist them in a preemptive raid on a snarl of fallen and hollow tree trunks where the gremlins camp.

The Ticking Mind: A mad hedge wizard named Salzero seeks entrance to the clock tower, and maintains a room in the Oaken Knot Tavern under the guise of a wheat merchant. Sheriff Ibarra asks the PCs to track down the would-be burglar before he causes any trouble, and before the next vanishing.

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RIVER KINGDOMS TIMELINE

- 1575 First appearance of gorgas from the seven arches in the Wilewood.
- 2014 Taldor's Fifth Army of Exploration explores and maps the area that will later become Tymon.
- 2021 The River Kingdom of Tymon is officially established when Taldan gladiator Maldar Tymon is granted deed to the land.
- 2057 Valknar Gladiatorial College is founded in Tymon.
- 2690 Elves attempt to return to Sevenarches, but are rebuffed from the territory by the treant precursors of the Oakstewards.
- 2692 Founding of the Oakstewards and the kingdom of Sevenarches.
- 2802 Kyonin elves establish Hymbria as a base to launch a secret and ultimately unsuccessful bid to reclaim Sevenarches.
- 3756 Theodric, priest of Aroden, founds trading post of Heibarr.
- 3811 The fey of the Wilewood announce their first "wilding." Fey of all sizes stream out of the forest and inhabit civilized Sevenarches for 2 weeks. The Oakstewards punish and repel all fey that cause too much harm. The Wilewood fey repeat this every 100 years.
- 4109 The Great Bridge of Heibarr is completed.
- 4247 Warring sahuagin and merfolk put aside their differences and found the aquatic settlement of Outsea.
- 4256 The Intilporium, a minor but powerful Taldan noble family of wizards, makes a surprise push to take Sevenarches from the Oakstewards. Arcane mercenaries take and hold Sevenarches for 9 weeks before the Oakstewards reassert control. This is the only break in Oaksteward power in 2 millennia.
- 4312 The Silver Fox first visits the small, sleepy hamlet known as Pitax. Within 20 years, the hamlet grows into a grand town, and becomes the capital of the River Kingdom of Pitax.
- 4316 The inhabitants of Mivon die or flee, claiming that the trees and brambles came alive to threaten them, the dead of the river rose and walked again, or magicians called down the moon from the sky. Mivon lies empty for 20 years.
- 4355 Cullerton family founds the city-state of Maashinelle at the confluence of the Sellen and Tolemaida rivers, in what later becomes Lambreth.
- 4394 Angelidis family demolishes the shantytowns of Troxell to found the city-state of Lockridge.
- 4402 His Supreme Highness Afanasy Athanasius of Yenchabur founds Daggermark on the site of the hamlet of Rivermark.
- 4411 The Daggermark Assassins' Guild is founded.
- 4424 Vizcarra family establishes the city-state of Sezgin.
- 4434 Mayor Aindon builds the River Gate beneath the Great Bridge in Heibarr. The Black Sisters of Gyronna arrive in Heibarr.
- 4435 Heibarr's River Gate is destroyed; Heibarr is abandoned.
- 4500 Several Aldori families, fleeing Choral the Conqueror's invasion of Rostland, occupy Mivon.
- 4502 Maashinelle, Lockridge, and Sezgin unite under the Triunes of Lambreth.
- 4534 The Aldori consolidate their control of Mivon and nearly succeed in conquering Pitax, opening a long period of hostility between the two River Kingdoms. A Pitaxian sellsword named Pietr Liacenza leads the armies of Mivon into a trap at Wolf's Ravine, slaughtering Mivon's forces and marking the Liacenza family's rise to power in Pitax.
- 4602 Pitax attacks Mivon with hired mercenaries. Upon discovering that the mercenary captains intend to take Mivon for themselves, Pitax betrays its own forces, allowing them to be destroyed by Mivon's soldiers.
- 4604 Cerona, priestess of Aroden, attempts to resettle Heibarr; she and her warriors are slain and become undead spirits haunting the city.
- 4607 Galtan silk merchants found town of Nystra.
- 4612 The first civil war between the Cattanei and Liacenza families breaks out in Pitax, splitting it into the rival kingdoms of Corvonn and Pitax.
- 4619 Chelish Count Ambras Imre founds the Daggermark Poisoners' Guild; the last king of Daggermark dies mysteriously. Anarchy reigns.
- 4620 The Outlaw Council is established in Daggermark through the combined will of the assassins' and poisoners' guilds.
- 4636 Dwarves found the outpost of Rookwarden in the Rookwarden Fells in the northern River Kingdoms.
- 4637 The infamous Ulfen skald, Birji Uringen, founds the town of Uringen.
- 4638 Using stolen notes, Birji Uringen and his wizard companion Rhona Ambros begin construction of Uringen's clock tower.
- 4642 The town of Uringen first disappears in a massive bank of fog on an unseasonably cool and humid summer night.
- 4645 Uringen reappears; the settlement continues to vanish and return at seemingly random intervals, each disappearance lasting several days.
- 4647 The Embeth Travelers abandon Uringen and begin patrolling the Embeth Forest.
- 4657 Naerel Twice-Born, the River Preacher, builds a shrine to Hanspur and establishes the town of Riverton on the shores of Kallas Lake.
- 4661 Sebilla Cattanei and Raimon Liacenza wed, reuniting Pitax and Corvonn.
- 4663 Tharl Grimull's family are burned to death after his eldest daughter refuses the advances of one of Nystra's merchant-lords.
- 4664 Merrow overrun the town of Mosswater, slaying almost all the inhabitants. Tharl Grimull's violet musk creeper blooms in Nystra, and the free silkgoyles slaughter the town's residents.
- 4668 Dwarves abandon Rookwarden; bugbears, goblins, and worgs under the banner of the Worg Queen overrun the Rookwarden Fells.
- 4672 Lord Drellis Artume flees Andoran and founds the kingdom of Artume.
- 4673 Exiled Galtan banker Obidas Nauzil founds Little Galt.
- 4675 Exiled Andoren knight Kamdyn Arnefax defeats Razmiri armies menacing Lambreth in the so-called "Moonlight Massacre"; Arnefax disbands the Triunes and installs himself as Lord of Lambreth.
- 4677 Little Galt's advisory council appoints Hannan Galt as governor. Little Galt is renamed Gralton.
- 4684 Razmiran attacks Tymon and drives her forces back to the Sellen River; Razmiran claims and occupies the Exalted Wood as part of its territory.
- 4687 Brigands raid Gralton. Hannan Galt dies in the attack, and the advisory council appoints Marnius Chelorne as governor of Gralton. Hostilities between Mivon and Pitax flare anew, and Mivon swordlord Rastone Selline makes his name putting down the raiders and forging a peace with Pitax.
- 4688 Razmiran attempts to claim the abandoned town of Mosswater. Its forces leave in defeat 6 days later with over 50% casualties.
- 4689 Revolutionary Achille Parsal, the "Young Knight," founds Liberthane.
- 4690 King Drellis of Artume is poisoned by Daggermark assassins; Queen Sovella appoints Sir Bransen Waike as regent.
- 4693 Taldan prospector Loric leads an expedition into the Rookwarden Fells. Ullorth Ungin becomes the latest Champion of Tymon.
- 4696 Uringen vanishes the night before a raid from Pitax, leaving the residents of the static portion of town to defend at half strength.
- 4699 General Cabol Voran stages a coup and establishes a military dictatorship in Touvette, repelling foreign invaders and expelling all churches from the kingdom.
- 4700 The Outlaw Council recognizes Loric's rule over the Rookwarden Fells, now called Loric Fells; river trolls under a covey of green hags depose the Worg Queen and oust her from Rookwarden. Chelish corsair prince Morgan the White, thereafter called the White Marquis, founds the Pirate Pact and the Protectorate of the White Marquis.
- 4701 Lord Loric and his mercenary army are ambushed and slain by scraggs, opening Loric Fells to the speculations of would-be bandit-kings.
- 4702 Castruccio Irovetti takes control of Pitax from the Liacenza family. The White Marquis of the Pirate Pact is assassinated, and the Crimson Marquis, a Vudran maharaja buccaneer, takes power in the Protectorate.
- 4703 Half-orc rapsallion Ultrar Duneshifter, later styled the Rogue Marquis, jails the Crimson Marquis.
- 4706 Foreign mercenaries take over the village of Bacul Gruui in Cordelon and enslave its residents. The town of Scrawny Crossing is abandoned under mysterious circumstances after a fierce rainstorm.
- 4707 Urdul Bazzak, the Black Marquis, seizes power in the Protectorate. Uringen begins to vanish and reappear with increased frequency.
- 4708 Lord Martro Livondar takes power in Daggermark, promising an era of reconstruction and glory, and survives three assassination attempts in his first week.



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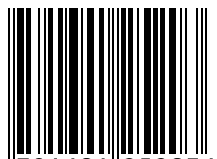
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