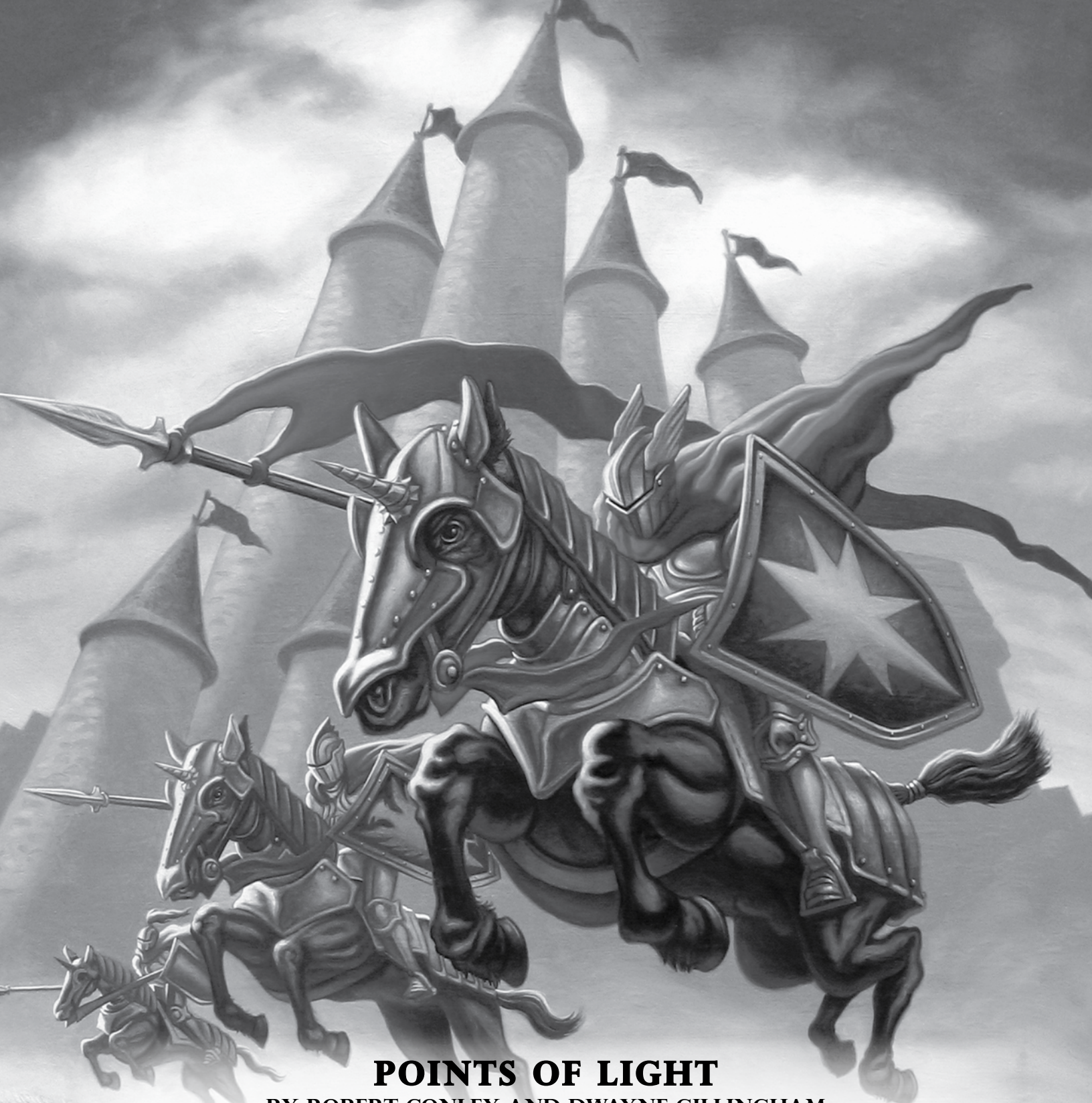


POINTS *of* LIGHT



ROBERT CONLEY





POINTS OF LIGHT

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INTRODUCTION

Points of Light is the default setting of the new fourth edition, a place where civilization exists in isolated outposts scattered throughout a dangerous wilderness. The vision of *Points of Light* is specific: Civilization does not consist of widespread nations and empires, but small city-states or groups of villages that have banded together for mutual support and protection. Between outposts lies only monster-haunted wilderness dotted with the ruins of a once glorious past and darkened by the ever-present shadow of the unknown. I was inspired when I read about *Points of Light*, and I found myself thinking: How far can I extend this concept?

One of the most beloved early modules, published by TSR, is *Keep on the Borderlands*. It featured an enclosed wilderness map with a dozen or so encounters that tied together the Keep and the Caves of Chaos, and confined them to a small area that could be dropped into any DM's campaign.

Since *Keep on the Borderlands*, this aspect has seen little development. Hundreds of modules have been published with dungeons and other detailed locales, some so large that an entire campaign from 1st to 20th level can be spent exploring them. Many grand settings were published as well, but there has been precious little in between.

This product occupies the middle ground between the dungeon and the civilized world. It introduces four lands designed to fit into any DM's campaign with little or no work. Using these as a starting point, DMs can expand outward and send their players on new and exciting adventures.

OVERVIEW

Each of the four new lands presented in this product is designed to interpret the Points of Light concept in a different way. The people, monsters, and geographical features of each land provide a distinct flavor, and are designed to facilitate a certain type of campaign.

THE HEX MAP

Each land contains the following: a numbered hex map, an overview, an alphabetical listing of geography, a rumor chart, a wandering monster chart, and a series of detailed locales keyed by the hex number. The scale of each hex is marked on the map.

A grid of hexes, arranged in columns, make up the maps. The hex numbers are given in a four-digit format (1213, 0114, etc). For example, 0211 means that it is in the "02" column (the 2nd column of the map) and is 11 hexes down. Sometimes the hex number will not be clear because of the terrain in the hex. In this case you will need to count hexes.

This system of using hex numbers allows a DM to quickly look at where locales are on the map and what locales are near a location. This helps keep the map uncluttered and easy to read. Geographical features are composed of multiple hexes, and are labeled directly on the map. They are listed alphabetically in that map's chapter.

GAME SYSTEM

Since this product is generic fantasy, the stats are kept brief. Only class, level, or Hit Dice are given. You will need to look up precise stats and any other relevant game information for your game system.

A new type of holy warrior, called a myrmidon is mentioned in several places throughout this product. These champions of lawful evil deities should be treated as paladins with the opposite abilities (cause damage instead of cure damage, etc). They are sworn to the cause of their evil god in much the same manner as paladins are sworn to the cause of good.

ADVENTURING ADVICE

The format in which the four new lands are presented is designed to aid players in their exploration of the world. With a list of locales, it is easy for players to determine what is over the next hill, and what possible challenges they might face once they get there. In addition, since the players can largely be left to their own devices, this format allows the DM more time to focus on the core adventures in his campaign.

Not every hex location has a description, and the provided background information is only meant to be a loose framework. DMs are encouraged to add material and make the setting unique to their campaigns.

CAPSULE DESCRIPTIONS

Wildland

Set shortly after the fall of a large empire where civilization is on the brink, Wildland is the land most similar to the core concept of Points of Light. Historically speaking, the social and economic climate of Wildland are not dissimilar to the chaotic Dark Ages of Western Europe. Wildland is designed for beginning characters, giving them ample opportunity to explore the world, defend civilization, and rekindle the light against the monstrous hordes.

Southland

Southland is set on the frontier of a large kingdom. It is a relatively empty land, with only a few scattered outposts of civilization. There is plenty of room here for the players to carve out a realm of their own and push the frontiers of civilization outwards.

Borderland

Borderland lies on the frontier between two warring factions of an empire. For a decade, they have battled one another, and their continual warfare has devastated the region. Here the monsters are not nightmarish creatures of myth and legend, but man himself.

The Swamps of Acheron

The river Acheron snakes across the Astral Plane like a great, twisting serpent, widening eventually into a colossal swamp. The swamp is home to all manner of planar monstrosities, and is rumored to be the domain of the dark god Sarrath. Those unfortunate enough to be swept up by the mighty Acheron are often deposited here, forced to make what lives they can in the endless, stinking mire.

MASTER MAP KEY

Legend

Desert



Forest



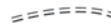
Swamp



Escarpment



Paved
Road



Road



River



Trail



Castle



Keep



City



Town



Village



Hamlet



Mountains



Foothills



Hills



Ford



Lair



Ruin



WILDLAND

INTRODUCTION

There are a variety of events and circumstances that could produce a *Points of Light* setting. One example from our own history is the state of Western Europe after the fall of Rome in the 5th century, the oft-referenced “Dark Ages.” Wildland was designed using this historical era as a foundation.

BACKGROUND

The Bright Empire once dominated Darish De’Cour or “Land of the Great River.” When the Empire expanded into Darish De’Cour, two provinces were created—Darish, east of the river, and Tharvengia, west of the river. For centuries the Bright Empire prospered, standing as a pinnacle of learning, commerce, and religion. However, in the last century, two rival factions arose that would eventually tear the Empire asunder. The earthly followers of Delaquain, the Goddess of Honor and Justice, and Sarrath, the God of War and Order, long at odds with one another, eventually forced the Bright Empire into a ruinous civil war. Weakened by the internal struggle, the Empire could no longer defend its sprawling provinces from the predations of marauding barbarian tribes. This was especially true in the Tharvengian Province, and it was quickly lost.

The final downfall of the Bright Empire came when humanoid tribes (orcs, goblins, gnolls, etc.) attacked the barbarians living in the defeated province of Tharvengia, routed them, and drove them en masse across the Great River into Darish. After devastating the Darish, the barbarians moved into the Empire’s heartland to the east. In the battle known as The Shattering, the barbarians destroyed the last organized forces of the Bright Empire, ending the civil war not with a final victory but with a final collapse.

Ten years after the civil war, barbarians and humanoids dominate this region, and only a single town and a few villages remain as beacons of civilization. Shortly after the fall of the Bright Empire, the remaining forces of Delaquain helped the survivors, but their efforts were stymied when the followers of Sarrath seized control of Yellzurthi, the last town in Darish. The followers of Sarrath now use Yellzurthi as a base to launch attacks against what remains of Delaquain’s followers, striving for complete control of war-torn Darish De’Cour.

ADAPTATION NOTES

The Bright Empire can be any ruined empire in your campaign, and Delaquain and Sarrath can be replaced with any two gods that would likely be enemies. The length of time between the fall of the Empire and the “present” can be lengthened or shortened as you see fit. A longer period between the fall of the Bright Empire and the present might allow for more established civilized outposts, while campaigns taking place right after the fall would likely have to contend with an even more chaotic landscape. Lastly, any of the humanoid or barbarian tribes can be replaced with enemies of your choice.

GEOGRAPHY

Lake Bovil

Noted for its rich fishing grounds, this seven-mile-long lake lies on the southern edge of the Plains of Hegramoth. A swamp on the eastern edge of the lake presents some danger, as packs of stirges (1 HD) roam the mire in search of fresh blood.



Crandar Moors

This windswept heather moor lies west of the Mish Mires. The primary dangers here are the six war bands of Gouge Eye hobgoblin that routinely hunt the area for game and other humanoids to rob and kill. The hobgoblins are very aggressive, and attack anyone venturing onto the moors without provocation,

In addition to the hobgoblins, the Crandar Moors conceal another danger — deep bogs (1–2 1d10 every hex). The bogs are covered with a thin layer of heather and moss, making them indistinguishable from the surrounding moor (–5 to spot). Stepping into a bog causes a character to sink immediately unless a saving throw (Reflex or Paralyzation at –5) is made. A character is completely submerged (and suffocating) in 1d4 turns unless he can claw his way out (Strength check or appropriate skill check), or he receives aid from a companion.

Eslohen Woods

The once-peaceful Eslohen Woods now serve as a battleground between marauding bands of orcs and ogres and the Elves of Arishai. Unable to stand against the brutal onslaught of their foes, the elves and allied sylvan creatures have fled north to safer regions. Despite the elven retreat, skirmishes between the two groups are still a frequent occurrence. However, the elves have all but abandoned the southern woods to the evil creatures dwelling there.

Faris Hills

These hills mark the eastern edge of the valley around the Great River. After the civil war and the dissolution of the Bright Empire, much of the surviving human population took refuge in the valleys. There are a few major settlements in this area, such as Curnitha (Hex 1309), Terish De’Carn (Hex 1204), and Dark Guard (Hex 1412). Most live in isolated farming communities.

The central hills between Hex 1308 and 1312 are rugged, but not overly dangerous. Paladins from Curnitha routinely patrol the northern hills, making them fairly safe for travelers. However, those venturing towards the lands controlled by Dark Guard should remain wary and alert, as slavers from the city often hunt for new “merchandise” in the southern hills.

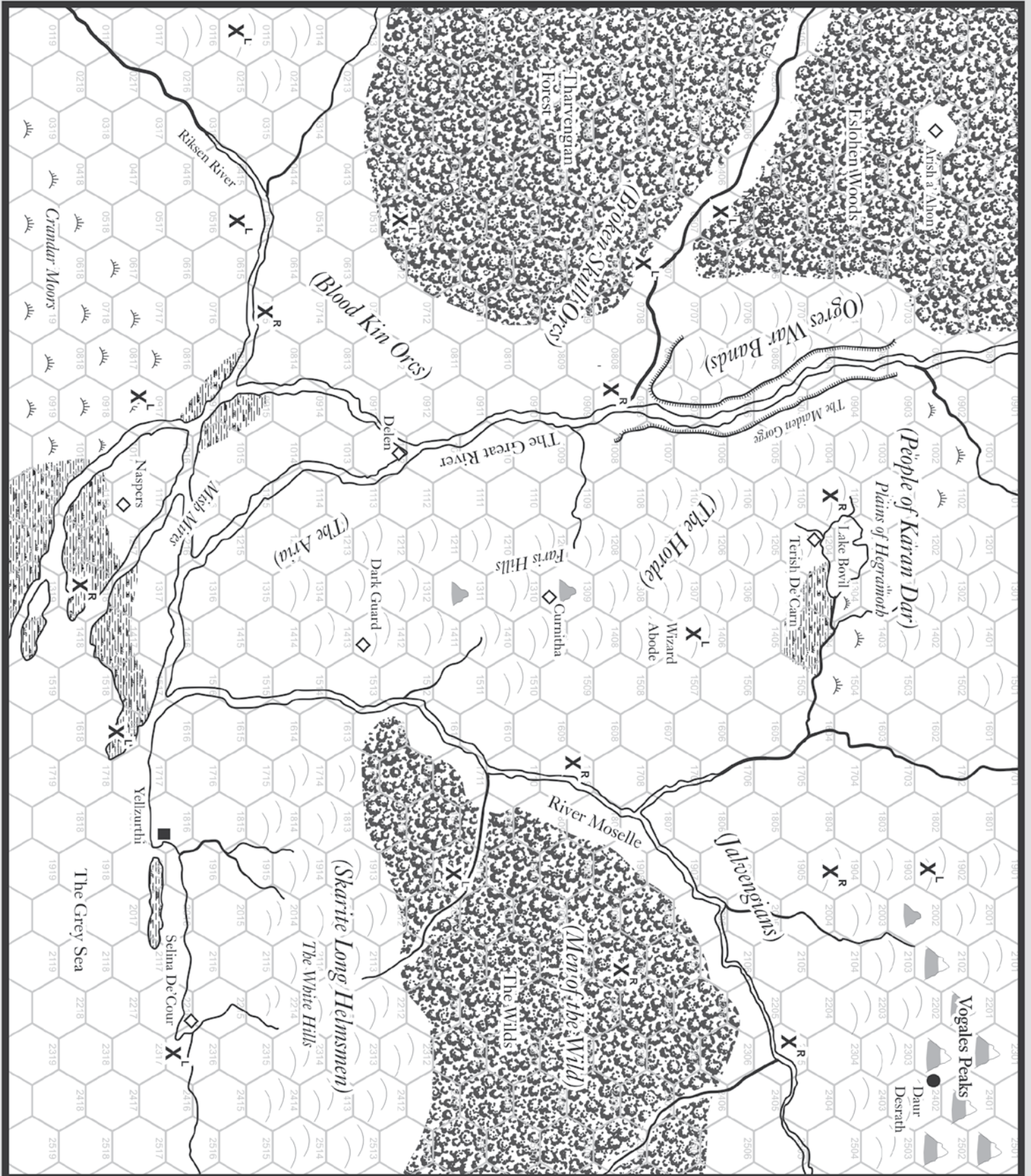
WILDLANDS

Encounters

- 1 Paladins on patrol from Curnitha (Hex 1309) (Pal6, 1d6 Pal2)
- 2 Patrol from Yellzurthi (Hex 1816) (Myr6, 2d6 Ftr3)
- 3 Dark Guard warriors out hunting for slaves (Ftr5, 2d6 Ftr1)
- 4 1d4 Lycanthropes (random type) looking for prey
- 5 Goblins scavenging for food (4d6 1 HD)
- 6 Barbarian raiding party (Brb6, 2d6 Brb1)
- 7 2d6 Slaves fleeing (20% chance they are hunted).
- 8 Ogre raiding party (1d6 4 HD)
- 9 1 and 2 are found fighting each other
- 10 A priest of Sarrath (Clr6) is travelling to Yellzurthia with 1d6 guards (Ftr2)

Rumors

- 1 (F) The forces of Delaquain are mustering for a counter attack on Yellzurthi
- 2 (T) The Broken Skull Orcs have suffered a great defeat
- 3 (T) The Men of the Wild perform blood rituals
- 4 (F) The green dragon, Dyre, demands virgin sacrifices
- 5 (F) A priest of Sarrath left an artifact in the temple of Fosnor
- 6 (T) A magical chalice of power is in the ruins of Torra Norith
- 7 (T) The fort built by Baron Wiford sank into the swamp with a great treasure
- 8 (F) High Priest Gargath of the Iron Hand Temple can change into a snake



Great River

The Great River begins in the distant Altus Mountains far to the north and travels nearly a thousand miles before emptying into the Grey Sea. The river is a mile wide throughout its length in Darish. The current is slow and steady, except in the Maiden Gorge where the narrow walls cause a swift current. Numerous shipwrecked barges and galleys line the river bottom.

The Grey Sea

The Grey Sea is noted for its storms, strong currents, treacherous reefs, and superb fishing grounds. Since the collapse of the Bright Empire, many fishermen, deprived of their livelihood, have turned to piracy.

Plains of Hegramoth

This grassy plain is the easiest way to pass through the Faris Hills. The tribesmen of Karan Dar patrol the pass and surrounding heights, making the Plains of Hegramoth relatively safe for travelers.

The Maiden Gorge

The Great River flows through this gorge, shadowed by soaring, one-hundred-foot cliffs on either side. It is here where Lareise, a maiden sworn to Delaquain, sang her song of power and stopped the barbarians from crossing the Great River during the early days of the Bright Empire. The power of the song shattered her mortal body, and it fell into the river while Delaquain took her spirit to Arcadia. Empowered by Lareise's sacrifice, and bolstered by the will of Delaquain, the great river became an impassable barrier that no barbarian could cross.

A shrine to Lareise was built in a cave at the base of the cliff where she fell, reachable only by a narrow footpath. During the civil war, a Sarrath raiding party destroyed the shrine, disrupting the ancient magic, and allowing the barbarians to cross the river.

Mish Mires

The Mish Mires form where the Great River widens before reaching the Grey Sea. Numerous islands, large and small, rise out of the swamp, each one infested with giant frogs, fire beetles, and other dangerous vermin. The Mish Mires was once a fertile farming area, but

the encroaching swamp has all but obliterated any trace of agriculture in the region. Most of the Mish Mires' original inhabitants have long since moved on; now only the village of Naspers remains.

River Moselle

The Moselle was once a highway for trade eastward into the heartland of the Bright Empire. Its banks were crowded with those that made their living from the river and the trade that rode upon it. Now the Moselle's banks are littered with the ruins of villas, latifundia, and towns — a grim reminder of better, more prosperous times.

Riksen River

Once the heart of the Tharvengian Province, the Riksen forms the boundary between the Crandar Moors and the Tharvengian Forest. The river valley is dotted with the numerous ruins of villas, farms, and villages. Several of these ruins hold heaps of gnawed bones, both animal and human, and the sign of the Blood Kin orcs has been drawn in blood on the shattered walls.

Tharvengian Forest

The Tharvengian Forest serves as the eastern tip of a vast forest. Much of the forest is untouched, and game of all sizes can be found here, from deer to mammoths, along with the saber-tooth cats, cave lions, and dire wolves that hunt them. Currently, two orc tribes, the Broken Skulls and the Blood Kins, dominate this area. However, rumors from the west insist that there are still free barbarian tribes fighting the vast humanoid hordes.

The Wilds

Before the civil war, these woods only existed as scattered groves. Numerous villas once farmed the region, and several small towns relied on the agriculture in this area to feed their citizens. As the civil war continued, however, farms were abandoned, and the towns they supported soon emptied as well. The woods steadily grew over the abandoned settlements, covering them in a thick mass of forest, brambles, and vines. The Wilds is infested with lycanthropes of all types, and the other inhabitants of Darish rightly fear the woods. Only the Men of the Wilds know the few safe paths through the tangled forest, but how they avoid the evil lycanthropes in the area is unknown.

Vogales Peaks

The Vogales Peaks are several thousand feet high and snowcapped year around. This mountain range was once extensively mined, but most of the mines have been abandoned or were destroyed during the civil war. There are still rich deposits of iron and silver ore in the Vogales, but only the dwarves of Daur Desrath continue to mine the soaring peaks.

The White Hills

These hills run parallel to the coastline, and are known for their extensive deposits of chalk. Currently, the fierce Skarite Long Helmsmen dwell here, although their numbers dwindle as starvation, enemies, and the elements take their toll.

TRIBES

The fact that the tribes cover multi-hex territories means they are marked on the map and given separate entries. Nearly all of the various humanoid and barbarian tribes are herders of sheep and goats. However, some do possess cattle, which are considered a sign of high status. Most of the tribes are semi-nomadic and tend to move about their territory quite frequently. Permanent settlements do exist, but they are rarely larger than small steadings of two to five families.

The Aria

The Aria are human barbarians that invaded with over 1,500 warriors a decade ago and participated in the Shattering. However, since the Shattering, constant infighting and heavy losses to humanoid enemies has diminished their numbers. Several years ago, the Aria, finding little but misfortune in Darish De'Cour, decided to return west to their old homeland. However, during the exodus, they were ambushed by orcs near the Tharvengian forest, resulting in a fierce battle that devastated the tribe. Only 200 Aria survived the orc ambush, and this tattered remnant fled back across the Great River and settled on the east bank. Currently, Chief Ardar (Brb6) fights to keep 120 warriors (Brb1) and 80 woman and children alive against fierce odds. Compounding the Aria's recent troubles is the loss of all its shamans.

Blood Kin Orcs

The 200 orcs of the Blood Kin often paint their bodies with the blood of their enemies, eat the flesh of their foes, and decorate their huts with the bones. They were converted eight years ago to the worship of the blood god, Azeel, by a figure they know as the Red Man (Haran the Red, see Men of the Wild). They are feared throughout the region for their brutality and ferocity.

Broken Skull Orcs

The Broken Skull orcs were once the largest orc tribe in the region until they failed, quite disastrously, to tame a pack of dire wolves (Hex 0612). The dire wolves have developed a taste for orc flesh and the tribe has shrunk by half, now numbering just over 60. The survivors now consider crossing the Great River to escape the wolves.

The Horde

Clak and Frull, hill giant (9 HD) brothers, moved their families and slaves across the Great River five years ago. They live in one steading (Hex 1207), with another under construction nearby. The Horde consists of the brothers, 2 giantesses (4 HD), 2 male young adults (7 HD), and 2 female young adults (3 HD). In addition, Clak and Frull can call upon 20 ogre allies (8 adults, 12 children) and 200 gnoll warrior slaves (80 adults, 120 children). Because of their close proximity to Curnitha [Hex 1309], the Horde has frequent run-ins with patrolling paladins, and skirmishes are quite common.

Jalvengians

Jalvengians originate from a frozen land in the north. During their migration south, they were attacked by humanoid tribes, and were forced to cross the Great River, joining the attack against the Bright Empire. After the Shattering, the Jalvengians migrated north again to the Vogales Peaks. They surprised and destroyed the mining communities there, taking much wealth in silver and iron from their defeated foes. Only the dwarves of Daur Desrath offered any real resistance. After several pitched battles, an uneasy peace was reached last year.

The Jalvengians are divided into ten clans of roughly 300 individuals, each consisting of 1 clan leader (Bar5), 100 warriors, 150 women, and 50 children. The clans have a head shaman (Drd5) and 4 lesser shamans (Drd3). The tenth clan is the royal clan, and contains the same

number of warriors and noncombatants as listed above, with the addition of the chief (Bar10), his 10 housecarls (Bar8), the high shaman (Drd10), and 7 members of the Tribal Circle (Drd8).

Men of the Wild

After the Shattering, several barbarian tribes were nearly destroyed. Wandering the devastated lands, they encountered Haran the Red, a self proclaimed prophet of the blood god Azeel. His personal charisma caused many to flock to his banner, and he foretold that the Empire would suffer a thousand years of darkness. Haran led any that would follow into the Wild, and once there, he taught them the secret of lycanthropy.

After a few years in the Wilds, Haran's followers divided themselves into tribes, each tribe taking an animal as their totem — Bear, Boar, Rat, Tiger, and Wolf. These totems represent the lycanthropy each tribe is infected with, and all members carry the shapechanger taint in their blood. The prophet Haran (Clr12) is still alive, wandering tribe to tribe, leading them in wild rituals. Each tribe consists of 200 individuals (150 lycanthropes of the tribe's totem, and 50 children). In addition, each tribe has a priest of Azeel (Clr5) and 6 acolytes (Clr1). Haran keeps a small retinue consisting of a lycanthrope from each tribe trained as a high priest of Azeel (Clr9).

Ogre War Bands

Between the western edge of the Eslohen Woods and the Maiden Gorge three ogre war bands make their home. The war bands are the Bonecrushers, led by Drux, the Bloody Fist, led by Jugular, and the Black Dearth, led by Kiru. Curdon (Wiz9, 5 HD), an ogre mage, is the chief of all the ogres, and lives in a hut (Hex 0805) near the Maiden Gorge. Each war band consists of 6 ogres, along with a dozen goblin warrior-slaves. The ogres frequently raid the Esolan Woods to the west.

People of the Karan Dar

After The Shattering and the collapse of the Bright Empire, commerce and agriculture was all but obliterated in Darish De'Cour, and many faced starvation. The Shaman Delvanus (Drd12) rallied many of the surviving groups, both imperials and barbarians, and made them swear the oath of the Karan Dar, the holy tree of the druidic faith, to keep the peace.

After years of wandering, Delvanus and his people encountered a group of Curnitha paladins fighting the Men of the Wild. They aided the paladins, and the two people became allies. For their aid, the paladins led Delvanus and his followers to the empty Plains of Hegramoth, where they settled and began calling themselves the People of the Karan Dar. Since then, they have prospered, and with the aid of the paladins of Curnitha, have been able to hold the plains against the humanoids to the west.

The People of the Karan Dar number 500 tribesmen. There are 10 clan chiefs (Rgr5), 150 warriors, 150 women, and 100 children. Delvanus is the leader of a circle of 8 druids (Drd9) and 10 acolytes (Drd3). Martial matters and tribal defense are handled by Captain Kaun (Rgr5), who leads a stalwart force of 20 rangers (Rgr2). Patrols consisting of 5 rangers and an acolyte are common, and they can be relied upon to help travelers in need.

Skarite Long Helmsmen

The Skarites are known for their distinctive long helms and horsehair plumes. During the barbarian invasion of Darish De'Cour, they crossed the Mish Mires and traveled east, eventually encountering the forces of Sarrath in the town of Yellzurthi. The Skarites laid siege to Yellzurthi, and their ferocity and martial prowess enabled them to quickly sack the city. Instead of simply looting Yellzurthi, the Skarites decided to stay and enslave the populace. Satisfied with their conquest, they did not join the other tribes in The Shattering.

Eight years after the sack of Yellzurthi, the forces of Sarrath returned and attacked the Skarite-held city by sea. Weakened from a recent campaign, the Skarites could not stand against Sarrath, and were forced to abandon the town. Scattered and defeated, they fled into the White Hills to the north. Now the Skarites have been reduced to only 150 ragged and starving survivors. A few dozen scattered longhouses in the White Hills hold the remnants of their tribe, including their chief (Brb6), 95 warriors, 40 women, and 10 children. Deadly fights often break out among the warriors due to the small population of women and the stresses of their peoples' desperate situation.

LOCALES

0115 Green Dragon Lair

Dyre (8 HD), a very young green dragon, has left her mother's lair far to the west. The wars and invasions have sparked her curiosity, and she regularly captures creatures she finds near her lair to question about current events. She always promises to let her captives go if they answer truthfully, but she usually eats them anyway.

0302 Arish a' Ahon

The Arish a' Ai, or "the nature people," are a clan of wood elves living in the Eslohen woods. The barbarian invasions have forced them deeper into their woodland home, and the constant harassment from the Orcs and the Ogres has left them with little more than the hex surrounding their village, Arish a' Ahon "home of nature." Arish a' Ahon is led by the elder Daraniel



(Ftr6/Wiz2) who defends the village with 100 elven warriors and 4 treant (7 HD) allies. Arish a' Ahon is surrounded by a 200-yard zone of brambles and briars that act as an *entangle* spell.

0506 Griffon Nest

Several decades ago, the elves of Arish a' Ahon helped three griffons (7 HD) build a nesting ground here. The griffons are very aggressive, and attack anyone approaching their nests.

0512 Wolf Pack

The Blood Kin Orcs have devastated the game in this region, leaving a pack of 12 starving wolves (2 HD) to try their luck against a different type of game. Driven by hunger, these wolves do not hesitate to attack humanoid prey.

0515 Wyvern Nest

In a bluff above the Riksen River, a wyvern (7 HD) has made its nest and laid three eggs. The wyvern is very aggressive, and fights to the death to defend the nest. The nest contains a substantial amount of treasure from the orcs the wyvern has killed.

0607 Dire Wolf Pack

The Broken Skull Orcs attempted to tame this pack of dire wolves (4 HD)... and failed miserably. The dire wolves killed a quarter of the Broken Skull tribe, and in doing so have developed a taste for orc flesh. The pack is led by a large black dire wolf named Shadow (6 HD).

0715 Ruins of Novus Tydaris

This was once the capital of the Tharvengian Province before barbarians sacked it 25 years ago. Most of the barbarians abandoned it during the humanoid invasions, and those who stayed became food for the Blood Kin Orcs. Beneath the ruins of Novus Tydaris there is an extensive catacomb and sewer system.

0908 Ruined Temple of Fosnor

This temple and village were once dedicated to the worship of Sarrath. Thirty years ago, the paladins of Delaquain attacked and destroyed the temple, killing most of the villagers of Fosnor. Soon after, a group of 10 harpies (3 HD) moved into the ruined bell tower.

The harpies have captured a merchant adventurer named Oritus (Rog4), and plan to eat him. If rescued, he tries to enlist the party's help in recovering a lost fortune in the ruins of Novus Tydaris.

0917 The Mysterious Statues

Along the bluffs that line the Mish Mires are a series of lifelike statues that seem to change in appearance at random intervals. Several villagers from Naspers swear they have seen statues depicting missing relatives. The truth behind the mysterious statues can be traced to a reclusive pair of cockatrices that have established a lair here. When the cockatrices petrify a victim, they leave the statue standing until it is inadvertently pushed over and shattered.

1012 Delen

Before the civil war, the village of Delen was primarily a marketplace for fishermen shipping their wares to Novus Tydarius (Hex 0715). During the civil war, Delen was looted several times by both sides for men and supplies, but after the fall of the Tharvengian Province, Elder Polt (Ftr5) called in a favor from an old friend, the wizard Bolothous. Bolothous erected a stone wall around Delen, and constructed six stone golems (12 HD) to help defend the village. Six amulets were given to the elders to command the golems.

With its new defenses, Delen has become a meeting ground where all can trade, including barbarians, civilized folk, and even humanoids. The village has doubled in size and filled the space within the walls. Outside of the gates are encampments where visitors can stay. Once a month, Delen holds a trade fair that includes a slave market. Despite the many disparate groups that are frequently thrown together during the trade fair, violence is rare. This is likely due to the fact that violators of the market peace are punished by drowning in the Great River, held underwater by a stone golem until they expire.

Nearly 1,000 people live within the walls of Delen, with another 500 or so living outside in the visitor's encampment. The citizens rely upon the city's stout wall, a 100-man guard, and the 6 stone golems to protect them from bandits, monsters, and raiding barbarian tribes.

1104 Torra Norith

The forces of Sarrath razed the castle of Torra Norith, “Heart of Virtue”, thirty years ago. A mage attempted to make the ruined castle his stronghold, and to augment his meager forces he tried to summon a babau demon (7 HD). The summoning went wrong, and the demon killed the wizard and his men. Since then, the demon has made the castle its lair, and is currently seeking a way back to the Abyss.

Torra Norith is rumored to hold many treasures, including a magical chalice that turns pure water into a single potion of *cure serious wounds* once per week.

1117 Naspers

Naspers survived the barbarian invasion and the calamitous events that came after by being small and out of the way. Much of the farmland around the city is polder, plots of lands reclaimed from drained swampland. The lord of Naspers, Baron Wiford, rarely visited his holdings, spending most of his time in Gervonium (Hex 1709). When barbarians overran the province of Darish, he arrived in Naspers with a large retinue. The Baron forced Naspers to build a fort (Hex 1318), supply his men with food, and forcibly drafted replacements. After three years, the fort collapsed in a flood, killing the Baron and many of his men.

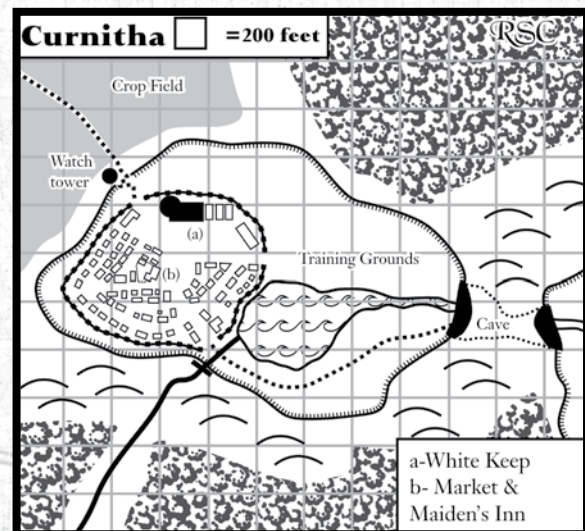
Today, Naspers has 200 people and a small militia of 20 men (Ftr1). Constable Argon (Ftr2) keeps the day-to-day order and helps the village reeve, Dargon (1 HD), with organizing the planting and harvest.

1204 Terish De’ Carn

The village of Terish De’Carn is located on the southern shores of Lake Bovil. After the fall of Torra Norith (Hex 1104), the villagers used stone from the ruins to build a tower as a refuge during a raid. The villagers have gone through several seasons of hard times, and are hostile to strangers. The village is led by the Elder Marik (Ftr2) and is home to 155 people, including a militia of 15 men (Ftr1). The villagers know that darkness has fallen on the ruins of Torra Norith (Hex 1104), although they won’t speak of it to strangers.

1309 Curnitha

Curnitha is located in a valley hidden in the roughest part of the Faris Hills. The only entrance is through a limestone cavern on the eastern end of the valley. Thirty years ago, during a battle with the Myrmidons of Sarrath, an experienced and powerful paladin named Captain Mithika (Pal12) was badly wounded. During his recovery, he was guided to the valley by a vision sent from Delaquain. A year later, Mithika established Curnitha as a refuge for paladins and clerics of Delaquain. Currently there are 500 villagers, 30 paladin candidates (Pal1), 20 cleric candidates (Clr1), and 20 guards and trainers (10 Pal2, 5 Clr3, Pal5, Clr5, Pal7, Clr9, Pal10) living in Curnitha.



1318 Ruins of the Mire

Southeast of the village of Naspers are the ruins of Baron Wiford’s fort. It was destroyed when the locks on the polder failed, and the rushing waters wrecked the fort and killed the baron and many of his men. The remainder were killed or enslaved when Naspers revolted. The polder has not been reclaimed, and the area has now returned to marsh. The villagers talk about the rich treasure that the baron took with him to the fort. However, nobody who has ventured into the fort has returned, likely because of the six wights (4 HD) inhabiting the ruins.

1406 Wizard Abode

Rani Halfhat (Wiz13) believes that she is the only survivor of the Guild of Arcane Knowledge, once the largest mages' guild in the Bright Empire. She lives in a small hut made comfortable through various spells. Rani saved much of the guild's library, and buried the books in several protected caches, nearby. Surrounded by barbarians and humanoids, which she considers beneath her, Rani longs to speak with someone who can provide her with what she craves most — knowledge.

1412 Dark Guard

Warlord Darios (Ftr9) and his mercenaries, the Dark Guard, are one of the many mercenary groups that survived The Shattering. Weary and demoralized, they wandered west and came across a ruined castle filled with refugees. Darios seized control of the castle, and forced any man capable of fighting into his service. The remainder he enslaved and put to work. In the years since, Darios has rebuilt the castle and frequently raids the surrounding area for slaves and plunder. Currently, he is the master of 100 warriors and 400 slaves.

1617 Temple of the Iron Hand

When the temple of Fosnor was destroyed (Hex 0908), the only survivor was a priest named Gargath (Clr8). Fleeing the destruction of his temple, he wandered into the Mish Mires where he encountered a tribe of lizardfolk. Gargath convinced the scaly humanoids that he was a holy man sent by their reptilian god, and that the god's true name was Sarrath. The simple-minded lizardfolk readily accepted the strange human at his word, and built a great wooden temple in honor of Sarrath. Gargath has set himself up as the will of Sarrath in the flesh, and the lizardfolk obey his every command. He often sends the lizardfolk to raid civilized areas for sacrifices and supplies, although he generally avoids Naspers for fear of their organized militia.

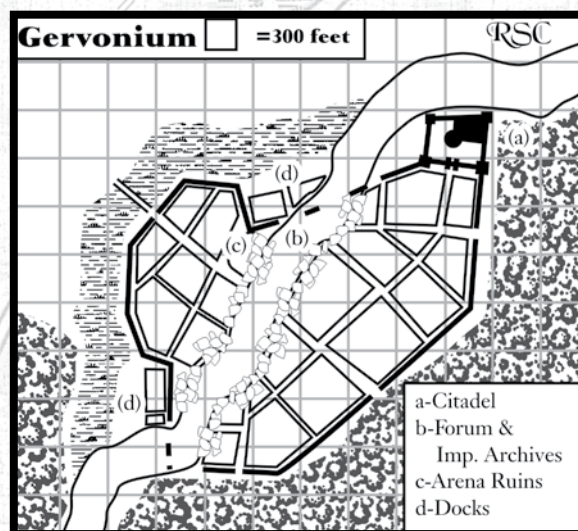
Gargath recently constructed a crude temple to Sarrath and recruited several of the lizardfolk as acolytes (3 Clr3). When necessary, he can call upon up to 100 lizardfolk (2 HD) living in crude huts around the temple.

Two years ago, Gargath and his lizardfolk aided Verin (Hex 1816) and the forces of Sarrath in retaking Yellzurthi. Part of Gargath's reward for this aid was 30 human slaves, who now serve at the temple of Sarrath.

1709 Ruins of Gervonium

This ruined town was once the capital of the Province of Darish. It was sacked and looted ten years ago when the barbarians came across the Great River. Five years ago, the Moselle shifted course, and the town is now divided neatly in half by the river.

Currently, a small tribe of 30 hobgoblins and their 40 goblin slaves dwell amid the ruins, although they generally keep to the east side of the river. The old river to the west of the town is now a swamp. A sortie of 12 sahuagin (2 HD), their lieutenant (3 HD), and 2 large sharks (7 HD) patrols the new river channel. The sahuagin are searching the ruins of the Imperial Archives for an artifact stolen from their people.



1816 Yellzurthi

Yellzurthi is the last intact town in the region, and is currently under the control of Verin (Clr10), a High Priest of Sarrath. Two years ago, Verin helped recapture Yellzurthi from the Skarite Longhelms, who had in turn captured the city from the forces of Sarrath a decade earlier. For the past year, Verin has been restoring the city, and the main walls, the castle, and the old temple have all been completely refurbished.

Work proceeds on clearing the remaining rubble and building new houses, and much of the populace lives in crude wooden shanties within the walls. These impromptu shanty-towns are under the control of several gangs that fight Verin's guards and each other.

Nearly 2,000 people live in Yellzurthi, 500 of which are under Verin's direct control. These include 300 warriors, 100 myrmidons, and 100 priests of Sarrath. In addition, the Green Dragons, 20 lizardfolk guards (3 HD) sent from the Temple of the Iron Hand (Hex 1617), add yet more weight to Verin's iron-fisted rule.

1902 Troll Cave

Hovik and Quib (7 HD), two trolls, grub out a bare existence in this dank cave. They live off the sheep of the Jalvengians and what local game they can catch, but this unsatisfying fare has driven them mad with cravings for proper troll food, like human flesh. The trolls have built a mock camp, complete with straw dummies, in hopes of enticing someone close enough to catch and kill.

1904 Tomb of Edwarch

Edwarch was a necromancer who used these caves to perfect his transformation into a lich. He has long since departed, but the remnants of his past experiments remain: 2 wights (4 HD), 10 zombies (2 HD), and 20 skeletons (1 HD). One of Edwarch's treasures, a spellbook filled with every spell up to 5th level, can be found with a careful search of the tomb.

1911 Lair of a Black Bear

This cave is the lair of a black bear (6 HD) that fishes for salmon in the Moselle. He is very territorial, and attacks any party not immediately leaving the area. The cave contains several mauled human bodies from the Men of the Wild.

2108 Ruined Monastery

Here the brambles of The Wilds cover the ruins of a monastery of Delaquain. This was once the most notable center of learning in the western provinces of the Empire. Much of the accumulated lore has been lost to time, decay, and looters; however, for every hour of searching there is a 20% chance of finding a still-useful book, scroll, or tome.

2216 Selina De' Core

Once a prosperous fishing community, the village of Selina De' Core has turned to piracy and smuggling since the civil war. When barbarians swept east, the populace scattered, and the village was burned. Now the village is little more than a series of brothels, cheap

inns, and flophouses. In addition, the hideouts of several resident pirate gangs stand proud and prominent in the center of town. Between 100 and 200 people call Selina De' Core home, and the population often swells further with the crews of up to 2d4 ships anchored offshore.

2305 Cathardown

This ruined town was once an important trading stop between Gervonium and the Bright Empire. Located in the rotted remains of an inn is a sealed chest containing blank imperial writs and metal stamps used for sealing official documents.

2316 The Sea Hag

A sea hag (3 HD), Isour, lives off the coast and preys on the smugglers and pirates that live in Seline De'Cour (Hex 2216). She typically visits the town at night when the sailors are drunk, and sometimes carries off a besotted mariner to torment and devour at her leisure. Isour's lair is an underwater cave filled with the treasures dropped from her victims' bodies.

2402 Daur Desrath

Daur Desrath or the "Great Depth" is the last dwarven forge in Darish De'Cour. The dwarven stronghold was established as an outpost to mine the extensive metal deposits of the Vogales Peaks and to trade dwarven-made goods to the merchants of the Bright Empire.

During the civil war, Daur Desrath was cut off from the dwarven homeland to the north, and to make matters worse, the Jalvengian barbarians migrated to the region shortly after the Shattering. The barbarians fought several pitched battles with the dwarves in an attempt to seize complete control of the region. However, neither side could attain a decisive victory, and an uneasy peace was reached last year.

The dwarves have recently lost their ironmaster, the master smith capable of forging the great dwarven weapons of legend. They are currently considering sending someone to the dwarven homeland to bring back another ironmaster. Lord Gerin (Ftr11), a mighty warrior and smith, leads the 200 dwarves of Daur Desrath.

SOUTHLAND

INTRODUCTION

Southland is meant to pay homage to the early days of role-playing. Back then, high-level play was about building and defending your own barony. Since the original game was about dungeon crawling, players and DMs that wanted outdoor adventures were forced to turn to other games to meet their needs. One solution was the game *Outdoor Survival* by Avalon Hill, which included a board that could be used as a wilderness map that players could explore. Dave Arneson, one of the authors of the original edition, originated the use of this board and placed it south of his main campaign. As his campaign progressed, several of the players began to clear the map of monsters and build their own baronies. It is in the spirit of those early days that this area is named Southland. A land of few realms and many wide-open spaces, Southland is an area where your characters can establish their own realms.

BACKGROUND

Here on the wild frontier, adventurers struggle to push back the wilderness. Mile by mile they push back the monsters and move the boundaries of civilization forward. Opposing them are the Blood Fist orcs, the dark elves of the Underrealm, and renegades from the Grand Kingdom, yet there are allies to be found within the Southland.

Where the Sarduin and the Darkwine rivers join, the Grand Kingdom has founded its first major settlement, Castle Westguard. The settlement is growing due in large part to the thriving trade between the Grand Kingdom and the Dwarves of Bolzak. The dwarves send shipments of weapons, iron, and gold through their port at Nilik, which is then shipped by barge to Castle Westguard, and finally moved by caravan over the Golden Pass to the Grand Kingdom. The dwarves also trade with the halflings of Dunshire, who barter grain and fruit for protection and iron ore.

South of Westguard lies the elven realm of Silverdim, the last outpost of the elves in Southland. Over 200 years ago the Bloody Fist orcs, led by the dragon Arcador, invaded the elven homeland of Silverwood. The orcs laid waste to Silverwood, slaughtered many elves, and claimed the forest as their own. After the orc invasion, the remnants of the elves regrouped and traveled east,

SOUTHLAND

Encounters

- 1 2d6 Elf Scouts (Ftr2/Wiz2)
- 2 Halfling Scouts (1 Rgr6, 2d10 Rgr2)
- 3 Hippogriff (3 HD)
- 4 Raiders from Beldon (Ftr6, 2d6 Ftr2)
- 5 Westguard Patrol (Ftr8, 2d10 Ftr3)
- 6 1d6 Wererat Spy (1 HD)
- 7 2d20 Goblin Raiders (1 HD)
- 8 Nomad Raiders (Brb6, 2d6 Brb1)
- 9 Drow Raiders (Ftr4/Wiz4, Wiz6, 2d10 Ftr1/Wiz1)
- 10 4d6 Orc Patrol (1 HD)
- 11 1d6 Hill Giants (9 HD)
- 12 Dwarven Scouts (Ftr6, 2d10 Ftr3)

Rumors

- 1 (F) You can buy potions or be healed from a witch living near Tybridge
- 2 (T) Wolfwood was once a farm run by an alchemist and has many rare herbs
- 3 (T) The dragon, Arcador, has a cave lair full of ancient treasure
- 4 (F/T) The trees of the blood forest talk.
- 5 (F) The wererats are spies for the blood god Azeel
- 6 (F) The dwarves of Norbeck keep halfling slaves
- 7 (F) Baron Victor married his own sister to enhance his claim to the crown
- 8 (T) The drow of Nightportal Keep are forming alliances in order to take over the realm

eventually establishing a haven in Silverdim. The Silverwood remains dominated by the orcs to this day, and has been renamed the Blood Forest.

The dark elves of House Ardize have established an outpost at Nightportal Keep, and have decided to expand their power to the surface world. They have recently made contact with the evil Baron Beldon, who dwells in a castle to the north, beneath the Sunset Rim. Beldon is an infamous traitor from a kingdom to the north, and rumor has it that the baron betrayed his king and fled to Southland to escape an almost certain execution. Currently, he deals in slaves and contraband, and has carved out a small realm for himself on the back of these nefarious activities. The Baron has welcomed the advances of the dark elves, and a tentative alliance has grown between the two evil powers.

Scattered throughout the Southland are the ruins of the Bright Empire. A thousand years ago, the Empire was a shining force for good until their own hubris brought them down. Today, the relics and artifacts of the Bright Empire are eagerly sought for their potent power, despite the rumors that the gods have cursed many of them.

ADAPTATION NOTES

Southland can be any frontier region of a kingdom in your campaign. Any ancient empire in your campaign's history can work in place of the Bright Empire. The Underrealm is a common feature in many fantasy campaigns, and House Ardize can be replaced with a suitable dark elf enemy of your choice. If no dark elves exist, any non-human, evil race can be substituted.

The Bloody Fist Orcs are numerous enough that even a determined party of high-level adventures won't be able to destroy them in a single fight. Their lair may be destroyed several times, but they will keep coming back until the players can scour the Blood Forest clean of their presence.

The trade between Bolzak, Westguard, and the Grand Kingdom has established a rudimentary economy that players may expand when they establish their own baronies. Threats to this economy can serve as the basis for many adventures as the brigands of Castle Beldon raid the caravans and river routes.

GEOGRAPHY

The Blood Downs

These rolling hills mark the boundary between the Blood Fist Orcs and the Kubar Nomads. Numerous battles between orc and nomad take place within the ridges and ravines here, but neither side has managed to gain the upper hand. This area also contains several ruined towers dating back to the time of the elves, where it is rumored the mightiest of Silverwood's artifacts were crafted. Some of these artifacts may still remain within the ruins.

The Blood Forest

Once known as Silverwood, this was the ancient home of the elves in the Southland. All three races of elves lived here, and were ruled by a family of grey elves. The elves made their home in villas scattered through the forest, although many also lived within the main settlements of Silver Hall (Hex 0209). Since the elves fled en masse from the orc invasion, many of their homes remain just as their owners left them, and have been virtually untouched by the passage of time.

Two hundred years ago, the red dragon Arcador, led the Bloody Fist orcs against Silverwood. After the elves were defeated, Arcador plundered the treasuries of Silver Hall, and then flew back to his lair in the White Mountains. The Bloody Fist orcs remained and claimed the forest for their own. Since that time, the Silverwood has been called the Blood Forest in memory of the elves that were slain.

The main body of the orcs currently resides in the ruins of Silver Hall, but the fell humanoids patrol widely around their main encampment. Although many of the elves' former sylvan allies have been killed by the orcs, a few pockets remain protected by powerful treants and fey. In place of the more benign forest creatures, wolves, spiders, and other fell creatures now make the forest their home.

The Dark Fence

This is a rocky ridgeline rising sharply from the floor of the Forsaken Desert. Enough rain falls on these mountains to give rise to Nightshade Creek and carve numerous passages into the Underrealm. The middle section of the Dark Fence forms part of the south wall



of Nightshade Canyon, while the northeast end is a jumble of blind canyons and arroyos. The dark elves have released giant spiders and ettercaps into the area, and ropers and giant ant colonies are known to infest the northeast region.

The Darkwine River

The Darkwine River gets its name from its muddy, purplish color. It rarely runs clear due to the tons of sediment washed downstream from the Dark Fence. The river runs shallow and slow, and the only deep sections are along the western edge of the Twilight Forest. The river can be crossed via a ford in Hex 2212.

The Forsaken Desert

This is a vast stony desert formed in the rain shadow of the mountains to the northwest. Only the Jackal Tribe, a collection of outlaws and exiles from the Kubar Nomads, makes a home here. Threats in this area include several bands of lamia and various types of giant lizards.

Forsaken Plains

The Forsaken Plains begin on the eastern edge of the desert where it emerges from the rain shadow of the mountains to the northwest. Several bulettes inhabit this flat area of high grass, and are a constant menace to anyone traveling through this area.

The Golden Pass

This is the only pass for a hundred miles in either direction that crosses over the Westwalls. The Grand Kingdom now uses it as the main gateway to Southland, and dozens of caravans use the pass every month.

Greenelm Woods

To the east of the Westwalls are the vast Greenelm Woods, which form part of the western border of the Grand Kingdom. Lumberwrights from Hawksleigh (Hex 2406) exploit the woods for its timber. This has angered the Great Druid of Greenelm, and he has marshaled his forces (druids, treants, dryads, etc) against the lumberwrights. The King's Rangers have been sent to protect the lumberjacks, and now the two sides are waging a small-scale war.

Grey Downs

These forlorn hills are scattered with dozens of barrows built by the elves of Silverdim to house those who died on the journey from Silverwood. Banshees haunt the region, and its fringes are guarded by elven patrols.

Greystone Road

This paved stone road runs from the gates of Gilhig to Nilik. It is well guarded by dwarven foot patrols and halfling rangers from Dunshire.

Caravan Frequency

Season (2d6-1 wagons)

Spring 1 per 3 days

Summer 1 per week

Fall 1 per 3 days after harvest

Winter 1 per month

Kubar Creek

This broad stream marks the boundary between the range of the Kubar Nomads and the Forsaken Desert. It is frequently the site of fighting between the nomads and slave raiders from Castle Beldon.

Kubar Steppes

The Kubar Steppes stretch for hundreds of miles to the southwest. Here the tribes of Kubar Nomads make their home, herding cattle and following well traveled routes from waterhole to waterhole. The nomads are animists, and take on an animal as their totem. The Wolf Tribe ranges from Hex 0119 to Hex 0418, while the Bear Tribe ranges from 0518 to 0719, then north to the Sarduin. The tribes have numerous conflicts with slavers from Castle Beldon and members of the Jackal Tribe in the Forsaken Desert.

Lanis River

The Lanis River is formed by the confluence of the Darkwine and the Sarduin. It varies from a mile wide where the Darkwine and the Sarduin meet to three miles wide when it exits Southland. The current is deep and slow, and the river is navigatable from the confluence to its exit, far to the north. Sea Raiders are known to sail south and attack, forcing Westguard to employ six war galleys to patrol the Lanis River.

Lanisdown Forest

The southern half of this forest is dotted with lumber camps. Bear, deer, and other game are plentiful in these woods, as the lumberwrights have all but exterminated the wolves and dire wolves that once hunted here. Only one pack of dire wolves remains led by a crafty, old alpha wolf known as Redeyes (8 HD).

The Mist Falls

A rainbow cloud of mist marks these spectacular hundred-foot-high falls. On a clear day the mist cloud can be seen two hexes away. Legend has it there is an entrance to the fey realm hidden behind the falls. Baron Beldon has sent two expeditions to find this entrance, but none have returned.

Nightshade Canyon

This canyon is carved out of the living rock by the Nightshade Creek. With walls ranging from 100 feet to 200 feet high, it is one of the most spectacular sights in Southland. However, the dark elves of Nightportal Keep have made it an unwholesome place. The drow have released giant spiders, ettercaps, and driders into the canyon that now inhabit the formations at the western end. Other dangers in the Nightshade include packs of chimera that roam the eastern end of the canyon.

Nightshade Creek

This swift, shallow stream runs along the bottom of Nightshade Canyon. The creek is dotted with broad gravel flats, and its banks form a small canyon with 10- to 20-foot high walls. When the stream emerges from the canyon it widens considerably, until merging with the Darkwine River. Dangers include giant toads inhabiting the gravel flats of the stream and packs of stirges near the confluence with the Darkwine River.

Olden Bog

This noisome swamp is found across the Landis River from Castle Westguard. Stirges, river trolls, and will-o-wisps inhabit the bog, along with an assortment of dangerous mundane creatures, such as alligators and venomous snakes. History has it that an early expedition from the Bright Empire met its demise in the bog. Rumors state that this expedition was loaded with gold, gems, and other valuable items, leading many would-be treasure seekers to their deaths attempting to find it.

Orcfell Creek

This once pristine stream is now polluted and choked with weeds as it runs through the Blood Forest. Anyone who drinks from the stream must make a Fortitude save or become sick within 1d3 days.

Osric Hills

The Osric Hills form the borderland between the Blood Forest and the White Mountains. Both orcs and dwarves patrol this region, and the remnants of past battles between the two races can be found amongst the hills.

Redstone Ridge

The Redstone Ridge looms over the Sunset Rim. The mountains get their name from their distinctive red color in the setting sun. The ridge is noted for its large deposits of gemstones, and Baron Beldon and his dark elf allies jointly run several small mines in an attempt to extract this wealth from the mountains.

Ryne Creek

Ryne Creek forms the eastern boundary of Baron Beldon's lands. The baron's cavalry patrol the creek down to Wicking Lake.

Sarduin River

One of the major rivers of Southland, the Sarduin is wide and deep. It reaches a width of one mile when it runs past Nilik, and is navigable by barge up to Sam's Landing. Throughout the year, barges travel between Nilik and Castle Westguard trading goods from both human and dwarven merchants.

Piracy is a problem, and many raiders wait with small boats in the shallows along the shores, hoping to waylay fat merchant vessels. Galleys from Castle Westguard protect the major barge fleets, but individual barges are easy prey. Baron Beldon fences the pirate's ill-gotten goods at Sam's Landing. Unless there is a spring flood, the galleys can only reach as far as Hex 1209.

Season Barge Frequency (1d8 barges)

Spring 1/week

Summer 1/week

Fall 1 per 3 days after harvest

Winter 1/month if not iced

Southridge

The hills of Southridge mark the southern boundary of Dunshire. Halfling rangers patrol the hills, contending with wild boars, giant ants, and the occasional ankheg.

The Sunset Rim

The Sunset Rim is an escarpment averaging 60 feet high. It runs for nearly 50 miles, forming the base of the Redstone Mountains. The rim's base holds numerous caves inhabited by tribes of troglodytes, except near Baron Beldon's realm, where the baron's slavers use the caves as holding pens for their humanoid stock.

Titan Head Mountains

These desert mountains are named after a mountain peak in Hex 1018. Mighty winds have carved the stone of the peak in the shape of a monstrous giant that legend states was once a titan who turned to evil. As punishment, the gods petrified the titan and left his remains here as a reminder to all that the gods punish evildoers. The dark elves of Nightshade Keep are currently researching the legend, believing it may be possible to free the titan from his stony imprisonment.



Twilight Forest

The Twilight Forest is the last refuge of the elves in Southland. Ruled by Queen Saravell (Hex 2211), the elves have created a sanctuary for the survivors of Silverwood. Treants and other fey creatures work alongside the elves in maintaining the forest boundaries.

The Westwall

This mountain range forms the western boundary of the Grand Kingdom. It has not been extensively explored in the Southland, and the only known way over the Westwall is through the Golden Pass.

The White Mountains

These majestic, snowcapped mountains stretch far to the northwest, and are the highest known in the region. Nestled beneath Mount Thariz, the highest peak in the White Mountains, is the great dwarven town of Bolzak. Here, dwarves mine deep into the mountains' spine, seeking iron, silver, and other precious metals.

The White Mountains teem with game, and great predators, such as griffons and hippogriffs, make their home in high aeries. Stone giants are known to roam to the edge of the dwarven territory, and although they don't normally attack without provocation, the giants occasionally raid dwarven caravans carrying precious metals to Nilik.

Wicking Lake

This is the largest lake in Southland. Eight miles long and five miles wide, it reaches depths of 100 feet. The local fishermen claim to have seen a crystalline city of unearthly beauty within the depths of the lake. The southeast shore is infested with harpies.

Wolfwood

These woods are inhabited by giant aurochs along with packs of worgs that prey on them. The woods are also known to have a huge variety of herbs, including many rare varieties eagerly sought by alchemists.

Yellow Rapids

This stream emerges from the western end of the Golden Pass in a series of rapids. The occasional spring flood allows safe passage and provides a quick method for reaching Castle Westguard.

LOCALES

0101 The Lair of Arcador

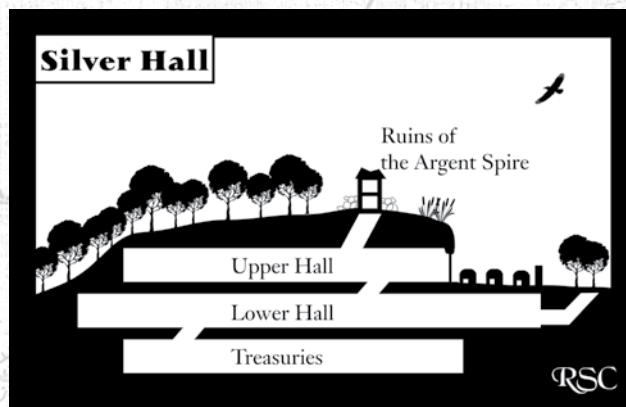
This network of caves is the lair of the ancient red dragon Arcador (34 HD). Here he sleeps on the treasure looted from the elves of Silverwood. Among the dragon's piles of gold, silver, and gems is a legendary artifact called the *Shield of the Sun*. The *Shield of the Sun* is +5 medium shield and is able to glow with a light at will. This light causes 2d6 damage to all undead in addition to the effects of sunlight. Arcador employs several tribes of hobgoblins, goblins, and kobolds to guard the outer caverns of his lair. These humanoids worship the great dragon as a god.

0204 Wyvern Feeding

When the party enters this area, four wyverns (7 HD) are gorging themselves on the remains of a stone giant (see Hex 0303). The giant carries 220 gp and a distinctive necklace hung with a 6-inch-long totem statue.

0209 Silver Hall

This is the stronghold of the Blood Fist orcs. The Silver Halls consist of three subterranean levels, and the orcs inhabit the upper two. The restless spirits of slaughtered elves haunt the lowest level, and the orcs avoid it completely. Dakshar the Violent (Ftr12) is the warlord of the Blood Fist clans, and he rules over 400 orcs with a bloody, mailed fist. The orc warlord's rule is supported by a dozen shamans (two Wiz8, six Wiz5, four Wiz2) that he keeps well bribed with gold and magical items he cannot use himself. Dakshar and his orcs defend their realm with constant patrols and a double wooden palisade around the entrance to the Silver Halls.



0211 Dwellings of the Wood Elves

This one-square-mile region was the chief city of the wood elves in Silverwood. It is comprised of interconnected flets and treetop buildings now overgrown with vines and weeds. The arboreal ruins are home to several packs of baboons that, while not particularly dangerous, are prone to screeching and howling at any intruders in their territory. This noise is likely to draw the real danger in the area, a nine-headed hydra (9 HD) that dwells in the center of the city.

0303 Olatin's Steading

This is the steading of the stone giant Olatin and his family. Olatin has not been seen for several days (Hex 0204), and his family is worried about him. His two eldest sons, Ordin and Purdin (14 HD) are thinking of searching for their father, but their mother, Vais (9 HD), wants them to stay and protect their younger siblings (two boys and a girl, 4 HD). The family has a pet cave bear (12 HD) named Hultar.

0505 Naldukr (Keep)

This dwarven holdfast is built atop a cliff overlooking the western approach to Bolzak. The cliff top has been carved into chutes that allow the dwarves to roll stones or pour burning oil on top of enemies.

Lord Araim (Ftr10), one of the last dwarves to retreat before the orc onslaught, has ruled the dwarves living in Naldukra for the past one hundred years. Over 150 dwarves are currently under his protection, including roughly 50 women and children. To defend the holdfast, Lord Araim can call upon 115 heavy footmen armed with axe and shield and armored in chainmail. Lord Araim is an isolationist; he feels Bolzak should retreat behind its borders in order to recover strength for the final battle with the orcs. He also feels his people should have nothing to do with the humans.

0509 The Taigh

This is the last portion of the Blood Forest that remains uncorrupted by the orcs. Here lies the Taigh, or heart of the once great Silverwood, a gargantuan 21 HD treant permanently rooted to the ground. The Taigh is guarded by twelve huge 10 HD treants, and an assortment of sylvan creatures have taken refuge beneath its boughs; including dryads, satyrs, nymphs, pixies, and others.

The treants and other sylvan creatures patrol in a half-mile radius around the boundary. The boundary is a hedge, 200 yards thick, acting like an *entangle* with a +5 difficulty to saving throw to all hostile creatures.

The transformation of Silverwood into the Blood Forest has wounded the Taigh deeply. A deep, magical slumber consumes it and it will not wake until the forest can be cleansed. As long as the Taigh remains alive, there is hope that Silverwood can be reborn. A person of great holiness can awaken the Taigh long enough for a conversation lasting 2d6 minutes.

0603 Bolzak (Town)

Located beneath Mount Thariz, Bolzak is the chief city of the dwarves in Southland. The city is normally accessible through Dwimvar's Cleft, which is heavily guarded and protected by two separate gate systems. A second, secret entrance to the city lies beneath Tharis' tower at the peak of the mountain; however it is accessible only by climbing a treacherous ten-thousand-foot stairway.

King Erzagar XII (Ftr18) rules the eight clans of almost 4,000 dwarves living in Bolzak. Each clan is led by a clan lord (Ftr10), who in turn commands 100 heavy footmen, 100 heavy crossbow, and 150 medium footmen. In addition to the footmen and crossbowmen, there are 950 dwarven women and children at Bolzak.

At any one time, there are two hundred visitors in Bolzak, mostly humans and halflings. They typically stay in the Outer Ward where most of the day-to-day trading occurs. Bolzak trades iron and gold for grain, lumber, and flax.

To defend Bolzak, King Erzagar commands over 500 troops — 200 medium footmen, 200 heavy footmen, 100 heavy crossbowmen, and 5 battle lords (Ftr10). This force is in addition to the warriors that each clan leader can summon. Bolzak is known for the Ironmaster Guild that holds the secret of forging adamant with iron to make the superior weaponry of the dwarves.

0618 The Nomad's Encampment

The 600 members of the Bear Tribe of the Kubar Nomads have established their encampment near a watering hole. Their chief, Yekchin (Brb9), rules with the assistance of his strongman, Galtemur (Brb6). The martial force of the Bear Tribe consists of 12 elite, medium horse archers (Brb5), led by Galtemur, and an additional 150 light horse archers. For spiritual matters, the tribe looks to Uron (Clr5), who placates the Storm Lord's wrath with his two assistants (Clr3). The tribe's witch, Shria (Wiz4), brews poultices and potions.

The encampment is a confusing maze of yurts and carts surrounded by a vast herd of nearly two hundred horses and four hundred goats. The herds are divided into a dozen groups guarded by at least three nomads. Four elite riders patrol from herd to herd each day.

Galtemur has lost his eldest son, Surendash, in the Forsaken Desert to the east. He fears that the Jackal Tribe has taken and mutilated the young nomad.

0813 Rat Knoll

Underneath a large knoll, next to the Sarduin, is a colony of 300 giant rats (1 HD) and 100 wererats (1 HD) that survive by scavenging fish and carrion along the river. Several years ago, they were forced to submit to Baron Beldon, and a levy was exacted, which included a dozen of their number for use as scouts in the baron's forces. Among the treasure of the wererats are relics from the time of the Bright Empire.

0905 Gilhig (Keep)

The holdfast of Gilhig is built into one side of two cliffs known as Barvir Cleft. Spanning the two cliffs is a forty-foot-high wall over twenty feet thick. A single gate, through which the Greystone Road passes, pierces the wall.

The holdfast is ruled by Lord Garias (Ftr11), the son and heir of King Erzagar. He rules over 600 dwarves and commands 400 heavy footmen. Lord Garias has developed several friendships among the human merchants that regularly pass through Gilhig, and he is secretly planning to visit some of them at Castle Westguard to discuss possible adventuring into the Grand Kingdom. Unlike Lord Ariam, Garias is in favor of a making a formal alliance with the humans.

0913 Sam's Landing (Hamlet)

This small hamlet of mud huts is the marshalling area for Baron Beldon's raids on the trade caravan passing between Westguard and Bolzak. There are usually several dozen canoes and a handful of barges pulled onto shore at any time. In the center of the hamlet is the Green Frog Inn, where Tom Lodon (Rog6) rules the thugs and pirates of Sam's Landing with an iron fist. Nailed to a post next to his "throne" is the shriveled head of Sam Dalton, the former chief of the hamlet. Over 40 pirates and raiders live in the hamlet, along with a dozen women, and twenty slaves to tend potatoes patches. A good portion of the crop is used to brew Silver Lightning, a type of hard liquor. A dozen wererats (1 HD) live on the outskirts of town and are used as scouts on raids.

1007 Ruined Hut

A battered hut sits on the ledge of a cliff overlooking a ravine. Several thick branches with spikes are setup to fall outward if the door is opened. If a Reflex save is failed, roll 1d6 for the number of spikes that hit; each spike inflicts 1d6 points of damage. The hut has been pillaged of anything valuable.

This was once the home of the witch Kelyne, an outcast from the Kubar Nomads to the south. After her exile, Kelyne traveled north and eventually built a hut here in this quiet spot. For nearly twenty years she brewed potions to trade to the various caravans at Nilik (Hex 1208). However, last summer, one of the guards she sold a potion to fell sick and died. Believing that she caused his death, the guard's friends tracked her to her hut. She was caught and beaten, but was able to escape north into the woods. One of the guards left the spiked trap in case she returned.

1010 Stone Ruins

Surrounding a charred circle of grass are twelve stone idols carved in a style current with the time of the Bright Empire. *Detect magic* will reveal a powerful aura within the circle. During the night of the new moon, anybody within 5 miles (one hex) of the circle witnesses a huge fireball erupt into the air at midnight.

1103 Dunbury (Village)

Dunbury is the chief halfling settlement of Dunshire. Its mayor, Mayor Vercana (Ftr3), manages both Dunshire and the village. Working out of the second floor of the Fox's Tail Inn, he coordinates with the Dunshire Rangers and the elders of the other four hamlets. He often contends with Lord Araim (Hex 0505) in the councils of King Erzagor on how to deal with the incoming humans. He feels the humans will be great allies in restoring the region's fortunes

Over 300 halflings make their home in Dunbury. There are nearly 80 halflings in the village militia (Ftr1, 4 Ftr3), which is overseen by Bombeck Pegfoot, the Sheriff (Ftr5). In addition to the militia, Dunbury is home to 20 Dunshire Rangers (Rgr5) led by Captain Marie Dabbleberry (Rgr7).

1114 Westfield (Hamlet)

A dozen long, wooden barracks and a stone manor house make up this hamlet. Here Lord Farris (Ftr6) runs a latifundium with nearly 100 slaves (nearly all human), 5 guards (Ftr3), and 10 overseers (Ftr1) who supervise

slaves in the fields. The slave labor in Westfield supplies nearly all of the food for Castle Beldon (Hex 1214).

Westfield is also home to Captain Travis (Rgr5) and his four slave hunters (Rgr3), employed by Baron Beldon to hunt escapees. They often patrol the land, out to ten miles (two hexes) around the various settlements.

1118 Shrine of the Red Maiden

Carved out of the sandstone of the Titan Head Mountains is a shrine to the lawful good goddess Delaquain, the Red Maiden. Delaquain was widely worshipped in the Bright Empire, and this shrine is one of the few to have survived the centuries after the Empire's fall. Her warrior priests recruit among the local nomads and the few faithful that made their way over the Westwall. Currently there are 20 warrior-monks in residence, 10 priests (Clr9, Clr7, 5 Clr5, Clr3, Clr1), 4 paladins (two Pal5, two Pal2), and 6 monks (Mnk10, three Mnk4, two Mnk1). The most recent arrival is Suredash (Galtemor's son, Clr1, see 0618), who the monks rescued from the hands of the Jackal Tribe. He recently converted, and is now training as a priest.



1201 Eastelm (Hamlet)

Forty halflings live in this farming hamlet. Eldar Mal Daygreen (Ftr1) manages the work, and Constable Palen Greenburr (Ftr3) serves as the hamlet's only full-time officer. The sheriff was mauled by a dire bear last winter and died. The mayor and elders of Dunshire have yet to appoint a new one. Eastelm is also the home of Raven, the Druid of Dunshire (Drd7). She maintains a grove to the south. She and her 5 assistants (Drd2) aid the rangers in patrolling the borders.

1202 Overwood (Hamlet)

This hamlet of 60 halflings is evenly split between farmers and the lumberjacks who work the woods to the north of the stream. The lumberjacks supply the lumber for the entire shire, along with a lucrative trade with the dwarves in fine wood.

Folan Knobclub (Rgr2) is the Elder of Overwood. He comes from a prominent lumberjack family and is disliked by the farmers. Sheriff Tom Pebblebrook (Ftr5) and his assistant Constable Sam Marigold (Ftr3) patrol the surrounding area. They can call upon up to 12 militiamen (6 Rgr1 and 6 Ftr1) in case of trouble.

1206 Ty Bridge

This ornate stone bridge allows Greystone Road to cross Olden Creek. On the south end, a single tower is attached, housing a small company of 20 dwarven heavy footmen known as the Ty Brothers. They have sworn to maintain and guard the bridge.

1214 Castle Beldon (Castle)

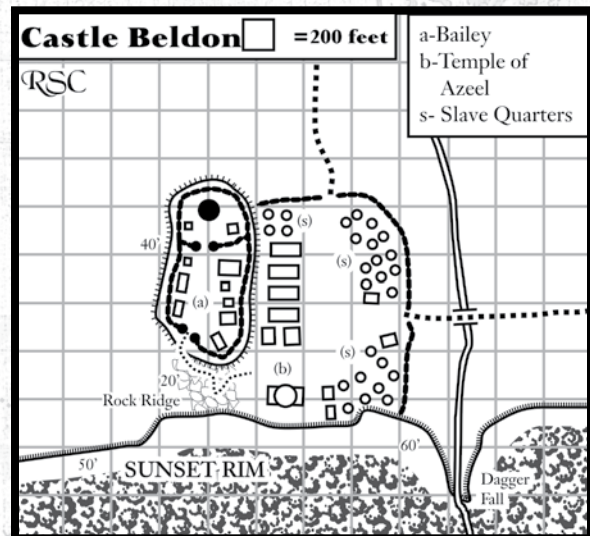
Baron Victor Beldon was once one of the Grand Kingdom's most powerful nobles. Twenty years ago the king died and the baron unveiled a plot to force the succession council to name him king. He failed, and when the new king was crowned, Beldon was named a traitor. With his life in grave peril, Baron Beldon gathered one hundred of his most trusted men and fled over the Westwall into the wild. The baron found several small hamlets and conquered them, settling there with his men. When his scouts found a superb location for a castle on the Sunset Rim, the baron forced the people of the conquered hamlets to relocate. After

Castle Beldon was built, the survivors were separated into two hamlets and forced to work as slaves, growing food for the baron and his men.

With increasing trade between Bolzak and Westguard, Baron Beldon began to recruit desperate men eager to raid. The arrival of the dark elves provided much needed allies. Victor Beldon's new opportunities have allowed him to plot his return to power in the Grand Kingdom.

Castle Beldon is built on a low mesa next to the Sunset Rim. The only pathway snakes upward on the remains of a collapsed ridge that once connected the mesa to the rim on the southeast side. The other faces of the mesa are sheer cliffs ranging from 50 to 100 feet high. There is a spring present at the top of the mesa. The pressure of an underground river forcing its way up the cracks forms the spring.

Baron Victor Beldon (Clr11) is a priest of the blood god, Azeel. His personal guard is commanded by a captain (Ftr7), and consists of 5 guards (Ftr2). There are nearly 120 bandits and light footmen living at the castle, along with 100 slaves and 20 camp followers. Along with the bandits, the baron supports a coven of 4 dark wizards (Wiz8, Wiz6, 2 Wiz2) to provide magical aid. He has an acolyte, Saldor Balsign (Clr6), to lead his men in the blood rites of Azeel.



Currently, there are six important prisoners in the dungeons of Castle Beldon. The prisoners are three knights from the Grand Kingdom, a dwarven battle lord, a ranking wizard of the Grand Conclave, and the king's cousin, Sir Belvin Toldare.

1405 Guardians of the Lost Treasure

Three will-o'-wisps (9 HD) prowl the dry hummocks that emerge from the Olden Bog. A thousand years ago, they were left as guardians for a treasure left after an ambush killed a prince of the Bright Empire. Buried in the hummocks are rusty gear and worm-eaten chariots along with the prince's raiment. This raiment consists of a +2 *breastplate*, a +2 *large steel shield*, and a +5 *boly avenger spear* (acts the same as the sword). The breastplate and shield are inscribed with the image of Delaquain, the Red Maiden. If the will-o'-wisps are killed, and the raiment is found, the original evil forces of the ambush will reorganize and hunt down the wearer.

1407 A River Hazard

This section of the Sarduin is known for its dangerous whirlpools, the work of a malevolent water elemental (10 HD). The barge masters have learned that throwing a gem into the vortex dissipates it. The elemental collects the gems to create a portal back to its plane, and currently has 10,000 gp worth of gems in its lair.

1409 The Crocodile Hunter

A giant crocodile (10 HD) lives along the northwest shore of Wicking Lake. There is a 20% chance per day the party is ambushed if they stay within 200 yards of the shoreline. The crocodile's typical attack is to rush out of the water and grapple its target with a bite, and then drag the victim back into the water until he drowns.

1411 Ruined Glory

This site was once a tower used by the famed hippogriffs riders of the Bright Empire. The tower has long since fallen into ruin, and only the foundation remains. A hundred years ago, a crack in the foundation formed, allowing access to the bottom basements of the tower. The tower is currently occupied by 24 wererats (1 HD), 20 giant rats (1 HD), and dozens of regular rats (1/4 HD). In a forgotten chamber are the remains of the harnesses and gear once used by the hippogriff riders. A dozen full sets can be salvaged and repaired.

1413 Mistfield (Hamlet)

This hamlet consists of several barracks and a stone manor house. The slaves of Mistfield grow delicacies for the baron and his men. Because of the Mist Falls, the area is considerably wetter than the rest of the baron's lands, allowing various fruit orchards and vines to be grown. The hamlet consists of 80 slaves that tend the orchards, 3 guards (Ftr3), and 8 overseers (Ftr1) to supervise the slaves.

1502 Greenport (Village)

Nearly 150 halflings live in Greenport. A quarter of the village is devoted to fishing in the Lanis River, while the rest are farmers. There is a small trade guild outpost in the village, which houses 6 humans working on promoting trade between Dunshire and Castle Westguard. As a gesture of goodwill, the trade guild has recently funded the building of a new dock for the village. One of the current traders is Marcus Arness (Rog10), a secret agent of the Thieves' Guild.

Elder Vanis Mudfoot (Ftr4) resolves disputes and helps manage the village. He distrusts the humans, and feels that Dunshire should not be involved with the outside world. He is considering running against Mayor Vercana (Hex 1103) in the next election in two years. Sheriff Ham Fairgood (Ftr4) has his hands full keeping the peace with all newcomers from Westguard. When there's trouble, Sheriff Farigoos can call upon a militia of 60 halfling slingers.

1604 Unicorn Pool

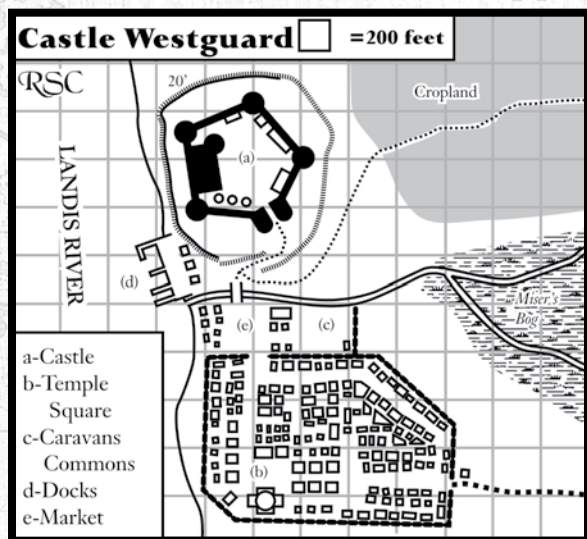
In a secluded ravine a unicorn dwells near a pool of clear water. Drinking the water acts as a *cure serious wounds* once per day. The area is protected by a charm that causes all non-good aligned creatures to avoid it. The unicorn is guarding the *Crown of the Lost Prince*, a magical helm lost during the fall of the Bright Empire. The *Crown of the Lost Prince* adds +4 to the wearer's charisma and adds an additional +20% or +4 to any morale checks.

1606 Castle Westguard (Castle)

Perched on a bluff overlooking the Landis River, Castle Westguard is the westernmost bastion of the Grand Kingdom. It consists of a central keep built inside 20-foot-thick curtain walls. Over 80 troops of the royal

guard are stationed here, commanded by Sir John Carenton (Ftr9), a banner knight of the kingdom. Sir Carenton and his guards patrol the road from the river to Hawksleigh. The royal guard stationed at Westguard consists of 20 longbow men, 40 pikemen, 10 light cavalry, and 10 heavy cavalry (bachelor knights).

Below the castle bluff is the village of Westguard. Protected by a wooden stockade, this is a major way station for the trade between the Grand Kingdom and Bolzak. The village has 300 permanent residents, with another 100 or so from barge crews and caravan workers. Lord Mayor Thomas White (Ftr3) commands 20 medium footmen armed with spears and shields to keep order in the village. Four inns and two taverns are supported by the trade traffic.



1615 Nightportal Keep (Keep)

Along the southern rim of Nightshade Canyon is a cleft providing a broad entrance to the dark ways of the Underrealm. Within the cleft, the dark elves of House Ardize have built a black keep out of obsidian. Here the Black Lady, Melinax (Ftr4/Wiz13), rules over 100 dark elves and 200 slaves. Dozens of driders and giant spiders help guard the cleft and the keep.

The Black Lady came to Southland over two hundred years ago, and forged the alliance between the red dragon, Arcandor, and the Blood Fist orcs that led to the downfall of Silverwood. For this, the Ardize matriarch awarded Melinax lordship over Nightportal Keep. The

Black Lady's malignant influence dominated much of Southland until the arrival of the Grand Kingdom. With the arrival of Baron Beldon, Melinax sees an opportunity to destroy Westguard and rule the entirety of Southland.

Nightportal Keep is built within one of the many entrances to the Underrealm. The keep is five levels high and extends another five underground. Several tunnels lead from the keep into the surrounding canyon, providing the drow with many avenues of attack during a siege. The Black Lady has stored several vats of a special potion designed to unleash a pestilence among any forces besieging the keep. Given a month, the Dark Lady can summon an army of a 1,000 dark elves along with equal number of allies (duergar, troglodytes, etc).

1812 Caravan Stop

Camped in this area is the caravan of Master Faustus (Wiz8). He is an ally of Baron Beldon, and has been trading with the baron and the dark elves at Nightportal keep for over a decade. Currently, the camp holds a dozen local trappers (Rgr2) exchanging their furs for gold and supplies. The caravan is heavy with gold (15,000 gp), and has little else except for crates containing 20 +1 longwords.

2001 The Icespire

In the windswept heights of the Westwall lies the Icespire, a conclave of wizards devoted to the study of magic. Five wizards (Wiz11, 2 Wiz10, Wiz9, and Wiz8) live here along with three apprentices (Wiz3, 2 Wiz1) and a dozen servants. The Icespire is known among other wizards and other conclaves for its knowledge about the magic of cold and ice. It is rumored that within the Icespire is a portal to the Paraelemental Plane of Ice.

2018 The Water Hole

This is a major watering hole for the eastern part of the Forsaken Desert. This area is noted for its numerous hippogriffs, and there is a 20% chance of encountering 2d6 hippogriffs drinking on any given day. These hippogriffs are descendents of the herd maintained by the Hippogriff Riders of the Bright Empire.

2108 Yonk's Place

In the foothills is a steading of hill giants, Yonk and his family. Eight hill giants live here: Yonk (9 HD), his brother Donk (9 HD), two of Yonk's sons Mat and Tak (both 8 HD), his daughter Leeka (4 HD), his wife Frella (4 HD), and two young children (1 HD). Yonk and his family have grown fat off the caravans passing through the Golden Pass. The giants used to simply raid the caravans, but recently, a group of merchants approached Yonk and arranged a tribute that would be paid by all caravans passing through the area. Since then, caravans traveling the Golden Pass pack an extra wagon with "Yonk's fee."

2211 Silverdim (Hamlet)

Silverdim is the main settlement of the elves in the Twilight Forest, consisting of several dozen lodges spread over a square mile. The settlement is protected by a Taigh (see hex 509), which resides within a decorative hedge around the lodge of Queen Saravell herself. This Taigh is a seedling from the Silverwood Taigh, and is relatively young by the standards of its kind, a mere two hundred years old. The Taigh's youth prevents it from protecting more than the hex containing Silverdim; however, it's boundary is still an impassable 20 yards thick, and acts as an *entangle* spell.

Queen Saravell (Ftr6/Wiz12), a gray elf noble, rules over 100 elves and another 500 assorted sylvan creatures (treants, dryads, satyrs, etc). She is the last surviving gray elf in the Southland. The remaining elves in the forest are comprised of 30 high elves and 70 wood elves. Silverdim's protection falls upon the shoulders of a single high elf captain (Ftr4/Wiz5) supported by 3 wood elf forest lords (Rgr8). Spiritual matters in Silverdim are handled by 2 high elf and 2 wood elf priests (Clr4)

2313 Forest Dwellers

Sixty gnomes of the Daringhall Clan live in burrows carved into the sides of the hills and ravines of the region. They lived here for several centuries before the arrival of the refugees from Silverwood. The gnomes' traditional enemies have been the Blackrock Goblins in the foothills of the Westwall (Hex 2510). Lord Baldric Goldar (Ftr6) is the clan chief of Daringhall, and is assisted by Elder Paldosh (Clr4). The gnomes helped the elves when they first arrived, but after Queen Saravell declined to help clear out the goblins, the gnomes grew resentful, and relations between the two races have been strained ever since.

2406 Hawksleigh (Village)

In this village of the Grand Kingdom, Baron John Banbridge (Ftr7) rules 300 farmers and lumberjacks. His son Harold (Ftr6) is the leader of the guard, and patrols the village and countryside with 5 light cavalry and 15 pikemen. The lumberjacks traditionally harvest the Greenelm Woods to the north.

The current conflict with the Grand Druid of Greenelm has caused the Baron to appeal to the king, and as a result, the King's Rangers have been sent to resolve the situation. Captain Martin Ardmore (Rgr9) leads the 20 King's Rangers (2 Rgr5, 4 Rgr4, 7 Rgr2, 7 Rgr1) currently in Hawksleigh. Due to rising tensions, Captain Martin has requested a nobles' council be assembled at Castle Westguard to discuss options.

2510 The Blackrock Goblins

In the foothills of the Westwall are the warrens of the Blackrock Goblins. Over 800 goblins live in the warren ruled by King Gabosh the Ponderous (Ftr6). Aiding King Gabosh are his vizier, Yanak (Wiz7), and three acolytes (Wiz3). The Blackrock warrens currently hold 200 goblin warriors, 220 females, and 400 children. The goblins also keep over a dozen dire wolves as pets.

BORDERLAND

INTRODUCTION

The Borderland is divided by factions and torn by war. Like any conflict, it is rarely black and white, and the “gray” allows for more complex adventures than a simple good versus evil background. This moral and ethical ambiguity makes alignment options easier, allowing players more choices during character creation.

BACKGROUND

Driving the rise of the Bright Empire were the four faiths of the United Church. The four gods venerated by the United Church were Sarrath, the God of War and Discipline; Delaquain, the Goddess of Honor and Justice; Veritas, the God of Truth and Law; and Thoth, the God of Knowledge and Wisdom. Supported by the followers of this quartet of gods, the Bright Empire became the greatest force the world had seen.

At its height, the Bright Empire became corrupt. Wealth and power, rather than the well being of the Empire’s citizens, became the goal of the nobility and the emperors. This attitude spread to the United Church, and the contradiction between what was preached and the venal goals of the leadership caused factions to form. The two largest factions were the followers of Sarrath and the followers of Delaquain, and the growing conflict between the two eventually brought about a civil war that ripped the Empire apart.

The Borderlands were once the province of Middleburg, and now consist of four major regions. In the south are the southern slopes of the Altus Mountains and the town of Darcion; in the center of the Borderlands is the Aisne River valley, dominated by the provincial capital of Middleburg; in the upper Aisne is the Duchy of Stonedale; and to the north of the Altus Mountains is the North Way and the town of Tromar.

When civil war broke out, Middleburg tried to stay out of the conflict. The governor imposed restrictions on followers of Sarrath and Delaquain to keep the peace. This worked for three years, and then an army devoted to Sarrath, commanded by Lord Divolic, marched north and seized Darcion. The Middleburg governor’s army was ambushed and destroyed in the Cailen Pass when attempting to retake Darcion. Divolic’s first siege of Middleburg failed, and the city declared for Delaquain.

BORDERLAND

Encounter*

- 1 Michael Greene’s band gives supplies to the poor (Hex 0318)
- 2 A mad prophet with 4d6 followers is preaches that the end of days has come
- 3 A Delaquain priest makes the village rounds
- 4 3d8 Brigands ambush the party (Rog4)
- 5 A patrol from Darcion (Sarrath)
- 6 3d6 refugees from Middleburg (20% chance plague ridden)
- 7 1d6 wounded soldiers need help home
- 8 A patrol from Tromar (Delaquain)
- 9 Ambush of 3d6 Raiders loyal to Lord Seris (Hex 2116)
- 10 A priest of Sarrath (with 1d6 guards) inspects a border outposts
- 11 On a site of a recent battle, a wizard creates skeletons and zombies.
- 12 Ghosts of slain soldiers haunt the living

Rumors

- 1 (T) People near Darcion consider Michael Greene their savior
- 2 (F) Count Travlin conscripts anyone of fighting age
- 3 (T) Grandmasters Travis and Nestor plot to overthrow Duke Edward
- 4 (F) Captain Darden has fallen from grace with Delaquain
- 5 (F) The Emperor’s Inn switches symbols to whichever faction occupies it
- 6 (T) Captain Vanis helps anyone escape the forces of Sarrath
- 7 (F) Count Travlin is a Son of Sarrath (see Acheron) in human form
- 8 (T) Pelsin is now under the control of bandits.

*Where allegiance isn’t specified use nearest region; or 1–2 Darcion, 3–4 Stoneburg, 5–6 Tromar

For the next five years a stalemate existed. Then Lord Divolic discovered old plans of Middleburg's sewer system in the imperial archives. He launched a second siege, and he was able to break into the city through the sewers. Angered by Middleburg's defiance, Divolic gave free rein to his men to sack the city. The entire city was looted and burned, and the followers of Delaquain were killed. The remainder of the populace was sold into slavery.

However, the victory in Middleburg weakened Divolic's army, and he was forced to retreat to Darcion. Lord Divolic was then made a Duke and given command of another army. He left what remained of his initial force in Darcion under the command of his ally Count Travlin. Two years later, the Count finished rebuilding the army left to him by Duke Divolic and is now preparing for the conquest of the remainder of the province.

After the second siege of Middleburg, the forces of Delaquain were scattered and disorganized. However, within a year, Captain Martin of Tromar rebuilt the army and proclaimed himself Governor of Middleburg, where he still rules today. His current focus is on securing the Northway to get trade and supplies flowing again.

During the civil war, The Duchy of Stonedale declared neutrality and closed its borders to both sides. After the Middleburg Massacre, Duke Edward of Stonedale put down two coup attempts over his declaration of neutrality. The first was against the remnants of the imperial forces that took refuge in the valley, and the second was against the local churches, which brought about a purge of the followers of Delaquain and Sarrath. Since the purge, Duke Edward has placed control of Stonedale's church in the hands of priests of Veritas. He is currently seeking alliance and support from the dwarven kingdoms to the west to secure his independence.

ADAPTATION NOTES

Borderland can be placed between any two rival empires, and the religious background for the conflict can be replaced with any issue the DM chooses. The issue should be important enough to allow for the Massacre of Middleburg to occur.

Whom is Stonedale trying to ally with? In Borderland, the dwarves are an independent force that can be substituted with another such force in your campaign. Stonedale is trying to avoid the chaos of the war by remaining independent.



FACTIONS

Sarrath

The god Sarrath teaches his followers that without order, obedience, and discipline chaos will ensue, and the glory that is the Empire will be lost. Once, the United Church exemplified these ideals, but the followers of Veritas and Thoth grew weak and corrupt, and Delaquain's followers hid behind rules of honor to justify the corruption. When the myrmidons called for the restoration of the Empire, those who followed Sarrath were at the forefront.

Delacquain

Honor and justice binds the Empire together. The Bright Empire is the greatest force for good the world has seen, and the followers of Delacquain want to ensure that it continues. Exemplified by the paladins, Delacquain's followers endeavor to protect the weak, to fight evil, and to show by example the power of good. While the United Church's hierarchy has grown lazy and corrupt, only evil is served by the methods of Sarrath's followers. The civil war is tragic, but from the ashes of war the Empire will be reborn.

The Duchy of Stonedale

Duke Edward is disgusted with the war and its factions. After witnessing fanaticism on both sides and the horrors of the Massacre of Middleburg, he has resolved to chart an independent course for his people. He has taken control of the imperial forces in Stonedale and transformed them into a ducal army. The Stonedale churches have been purged of fanatics, and placed under the levelheaded priests of Veritas. Both the duke and the church have called for unity, lest Stonedale suffer the same fate as Middleburg.

Lord Seris

Lord Seris (Hex 2118) is the son of the last governor of Middleburg. While provincial governors are technically appointed there is a tradition to keep them within certain families. Seris has the most legitimate claim to authority over the province. However he is consumed by revenge. Despite his obsession he managed to carve a small area of safety in the Jurasin hills. If he can be convinced to see beyond revenge he may serve as a unifying force for the entire region.

Veritas

Veritas teaches that truth and the rule of law are the keys to peace. The Empire was proof of the power of this belief, but laxness on the part of the emperor and nobility caused corruption to flourish. This corruption spread into the hierarchy of the church, and as bribes and favors exchanged hands, the downfall of unity was assured. Now with the Duke of Stonedale's backing, the slate can be wiped clean, and the law restored, as it should be.

GEOGRAPHY

Aisne River

The major river of the province, the Aisne rises in Stonedale before exiting to the southeast. Beyond Stonedale it forms the border between the factions of Sarrath and Delacquain.

The Altus Mountains

The Altus Mountains are the grandest peaks in the Bright Empire. The eastern terminus is in the Borderlands; ere the range splits, forming a broad valley wherein lays Stonedale. The eastern mountains are below the tree line, and farther west they rise above 10,000 feet and are snowcapped year around. The high mountains are home to hippogriffs and griffons.

Andros Pass

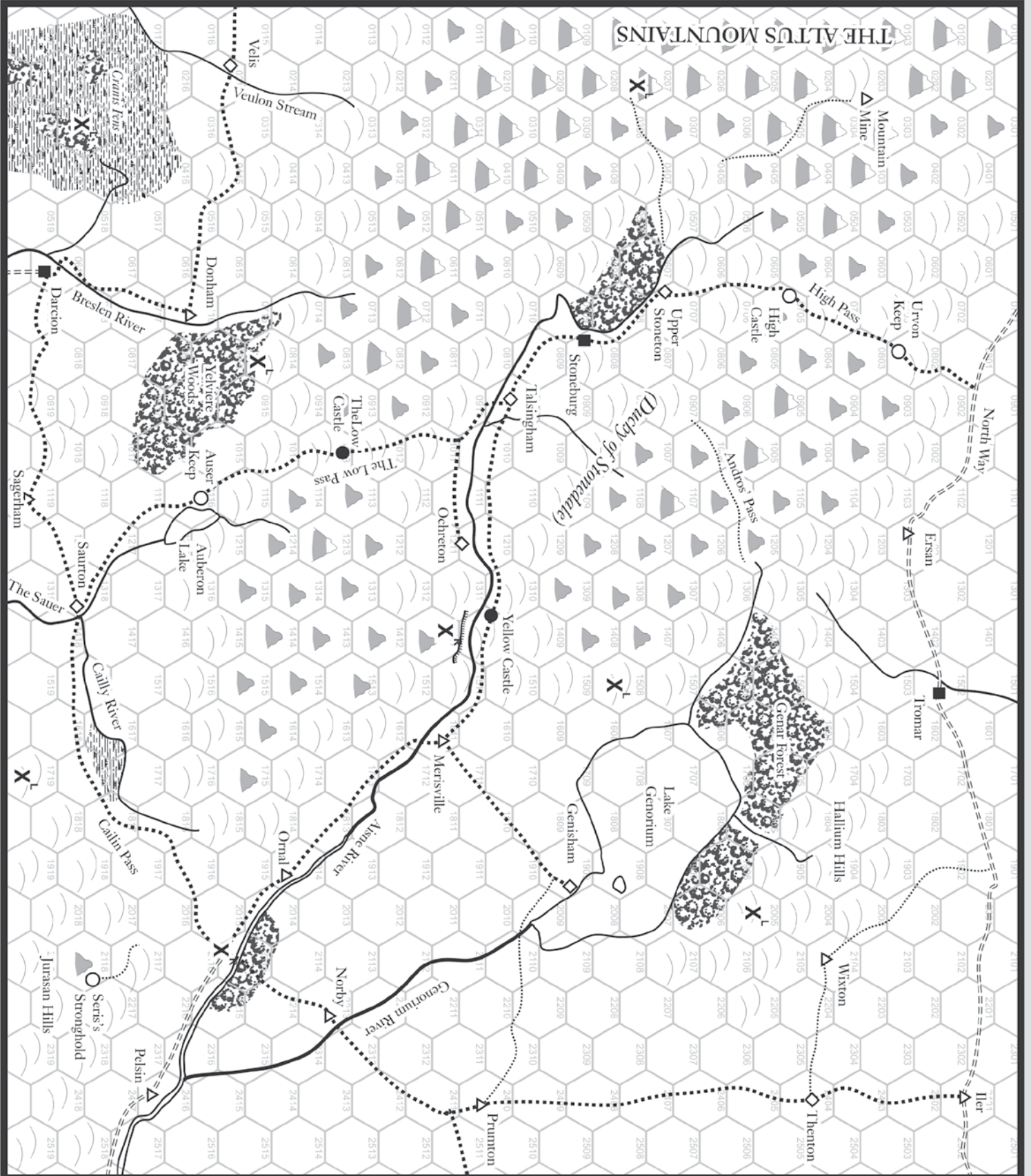
Legend has it that a thousand years ago, the Emperor Andros conquered Stonedale using this high northern pass. In the ruins of Middleburg, there is an accurate record and a map of Andros Pass buried in the remains of the Imperial Archive.

Auberon Lake

Along this lake's northeast shore are several secluded coves that are home to nixies (1 HD). The local fishermen avoid them.

Breslen River

This river is used to transport much of the supplies for Count Travlin's army in Darcion from further south.



Cailin Pass

This is a major pass between the southern slopes of the Altus and the Aisne River valley. There are many remains of burned farms in this area.

Cailly River

This river flows through the Cailin Pass before joining the Saurer at Saurton. Some raiding parties use rafts on the river to quickly traverse the pass.

Cranis Fens

The Cranis Fens lie in lowlands between the Veulon and Breslen rivers. The fens are mostly woods with some swamp. The native fenlanders inhabit the bogs, harvesting frogs, eels, and exotic plants to sell at market. In recent years, the fens have become home to several bands of outlaws. The renegade Michael Greene leads the most notorious of these outlaw bands (Hex 0318).

Genar Forest

These woods hold several abandoned lumber camps, and are now infested by packs of dire wolves (2 HD).

Lake Genorium

This is the largest lake in the province. Along its shore are a number of isolated fishing huts. The fishermen go onto the lake before dawn, fish until noon, and then converge on Sunstone Island (Hex 1908) to sort and preserve their catch. After that, they travel to the late afternoon market in Genisham to sell their fish before heading home.

Genorium River

Ruins of farms and villas are found throughout the river valley, along with the decayed remnants of sluice gates used by lumber and fish barges from Lake Genorium. Bandit gangs are known to roam along the banks.

Hallium Hills

Between the Genar Forest and the North Way are the Hallium Hills. There are a number of derelict iron mines in the hills that have been taken over by three gangs of brigands. Each gang consists of roughly 40 brigands [Ftr1 or Rog1] led by a brigand chief (Ftr5 or Rog5).

High Pass

This is the northern pass into Stonedale. It is dangerous to travel here in the winter as sudden blizzards can bury the pass with up to six feet of snow. High Castle (Hex 0705) blocks the narrowest portion of the pass.

Jurasan Hills

These rough hills form the southern border of the Aisne River valley. Many of the refugees from Middleburg have fled here, and now scratch out a living in the valleys of the region.

The Low Pass

This is the southern pass into Stonedale. It was recently the site of two battles between Delaquain and Sarrath's forces. In the last battle, three years ago, a pay wagon with several thousand gold and silver coins fell into a steep ravine. The wagon is still there, covered with mud and nearly impossible to see from the pass.

North Way

This is a major trade route for northern Bright Empire. It runs for nearly a thousand miles from the dwarven kingdoms in the west to the eastern shore of the Empire. Much is under the control of forces loyal to Delaquain, allowing a small amount of trade to continue.

The Sauer

This small river flows south from Lake Auberon into the southern provinces. Patrols from Darcion go no farther than the Sauer.

Veulon Stream

This stream forms the western edge of the Cranis Fens. The fenlanders can usually be found paddling their small leather coracles along the river to Velis to trade.

Yellow Cliffs

These yellow sandstone cliffs form a natural barrier in the eastern pass to Stonedale. The river and streams have worn many arches, canyons, and caves in the cliffs.

Yelviere Woods

These woods are the site of many pitched battles between various raiding parties from Stonedale, Darcion, and Tromar.

LOCALES

0203 Mountain Mine (Hamlet)

The Dukes of Stonedale have long relied on a secret source of gold for their power. The Altus Mountains to the west of Stonedale hold several rich gold veins, and for hundreds of years the dukes built secret mines to extract it. These mines have been joint ventures of the Mountain People and the dukes. In exchange for annual tribute and protection, the Mountain People mine the gold for the duke. There are 100 miners here along with 20 elite heavy footmen (Ftr5). The trailhead is hidden in the foothills and is hard to spot (+10 difficulty).

0207 Dwarven Mine (Hamlet)

To strengthen the alliance between the dwarves and Stonedale, Duke Edward has agreed to allow the dwarves to open a gold mine. 50 dwarf miners work here with 10 dwarven heavy footmen (Ftr4). Prince Azar of Deeprock (Ftr12) is in command. The first vein of ore was recently discovered on the second level of the mine.

0215 Velis (Village)

This village of 300 people is the market for several surrounding farms and villas. The market also sees a number of fenlanders selling hides and frogs. Sheriff Harold Rainuld (Rog9) is in charge of Velis, and he ruthlessly keeps order and collects the levies for Count Travlin of Darcion. However, the former sheriff, Michael Greene, now a renegade, still has allies in the village.

0318 Michael Greene

When Lord Divolic seized control of Darcion, he systematically plundered both men and supplies from the villages. Sheriff Michael Greene (Rgr11) of Velis successfully mitigated the worst of Divolic's decrees, until Count Travlin was forced to increase the levies in order to rebuild the army after the Massacre of Middleburg. With his people facing starvation, Michael Greene tried to organize a rebellion, but was quickly defeated and forced to flee into the Cranis Fens.

Michael Green has organized a band of outlaws and now raids the caravans of the sheriff and the count. The supplies they capture are secretly funneled into Velis. He has recently forged an alliance with the fenlanders, and the swamp-dwellers have taught him the secrets of the Cranis Fens.

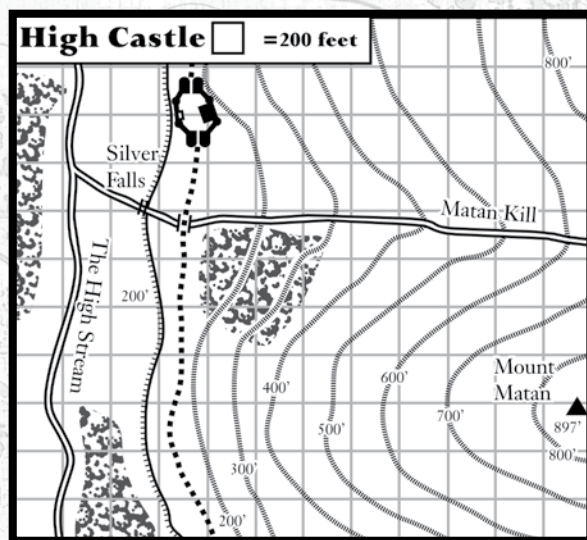


0618 Darcion (Town)

This was once the main market for the southern portion of Middleburg Province. It is currently under the control of Count Travlin (Ftr10). Darcion is booming due to the influx of troops, supplies, and levies from the surrounding villages. Over 1,000 people live here, along with 2,000 troops (500 bow, 1,000 footmen, 500 knights) camped both inside and outside of the town. The town is fortified, and a castle was built during Lord Divolic's command. Count Travlin feels his forces are nearly ready to campaign again, and is considering his next target.

0705 High Castle (Castle)

This stone castle is built upon a cliff where the road runs through the High Pass. On one side of the castle the cliff plunges two hundred feet into a narrow ravine, on the other, the sharply rising slopes of Mount Matan created a natural bulwark. These natural obstacles ensure that the only way to enter the castle is through the heavily fortified main gate. Stationed here are 200 men from Stonedale consisting of 150 spearmen and 50 crossbowmen. In addition, a small troop of 40 light cavalry (Ftr4) patrol the pass to warn the Duke at Stoneburg of any attacks.



0707 Upper Stoneton (Village)

This village of 500 people primarily engages in herding sheep and goats. They raise much of the wool, milk, and meat eaten in Stoneburg. Baron Crandis (Ftr8) and his family are the most loyal and trusted of the duke's retainers; they oversee the security for the gold shipments from the Altus Mountains.

0716 Donham (Hamlet)

Donham is a small hamlet of 80 people farming the upper reaches of the Breslen River. The renegade Michael Greene has helped them in the past against bandits and marauding humanoids; however, they have recently been raided by Captain Darden's force (Hex 0915). The village reeve, Robert Doncaster (1 HD), feels betrayed by Michael Greene for not protecting the village.

0802 Urvon Keep (Keep)

Urvon Keep guards the lower (north) entrance to the High Pass. Its commander, Captain Denis Greene (Pal6) is a follower of Delaquain sworn to Governor Martin of Tromar. He is also the younger brother of the infamous outlaw Michael Greene (Hex 0318). Captain Greene knows of his brother's troubles and desires to raise a force to aid him. However, Governor Martin has refused this request twice. There are 100 men (20 bowmen, 60 footmen, 20 knights) stationed here.

0808 Stoneburg (Town)

This town of 1,500 people is the seat of Duke Edward of Stonedale (Ftr9). This was once one of the headquarters of the Imperial Miner's Guild, and metals and minerals mined in Stonedale were traded here for goods from all over the Empire. Since Duke Edward's declaration of neutrality, many of the guildmasters have seen ruin at the loss of trade. They are the only major organized force left that challenges the duke's rule. The guildmasters have even gone so far as to enter into negotiations with Count Travlin of Darcion to gain his support for a rebellion to restore the markets.

Stonedale features the Cathedral of the Four Golden Spires, so named for the gold leaf that covers the roof of each spire. The cathedral is constructed of the distinctive granite in the area, and is one of the architectural wonders of the Empire. Once under the authority of the United Church, it has now been given over to the priests of Veritas. The symbols of the other three gods that once adorned the peak of each spire have been removed in place of Veritas' golden orb.

0909 Talsingham

This village of 300 people is the center of Stonedale's farming regions. It supplies much of the grain and vegetables to Stoneburg. Baron Marcus (Wiz10) rules Talsingham, but leaves most of the day-to-day administration duties to his seneschal, Alex Bagnall (Wiz6), while he experiments with alchemy. Marcus bemoans the loss of trade, and will pay a premium for exotic alchemical ingredients.

0915 Captain Darden (Raiding Party)

Captain Darden (Pal10) and his force of 40 light cavalry (Ftr4) have been raiding around Darcion for over a month. Darden attempted to recruit Michael Greene, but was rejected. Further, the renegade recently foiled one of Captain Darden's raids, when he tried to burn down a supply caravan. In response to the failed raid, Darden struck at Donham, and burned the storehouse there to the ground. The captain and his men are now preparing to return to Tromar.

1013 The Low Castle

Low Castle sits atop the ridgeline dividing Stonedale from the rest of the province. Stationed here are 100 spearmen and 100 crossbowmen and 100 Stonedale knights patrol the pass. Because Low Pass is nearly three miles at its narrowest point, patrols are frequent. Two battles have been fought in the past three years as Count Travlin continually tests the pass defenses.

1116 Auser Keep

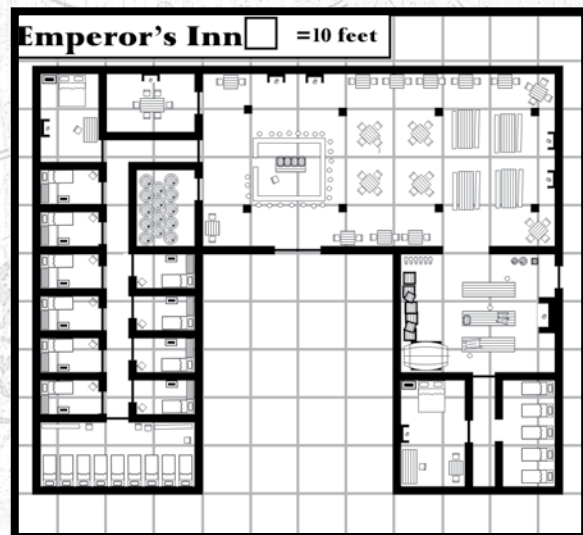
Geris the Bold (Myr6) commands 200 men (150 footmen, and 50 knights) in Auser Keep for Count Travlin. The keep guards the southern entrance of the Low Pass, and is built on a small peninsula jutting into Auberon Lake. A nearby hamlet of 50 fishermen supplies the keep.

1119 Sagerham (Hamlet)

This small, rustic farming hamlet of 100 people supplies much of the grain and vegetables for Darcion. Count Travlin's levies have left Sagerham without food, and the village reeve, Peter Masham (Ftr2), can barely keep everyone from starving. Every fortnight wagons leave Sagerham to carry the levy to Saurton (Hex 1318).

1202 Ersan (Hamlet)

Ersan is a small hamlet of 50 people famous for the Emperor's Inn, one of the best stops along the North Way. Goodman Pierson (Rgr4) likes to tell first-time visitors that the first Emperor, Andros Magnus, camped on this very spot. If he likes the party, he will tell them the tale, *Treasure of the Mountain*. The tale states that a thousand years ago, when Andros looked for a pass to cross into the mountains, his party was caught by a late spring blizzard. They survived, but lost much of their gear, including magical weapons and armor.



1210 Ochreton (Village)

This village of 600 people is the seat of the Bishop of Stonedale and a center for mining the surrounding hills. Many of the mines have been closed due to the lack of trade, leaving the miners without work. The grandmasters of the mining guild are using the abandoned mines to train the miners and organize them into an army. Bishop Nichols (Clr10, Veritas) gives charity to the unemployed miners, but knows that discontent is rising among them. He is unaware of the grandmasters' conspiracy.

1318 Saurton (Village)

Sheriff Melan (Ftr6) rules Saurton and collects the local levies for Darcion. He is a lazy sybarite and an ineffectual ruler. Melan has recently built a harem of a dozen village girls, enticing them with good food and clothing. Count Travlin recently noticed a shortfall in the levies Melan collects for him, and will likely investigate.

1410 Yellow Castle (Castle)

Yellow Castle guards the eastern pass into Stonedale. It is constructed of the local, yellow sandstone, which makes it weaker than most castles of its size. There are 200 spearmen and 100 crossbowmen stationed here, along with 60 knights that patrol the pass.

1502 Tromar (Town)

This town of 2,000 people is a major trade stop along the Northway, and is firmly under the control of Governor Martin (Pal12) a paladin of Delaquain. The construction of a town wall and a castle has begun, but it will be a couple of years before either is completed. The town is defended by 800 troops (100 bow, 100 footmen, and 600 knights) camped nearby. Governor Martin is drilling his knights with new tactics that he believes will offset the superior numbers of Travlin's forces.

1508 Ogg's Band

Ogg (Ftr8), a powerful half-orc, leads this band of 40 raiders (Ftr2). They have been raiding and pillaging the region's villages for some time.

1611 Merisville (Hamlet)

Merisville's 20 inhabitants are protected by a wooden stockade housing 20 light cavalry (Ftr3) from Tromar. Captain Vanis (Pal6) keeps watch over this stretch of the Aisne River. He has orders to report any force emerging from Stonedale or the Cailin Pass, and then abandon the hamlet. He cares for the villagers, and will try to evacuate them to a safe place should he retreat.

1719 Eric's Force (Raiding Party)

Captain Eric (Pal8) has recently suffered a mauling at the hands of Lord Seris and his men (Hex 2217). He has 8 knights (Pal3) still standing, with 4 others severely wounded. His plans are to rest a day and make his way to Merisville (Hex 1611).

1909 Genisham (Village)

This village was once the market hub of the lake region. Since the massacre, its population has swelled with refugees from Middleburg. However, trade has disappeared, straining Lady Paulis' (Wiz4) ability to feed everyone. She sent petitions to Governor Martin for relief, but no aid has been forthcoming. Only the beadle (Ftr2) and 10 militiamen (Ftr1) are available to keep the peace among the 400 villagers and 200 refugees.

1914 Ornal (Hamlet)

Only 24 people are left in this hamlet. They grow what they can and hide when any raiders come near. Among their number is the former Archbishop Jordan of Middleburg (Clr15, Delaquain) who blames himself for the massacre at Middleburg, and has lost his confidence and his faith. He uses his few remaining spells to help the villagers when they are most needed.

2005 Sir Baran's Warparty (Raiding Party)

Sir Baran (Myr8) and his 20 knights (Myr3) have recently raided Wixton Abbey (Hex 2104), and are now celebrating their victory. Sir Baran has four knights hidden in case of ambush.

2104 Wixton (Hamlet)

This hamlet of 30 people was once an abbey of Delaquain. Sir Baran (Hex 2005) attacked them recently, and the abbey was burned along with half of the storehouses. Abbot Iain (Clr8) and 10 monks (Clr3) are helping the surviving villagers. They need someone to go to Tromar (Hex 1502) or Thenton (Hex 2404) for help.

2115 Ruins of Middleburg

Once 8,000 people lived here, but war and the massacre have depopulated the city. Lord Divolic's men slaughtered nearly 4,000 people, enslaved another 2,000, and scattered the rest throughout the hinterland.

Two small brigand bands inhabit the ruins. A lich named Zeris (Wiz 23, lich) has taken control of the larger band. He is planning to use the plentiful corpses to create an undead guard and establish a base of power. Zeris is hunting the other band of brigands to either kill them or force them to join.

2116 Seris' Stronghold (Keep)

Lord Seris (Ftr13) is the son of the last governor of Middleburg. When the city fell, he escaped the massacre with a small force and fled to his father's hunting lodge in the Jurasan Hills. In the two years since, he has constructed a wooden stockade around the lodge and trained a force of 100 men (45 bowmen, 45 footmen, 10 light cavalry). He saved another 500 refugees and scattered them in the hills to raise food for his forces. He hates all three major factions and is hungry for revenge for the death of his father.

2213 Norby (Hamlet)

This small hamlet is home to a brigand gang of 20 men and 30 refugees under the leadership of Slice Handler (Ftr12), a master of dagger throwing. He was caught in the massacre, but managed to escape along with a small band of men and refugees. Since then, he has managed to keep the entire group intact, and has settled in the abandoned hamlet of Norby. A wooden stockade has been built around the hamlet, and one crop has been harvested.

2401 Iler (Hamlet)

This crossroads hamlet is little more than the Buxom Maid Inn, owned by Goodlady Alena Farling (Rog8), and the homes of its 20 employees. There are usually 2d6 guests staying at the inn, except when there is a caravan (10%/day) in town, in which case, the inn will be full. Governor Martin had a wooden tower and barracks constructed last year for 10 light cavalry (Ftr4). Goodlady Alena Farling protested this construction, fearing the presence of the troops would uncover her secret smuggling operation. So far, she has been unable to operate undetected.

2404 Thenton (Village)

This village of 600 people is the market for this region of the province. Lord Asherton (Ftr1) is a major supporter of Governor Martin and a follower of Delaquain. He recently came of age and desires to destroy the forces of Sarrath. Governor Martin has stationed Captain Ord (Pal8) and 180 men (100 footmen, and 80 knights) here to protect the village and to keep Lord Asherton from doing anything rash.

2410 Prumton (Hamlet)

This small farming hamlet of 50 people is protected by 20 knights (Ftr5) sent by Captain Ord from Thenton (Hex 2404).

2416 Pelsin (Hamlet)

Once a hamlet, Pelsin is now under the control of 80 cannibals (Rog1) — once refugees from Middleburg. A charismatic thug named Kelen (Rog6) seized control of the band by brutally murdering the former leaders. He forced the survivors to become cannibals, and for two years, they have terrorized the region.



THE SWAMPS OF ACHERON

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents one of the myriad realms that exist in the Outer Planes. It is a place where adventurers dare to enter the homes of the gods. Where the lowest level of the dungeon is no longer the end of the adventure, but the doorstep of evil.

BACKGROUND

The great river Acheron winds through the Astral Plane, connecting many of the Outer Planes. In one place, it broadens into a vast swamp surrounded on three sides by the Great Ochre Desert, and girded to the southwest by the ice-choked Mountains of Mershan. In this vast, impenetrable swamp the god Sarrath holds his domain.

Followers of Sarrath often make a pilgrimage to the swamps to undertake the trials necessary to advance in power and prestige among the faithful. To facilitate these trials, Sarrath created nine pillars and scattered them across his domain. Each pillar embodies an essential principle of Sarrath's philosophy, known as the Laws of Ma'at. The clerics and myrmidons of Sarrath that wish to progress beyond 3rd level must endure the trials, one for each level up to 12th. The order of the trials, and the principle each represents, are Strength (Hex 0101), Hardiness (Hex 0707), Loyalty (Hex 1806), Obedience (Hex 0901), Certainty (Hex 0712), Dedication (Hex 1702), Integrity (Hex 0112), Order (Hex 1206), and Wholeness (Hex 0108).

The pillars are made of a strange black metal, are 40 feet in diameter, and stand 99 feet tall. Ninety-nine stairs spiral up the pillar to the top. If a priest or myrmidon of Sarrath steps onto the stairs, it began the trial associated with the pillar. At the top of each pillar is a giant, orange crystal that emits a brilliant light that can be seen from over twenty miles away. To prevent unbelievers from violating the sacred site, a unique guardian protects the crystal atop each pillar.

Each trial consists of three parts, and is unique to each petitioner. To begin a trial, a petitioner meditates in front of an altar of Sarrath, making his desire to be tested known to his deity. If Sarrath deems the petitioner worthy to begin the trial, he will be instantly



THE SWAMPS OF ACHERON

Encounter (Swamp/Desert)

- 1 Myrmidon on quest (Myr 1d6+6 level)
- 2 2d6 adventuring group (1d6+9 avg lvl)
- 3 Adult black dragon (19 HD) hunting boglings/...hunting dervishes
- 4 Monstrous snapping turtle (11 HD)/ Dervish Lord traveling (Ftr12) with 1d6 guards (Ftr6)
- 5 Giant Crocodile (12 HD)/ 1d6 Monstrous scorpions (10 HD)
- 6 2d10 Bogling hunting party (4 HD)/ 2d6 Dervish hunting party (desert)
- 7 Monstrous constrictor snake (11 HD)/ Monstrous viper snake (11 HD)
- 8 Questing priest of Sarrath (Clr 1d6+6 level)
- 9 Turtle dragon rises from beneath (30 HD)/ Scouring sandstorm for 1d6 hours.
- 10 A Son of Sarrath (20 HD) torturing 1d6 boglings/...torturing dervishes.



transported to the foot of appropriate pillar in the Swamps of Acheron. The first part of the trial begins when the petitioner reaches the 33rd step, the second part when he reaches the 66th, and the final portion of the trial takes place at the 99th step. If a petitioner fails any part of the trial, he is sent back to his home plane with full knowledge of his failure. The petitioner also loses enough XP to place him midway into the level he had attained before beginning the trial. If a petitioner completes all three parts of the trial successfully, he is allowed to retain his new level, and gains a magical item relevant to his class. The DM should make each trial *unique to the personality of the character participating*.

If the pillar's guardian is defeated by outsiders and the crystal removed, it will prevent clerics and myrmidons of Sarrath from advancing in that level. This will draw the immediate attention of Sarrath, who will send his minions to recover the crystal.

ADAPTATION NOTES

The DM must decide who Sarrath is. As written here, he is a lawful evil god whose code and followers are viewed as tyrannical by the forces of good. This description can fit many gods in various published or personal settings. The referee should adjust the pillars to fit the specific ideals of the god that is chosen.

The god Sarrath is presented as an "evil" god that can be followed by player characters if desired. Of the different possibilities of evil, the type represented by Sarrath is a version that would not be disruptive to a normal adventuring party. Trials are left deliberately vague to allow the referee to tailor them to a specific character.

This plane fits into any cosmology and is deliberately vague. The only point of connection could be the Acheron itself. It may be possible to traverse the Great Ochre Desert or the Mountains of Mershan and find other realms in the Outer Planes.

GEOGRAPHY

The Acheron River

Acheron, or the “River of Woe,” connects several of the Outer Planes. In the swamps it is not a swift river and flows sluggishly to the northwest. Anyone immersed in the river will need to make a Will saving throw or suffer the death of a loved one. In addition, after this saving throw, the effected person will experience the worst possible die roll three times. At the GM’s whim any three rolls are declared a natural ‘1.’

The Great Ochre Desert

This trackless dune desert surrounds the swamps of Acheron. For each day spent in the desert, characters must roll a Fortitude save or suffer 1d6 points of damage from the hellish heat. In addition to the scorching sun, sandstorms and monstrous scorpions (10 HD) make travel through this area extremely hazardous.

The Hathor Mountains

These mountains are as hot and dry as the desert, and numerous rockslides make travel dangerous. It is rumored that the goddess Hathor, Delaquain’s mother, is imprisoned under these mountains. Clans of duergar, loyal to Sarrath, are known to inhabit the numerous caves in the area.

Mountains of Mershan

These glacier-choked mountains form the southwest edge of the Swamps of Acheron. Huge ice devils (30 HD) and gargantuan remorhaz (21 HD) are known to inhabit these peaks.

Forest of Resu

The only trees in Acheron are found on this mesa. Giant snakes (11 HD), dire apes (15 HD), and one mad bogling (see below) druid named Calik (Drd12) inhabit the forest. Calik escaped from his servitude to Sarrath and is hiding from his master. He will help anyone striking back at Sarrath to liberate his people. The swamp around the mesa is infested with giant crocodiles (12 HD).

Calik knows the following rumors

- 1–2 (T) There is a tomb guarded by Sarrath’s eldest son.
- 3–4 (T) Mines in the realm possess a mineral used to create great weapons of power.
- 5–6 (F) Sarrath is breeding dervishes and serpents to create his sons.

The Swamp of Acheron

This stinking, festering bog dominates much of the region. It has a few islands and pools of open water, but it is mostly miles of weed-choked swamp. Snakes, crocodiles, monstrous turtles, giant leeches, and over a dozen tribes of boglings can be found here, although, the most dangerous creatures in the swamp are the dragon turtles (15 HD to 36 HD). Some are so large that adventurers might mistake them for islands. The swamp is also rife with terrible diseases. Any character spending time in the swamp must succeed at a Fortitude save once per day to avoid contracting a disease of the DM’s choice.

GODS AND DENIZENS

Boglings

Boglings are froglike, sentient creatures that were enslaved long ago by Sarrath. Their primary task is to tend to the eggs and young of the dragon turtles of the swamp. Although not intrinsically evil, the boglings do worship Sarrath; however, this devotion is primarily motivated out of fear of the deity’s wrath. The bogling elders will not risk defying Sarrath unless there is a clear gain. However, they are very interested in any plan or proposal that involves escaping Acheron.

Boglings are similar to lizardfolk, with the following changes: they have 4 HD, can breathe underwater indefinitely, and are able to jump 30 feet (+12 bonus on Jump Checks). A bogling takes 1d12 points of damage for each hour out of the water. This damage persists until the bogling is fully immersed in water again. Most wear special moistened robes that delay this damage for 3 hours.

Sarrath

Sarrath is the God of Order, Discipline, and War. Since the beginning of creation, Sarrath has been fighting against the primordial chaos and its demonic allies. He is known by many names on many worlds: Set, Seth, Sutekh, and Seteh are but a few. Legend states that he was instrumental in the creation of chromatic dragons, and may have had a relationship with the draconic deity Tiamat in the distant past. Sarrath's favored animal is the serpent, and his colors are orange and black. The mineral malachite and the metal brass are used often in Sarrath's temples.

Although Sarrath's methods seem tyrannical and evil to those he fights, it is by his efforts that the chaos is held back and prevented from sweeping away creation. This task takes absolute discipline, and absolute commitment. In Sarrath's mind, those not aiding in the battle are aiding the enemy.

Of all the gods, Delaquain is the one that Sarrath bears the most malice. During the Dawn Age they were allies in the war against chaos, but Delaquain's misguided notions of honor and justice placed their forces in jeopardy. It was Delaquain who betrayed the alliance and struck the first blow. By fighting Sarrath, she divided the forces of Law in the face of the demon armies of Chaos and weakened everyone.

Sons of Sarrath

These are sons born of mortal women, favored by Sarrath. They take the form of a half man, half serpent, although the exact combination varies. The vast majority of the Sons of Sarrath are taken away by Sarrath at birth and raised on Acheron to serve as generals and governors. Their statistics are the same as a guardian naga, and can range from 12 HD to 33 HD.

LOCALES

0101 The Pillar of Strength

Sarrath prizes raw strength and teaches that only through strength will his order succeed. The Trial of Strength involves applications of physical and mental strength. If the trials are successful, a *+1 cold iron dagger* or *light hammer* is awarded. A monstrous scorpion (10 HD) guards the top of the pillar.

0107 The Pillar of Wholeness

A follower of Sarrath cannot focus on one of Ma'at Laws. The Trial of Wholeness involves three situations where participants use *all* the Laws of Ma'at to resolve conflicts. If successful, the hero receives a *+2 breastplate of command*. This breastplate replaces the breastplate from the Trial of Certainty, and can be added to the armor gained in the Trial of Obedience. This creates a suit of *+2 full plate* that adds a *+2* enhancement bonus to all Charisma-based checks, and a *+2* bonus to turning checks. Any troops within 360 feet of the wearer automatically succeed at morale checks. A monstrous snapping turtle (11 HD) guards the top of the pillar.

0112 The Pillar of Integrity

The world offers many temptations. Power can be abused to secure luxuries and indulge pleasures. The Trial of Integrity involves three situations where the participant is tempted. If the trial is completed, then a *ring of protection +1* is awarded. A giant constrictor snake (11 HD) guards the top of the pillar.

0304 Xilen

Xilen village is a collection of mud huts and egg nests. Here 150 boglings tend to the eggs and young of the dragon turtles. The dragon turtles are hatched, trained by the boglings, and then released into the swamp as Sarrath's guardians. Training is hazardous, and boglings often become food for juvenile dragon turtles. Higapor (6 HD) is the chief of the nine bogling elders (5 HD). He hates the treatment of his people, but sees no escape — he and the other elders will not risk Sarrath's wrath.

0504 Mines of Iathtor

In the foothills lies the Mines of Iathtor. This small village holds 100 duergar (Ftr6) who mine black adamantine. After mining, the ore is melted into ingots and shipped to the Citadel (Hex 1002). A small tribe of 50 dervishes (Ftr3) living outside the village are responsible for shipping the ingots.

0707 The Pillar of Hardiness

One must be able to overcome all adversity to fulfill Sarrath's will. The Trial of Hardiness pushes participants to the limits of endurance. If the trial is completed, a *+1 longsword* or *+1 flail* is awarded. Malakan, a Son of Sarrath (15 HD), guards the top of the pillar.

THE SWAMPS OF ACHERON

1 Hex = 5 miles



0712 The Pillar of Certainty

A follower must display confidence that the will of Sarrath is the right and only way. The Trial of Certainty places the participant in several situations where his ability to act quickly and correctly is tested. If the trial is completed, pieces of a suit of *+1 full plate* will be awarded. These can be joined with the *+1 breastplate* awarded in the Trial of Obedience to form a suit of *+1 full plate*. Pendeth Malor (Myr16), a powerful myrmidon, guards the top of the pillar. He was the first myrmidon to die in the service of Sarrath.

0901 Pillar of Obedience

Followers of Sarrath must obey those who are placed above them without question and expect obedience from those below them. The first part of the Trial of Obedience involves the participant's ability to obey. The second part involves some type of personal sacrifice. The third, and final part of the trial involves the participant's ability to demand obedience. If the trial is completed, a *+1 breastplate* is awarded. The top of the pillar is guarded by swarms of venomous snakes (treat as a centipede swarm). The snake swarms attack in waves of four, and there are a total of 20 swarms.



1002 Citadel of Sarrath

This dark tower is Sarrath's seat of power. It's found at the end of a rocky outcropping jutting from the rim that surrounds the swamp. The foundation of the tower encompasses nearly all of the cliff face, from the top of the rim to the bottom in the swamps. Below the foundation are the Nine Deeps of Sarrath, where his treasuries and armories are found. The tower itself soars 999 feet high and consists of nine spires along with the central tower. The malachite throne of Sarrath is found within the central tower's highest point. Each of the nine spires is ruled by a favored son: Anchak, Belachron, Fashion, Luxcor, Meris, Nalchroon, Ormases, Ptar, and Zalthran (all 33 HD). The level where the spire joins the central tower is known as the Brass Hall, where Sarrath meets in council. In the ninth deep is the sword Caliburn, this +5 *holy avenger* was Artos' (Hex 1006) sword of power. Reuniting Artos with Caliburn will awaken him from his slumber.

1006 The Tomb of Artos

The greatest enemy of Sarrath, the great paladin Artos (Pal20), is imprisoned here. He lies in magical slumber within a crypt on an island in the swamp. Guarding the swamp around the tomb is a gargantuan dragon turtle (30 HD). Guarding the tomb's inner passages is Kanath (30 HD), Sarrath's eldest son. Kanath is attended by 50 boglings (4 HD) who serve his every need.

1307 The Pillar of Order

Without order, chaos will leave nothing behind. The Trial of Order places the participant into difficult situations where he must use his ability to restore and preserve order in the face of various threats. Those who complete the trials are granted *gauntlets of ogre power*. Guarding the top of the tower is an adult black dragon named Obonis (19 HD).

1311 Mine of Venitora

This is a mining community in the Great Ochre Desert overseen by Lanton (15 HD), a Son of Sarrath. It is a huge pit where the crystals used on the top of the pillars are mined. Six additional Sons of Sarrath (12 HD) and 50 dervishes (Ftr6) guard the pit.

The mine is worked by a veritable army of slaves, all former enemies of Sarrath who were captured from different worlds. There are two slaves here of note: a priest of Delaquain named Degmish (Clr9) and Lord Fost of Middleburg (Ftr10). Degmish nearly stopped the forces of Sarrath from taking over Yellzurthi (Wildland, Hex 1816). Lord Fost was leader of the forces defending Middleburg (Borderlands, Hex 2115) until he was kidnapped and brought here.

1401 Javous

This camp of 100 dervishes (Ftr6) oversee a herd of two hundred giant scorpions (10 HD), which they milk for their venom and train to fight in Sarrath's forces. Every fortnight, a caravan of 20 dervishes delivers hex venom and trained scorpions to the Citadel (Hex 1002). Al Mahed (Ftr9) is the chief of the dervishes and a descendent of Nalchron, a Son of Sarrath (Hex 1002). There is a 10% chance that Nalchron can be found visiting the tribe.

1702 The Pillar of Dedication

The Trial of Dedication measures the participant's dedication to fulfilling Sarrath's will. If the trial is completed successfully, a *helm of greater fire resistance* (treat as *ring of greater fire resistance*) will be awarded. A stoic Altamar of Thebes (Myr15) guards the top of the pillar.

1708 Oasis of Barenth

The oasis of Barenth produces Lactuca, the preferred food of Sarrath and his sons. Lactuca is a succulent leafy vegetable that enhances the flavor of ambrosia, the nectar of the gods. Eating a leaf will cure any poison or disease inflicting the character. A large farming community of 80 dervishes (Ftr6) maintains and harvests the crops. Chief Musa Elnar (Ftr11) rules the village.

1806 The Pillar of Loyalty

Only by the trust absolute loyalty brings can the forces of Sarrath hope to keep chaos at bay. The Trial of Loyalty puts the participant in various situations of a highly personal nature to test his loyalty to Sarrath. If the trial is successfully completed, the participant will be awarded a *+1 large steel shield*. Nine monstrous scorpions (10 HD) guard the top of the pillar.

INDEX

Acheron River	41	Great Ochre Desert	41
Aisne River	31	Great River	7
Altus Mountains	31	Great River	7
Andros Pass	31	Green Dragon Lair	10
Aria	8	Greenelm Woods	18
Arish a' Ahon	10	Greenport (Village)	26
Auberon Lake	31	Grey Downs	18
Auser Keep	36	Grey Sea	7
Blackrock Goblins	28	Grey Sea	7
Blood Downs	16	Greystone Road	18
Blood Forest	16	Griffon Nest	11
Blood Kin Orcs	8	Guardians of the Lost Treasure	26
Boglings	41	Hallium Hills	33
Bolzak (Town)	22	Hathor Mountains	41
Borderland	29	Hawksleigh (Village)	28
Breslen River	31	High Castle (Castle)	35
Broken Skull Orcs	8	High Pass	33
Cailin Pass	33	Horde	8
Cailly River	33	Icespire	27
Captain Darden (Raiding Party)	36	Iler (Hamlet)	38
Caravan Stop	27	Jalvengians	8
Castle Beldon (Castle)	25	Javous	45
Castle Westguard (Castle)	26	Jurasan Hills	33
Cathardown	14	Kubar Creek	18
Citadel of Sarrath	44	Kubar Steppes	18
Crandar Moors	5	Lair of a Black Bear	14
Cranis Fens	33	Lair of Arcador	21
Crocodile Hunter	26	Lake Bovil	4
Curnitha	12	Lake Genorium	33
Darcion (Town)	34	Lanis River	18
Dark Fenc	16	Lanisdown Forest	19
Dark Guard	13	Lord Seris	31
Darkwine River	18	Low Castle	36
Daur Desrath	14	Low Pass	33
Delaquain	31	Maiden Gorge	7
Delen	11	Maiden Gorge	7
Dire Wolf Pack	11	Men of the Wild	9
Donham (Hamlet)	35	Merisville (Hamlet)	37
Duchy of Stonedale	31	Michael Greene	34
Dunbury (Village)	24	Mine of Venitora	44
Dwarven Mine (Hamlet)	34	Mines of Iathtor	42
Dwellings of the Wood Elves	22	Mish Mires	7
Eastelm (Hamlet)	25	Mish Mires	7
Eric's Force (Raiding Party)	37	Mist Falls	19
Ersan (Hamlet)	36	Mistfield (Hamlet)	26
Eslohen Woods	5	Mountain Mine (Hamlet)	34
Faris Hills	5	Mountains of Mershan	41
Forest Dwellers	28	Mysterious Statues	11
Forest of Resu	41	Naldukr (Keep)	22
Forsaken Desert	18	Naspers	12
Forsaken Plains	18	Nightportal Keep (Keep)	27
Genar Forest	33	Nightshade Canyon	19
Genisham (Village)	37	Nightshade Creek	19
Genorium River	33	Nomad's Encampment	23
Gilhig (Keep)	23	Norby (Hamlet)	38
Golden Pass	18	North Way	33
		Oasis of Barengith	45
		Ochreton (Village)	36

Ogg's Band	37	Skarite Long Helmsmen	9
Ogre War Bands	9	Sons of Sarrath	42
Olasin's Steading	22	Southland	15
Olden Bog	19	Southridge	20
Orcfell Creek	19	Stone Ruins	23
Ornal (Hamlet)	37	Stoneburg (Town)	35
Osric Hills	19	Sunset Rim	20
Overwood (Hamlet)	25	Swamp of Acheron	39, 41
Pelsin (Hamlet)	38	Taigh	22
People of the Karan Dar	9	Talsingham	35
Pillar of Certainty	43	Temple of the Iron Hand	13
Pillar of Dedication	45	Terish De' Carn	12
Pillar of Hardiness	42	Tharvengian Forest	7
Pillar of Integrity	42	Tharvengian Forest	7
Pillar of Loyalty	45	Thenton (Village)	38
Pillar of Obedience	43	Titan Head Mountains	20
Pillar of Order	44	Tomb of Artos	44
Pillar of Strength	42	Tomb of Edwarch	14
Pillar of Wholeness	42	Torra Norith	12
Plains of Hegramoth	7	Troll Cave	14
Plains of Hegramoth	7	Tromar (Town)	37
Prumton (Hamlet)	38	Twilight Forest	21
Rat Knoll	23	Ty Bridge	25
Redstone Ridge	19	Unicorn Pool	26
Riksen River	7	Upper Stoneton (Village)	35
Riksen River	7	Urvon Keep (Keep)	35
River Hazard	26	Velis (Village)	34
River Moselle	7	Veritas	31
River Moselle	7	Veulon Stream	33
Ruined Glory	26	Vogales Peaks	8
Ruined Hut	23	Water Hole	27
Ruined Monastery	14	Westfield (Hamlet)	24
Ruined Temple of Fosnor	11	Westwall	21
Ruins of Gervonium	13	White Hills	8
Ruins of Middleburg	37	White Mountains	21
Ruins of Novus Tydaris	11	Wicking Lake	21
Ruins of the Mire	12	Wildlands	4
Ryne Creek	19	Wilds	7
Sagerham (Hamlet)	36	Wilds	7
Sam's Landing (Hamlet)	23	Wixton (Hamlet)	37
Sarduin River	20	Wizard Abode	13
Sarrath	31	Wolf Pack	11
Sarrath	42	Wolfwood	21
Sauer	33	Wyvern Feeding	21
Saurton (Village)	36	Wyvern Nest	11
Sea Hag	14	Xilen	42
Selina De' Core	14	Yellow Castle (Castle)	36
Seris' Stronghold (Keep)	37	Yellow Cliffs	33
Shrine of the Red Maiden	24	Yellow Rapids	21
Silver Hall	21	Yellzurthi	13
Silverdim (Hamlet)	28	Yelviere Woods	33
Sir Baran's Warparty (Raiding Party)	37	Yonk's Place	28

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