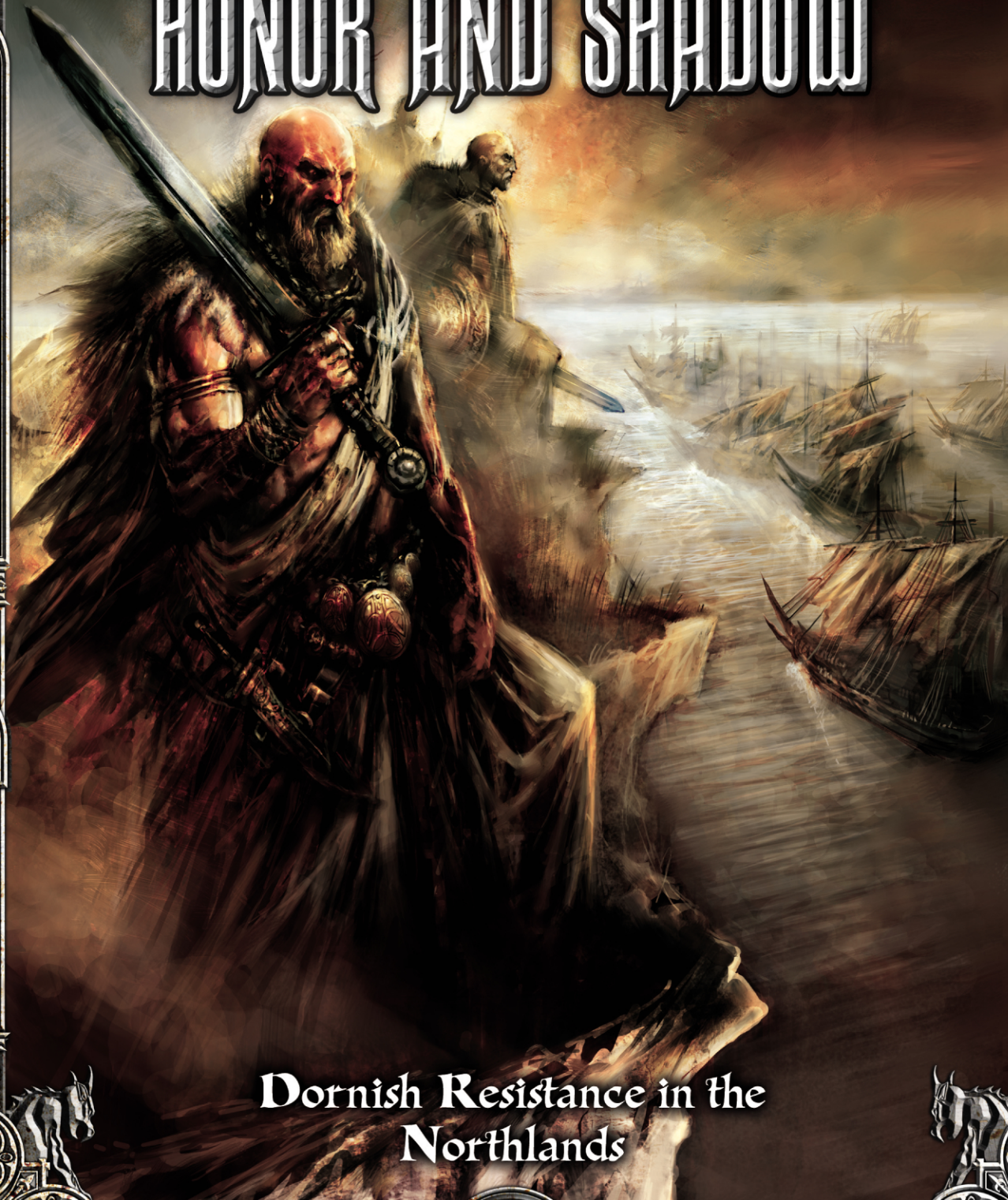


MIDNIGHT

HONOR AND SHADOW™



**Dornish Resistance in the
Northlands**

Honor and Shadow

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Introduction

Sabern's face shaped into a rictal grin. After months of trailing, he had found this insolent mortal, the one who would dare kill the dark god's own spokesmen on Aryth. Now Sabern, Witch Taker of the North, bane of all who wielded magic without the Shadow's assent, would return the favor.

The true glory for the dark god, if you asked Sabern's brethren, was elsewhere. Not here in the pointless, barren north. Not among the starving and the weak. In the east and west there was war, true; but Sabern knew that those were places best suited for orc and goblin, not for skilled practitioners of a trade, not for enlightened priests...and Sabern considered himself both.

What of the south, then? There were the mighty cities, the wide fields, the still-healthy of mind and body to be converted to the dark god's worship. But there also was intrigue, and pompousness. Such warmth and comfort could cool a man's devotion, could dull the sharp edge of his skills.

Here, in the biting wind of the north, he practiced his trade with alacrity and icy passion. The barren ground made tracking a challenge; the wide spaces between settlements made information-gathering next to impossible. His astirax, now in the form of an eagle with keen eyes, relished the hunt as much as he did. His troops, whom he had hand-picked, were tailored for the hunt: A pair of goblin sniffers, orcs trained in the use of bolo and net for taking down running targets, and an ogre skilled at grappling with his meaty fists – the better for taking potential priests or corrupted channelers alive. His fellow priests looked askance at his choices, wondering why he did not bring the heavily-armored infantry to which a legate has a right. Where were his oruk shock troops, his vardatch-wielding ravagers?

Too slow, too cumbersome, too difficult to control. This was the north. The populace had no food, no community, no hope. There was no resistance to fear, and no need for bodyguards. Anything dangerous could be met with guile and with magic, not with brute force.

Take his current prey, for instance. A channeler who had dared to kill a legate, or more than one, if the rumors could be believed. He had led a long and hard chase across the Northlands, over flinty shale and dry field. He had even taken to the water for a time, hoping to evade his pursuers on the Sea of Pelluria. But Sabern was implacable, his pursuit uncanny. The channeler's magic had inevitably betrayed him, as it betrayed them all. It had led Sabern and his men right to him, hear in these foothills beneath the Kaladrans. Soon, it would lead him to capture, or death. Sabern had warded himself with spells to block the channeler's magics, had given his troops the means to prevent the fugitive from completing his incantations. Against this spellcaster, they would prevail.

There was a yell, and a loud rumbling sound, interrupting Sabern's thoughts. The Witch Taker drew his sword, and gaped. The mountainside was attacking his troops. Pine trees, boulders, and a tide of earth washed over his odrendor and goblins, dragging them howling into the chasm below. One of the orcs got hold of his boot, and Sabern fell to the ground, desperately hacking at the arm until the orc vanished with a scream. Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw his ogre attacking a camouflaged, armored figure who had appeared from nowhere. The brute got his arms around the man, just as he had been trained to do; but then his arms were gone, and then his head, replaced by a fountain of blood.

Sabern directed his astirax to attack, to drain the channeler's magical essence and, by so doing, his very life force. It struck once, twice, but the channeler—the warrior, Sabern now saw, for he bore a shirt of mail and carried an axe as long as a man—the channeler ignored the eagle and kept coming. Sabern decided that he must have miscalculated. His quarry must be farther up the canyon, and this some bodyguard with a penchant for landslides. He laid an enchantment upon the man that would be sure to reduce his mind to quivering ooze...but as the spell was completed, Sabern felt his magics being resisted.

The legate braced himself as the man paused to cleave into the astirax that harried him. Sabern was no weakling in hand-to-hand combat. With the grace of his god, he called down spells that would enhance his combat prowess, allow him to strike with the strength of a giant. Glowing now with dark power, the legate gripped his sword in both hands and charged his foe.

And as he reached him, he felt that magic snuffed out.

Sabern faltered. The Dorn did not. The legate's longsword shattered beneath the axe's blow. A heavy hand gripped the Witch Taker's throat, and a bearded face pressed close as grim eyes dug into his own. In the corner of his eye, Sabern could see the glimmer of steel from the man's axe. More glimmers appeared; men were coming out of the woods, gathering around him.

Searching for a way out, Sabern tried to step back. His mouth searched for words. His enemy saved him the need.

"My name is Ulric. I tell you this, because I do not fear you or your god. You have taken what you would, you have dealt your death and brought us to shame. You have left us nothing but hate. And with nothing but hate, we will defy you. I am your bane." Reaching for his neck, the warrior tore off Sabern's holy symbol. Then he pushed. Still searching for his voice, the legate fell, following the orcs into oblivion.

The Dorns were a mixed blessing to Eredane. They brought bloodshed and war, but they were also the hammer that tempered the steel resolve of the elves and dwarves. They unified the other races of the land, first in common cause against them, later via trade and military aid. They stood honorably against the Shadow in the North, but they were also among the first to fall prey to his corruptions in the Third Age.

Now, the Dorns are perhaps the closest of the races of Eredane to complete defeat. Their lands are overrun, their titles and royalty replaced with pretenders and traitors, their children taken to become the dark god's mouthpieces. Comparatively, while the dwarves face extinction, their armies are still fearsome and their steel is plentiful; though the elves fight a guerilla war, their ancient cities yet remain whole.

The Dorns may be a conquered people, but from them come the most fearsome resistance fighters. Roland of Redgard leads a cavalry akin to the Dorns of old against the evils of Izrador. The princes of Norfall still sail free and ensure that troop transport on the Sea of Pelluria is a dangerous passage. Hulking warriors join the resistance and venture far afield in the fight against their foes, seeming to boast the blood of giants or of iron within their veins.

The Dorns they have lost their homes, their hope, and even their honor. But, the honor of a man need not be forever tainted by the shame of his people. The actions of a resilient few can remind even the most jaded and forsaken clansman what his name once meant. In the Last Age of the Northlands, the survivors have but two choices: to walk the path of the Shadow, or to walk the path of honor.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Old North

The winter sun was rising through a gentle fall of heavy snowflakes as he saw the farm again.

The grounds were silent, but thick smoke rose from the chimney. Tired, but content, he hid his sword and let his skis take him to his door. He took them off, and called his wife.

"Hekla! Hekla, come out! I'm home!"

There was silence for a moment, and then the door swung open. She was beautiful. Even in the heavy winter clothing, beauty radiated from her. Long golden hair cascaded down her shoulders, and her blue eyes shone in the winter dawn. He loved her.

"Ulric! You came back!"

Her voice was low, breathless, surprised. His own was full of the smile on his face as he put his arms around her.

"I did. I keep my vows, my love."

They held each other in silence as the snow kept falling.

"Has my brother arrived?"

"In... inside."

She looked away.

"Is something wrong?"

"No. No."

"Good! Let us go in. My stomach growls like a wolf!"

"I love you."

His smile left him and he turned around, facing her. She seemed so distant, ghostly. He pulled her close and kissed her. The kiss was long and warm and tender. Then, he broke away. She clung to him. She tried to smile, but tears shone in her eyes.

"What has happened?" Without waiting for an answer, he bowed down and stepped inside, and something struck him on the head. Stumbling forward, he fell to the ground, crashing into the raised hearth. Through the blur and the flames of the fire pit, he could make out the dark outline of someone. Cold laughter mixed with the crackle of burning logs.

"We've been expecting you, brother. Welcome home."

House Banners and Mottoes

Throughout the north, coats of arms and mottoes were highly important elements of a clan structure, things that united clans and served to distinguish one group from another. A house's motto represented everything it was; Dorns would continuously strive to prove that they truly represented the icons and words of their founding fathers. In the Last Age, the remnants of the Great Houses that fight the Shadow do their best to maintain the pride of their ancestors, while others have perverted their symbols to serve the Shadow.

Clan	Coat of Arms	House Motto
Baden	White falcon and black raven combatant on grey	We Walk Our Own Path
Chander	Black bear on green	Unbreakable
Dale	Three white watchtowers on black	Against the Shadow
Davin	Golden lion rampant on green	Strength and Pride
Esben	Golden rooster on brown	Herald the New Day
Falon	Iron castle on dark red	Awake the Iron
Norfall	Black longboat on blue	We Bring the Storms
Orin	Black vertical sword over black anvil on silver	The Strength of Mountains
Pendor	Black bull and horse rampant on yellow	Great and Proud
Redgard	Red stallion's head on white	Bring the Thunder of War
Sedrig	Crossed white feather pen and silver sword on blue	Our Songs Eternal
Torbault	Flaming golden sword on red	Forged from Fire

The Great Houses

Ever since the dawn of the Second Age, the Great Houses have remained a constant. Though there have been disputes, feuds, duels, and even all-out wars between the kings of the Northlands, no house ever fell into ruin. Throughout the Sarcosan War and the Second Rise of Izrador, they survived. Whether this was through the sheer tenacity of the Dorns, the intervention of the Sarcosans, or through the careful manipulation of the Witch Queen is still disputed by historians. Nevertheless, no house ever fell...until the Last Age. Now houses Dale and Davin lie in ruin, while Norfall and Redgard wage fierce resistance wars simply to survive. Many clans and families split, with some defecting to the side of light, others to the dark, and now they fight one another. No house, no clan, no family, has been left unscarred by the touch of Izrador. It is a dark hour for the northmen, a time when good men must break their oaths, renounce their families, and forsake their heritage to fight their own princes and clan chiefs. This tear in tradition weighs heavily on many Dorns, both young and old. Still, they fight on, forging new bonds of loyalty on the battlefields of the ongoing war.

The Dorns live and die by their traditions. More than any other culture of Eredane, they abide by the ways of their ancestors. Individuality is not prized, and while new ways of

thinking and doing may sometimes serve, tried and true methods are always preferred.

Tying them to their ancestors, like proud steeds bearing their masters, are the Dorns' names, families, and titles.

Names

Names are of utmost importance to the Dorns, for they identify not only a man, but his clan and family, his allegiances, as well as his deeds and reputation. In a society that has always been based on legends and word-of-mouth, a man's names is his greatest treasure, and can open many doors. Throughout the ages, the Dorns have fought and died for the pride of their names. One of the Dornish monikers for Izrador is "Namestealer," and it is commonly believed that legates who animate or raise the dead do so by calling the names of the one they would force to serve them.

First Names

Dorn children are given names as soon as they are born and immediately introduced to their families, for should the child die, it is important that he can present himself to his ancestors. Names for the first child of each gender are typically handed down from father to son. Additional children are

Remnants in the South

Though most of Dornish culture is clustered around the Sea of Pelluria, there were those who remained in the lands along the Eren River and the Ardune, as well as farther south. Like the *dunni* and gnomes they kept as serfs, they did not fight during the First Rise of Izrador. Led by their clan chieftains, they became a part of the alliance between Dorn and fey when House Torbault conquered them in the early years of the Second Age.

With the coming of the Sarcosans, these southern Dorns became the first to feel the influence of the Pellurian Empire and the ancestors of the Erenlanders. Their culture was overwhelmed by the massive influx of the Sarcosans, but their legacy remains: many towns and villages of Central Erenland are built upon Dorn foundations, and now and then tall, strong, fair-haired boys and girls are born into the most dark-skinned peasant families. In the woods outside these settlements, their forgotten burial mounds still lay, overgrown and hidden by the shadows of the forest, remnants of a time before the Fell stalked Eredane's people.

named after grandparents, uncles, aunts, or favored friends. Many of these names had a meaning in the First Age dialect of Norther, often symbolizing animals, traits or trades. They also often represented a tradition or aspiration the family carried. In the Last Age, the meanings of most names have been lost, leaving nothing but the sounds to all but scholars.

family Names

All Dorns can track their ancestry back to the founders of their clans, many even to the founders of the Great Houses. It is this source that provides them with their second names. Having expanded over the years, most of the clans are a collection of many families, just like each Great House is a collection of many clans. However, the clan Dorns do not see themselves as individual families. Regardless of how removed they are, they all take on their father's clan name. Any two Dorns with the same surname are guaranteed to be related, and usually call each other uncle, aunt, cousin, or nephew as appropriate by age, even though their common ancestors may be many generations removed. In addition to their clan names, the Dorns keep record of their lineage in order to narrow down their ancestry and allegiances even further. A Dorn who cannot recite his lineage at least three generations back must be an orphan.

Monikers

In a culture where your reputation defines who you are, most men are given monikers that serve to identify their traits, strengths, and deeds. Usually such names are proudly proclaimed by their possessors, for they serve to separate them from the masses. A man never claims such a name for himself. It is always given to him by those around him. Should he be dissatisfied with what people call him, a Dorn could take his complaint to the namecaller. Many duels were fought in the Third Age for this very reason. Dorn sagas even speak of men who traveled the width and length of Erenland, hunting those who had presumed to hand them foul names.


The majority of such monikers are derived either from a man's looks, his strongest trait, or a specific deed he has done. Many also carry the names of animals that share their traits, possessions through which they can be recognized, colors that they favor, or objects in nature. Some monikers derive from a mixture of these traditions; particularly famous or heroic people often gain multiple monikers, and may announce some, or all of them, depending on the importance of the situation. The moniker-giving tradition has continued into the Last Age, and even many Dorns who are sworn to the Shadow still defend their names fiercely.

family

Family is one of the most important things a northman has; it ranks well above his own life. It is believed that a Dorn with no clan to honor his spirit has no home in the afterlife, and upon death, will drift until he becomes ensnared by the Shadow. Then, all the great deeds the man has done would be undone. Thus, renouncing one's family is one of the most extreme actions a Dorn can take, for it means he would rather take his chances with Izrador than keep common ties with his own kin. Many Dorns who reluctantly serve the Shadow in life try desperately to remain true to their families in hope of escaping the Shadow's grasp in the afterlife.

Those without parents are truly pitied in Dorn society; those who prove themselves are sometimes adopted as cousins, sons, and daughters. Those who refuse such trust and respect, or who fail to earn it, are considered cursed or insane, and are feared and avoided. It is believed that they are haunted by their ancestors, who clamor in the unknown language of spirits for recognition, a clamor that manifests itself with bad luck or ruin.

Dorn family bonds do not have to be by blood. Adopted sons and daughters are considered just as close as those born of husband and wife; it is action, not blood, which defines a man's place in life. Though it is usual for the oldest son to inherit the lion's share of his father's title and wealth, it must not always be so, and the parents may freely split their heritage as they chose. They often try to consult their ancestors on such matters. Adoption further splits this inheritance, and is thus a serious undertaking. It requires complete trust and agreement from all those involved, from the ancestors down



to the youngest child in the household. When orphans are adopted, they also bring their ancestors with them into the new family, unless they do not know their parents. In the latter case, wards and rituals must be prepared to protect the home from any malevolent spirits that might haunt the new family member.

Since the First Age, the Order of Shadow has offered an alternative to outcasts, outlaws, and orphans throughout the Northlands. Whenever a feud left a man abandoned by his clan, a shadowed cloak offered a home. Wherever a man fled from his crimes, a legate was there to spirit him away. Wherever a child wept alone, a black hand and a dark voice offered comfort and protection. The legates would give all they had to their new brothers, demanding nothing in return but loyalty, respect, and affection. Even in the Last Age this practice continues, as legates scour the land for new talent to train in Theros Obsidia. These recruiters are almost exclusively of the Cabal, and begin planting their seeds even as they bring their candidates to the tower.

Titles

Dorn society adopted the clan-based feudal system during the First Rise of Izrador, when groups of clans banded together into houses so that they could better field and equip united military groups. They have been ruled by royal bloodlines ever since. Below these monarchs exists a hierarchical system that determines the powers and responsibilities of those who follow the banner of any clan and Great House. In many places throughout the Northlands, even among those fallen to Izrador, parts of this system remains in place, offering the minions of Shadow in the North an easy and established way to control the Dorns.

Thengil

The highest rank of Dorn society, *thengil* means king in old Norther. A queen would bear the title *thengla*, a prince *thiodann*, and a princess *thenvif*. Throughout the Second and Third Ages, thengils were the heads of all the Great Houses. In the Last Age, the title is nonexistent. The leaders of the houses that still resist have all refused to accept the title, while the traitor princes have relinquished their crowns to the Izrador and the Night Kings. The latter still wield power almost equal to a king of old. They defend their realms, render judgment, and can make or break laws at a whim, so long as they do not conflict with the Order of Shadow.

Dhrot

Dhrots are the leaders of the individual clans that make up a Dorn house, and answer to the ruling family. Chosen in a great meeting including every authority down to the *theigns*, the position is not a hereditary one, but rather one based on ability and common consensus. The process of choosing a clan leader is a lengthy one, and custom decrees that when a

dhrot dies, the next one should be at least 10 winters younger. Though the free Dorns still choose their clan leaders according to traditions, the traitor clans suffer from the meddling of the Order of Shadow. The priests have determined that Izrador should have a say on who has authority in his domain, and either propose candidates they wish to elevate or veto those they dislike. Their motives and methods vary, from instilling a weak leader so that a clan will collapse to instilling a strong one, so the clan will overstep its bounds and suffer punishments.

Mhor

The Dorns' war leaders, *mhors* are the chosen captains of the clan chiefs. Traditionally, each clan had but a single such war leader who would lead his clansmen in battle should the dhrot fall, or lead battles that the dhrot or thengil were unable to undertake. Mhors were also often elected to take over the mantle of the old clan chiefs when they died. With the construction of the Fortress Wall, it became common for a second mhor to be selected. The two mhors rotated, each in turn representing the clan on the wall or in their own lands. Under the political intrigue and demands of the Third Age, most clans ended up having as many as four or five mhors, each squabbling for the greater honor and position. After the rise of Izrador and his conquest of the land, the title still stands strong on both sides of the conflict. Most traitors have reverted to the old ways and only elect a single man for the title, while the resistance has gone the other way, electing leaders for each raiding band.

Hirde

Above those who simply hold their own lands, but below true nobility, the *hirde* is a clan's professional warrior elite. In war, they lead bands of warriors or form nobles' bodyguards. In peace, they act as patrolmen and enforcers of the law, performing duties similar to those undertaken by sheriffs south of the Sea of Pelluria. Though hirde can hold their own lands, they are expected to remain in a constant state of readiness most of the year. Their lands are left to the care of family or trusted clansmen while the warriors take on missions for their patron nobles. The Last Age has seen the position of the hirde change little among the traitor houses. While they no longer patrol the roads and check on isolated farms, they still serve as bodyguards and warrior elites. Even members of the Order of Shadow have taken to recruiting their own hirde, preferring the company of Dorn soldiers to orcs.

Theign

Theigns were the free, independent men of the clans. As the heads of their families, they held their own land and oversaw and protected the clansmen who lived on their soil. When their clan held council, they were able to attend and speak freely. In return, they were expected to possess mail and

Honor Revered: The Kvedi

The *kvedi* is a song sung by Dornish skalds, owing to traditions established in their earliest beginnings across the sea. It is the celebration in verse of great and mighty deeds performed by heroes throughout Dornish history. These poems have passed from clansman to clansman through successive generations, and were often performed by bards and nobles alike during House banquets. The accounts glorified the accomplishments of those they honored, preserving their memory as legends. However, such tales also served as moral lessons exemplifying the noble and proper virtues of the heroes they praised: honor to one's enemies, loyalty to one's allies, and humility in one's accomplishments. Following is an excerpt from *The Deeds of Fgir Elmshalm*, an account of a great chieftain of House Falon composed sometime in the Third Age.

*Then Fgir, having slain his foe
Cast off his battle-helm, held high his blade
And turning to his clansmen, cried aloud his
joy in fury
Fair hair shining in the sun, eyes ablaze*

*Then his face darkened in woe
As the war-carnage upon the field he surveyed
The blood of enemies, and long-held friends
spilt and wasted
Both men and near-children lay dead under his gaze*

*To his liegemen he looked, and in time spake
"High-hearted we stand, upon our clan-lands ancient,
A host so mighty, we cast down our foes,
laid them low
Families safe, lands kept, glory preserved*

*Victory yes, sweet and bitter both, for our battle-thirst
We slaked on the blood of those we loved
Once standing side-by-side against Shadow,
now spirits
Fled to join the Lost, lights extinguished*

*Know not these foes as foes in coming years,
But brothers lost to us, their loss worthy of tears."*

shield, to answer the clan's call to arms whenever it was sent out, and to uphold the law on their own lands. A theign was held responsible for all that occurred within his holdings. In the Last Age, theigns are an obsolete concept. No man may dictate what purpose his land is used for, nor how local laws are upheld. Any man in occupied lands, unless he is a mercenary or a favored of one of the Traitor Princes is, essentially, a slave.

The Shadow's Works

From the moment the Dorns first crossed the Pale Ocean and settled upon the shores of Eredane, the attention of the Shadow was focused upon turning this fierce, puissant race to his own dark purposes. The warlike Dorns brought strife and tyranny to the lands of the peaceful gnomes and *dunni*, and the dark god reveled in the resulting turmoil. However, as the long-running Dornish War came to an end, and the Northmen came to peaceful terms with the fey and forged their alliances, their inherent nobility and integrity began to shine. When the Sarcosans landed to press their conflict against the Dorns, and eventually subjugated the Northmen, the courage and nobility of the Dorns shone all the brighter despite their defeat. Swallowing their warlike pride, the Dorns swore their oaths to the Sarcosans. As the Kingdom of Erenland was born, the Shadow in the North seethed with icy rage. Izzador doubled his efforts to destroy this mighty people during the Second War, and when the conflict reached its catastrophic end, the Dorns' fierce warrior spirit was nearly broken. As the Shadow surveyed the ruination that war had brought to the Northlands, and the toll it had taken upon the Northmen, a new design began to fester in his black heart. The bodies and blood of the Dorns were dearly spent in war, but in a dark age of peace, Izzador resolved to assail and pervert the greatest remaining asset of the Dornish people: their honor.

Corruption of the Dorns

After the decades of extended conflict, from the bloody Dornish War in the First Age, to the last desperate days before the fall of Erenland, the forces of Shadow hold a strong influence over the Dornish people. The servants of Izzador have worked to take advantage of this fierce people's warlike nature, manipulating their strongest and most revered qualities, twisting them from their original virtues into base and craven behaviors. The seeds of dissent planted within their hearts, the perversion of their spirits, may have had a greater cost than any loss of land and blood.

At the end of the Second War with Izzador, the Northlands were a shambles. No sense of unity or strength could survive among the vassals of the Kingdom of Erenland, not in the

face of so much destruction. The people, like the land, were battered in body and spirit. Several generations of strong men and women had been obliterated, and the survivors were as often crippled and sickly as they were hale and whole. For the first time since their escape from the empire of Pelluria, the Dornish people feared for the continuance of their race. Their vision no longer encompassed the continent-spanning kingdom of men; their focus turned homeward, as well as inward, and they thought only of their own preservation. As the lonely years of the Third Age wound on, the Northmen pulled back from their obligations to the High King, abandoning their posts upon the Fortress Wall. They rebuilt their homesteads and fortified their own districts against perceived threats from outside the boundaries of their lands.

The years of civil strife that followed sprung from the Dorns' newfound fear and distrust of threats from without, and led to the ugly rise of conflict from within. As the clans sought to fortify their homelands against outsiders, political and personal rivalries developed within the Great Houses themselves. The practice of personal combat in the First and Second Ages had served to settle political disputes and legal claims. In the darkness of the Third Age, however, Dornish warriors found motivation in their own greed and jealousy. The honorable tradition of the duel devolved into a practice of sanctioned murder fueled by hatred, the first sign of the Shadow's stain upon the hearts of the Dornish nobility.

Conflict in Shadow

As the Northlands were overrun at the end of the Third Age, the orc tribes sacked Dornish villages and cities and began to dig their warrens throughout the region. Though sharing the common cause of sending their strongest warriors to the southern wars, the great tribes of orcs occupying Dornish lands harbor ages-long grudges against one another. While there is cooperation among warrens and

strongholds of the same tribe, the orcs lash out at any from rival tribes who dare trespass on their chosen lands. Even the movement of orc proto-armies through districts occupied by opposing tribes can make for short but brutal conflicts. Particular resentment is harbored by Gray Mother orcs within Fallport and Dark Mother orcs of Bastion against orcs of the prestigious Blood Mother tribe, who often pass through their districts on the way to war fronts.

Though many orcs follow the commands of the human Traitor Princes, they do so grudgingly; too often the pretenders, and the arrogant legates who worship within their cities, show disdain for Izrador's chosen. However, the *odrendor* hold their rage and heed the whispered counsel of their kurasatch udareen; though they yearn to rise up and wrest control of the Northlands from the weak humans, they dare not defy the will of the Shadow. The mother-wives of Izrador therefore bide their time, waiting for the day when the legates become careless in pursuing their personal, human agendas. When



Honor Lost: Heinrar's Victory

After the Second War with Izzador, as northern Erenland fell to infighting and even into civil war, the influence of the Shadow grew in the hearts of many young northmen. Those princes and kings wallowed in the pride of their military accomplishments, encouraged to exult in conflicts against their former liege lords and brothers-in-arms. As the value and importance of the Dorns' oldest traditions began to fade, they were supplanted by vanity and pursuit of personal glory. The impact of this loss is reflected in many of the lays written by skalds of those dark days, and illustrates the hand of the Shadow in the perversion of the Dorns' honor. It is a perversion that continues in the Last Age.

From *Heinrar's Victory*, penned in the late Third Age:

The dogs of Darlan, feeling the Wall
Fortresses abandoned, honor lost
To cross our borders, roam our lands,
share our spoils,
Weakness ever, craven masters and thralls.

Mercy and aid, their masters spoke their need,
Succor from the orcs and beasts of the north.
Yet envy lit the fires within their eyes,
and they fell to Shadow,
Mighty Heinrar rode to meet them.

His men at his back, their eyes glint their fury
Hale and strong, their blades sharp and sure
Against long-hated clan, their hews were mighty,
blood-feud now sated,
Their blood stained our soil, our was the glory.

"To the Shadow with you!"
Mighty Heinrar did cry
As he faced the failed
Clan of house Darlan, fleeing.
Their chieftains were all dead,
Their whelps lorn, women shamed,
Staggering north they reached
Open arms toward the dark.

Clan Rinfall kept honor,
Our greatness was preserved,
Foes slain, scores settled, and
Our vengeance was served cold.

that day comes, they dream of stamping out the humans, and take their rightful place as Izzador's most deserving worshipers.

Over the last 100 years, legates have openly culled the Dornish survivors in search of new worshipers. This recruitment in itself is not new however, merely its openness. The elder legates of the Cabal have occupied the Dorns' lands for thousands of years, with secret strongholds scattered across the Northlands. Their influence extends from Theros Obsidia through the approaches to the Northern Marches, and they jealously and viciously maintain their hold upon the region, acting clandestinely against the legates given official sanction by Sunulael throughout the districts of the Traitor Princes. The dark priests of the Devout sequester themselves within the walls of their well-guarded temples, and never travel through the Northlands without heavy escorts. However, even these measures sometimes fail to preserve them from ambushes in the wild, far from the eyes of Sunulael's spies. Furthermore, the forces of the Cabal have been masters of infiltration for ages, and from time to time a legate of the Devout will be found poisoned at his own table or garroted in his own bed. Devout forces have therefore limited their power bases to the northern coast of the Pellurian Sea, biding their time as they call upon further resources and manpower from Southern Erenland.

Lights of the North

Their lands lost, their fortresses fallen, their people slain or enslaved, the Dorns have suffered many losses through the ages at the hands of the fey, the Sarcosans, the forces of Shadow...and often at the hands of their own people. Despite the overwhelming trials facing them in the Last Age, the Northmen are not without hope in these darkest of days. Many of the Dorns who refuse to bow their heads in shame, who insist on defying Izzador and those who serve his purpose, have put aside the failings of the Third Age. These people uphold the lore and traditions of the early Dorns and keep true to the intent of their ancestors. By pursuing the brightest examples of their past, some Northmen have found the strength to bring new light into this age of Shadow.

The Anublir

Since the earliest days of their history, the Dorns have been ancestor worshipers. Though Dorns in ages past were known to give obeisance to a loose pantheon of gods, the lack of response of these distant, inaccessible deities led to the rise and proliferation of spirit and ancestor worship in Dornish culture and religion. The people believe the spirits of their forefathers look upon them as they live their lives, sitting in judgment of all decisions they make. The way a person conducts himself and the feats he accomplishes must always be pursued with respect for one's ancestors; to do less is to damn

oneself in the eyes of all Dorns that have lived in ages past. These spirits themselves have been known to appear to their children at times throughout the ages, sometimes praising a warrior for his selfless actions in battle, other times brutally punishing a Dorn for craven behavior. The examples and attentions of the ancestors have served as a tangible bastion of faith for the Northmen throughout their history, surpassing the teachings of any all-powerful deities. So it was that those rare Dorns that were born with the ability to not only see the spirits, but communicate with them directly, evoked both fear and respect among the Northmen. These spirit speakers are known as the *anuhlir*.

The emergence of this talent is thought to have coincided with the coming of the Fell. Perhaps the blight of the tethered dead evoked a need for Aryth's spirits to finally voice their eternal anguish; perhaps it was Aryth herself trying to appease the further suffering of these lost souls. Whatever the reason, during the First Age, one Dorn in a thousand demonstrated the ability to spirit-speak. The gift came naturally, without training, and most often appeared in young women of breeding age, but faded by the time they reached middle age. There were exceptions; some men had the gift, or learned it, while some women retained the gift, relinquishing their relations with the corporeal world in order to pursue their connection with the unseen. While other women married and gave birth to the next generation of Dorns, these *anuhlir* married the spirit world, and gave birth to an unseen hope.

As the scourge of the Fell spread across Eredane, this new ability emerging among women was viewed as both gift and curse by the Northmen. Superstitious and paranoid Dorns felt the *anuhlir* were as evil a phenomenon as the Fell, and persecuted them openly. Other Dorns realized that the spirit speakers could be a boon to the people, as they sought to employ the knowledge and wisdom of their ancestors to help the Dorns survive the depredations of Shadow. These mystics acted as mediums between the living and the dead – in order to aid their people, the *anuhlir* beseeched the spirits of their ancestors for divinations and favors to help their clans live honorable lives during their time on Aryth. Those *anuhlir* embraced by their clans acted as both soothsayers and counselors for their people. During the wars against Izrador in the First and Second Ages, acceptance of the *anuhlir* expanded, and more clans employed the lore of the spirit speakers in their vigil of the Fortress Wall, and to provide aid in battle to the clans' warriors.

After the war that began the Third Age, however, paranoia and fear spread among the Dorns. Distrust had been sown among the people, and the Dorns began to doubt the strength of their brothers, and the courage of a once-proud people. Many Northmen lost faith in the nobility of the race, and in shame turned away from the examples of their ances-



tors. The Dorns had fallen from honor, and among a people with no faith, the *anuhlir* no longer had a purpose. As the dark age dragged on and Northern Eredane fell into conflict, the spirit speakers were forced to look to their own survival. Future generations of these mediums were unaware of the significance of their gift, and when they heard the whispers of the dead they thought themselves cursed. These tormented Dorns hid in fear, or lived in exile, trying to find some escape from their madness.

When the Shadow finally fell upon Eredane, the spirits of the Dorns cried out their anguish, shamed at the final fall of their people. The foundations of the ghostly realm may have been shaken at the strength of this mighty, ghostly cry; the outrage of the Lost may have disturbed the very barrier between life and death. Whatever the cause, in the Last Age, the few spirit speakers left in the Northlands heard the cries of their ancestors, and awakened to their own desperate purpose. Those *anuhlir* brave enough to risk persecution revealed themselves and their abilities to their clansmen. And while paranoia and terror led to the downfall of some of these speakers, others were accepted by their desperate, hunted people. These are the men and women who dedicate their abilities to the survival of the Dorns against the evil of Izrador. With the hope of the living fading more and more everyday, these *anuhlir* have worked to strengthen their mysterious bonds with the ancestral dead among the Lost and the Eternal. Through consulting ancient lore, and negotiating for

Dangers in the North

While the orcs are numerous in the Northlands, their ranks are constantly being thinned of their best warriors, the better to serve the wars in the south. Those remaining are *kurasatch udareen*, breeders, cripples, and an occasional elite guard who wishes he were elsewhere so that he might win glory for his clan. These congregate among the orc warrens, though, or in the Shadow cities where their masters reside, rather than in the blasted wastes in which the insurgents hide. Each Traitor Prince has a few warbands of orcs and goblinoids available to patrol his lands, as well as however many human mercenaries he can afford to pay, but the north is vast. It could never be completely controlled and overseen.

Jahzir foresaw all this when he led Izrador's forces through the Northlands on their way south, and so absolute destruction became the standing order. The land was salted, the fields and forests burned, the bridges shattered. Those corpses that had no chance of rising as Fell were thrown into wells and springs to pollute the groundwater. Caches of plague-ridden flesh were sealed in ruins for the survivors' descendants to uncover, and Shadowspawn were given free reign to use their poisonous breath, their dripping acids, the shriveling touches, on whatever they saw.

There is unpatrolled land, yes, but it is blasted and bitter, and the people who once resided there have been all but driven to extinction. The survivors have no resources with which to house and feed the next generation. The mortality rate among newborns is greater than two in three, and few live beyond 30 winters. And so the Dornish population dwindles rather than grows, despite the lack of an organized campaign against them.

Deprivation and disease are not the Dorns' only foes, however. Witch Takers lead teams of goblin sniffers and worg riders in pursuit of spellcasters, covering thousands of miles of territory to chase down their quarry. In order to provide an additional threat against groups of freedom fighters or simply those who would live outside the Shadow's rule, the spawning pits throughout the Northern Marches spew forth hundreds of vicious Shadowspawn every arc. These creatures are released throughout the wild regions on the borders of Shadow districts, and pose a threat to all dwellers of the north, be they resistance hero or Shadow servant.

secrets and rituals from the spirits of Aryth, these mediums have unearthed much knowledge from their ancestors, and at times powerful boons have been granted to them. It is also rumored that in some parts of the Northlands, the shades of great Dornish warriors walk the earth once more, exacting a terrible toll from the Shadow's minions.

The first Dorns

The First Dorns are an ancient legend of the Northmen, predating their migration from the continent of Pelluria. They represent the earliest heroes and heroines of Dornish folklore, the mightiest ancestors of their race. Their identities are disputed; indeed, as individuals they are enigmatic, their exact powers and abilities unknown. However, some of the more contested and prominent names have survived the past ages: Axel, the puissant, the heart of fire; Bodil, the wise, winter's skin; Cendara, the protector, mistress of the air. However, the First Dorns represent more than just beings of great power. To the Dorns, they are actual manifestations of the strongest traits of the people, and throughout the First and Second Ages their examples served to keep the people's honor steadfast.

The forces of Shadow have long known the significance of these beings in Dornish lore, and throughout the Third Age the poisonous influence of Izrador, the twisting lies spread by his servants in the Northlands, caused the Dorns to turn their attentions away from the greatness of their past, from their most revered qualities. Dorn betrayed Dorn for an opportunity to gain stature within a Great House; starving peasants were denied food and shelter so a cruel noble might adorn his communal hall with richer trappings; a warrior denied mercy in a duel, striking down his already defeated opponent. During this dark age, the memory of the First Dorns faded from the minds and hearts of many Northmen. Selfless oaths and honor were forgotten; personal glory and self-preservation became the rule of the day. This corruption of the Dornish way of life spread into the Last Age; the further perpetuation of ignorance and the persecution of those who still celebrate Dornish traditions daily erodes the fragile foundation of their pride as a people.

However, in recent days, flickers of the ancient greatness of the people have begun to appear, not only in the hearts and memories of select heroes, but also in the form of apparitions, visions, and manifestations in the wildest areas of the north. Warriors rumored to drift upon the wind strike at orc patrols, leaving none alive. One of the anuhlir seeks out a remote glacier upon the frozen tundra, and emerges days later with knowledge of lore forgotten for thousands of years. A mhor leads his band of fighters to victory after victory, kindling the courage within his men to an almost incandescent flame. At the most desperate time the Dorns have ever known in their existence, the greatest qualities of this once-proud people have begun to come to life once more. The First Dorns, and the powers they grant to their children, are becoming known to the people once again.



The Mhors

Those in power in the Northlands are either corrupt figureheads or puppets of dark powers. The former leaders of the Great Dornish Houses are gone – killed in honorable combat, betrayed by their own people, or forced into exile. But there are still some who actively defy the Shadow, leaders of men who strike from the shadows of the northern wilderness. These men and women, called mhors, are the closest things to generals the Dorns still have. They lead small bands of fighters against the occupation, using mobility and ambushes to make up for their poorer armaments and smaller numbers. Thanks to the success and notoriety of Roland Redgard, an increasing number of mhors have become emboldened, organizing raids against the flanks of orc encampments and supply trains throughout the Northlands. But these are no heroic saviors; they are grim, pragmatic, and vicious toward those who do not follow their instructions. No mhor can suffer under the illusion that he is Roland, or that his fighting force is a match for a squad of orcs or even a single well-prepared handful of legates; those who let themselves be convinced of such do not last long.

The Vigdir

The appearance of scavengers foraging among the fallen upon a bloody battlefield is an all-too familiar sight to many Dorn raiders wandering the north in the Last Age. However, only one in a hundred Dorns alive today might recall snatches of past myth that would send an icy shiver down the spine of the most stalwart warrior. These snatches of legends, passed along in half-forgotten tales and teachings of the anuhlir, convey a sense of awe as well as terror regarding the beasts that skulk among the dead. Should a man witness their movements of scavengers that seem both less and more than flesh, it is said that he should exit the field expeditiously, for to disturb their activities would be to meddle in the affairs of powerful spirits, risking their ire and deadly retribution.

According to Dornish mythology, scavengers of a less fleshly sort once traveled among the Dornish battle-dead. These *vigdir* were trapped spirits clothed in the bodies of ravens and wolves; their purpose was to seek out the souls of the mightiest Dorn warriors slain in battle and escort them to the vast gathered host of their forefathers. Ordinarily invisible to mortals, they were glimpsed only by those who were near death after a battle, or by victors whose battle frenzy had allowed their vision to attain a clarity beyond that of the mundane world. Where other warriors only saw bestial scavengers, those select Dorns granted this vision saw the specters of guardian spirits. Those of goodly demeanor glimpsed the spirits as tall, stately Dorn women wearing shimmering armor and bearing bright greatswords. Wicked warriors encountering the *vigdir* beheld the macabre vision of a blood-spattered maidens wrapped in a dark cloaks woven from the feathers of fell birds. Regardless of their supposed appear-


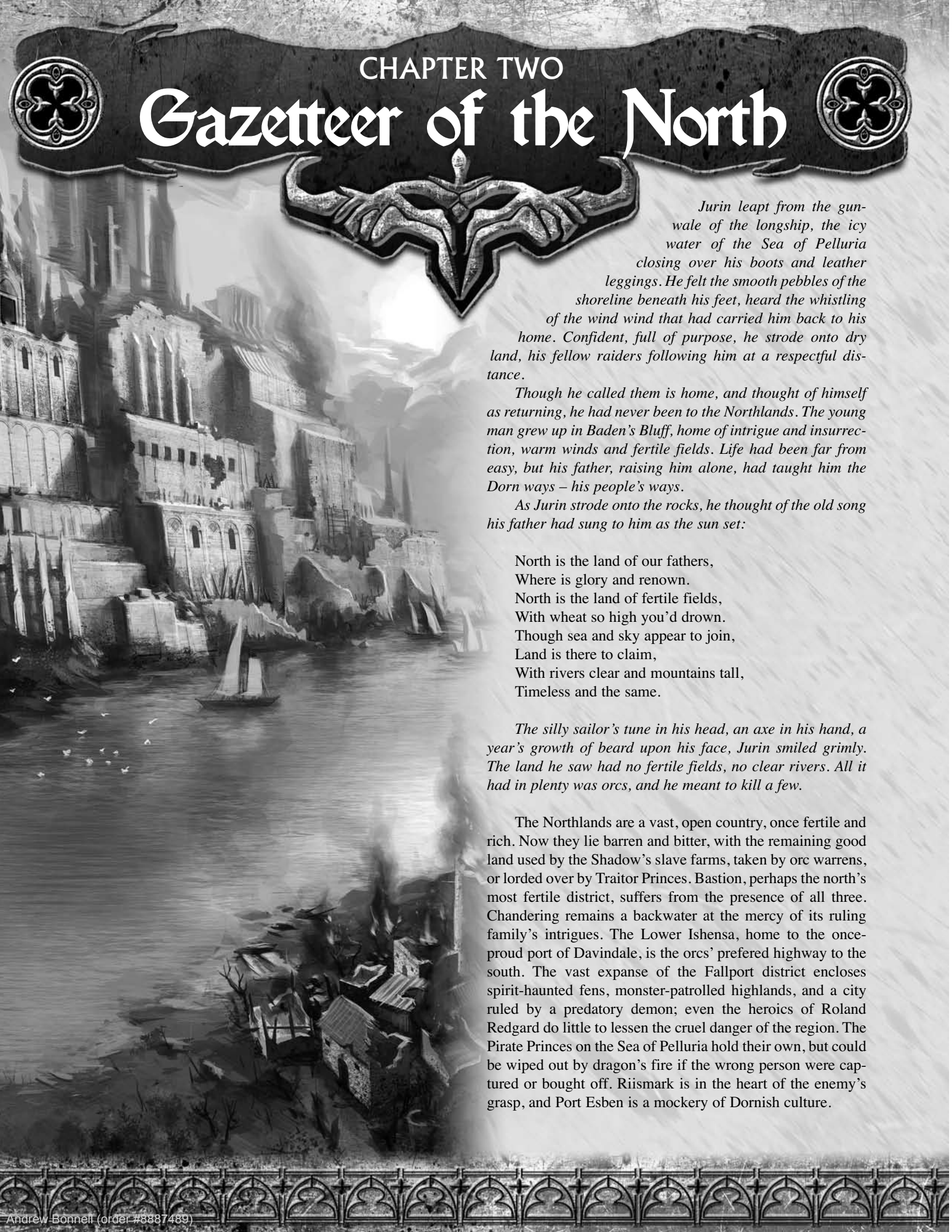
ance, these messengers consumed both the bodies and souls of those they chose. Accounts recorded from the earlier First Age indicate that these spirits were both respected and feared for the duty they performed among the dead. A mixed feeling of honor and regret was shared by the families of the fallen: The attention of the scavengers meant few remains for interment by a man's surviving kin, but provided his family a sense of satisfaction, as they knew the deeds of the fallen had gained the attention of his ancestors.

However, with the rise of the Fell upon Eredane, men no longer glimpsed the spectral forms of these great guardians. The *vigdir* disappeared from Aryth's battlefields, and generations of men coping with the horrible assaults of the risen dead soon forgot the significance of the omens of the wolves and ravens. The anuhlir believe this to be proof that the Fell were no accident, but a plague created by Izrador himself. Not only does their existence mean the torture of all souls upon Aryth, it also forces the Dorns to wonder if their fallen heroes can truly ascend to the mighty spirit host of the Northmen.

Now, in the Last Age, insurgents surviving raids and fierce battles have come to their anuhlir claiming to have seen the spectral shapes of gloriously armored warrior-women, walking among the dead in the guise of the wolf and raven. The meaning of this sudden re-emergence of the *vigdir* is contested by the anuhlir. Some consider their return a great boon for the Dornish people, and a sign that the grip of the Dark God upon the world is weakening. Others fear that the guardian spirits are as corrupted as any of the other Trapped or Lost, and that they merely consume the souls they scavenge, rather than elevate them.

CHAPTER TWO

Gazetteer of the North



Jurin leapt from the gunwale of the longship, the icy water of the Sea of Pelluria closing over his boots and leather leggings. He felt the smooth pebbles of the shoreline beneath his feet, heard the whistling of the wind that had carried him back to his home. Confident, full of purpose, he strode onto dry land, his fellow raiders following him at a respectful distance.

Though he called them his home, and thought of himself as returning, he had never been to the Northlands. The young man grew up in Baden's Bluff, home of intrigue and insurrection, warm winds and fertile fields. Life had been far from easy, but his father, raising him alone, had taught him the Dorn ways – his people's ways.

As Jurin strode onto the rocks, he thought of the old song his father had sung to him as the sun set:

North is the land of our fathers,
Where is glory and renown.
North is the land of fertile fields,
With wheat so high you'd drown.
Though sea and sky appear to join,
Land is there to claim,
With rivers clear and mountains tall,
Timeless and the same.

The silly sailor's tune in his head, an axe in his hand, a year's growth of beard upon his face, Jurin smiled grimly. The land he saw had no fertile fields, no clear rivers. All it had in plenty was orcs, and he meant to kill a few.

The Northlands are a vast, open country, once fertile and rich. Now they lie barren and bitter, with the remaining good land used by the Shadow's slave farms, taken by orc warrens, or lorded over by Traitor Princes. Bastion, perhaps the north's most fertile district, suffers from the presence of all three. Chandering remains a backwater at the mercy of its ruling family's intrigues. The Lower Ishensa, home to the once-proud port of Davindale, is the orcs' preferred highway to the south. The vast expanse of the Fallport district encloses spirit-haunted fens, monster-patrolled highlands, and a city ruled by a predatory demon; even the heroics of Roland Redgard do little to lessen the cruel danger of the region. The Pirate Princes on the Sea of Pelluria hold their own, but could be wiped out by dragon's fire if the wrong person were captured or bought off. Riismark is in the heart of the enemy's grasp, and Port Esben is a mockery of Dornish culture.

Bastion District

In the Last Age, the majority of the populace of Bastion District – slaves, starving villagers, and resistance fighters alike – still revile the Pendor name, and are shamed at his memory. They believe that their former liege lord not only compromised his own honor, but that of all of his people, as well. The urge to resist the Shadow is nearly smothered by the many orc enforcers of the district; but the people’s smoldering hatred of their former lord, and for his corrupt replacement, Samael, will be a long time going out.

Within Pendor Keep, the private chambers once belonging to King Tabel lay undisturbed and unused, as if the occupiers can sense the cloying, pervasive melancholy of the place. Tabel’s cobwebbed study is kept locked, and his last despondent writings lay untouched where they fell from his lifeless hand a century ago.

The people of Bastion District live in pitiful villages scattered across the stark plains. The lands they work, once extremely fertile, have suffered considerable damage from the longer winters under the Shadow. Most villages are also forced to give up all most all of their harvest to tithe-takers supplying the war caravans. Worse, the strongest and healthiest Dornish men and women are often taken in these sweeps: the men to serve on the district’s many slave farms or in the city harbors upon the coast, the women to serve either on farms or as concubines for prominent legates and the Traitor Prince, Sameal. The Dorns also suffer considerable hardship resulting from is the ever-increasing number of orcs migrating from the Northern Marches. Entire villages are often overrun, their people either driven out, or slain and eaten by the orcs who come to claim the fruits of 100 years of occupation. After several chaotic population shifts in the Northern Bastion District, the Dorns are rapidly becoming a minority, and in time, will likely be expelled from the region entirely.

The Traitor Prince Sameal, nicknamed “the Eel” both for his wild, chameleon-like shifts of personality and his gray, scaly skin, rules from Pendor Keep in the city of Bastion. His only true responsibility is to feed the northern armies heading south on the Pellurian Sea, so he levies brutal tithes upon the free villages throughout the district. From the region’s many slaves, he exacts a similarly heavy price in blood. So long as the earth’s yield flows to the orc larders, his masters are content, and so is he. It is darkly ironic that, through his twisted rule, one of the most fertile regions of the Northlands is home to a population where four out of five people are starving.

The fall of Bastion

The movement of the Shadow’s forces brought rumors of extreme bloodshed and suffering to the ears of King Tabel Pendor. Hearing reports of different areas within the Northlands falling to overwhelming attacks, Tabel was reminded of similar tales of horror of the wars of the Second Age. After many days of weighing the noble and courageous

Bastion’s Honor

Katrin advanced upon the frost-bound circle of rough stone plinths, and stooped to one knee before the weathered bier at their center. Laying her broadsword upon the frozen ground in front of her, she paused a moment, then began speaking the phrases of the ritual in a voice as even and unyielding as a steel blade. Her recall of the proper words was imperfect; though she was the daughter of the anuhlir of her village, her own calling was that of a warrior, not a medium. Still, the reverence she held for her forefathers was no less than that of her peoples’ spirit speakers. Having no mastery of formality, she must approach her need from a place she understood.

She drew the broken dagger from within the folds of her fur-lined cloak and placed its halves upon the stone of the bier. Bowing her head, she stated her simple appeal to her ancestors, shirking ceremony; a few brief words straight from the core of her need into the still air. When her request was complete, she remained kneeling, gazing upon the hoary peat before her.

A short gust of wind blew her fair hair about her helm, and the cold intensified. The air within the stone circle began to stir, then swirled with greater force, until within moments the stillness was replaced with the growing roar of winter’s breath. As she slowly raised her head, she saw the dagger, now restored, upon the bier. She was not surprised when the tall, broad shadow fell upon her, and the hiss of drawn steel reached her ears. Grasping her sword, Katrin rose to claim her honor.

legacy of the Dornish people against the destruction the race now faced, he determined that he could not allow his people to be exterminated. It would be better to survive to a later day, even as thralls to a dark master, than to face extinction for clinging to the convictions of a people fallen so far from their days of glory.

So, Tabel took steps to ensure that his soldiery did not waste their lives against the onrushing dark tide. Those of his men of questionable aspect were bought off, paid to shorten patrols and avoid the roads likely to be taken by Izrador’s armies. Soldiers loyal to the kingdom, those most likely to fight to the last against the coming hordes, were requested by Tabel to undertake “dangerous missions” to far-off regions – wild-goose chases meant to keep these heroic men away from Bastion when the armies arrived. Thus, when the vanguard of the dark god’s armies crossed the borders of Pendor lands, they

were allowed to approach unhindered to the gates of Bastion. Tabel thought, without the presence of their armed defenders to bolster them, the people of his realm would taste the same despair he himself felt, or at the least realize they were over-matched against an unbeatable enemy, and capitulate.

However, Tabel grossly underestimated his clansmen's will to fight. Dornish strength and pride ran strong in their blood. They remembered well the lays of the First and Second Ages, and knew that bowing to the Shadow meant compromising their souls, a fate far worse than an honorable death earned in combat. When his people discovered that their king had lost his will to fight, they in turn lost all faith in his leadership. So it was that every hale Dornish man and woman, excepting their king, took up arms when the armies of darkness marched upon the city of Bastion. Led by a handful of brave soldiers who refused to desert their posts, the people of the city blocked the gates as best they could, placing heavily laden carts, barrels, and furniture across the threshold. The men and women of Bastion fought like devils against overwhelming forces.

The resistance of the people of Bastion was fierce but brief, as the waves of darkness washed over the city's defenders. Tabel watched from the window of his tower, and despaired as he witnessed the city gates being breached by oruks and trolls, and saw his people cut down by Izrador's chosen. Blinking through tears of shame and horror, he begged his ancestors for forgiveness for the ruin he had wrought. Tabel Pendor then took his own life, friendless and alone.

The Clanless and the Cursed

The original Dornish settlers of the North believed that how a man dies determines his condition in the afterlife, and they valued the death of a warrior in battle above all other ends. A man dying in his sleep, or from illness, was a cause for distress and sorrow. Men were expected to defeat illness through their own strength, so a warrior who succumbed to an ailment demonstrated his own weakness. Those Dorns dying such undesirable deaths were sometimes considered cursed or tainted in some way. In these cases, their kinsmen often refused to provide the traditional funeral honors. The deceased lost the honor of bringing his possessions and weapons into the afterlife. His items were in turn considered cursed, and were buried or disposed of outside of clan lands. In the Last Age, stores of these ancient artifacts are sometimes discovered in desolate, forgotten places. A rare handful of such treasures have great powers, but they have which that have lain quiescent for thousands of years.

The Shadow

Armies of orcs constantly move through Bastion District on their way to the coast of the Sea of Pelluria, where the bulk flow west toward Fallport, with smaller units heading east to Highwall. Those armies passing through



the city of Bastion occasionally have run-ins with Sameal's orc enforcers, particularly if the Traitor Prince is experiencing conflicting moods. Short, violent altercations are not unheard of, but these are usually broken up quickly and the guilty parties executed on the spot, allowing the flow of troops to continue unabated.

The number of orc noncombatants trickling in from the north have made for power struggles with the human legate presence, particularly in the northern portion of the district, as the kurasatch udareen moving with the tribes seek to extend their influence ever southward. The legates have sanction in and around the city and can pursue their agendas there without fear of violent opposition, but they are advised to travel with heavy escorts when entering lands occupied by orcs.

Over the last several arcs, legates have received word of deadly encounters in the wilds, and sightings of strange phenomena across the district. Entire orc patrols have disappeared without a trace, their bodies later discovered hacked and mangled, looks of outright horror frozen upon their faces. Few orcs have survived these ambushes; those who limped back to their posts, battered and bloody, rave about horrific, wild spirits of unknown origin who appeared out of the mist, and plowed through the orc ranks like giants among children. The specters supposedly stand as tall as orcs and are shaped like men. Their countenances are fierce, their eyes blue like bitter hoarfrost, and their laughter roars like the icy, rushing wind. In battle, they are terrifying to behold, and fear surrounds them like a pale, ghastly shroud. The legates have taken counsel with the powers of Theros Obsidia to counter this growing threat, and some are attempting to take advantage of the situation to bolster their own position against the orc warlordss with whom they contend. If the legates could somehow gain control over these warrior-spirits, it could tip the balance of power in Bastion in the priests' favor.

City of Bastion

The vast slave farms of Bastion are a stark reminder to the Dorns that they are utterly defeated. Men, women and children face the prospect of years filled with exhausting labor, and as their reward they receive sparse servings of spoiled, moldy rations and are forced to sleep in overcrowded, rat-infested hovels. The orc enforcers of Sameal the Eel are disgusted at their lot; they are forced to serve the unpredictable whims of an insane human figurehead whom they consider to be weak and completely unstable. Further, many of these members of his "personal guard" have been harshly beaten or even executed after carrying out an order Sameal later countermanded during one of his frequent personality changes. They dare not oppose the Traitor Prince, so they vent their frustrations upon the slaves, who are often beaten or executed for insubordination and attempts at escape. Sometimes these charges hold merit, sometimes not.

Sameal (Male Sarcosan Ftr [Adapter] 6/Pellurian Blade Dancer 4) is despised by the people of Bastion, and with good reason. Prone to dramatic mood swings and personality

Legacy of the Cursed

Possessions and weapons of cursed Dorns of ages past were often buried or disposed of outside of clan lands. The powers of these covenant items might be exceptional, more powerful than a standard covenant item, but such powers always carry an accompanying drawback with their use. For instance, a staff might allow its wielder to drain hit points from a target within 50 feet once per day, imparting the damage to the wielder as bonus spell energy, but the wielder has no choice as to the target of this power; the victim is determined randomly.

The nature of a given item's curse is directly related to the fate of the person who once bore the item, often mirroring that unfortunate Dorn's behavior. So, a warrior who was vilified and exiled for his debilitating disease might have passed on his feelings of isolation and melancholy to the covenant item. The new bearer might suffer a penalty to Fortitude saves against diseases while carrying the item, and each time he uses an item's power, he may risk falling into a bout of depression, perhaps suffering a penalty to attacks and Will saves.

changes, his edicts often contradict themselves, and he often gives over to virulent outbursts against his orc enforcers. One stable facet of his personality, however, is his deep-seated hatred of all Dorns; Sameal openly disparages them and their warrior spirit. He goes out of his way to not only abuse his subjects, but to humiliate them thoroughly. Twice a year, he holds public tournaments of battle, where the strongest Dorn slaves are forced to fight among themselves in mortal combat. These contests involve various match ups: single combat, pairs, as well as all-out brawls with many combatants. Dorns are sometimes forced to fight with Dornish ancestral weapons held by Sameal as war trophies; other times they must use the weapons of their enemies: crude clubs, axes, and even vardatches. The last combatant left alive at the end of the day of butchery has the opportunity to win his freedom, if he can defeat one last opponent: Sameal himself. This is a near-impossible prospect, as by this time the fighter is often on death's door. In addition, the Eel is a highly skilled warrior, and his corruption by the Shadow makes him quite resilient to damage. The inevitable result of these mock tourneys is the grisly death of the "honored combatant" at Sameal's hands. And, if the defeat of yet another Dorn hopeful is not enough humiliation for his subjects, Sameal concludes the tournament day by holding a public feast – though only he and his cronies are invited to the table. The oft-starving slaves are

Dorn Mercenaries

As the fourth generation of humans is born under the Shadow's dominion, Dornish mercenaries are becoming more prevalent, serving as auxiliaries in Jahzir's armies, temple guards, and escorts for legates traveling through the north. With little effective resistance and the seemingly doomed population in the Northlands, the Shadow has allowed local administrators, petty lords, legates, and soldiers who have proven their loyalty and leadership to recruit and arm human warriors. Even with Jahzir's approval, though, the number of human mercenaries is low, less than five thousand.

While Jahzir has approved the use of human as mercenaries, bearing arms in the Northlands is still illegal for anyone but orcs and goblin-kin. Mercenaries must carry a token from their sponsor that is clearly visible at all times. That token is usually a badge with the symbol of Izrador on its front and the mark of the sponsor (lord, legate, etc) on its reverse. The sponsor is responsible for the conduct of his soldiers and to ensure the tokens do not fall into the hands of the resistance. Losing a token often costs the mercenary his life or at least his freedom. To prevent the resistance from copying the tokens, they are cast in iron and the workmanship is well beyond what a simple smithy could produce.

There are a variety of reasons why humans would serve their oppressors. A large number of the mercenaries were raised to revere Izrador and take up arms due to their fanatical loyalty. These devout worshippers serve as temple guards and in the personal retinue of legates who prefer the company of their own kind to the brutish orcs. Most mercenaries, however, serve not out of devotion, but instead to protect and feed their families, trying to shield their communities by loyal service to the Shadow. By preventing resistance attacks and ensuring the safety of the roads, they lessen the burden of the tithe, providing for as a good of life as is possible in the Last Age; finding it far better to serve with a sword in their hands than in chains. The last, but most dangerous type of mercenaries are those that serve the Dark God to inflict pain and to carve their path to advancement in the Shadow's hierarchy through the misery and blood of their own race.

forced to watch them eat their sumptuous repast, while he regales his audience for hours with tales of Tabel Pendor. He takes great pleasure in reminding the Dorns that, had they followed their leader's example and capitulated before the Shadow, they would have assured themselves a bountiful, if compliant, future. Sameal then cackles with glee as the Dorns are marched back into the fields, forced to work throughout the night. After all, they must make up the day of labor lost to the "festival."

Sameal's impulses and decrees have taken a great toll upon his subjects and close servants, but his practices do not interfere with the purposes of his legate advisors nor those of the orc warchief Tzudar (Ftr [Leader of Men] 9) and his troops. The true power and control of Bastion is contested between these two factions, who have learned to manipulate Sameal, mainly in his few lucid moments, to further their own aims. Thus far, the legates and orcs have avoided open conflict with one another, preferring to accomplish their aims behind the cover of Sameal's outlandish exploits and contradictory commands.

Against the Shadow

Resistance in Bastion District is light. Small parties of Dornish fighters, led by their mhors, emerge only rarely from the wilds to harry patrols and raid war caravans. Their overall impact is light, as they can do no more than slow the inevitable flow of troops and material south toward the war fronts. However, through the increasing intervention of the anuhlir, the Dornish resistance has recently gained some incredibly powerful allies. Mighty spectral warriors, the strongest of the Dorns' ancestral dead, have answered the spirit speakers' pleas. In a handful of desperate engagements between Dorns and overwhelming numbers of orcs and oruks, these spectral champions have appeared alongside their descendants, and have turned the tide. Those Dorns who refuse to surrender to the Shadow fight with a new purpose, as they know their ancestors have looked upon their deeds, and bestowed upon them their favor.

In addition, resistance fighters have increasingly witnessed the appearance of the rumored guardian spirits of the Dorns, the vigdir, passing among the fallen warriors after raids against Shadow forces. The ongoing teachings of the anuhlir, coupled with the direct intervention of figures straight out of the oldest Dornish mythology, have caused many warriors to re-evaluate the way they conduct themselves. Those men and women who refuse to bow to oppression are unsure as to the fate of their people, but they wonder: Having lost the Northlands to Izrador, are the Dorns being given this one last chance to redeem their honor?

Chandering District

Ever since he sold his soul, his crown, and his people to Izrador in return for revenge, Gregor Chander has let his lands fall apart around him. Quickly aging but never dying, he has ruled his fiefs like a madman for the last 80 years. His reign of hate and cruelty has left the land cut off and desolate. The Chander family has almost disappeared through a century of infighting. Legate advisors have usurped more and more power in the name of Prince Gregor and the Order of Shadow. Orc warlords do not go so far as to let their troops pillage, but their soldiers are ever-present; albeit supervised by legates, odrendor warriors oversee much of the district, and have taken over the duty of tax collecting, one of the few profitable businesses in Chandering. Isolated and forgotten in the mountains, entire villages have disappeared off the maps. They think themselves free of the Shadow's grip, only to be rediscovered and plundered by self-serving tithe-takers hunting for more goods to fill their coffers. Chandering falls steeply into ruin, and vengeful farmers take to the wilderness to wage war on their corrupt lord.

The Shadow

Gregor Chander still rules the lands of his forefathers, but only in name. In truth, nearly all of his power has been usurped by legate advisors at the expense of his own family. As long as he is alive, the legates claim to be speaking through him, and none can contest their claims. The scheming legates try to hide the condition of Chander and his lands from the outside world, relishing in the freedom that isolation brings. As long as the tower receives its tithes, few notice what goes on in this corner of the world. Gregor cares for nothing, and the legates care only for themselves.

The lands of Chandering are hard to control. The people are spread thin across a steep, mountainous land. Proper roads are extremely hard to maintain, especially with the threat of resistance attack. Sheriffs are appointed by legates and given orc enforcers to aid them in their duties if the village is of sufficient size, then left to their own devices. Coordination is next to impossible, and only a few small shrines to Izrador have been established inland. Legates hardly ever travel the area, except when collecting taxes during harvest season. The fanatical few who tempt fate, mainly legates of the Voice of Shadow, are as likely to become lost in the mountains or fall prey to resistance fighters as they are to make any converts.



The Chanders

House Chander has never been a prosperous noble family. Since their early conflicts with the dwarves, there were always tensions between Chander and their mountain fey neighbors. Chandering did not benefit from the trade that made house Orin strong. Their own lands were poor, and they had little to offer Erenland or the elves, it was always a hard land to live in and its people and leaders early on became as bitter and grim as the soil they tilled. The Last Age is no exception, though now, after a century of infighting and legate plots, the line of House Chander is almost dead.

Prince Gregor

Having lived more than a century in the waning grace of Izrador, Gregor Chander is a gnarled, withering husk of a man. His eyesight faded and his mind addled, the only thing that remains is a small, vile creature clinging to life through sheer malignant stubbornness and fear of what awaits him in death. Gregor spends his days atop his throne in the long dark hall of his ancestors, maddened by his unnaturally long life and his bond with Izrador. He mumbles pointless verdicts and issues orders that no one can complete, sometimes falling into wheezing fits of laughter or rage for no obvious reason. He depends on constant legate magic to keep his mind clear and his legs working. Several attempts have been made upon his life by ambitious heirs, but nothing seems capable of killing him; the assaults have only crippled him further. While the



prince disappears into the hell inside his head, the legates who once advised him have taken over much of the authority in Chanderling, to his remaining family's resentment.

Frederic

Born deformed and addle-brained more than 60 years ago, Frederic has been kept alive by Prince Gregor in order to mock the child's mother for her failure to deliver Gregor a proper child. As the years passed and the child grew, Gregor's revulsion of his son turned to fascination, and then, strangely enough, to love. In Chander's court of infighting and fratricide, Frederic was the only tranquil constant. Barely able to talk, and never developing intellect beyond a child's, he became Gregor's favored son. Though he could never inherit the throne, the traitor prince keeps the boy with him always. Now an old man himself, Frederic is kept alive by legate magic on his father's orders. He spends his days squatting by his decaying father's throne, holding his hand, laughing when he laughs, crying when he rages, and unwittingly waiting for death. Some legates fear that Frederic's inevitable death will persuade his father to pass away, and they do their best to protect and sustain his too-old son.

Garth

A late son by a late daughter, Garth is still in his thirties, 100 years younger than his grandfather. Garth grew up being ignored and looked down upon by everyone. Hating the court, he chose a military path for himself, preferring the hon-

est brutality of soldiers to the insidious cruelty practiced by his family. As his family and those loyal to House Chander kept dying off, Garth found himself climbing through the ranks without exerting any effort. He took command of the house guard, and eventually all of Chanderling's forces. Violent, grim, but with a penchant for pillage and rape, Garth is highly popular among the soldiers and mercenaries of his grandfather. He prefers to lead from the front, fighting with a fury that impresses even the orcs. Those under his command are almost guaranteed to see violence and bloodshed, even if it is usually against defenseless peasants.

Garth is one of two remaining Chanders fit to take the throne should Gregor die. Though he knows that his half-sister is ambitious, the armed might of the house supports him and has no fear of the woman. Should the time come for him to take the throne, he will attempt to do so, and is willing to have his sister executed, if necessary. In the meantime, he is content with letting her bear the brunt of courtly intrigue as she seeks more power.

Vida

Voluptuous, dusky-skinned and dark-haired, Gregor's granddaughter Vida combines Sarcosan features with a Dornish frame that seems tailor-made for bearing many children. It is a combination that has left her living in fear and hatred of men all her life, as hungry-eyed knights, legates, and even brothers have stalked her footsteps, seeking to produce heirs of noble blood. Vida was eventually married to a mercenary captain in one of her father's power schemes, and she remembers her first years of marriage as a long nightmare of rapes, hidden beatings, and constant fear. She gave the man two sons before she convinced him to kill her own father, then exposed him and saw him tortured to death. Gripped by a lust for vengeance, she then killed her own two infant sons. This most horrifying exploit created a forsaken (see *Minions of Shadow*), and murdered an entire branch of the family before legates intervened, halting the massacre. Rumor says that the monster still lives somewhere, hidden away by Vida.

Vida's cold heart and cruel intelligence make her the only person truly fit to take the reins when and if Gregor Chander dies. Playing the legates against each other while underplaying her own authority, she has managed to set herself up as a wolf in sheep's clothing. The Order of Shadow is sure to back any claim she makes for the throne. Should she need it, she could also lure some mercenary captain to side with her. Such a joining would be short-lived for the man, but beneficial for Vida.

High Road

Wrested from House Chanderling through their sheer numbers, High Road is now yet another bastion of the odrendor. Secure in the foothills of the Kaladrans, it marks the beginning of the dangerous trek through the mountains to the ancient cities of the dwarves. Built to ease travel between the Dorn and the mountain fey in supporting the Fortress Wall, High Road once saw large amounts of trade between the two peoples. Now, it sees only the passing of soldiers of the Shadow, marching to bloodshed and death.

Once a trading post, High Road has been heavily reinforced and turned into a true war camp. It is overseen by the newly selected orc warchief Dargash the Bloody-Fisted, of the Mother of Blood (LE fighter 11), and houses half a legion of orcs, their auxiliaries, and a contingent of slave workers. Their only task is to maintain control of the road. Dargash pursues this goal with single-minded dedication. So far, nothing threatens his position, and his troops do little but march and drill. Despite his dedication, Dargash is tired of seeing other troops march off to glory, sneering at his men as they pass by. He would leap at any chance for combat.

Against the Shadow

A hundred years ago, when Gregor Chander ordered his men to withdraw from the Fortress Wall, few expected what was to come. The under-equipped soldiers were happy to get away from their haughty, boisterous Davin peers and return to their farms and families. When the Shadow fell over Erenland and Prince Gregor revealed his treason, those who would have been able to offer resistance in Chanderling were scattered throughout the territory. News of what had come to pass reached the isolated villages through the sudden attention of soldier legates and armored orcs; Izrador's forces had taken the north, and soon Jahzir would be crowned High King.

Refusing to be traded away like livestock for Prince Gregor's chance at revenge, many men picked up their shields and spears to resist. They were too few and too late, but while their vanguard died on orc blades, the rest scattered and regrouped. Former hunters and farmers familiar with the land, these Dorns keep the fight going in whatever way they can. Legate tax collectors and orc patrols disappear in the mountains. Bridges and roads are destroyed. The farms of traitors burn down during the night, their livestock stolen.

Their homes hidden in caves and overgrown hunting lodges in the wilds, the resistance fighters meet at secret locations on the first day after each full moon, sharing information and planning their actions for the coming arc. They possess no proper leadership, instead electing leaders on the spot for the next planned strike.

Chief among the resistance fighters' goals is establishing alliance with the dwarves. Despite their history of bad relations, they reason that any grudges should be held against House Chander, not those who oppose the traitor prince. The

The Battle of High Road

When the Dorns first came to Erenland, they came as a people intent on conquest. Having crossed the Sea of Pelluria, King Elbern Chander took his men east, drawn by the tales of the riches of fabled Caladale. Word of the Dorns traveled ahead of them as they searched for a pathway to the fabled city. By the time they found the passes now known as High Road, the dwarven defenders were well prepared for them. Savvy mountain warriors, they waited for the Dorns deep in the mountain, letting ice, snow, and stone do their work for them. By the time the Dorns met their enemy, they were already defeated. Honorably, Durnang Thedron offered the Dorns free passage home, praising the Dorns for their tenacity. Proudly, the king refused.

Elbern Chander died in the first clash, crushed under the stones of a dwarven siege engine. Hearing of his death, the Dor of Caladale halted the fighting, offering the king's heir, Elgran, a new chance to surrender. When he went to negotiate with the prince, a murder of black eagles circled overhead like carrion birds. Elgran, grieving and gripped by rage, struck the Dor with his sword, crippling him for life. In the chaos that followed, the Dorns were forced to retreat, harried all the way through the mountains by the enraged but leaderless dwarves. Animosity has existed between the men of Chanderling and the dwarves ever since. Even with the unification of Erenland and the construction of the Fortress Wall, contact remained at a minimum.

enemy of your enemy should be your friend, and the Dorns desperately need the dwarven metals to keep their warriors equipped. So far the scouts sent into the Kaladrans have been unsuccessful at finding any dwarven settlements, let alone surviving the harsh environment. They instead encounter orcs, goblin-kin, and Shadowspawn also on the hunt for dwarven homes. Until any allies are found, the resistance in Chanderling will remain isolated and undersupplied.

Resistance is more restricted along the coast of the Sea of Pelluria, the villages much more heavily patrolled by Chander's men-at-arms and mercenaries. In fishing villages along the coast, youngsters practice combat techniques taught to them by defenders smuggled in by the Pirate Princes. Fishing vessels out of sight of land pass on information and recruits to House Norfall's ships, in return for tools and protection. Thanks to their aid, the Pirate Prince's ships have been able to raid the harbor at Chanderling three times, each time sinking navy vessels, stealing cargoes, and carrying off



as many escapees as they could. Rumor says a fourth raid is being planned, and that this time, the Norfalls will push all the way to Chander Keep.

The Bear Lord

Where the Bear Lord and his companions come from no one knows, but over the course of the last five years tales of their deeds have spread like wildfire throughout the region. Stories claim he stands as tall at the shoulder as a horsed man, that his paws crush armored orcs like twigs, and that he can tear the head off an oruk with a single bite. Leading a group of savage men and wild beasts, the Bear Lord and his followers have become a fearsome, elusive threat to the already weak Chander authority. They launch brutal raids and ambushes upon the Shadow's minions throughout the district, leaving nothing but utter carnage behind. Men and animals alike follow him, driven to a primal hatred of anything tainted by the Shadow. Only a few deceased who later rose as Fell, along with *speak with dead* spells, have yielded any clues to this new threat. Legate tax collectors fear to head into the hills to gather tribute for their god, even when accompanied by many fists of orc warriors. Even to the resistance, the Bear Lord is a mystery. Though they have attempted to establish contact with the creature, all their attempts have so far yielded no response.

The Bear Lord can take the shape of both man and bear, both forms figures of great power, though none seem to know which his true form is. Some claim he is a lost heir to House Chandering, a good man cursed with the shape of a beast as part of Izrador's deal with Gregor Chander. Others believe him to be a spirit of nature, manifested to protect the land. Darker stories say he was once a cruel man who embraced his own bestiality to such an extent that he took the shape of an animal. Now, the tales say only actions that prove his humanity and his compassion can save him from his curse, and he has become a king of once-wicked creatures seeking redemption. In the court, some say he must be a tool of the Mother of Blood, sent to destroy House Chander. Stories of the Bear Lord have even reached Erethor, where some think the creature is a dire animal, lost and isolated since the Third Age.

Regardless of what people claim, the Bear Lord has fast become a grave threat to the Shadow's authority. Possessing no ties to any known settlements, presumably living like wild animals, his followers are even harder to root out than the already elusive resistance. Legates tasked with hunting him down have all been killed, and frustration has reached the point where the Order's minions in Chandering have contemplated calling on Theros Obsidia for help. So far, their fear of outside intervention outweighs their fear of the Bear Lord.

Lower Ishensa District

As the first century of the Shadow's dominion comes to a close, much of the former Davin lands have reverted to wilderness, their people killed or fled. Only along the river road do vassal villages and slave-run farms still till the soil, providing food for the local garrisons and labor to keep the road in good repair. The road is heavily traveled by warbands and caravans bound for the docks in Davindale. The great city is still mostly in ruins, a monument to the Night of Fiends. The Shadow has restored only the former Davin Keep and the docks, which are crucial to the Night King Jahzir's offensives against the fey. These once-rich lands, long coveted by Prince Gregor the Betrayer, have been left fallow. The Prince's dreams of avarice, of claiming the Davin lands as his own, are dust. The Shadow has denied him both control and influence. His deal was made, and for the price of his soul he received only his enemies' destruction.

The Fall of Davindale

In the waning days of the Third Age, even with the slow decline of the Kingdom of Erenland, the port of Davindale thrived. From its commanding position at the mouth of the Ishensa River, the city dominated trade in the eastern Pelluria. Its prominence and wealth, however, were ultimately the cause of its destruction. Prince Gregor Chander, leader of House Chander and lord of Chandering, watched Davindale with covetous eyes. Belittled or ignored by his Dorn peers, Prince Gregor succumbed to his rage and petty ambition, listening to the dark whispers that promised him power and sweet revenge. In the Dorns' darkest hour, he sold his honor and his soul to Izrador in return for the destruction of House Davin and its prize city.

On a moonless night on the last day of the Arc of Doshram, Gregor unleashed a pack of fiends on the unsuspecting keep. Their first mission was to hunt down and slaughter every member of House Davin, delivering their corpses to the elite Shadow scouts that had traveled by secret path and on dark wings to wait outside the gates. Once that was accomplished, the gates were sealed, and the demons received their reward: the rest of the city as their plaything. By sunrise the port was in ruins; fires spread unchecked, creating a massive funeral pyre for the thousands of dead. House Davin was no more, and any effective resistance to the Shadow's invasion of the district was eliminated. The Dark God's bargain with the Traitor Prince was complete. In return for the power to destroy House Davin, Chander withdrew his badly needed troops from the defense of the Fortress Wall. Worse, he convinced those same commanders to lead his troops against Highwall, Low Rock, and Fallport under the guise of a bid for power over the Dornish lands. Those sol-

The Hunted

After months of patient waiting, husbanding my strength, saving scraps of food, enduring the overseer's lash, it came. My chance to escape. The net holding the cargo split, spilling the crates to the pier. A few slaves got crushed, and guards, too! The rest rushed to help the wounded, leaving me unwatched. I moved fast. Nobody noticed me. I made it to the empty storehouses at the end of our pier. I knew it wouldn't be long before they missed me. Once I was clear of the piers I ran. I lost myself in the ruins, scrambled through broken buildings, hid under trash and corpses. I made my way, slowly, a little every day and night, to the walls.

And now that I've seen them, I know it's all pointless. There's no way to get out of this hell. It's been a week, and I can barely stand. I'm too hungry to think. The orcs aren't even bothering to chase me. But something else is. Something is hunting me. I can hear it as it moves through the rubble. It's herding me. Deeper into the darkness. It'll come for me soon... tonight.

diers, dark-hearted as they were, were shocked and horrified to discover that they had only weakened their kinsmen's defenses in preparation for the orcish horde that then streamed past the Fortress Wall. By then, however, it was too late. Most of them, like their master, sold their souls to the Shadow rather than face the guilt over what they had done.

The Shadow

The Greater Legate Judela Marcosa rules this district from the black temple in Davindale. She controls the Ishensa River from the fortress of Three Fords in the north to the Pelluria, and nominally all territory within 200 miles on either side of the river. Including the garrisons at Three Fords and Davindale, she has 6,000 orcs and human mercenaries under her command. If necessary, Judela can also usurp control of warbands transiting south to reinforce her garrison. With this force she mans watchposts along the river and patrols the roads to Bastion, Port Esben, and Chandering. She spares little effort to patrol the eastern bank of the river or the trails leading into the Barrens. The scattered human population there is no threat, as far as she is concerned, and is useful to her only as slave fodder.

Judela is a member of the Cabal and acts as their gatekeeper in Davindale, carefully screening south-going legates to determine their loyalties. Only those in the service of the

Cabal are assigned to the orc legions and the largest and best equipped warbands, furthering the Cabal's influence with the most elite of the Shadow's army. Those of uncertain loyalty or who clearly show themselves to servants of the devout are assigned to lesser warbands or assigned to guard merchant caravans. Recently she has become aware that a number of legates loyal to the Night King Sunulael have disappeared or died mysteriously in her district over the past three years. The numbers are too high to be accidental or attributable to the very weak local resistance. She is tolerating and not reporting the deaths, as they serve the interests of the Cabal. However, if deaths among the Cabal legates begin to rise she will leave no stone unturned to find the killers.

Davindale

Once the bright jewel of the Pelluria, Davindale is now just a pale reflection of the city that once dominated the Ishensa River Valley. At its height, Davindale was the nexus of trade between the Dornish north, the dwarves in the north-

The Landing

The Landing was spared the destruction of the Night of Fiends, and most of its population was able to escape the advance of the orc armies. Being isolated by the river from the rich farmlands to the west, unwallled, and of no military significance, the town was ignored by the Shadow's armies. Over the past century the Landing has been quietly occupied by refugees, escaped slaves, and goblin-kin. Davindale's orc garrison is loathe to cross the wide river, allowing for a modicum of safety to those hiding in the collapsed structures. A band of brutal hobgoblin slavers occasionally sweeps the sprawling village, but they are far from thorough.

The town shelters anywhere from 50 to 200 refugees and escaped slaves at any given time, though up to a quarter of these are claimed by the slavers every few arcs. Those who survive and retain their freedom are the ones who are most careful to hide their presence, masking open flames at night, covering their tracks, and using filth and animal corpses to mask the scents near their hiding spots. The most subtle and skilled are actually Norfall agents, there to monitor the shipping leaving Davindale. Messengers with ship schedules are sent down the eastern bank of the river to Norfall picket ships that hide on isolated cays in the Ishensa delta. The town provides a perfect observation post, and has allowed the Norfalls to determine when the most important cargoes are leaving Davindale.

ern Kaladrans, and the Erenlander and Sarcosan cities of the south. Davindale easily overshadowed Port Esben and Chanderling, pairing with Erenhead to dominate shipping upon the eastern Pelluria. Before the fall, more than 20,000 Dorns called the city home, working the docks, shipyards, and industries that made House Davin amongst the richest and most influential of the Dornish great houses. The main city sprawled along the west bank of the mighty river, with over a mile of reinforced piers. South of the city, in stone-lined canals, ships were built with cedar and oak felled from the dense forests in the Kaladrun foothills. To the north and west of the city were boro-slaughtering yards and silos for corn and grain brought from the farmlands of the river basin. On the eastern shore, directly across from the docks, was the Landing, a bustling town supplying dwarven goods to the markets in Davindale. The Landing was already badly in decline before the fall of Davindale, as the dwarves had long since closed their holdfasts to traders.

Today the city remains mostly a ruin. After nearly a century, the scars of the Night of Fiends are still visible. The once-proud walls have been allowed to decay, not worth the cost in resources to repair as there is no threat to the Shadow's dominance. Only two of the city's five districts, the keep and the docklands, have been restored. The former Davin Keep is home to the Shadow's garrison, the city's primary dark temple, and the limited administrative offices necessary to ensure the quick transit of supplies to the armies in the south. The keep dominates the northern edge of the city, looming over the entrance to Davindale's vital harbor. The docklands stretch the entire length of the city, ending in a still-functioning and patrolled gate that leads to the animal corrals outside the walls. The merchant, artisan, and residential districts, which make up the remainder of the city, are in various states of disrepair. Some warehouses on the edges of these areas have been rebuilt or converted into quarters for the slave labor used to work the docks. With a total population of less than 4,000 humans and Shadow servants, the great city feels dead. The orc garrison swarms over portions of the city, like parasites stripping the carcass of a once-great beast.

The restored areas of the city are firmly under the Shadow's control. Two seasoned warbands of the Blood Mother tribe, almost 800 warriors, man the keep, harbor, and the watchposts on the roads leading into the city. The orcs are focused on maintaining the flow of supplies along the river, and thus rarely patrol outside the docklands. With almost three-quarters of the city in ruins, there are numerous bolt holes, cellars, and even free-standing buildings that can act as temporary or permanent shelters for escaped slaves, deserting Shadow servants, and rogue shadowspawn...but the ruins are far from safe. The orc garrison occasionally sweeps through sections of the ruins, recapturing slaves or killing beasts that threaten the safe operation of the harbor, but there are limits. They never do so at night, never venture deep into the city, and never travel in numbers less than a fist.

The orcs believe that they are being watched, and that something hunts their patrols. Recaptured slaves speak of hearing sounds of digging and strange voices in the night. The only explanation is that the demons originally set loose by Gregor to kill the Davins still roam the city in form, preying as they wish.

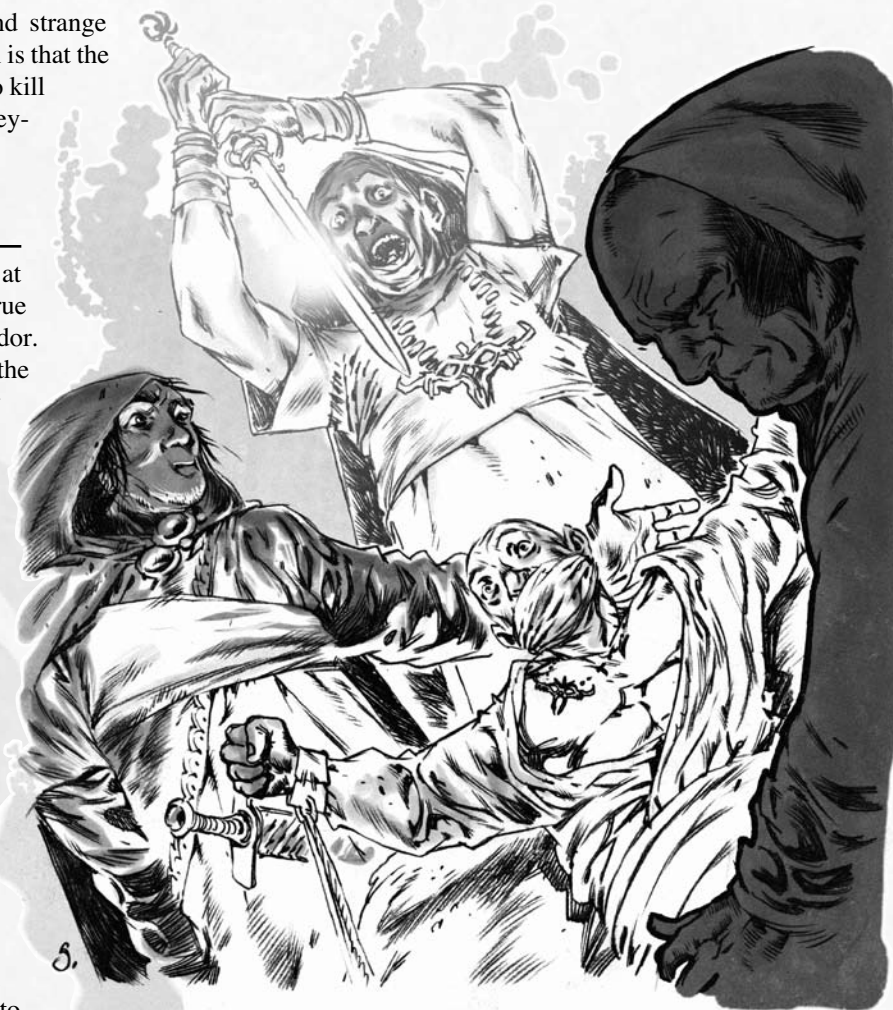
The Pure

With the corruption of the monks at Bandilrin, the Dorns became the first true priests of the Shadow, legates to Izrador. For centuries the true believers among the Dorns gave their souls and risked their lives to spread the Dark God's faith. All that mattered was complete devotion to the one true God. Legates served selflessly, unconcerned with benefit or rank. With the arrival of the Sarcosans and ultimately with the rise of the Night King Sunulael, divisions formed within their ranks. Factions fought hidden wars for influence, power, and material gain. Theros Obsidia was split between the Devout and the Cabal. All those who stood in their way were eliminated or pushed aside. Those truly loyal to Izrador had to watch quietly as the most powerful of the legates moved further and further from the path of utter devotion. With the fall of the Kingdom of Erenland and with the One God's victory at hand, the greed and arrogance of these fallen priests know no bounds. In this Last Age, legates who refuse to join the petty games of power are banished to isolated and forgotten fanes, left to rot while the Cabal and the Devout use their positions for personal gain.

One of the discarded was Hakon, a Dorn warrior legate, sent in 56 LA to the ruined shrine at Malacon north of Davindale. Malacon was once a thriving river town that sickened and died due to the petty games of power between the cabal and the devout. Infighting between the two factions disrupted the ritual that empowered Malacon's corith. On that moonless night, the mirror unleashed Izrador's corruption, destroying all it touched, searing the life from the land. In this blasted and dead terrain, Hakon could not feel the power or presence of his God. The land was a void, providing nothing to the service of Izrador. After months of deprivation and silent prayer, the priest came to believe that the Dark God had guided him to the ruined fane to show him what became of those who turned from the faith. He understood that he had been given a task: he must restore the Order of Shadow to the true path, punishing those who lacked devotion and misused the gifts of the One God. Their blood would sanctify the land,

restoring the corith and feeding the God's rapacious hunger. On that day, Hakon became the first of the Pure, the true priests of the Shadow.

Over the past 50 years, the blood of dozens of legates has stained the altar in Malacon, their disappearance blamed on the resistance, the Fell, or the rivalry between the Cabal and the Devout. The ranks of the Pure have grown, and while their numbers are still small, they have successfully infiltrated temples throughout the district, posing as loyal members of the Devout or the Cabal. They carefully choose their victims and bide their time, sometimes waiting years for the perfect opportunity. Their survival depends on remaining hidden until they are strong enough to cleanse all the unworthy from the district. Hakon, now 70 years old, still leads this small group, kept strong by his fervor and by the drive to purify his faith. He faked his own death years ago to provide him the freedom he needs to run the order. He now spends his day in prayer around the altar at Malacon, waiting patiently to spill the blood of his brethren who haven fallen from the true path.



The Whisper in the Night

On the Night of Fiends, the demon known as the Whisper in the Night was amongst the vanguard to breach the defenses of Davin Keep. Hidden behind his larger brethren, the demon slipped by the keep's guards and began the hunt for its favorite prey, the most innocent and pure: the children of House Davin. As the Davin guards tried desperately to defend the keep, the Whisper in the Night sought out the nursery. The demon was the lurker in the dark, the beast that brought visions of innocent pleasure, visions that hid razor-sharp claws. The Whisper knew its prey, knew where they would hide, where their nurses and guardians would run. The Whisper reveled in the pleasure of luring the children and their guardians to their deaths. Its claws ended any hope for the Davin line.

Having been kept so long under the Dark God's tight leash, the demon gorged itself on the young souls, so easily available south of the Fortress Wall. In the chaos of the final hours of Davindale, the Whisper disappeared into the rubble of the ruined city, unwilling to relinquish its newfound freedom. For the past century the demon has lurked in the ruins of Davindale, hunting the children of slaves and overseers equally. The Whisper is careful not to alert the legates of its presence, and kills any servant of the Shadow that threaten its independence. The demon has had a century to scour the ruins of Davindale, and its lair is decorated with the grisly remains of its favorite victims. Bones of the Davin heirs, corpses of youngling legates, and trophies from its assassination of the occasional orc decorate the former warehouse cellar it has converted into its lair. Items of great historical and emotional significance to House Davin are casually strewn through the bones.

The demon is a master of illusion, able to mimic the appearance and characteristics of a trusted friend, a helpless traveller, or even a child's doll.

The Whisper relies on surprise and speed to make its kill, as it is ill-suited for lengthy combat. Misshaped, with long, gangly arms and a

frail seemingly withered body, the demon lacks the strength of its kin.

The Whisper repelled by its own visage and abhors mirrors. All mirrors must be destroyed before it attacks. When the moon is high, it also shuns areas with standing water to avoid its own reflection.

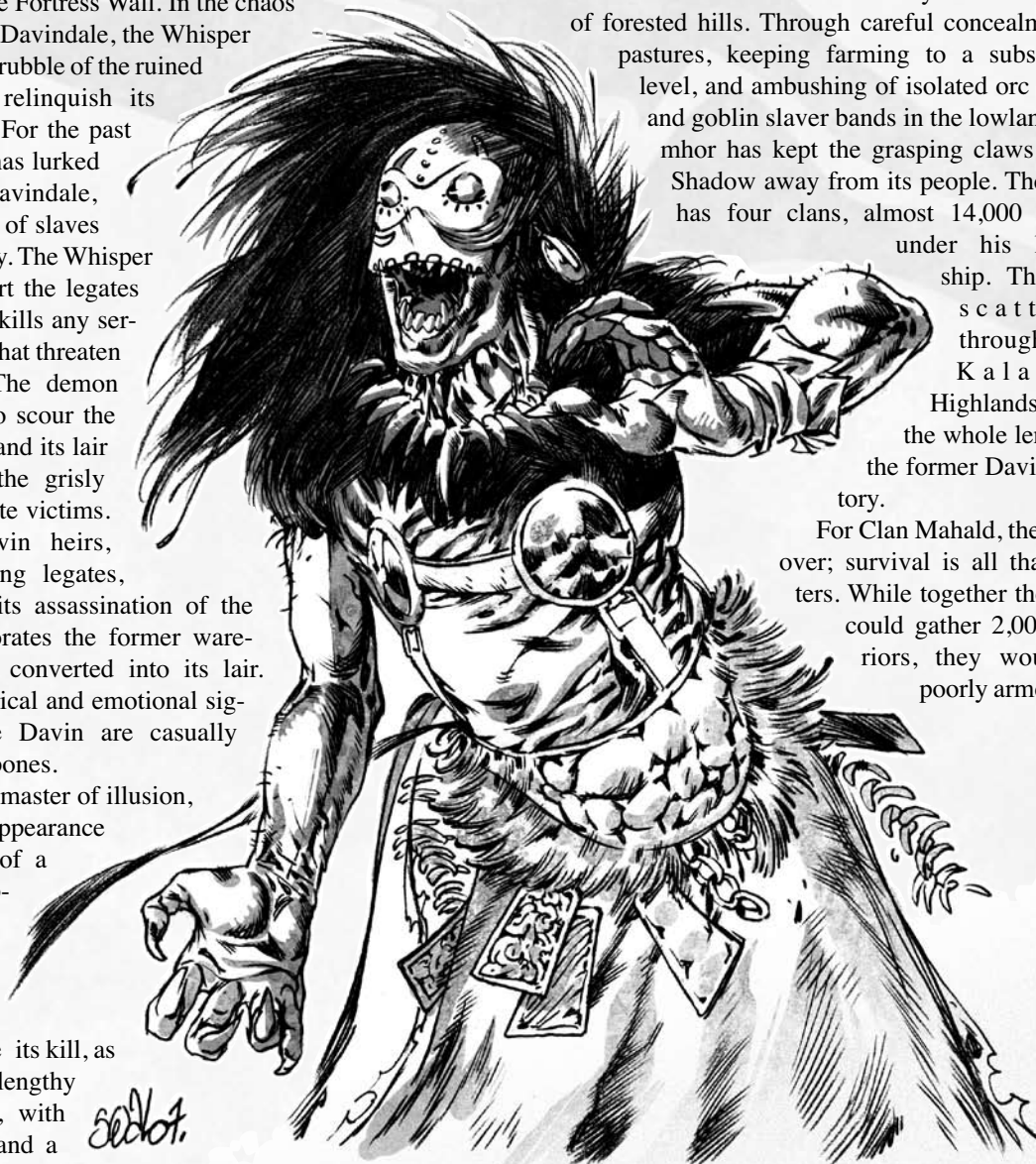
Against the Shadow

The Night of Fiends shattered any possible resistance to the Shadow's march down the Ishensa River. Most of House Davin's clans were enslaved or destroyed in the first year of the Shadow's dominion. A few of the smaller clans were able to escape into the Kaladrans, barely surviving years of famine and attacks from orcs and goblin-kin. In the second year of the Last Age, Mhor Ulfan of Clan Mahald rallied the remnants of the House Davin clans that had fled east. They built new settlements hidden in sheltered valleys or on the sides

of forested hills. Through careful concealment of pastures, keeping farming to a subsistence level, and ambushing of isolated orc patrols and goblin slaver bands in the lowlands, the mhor has kept the grasping claws of the Shadow away from its people. The mhor has four clans, almost 14,000 Dorns,

under his leadership. They are scattered through the Kaladrun Highlands along the whole length of the former Davin territory.

For Clan Mahald, the war is over; survival is all that matters. While together the clans could gather 2,000 warriors, they would be poorly armed, and



doing so would leave their villages undefended. The clan's warriors rarely gather in strength, as the risk is too great. Better to lose one village than to doom the entire House. The clan uses its warriors to keep a close watch on the orc watch-towers and the passes leading into the mountains. So long as the orcs continue marching toward the dwarves, rather than toward them, Clan Mahald keeps its swords sheathed.

The clan's greatest threat is from goblin slavers and orc tribes seeking to settle in the Ishensa Basin. The clans can ill afford to lose pastures and farms in the lower foothills. Penned in by the Shadow to the west and the barren Kaladrin peaks in the east, the clans have nowhere to go. They have only limited contact with other resistance groups. The Mahalds are aware that the Norfalls still attack the Shadow on the eastern Pelluria, but there is little either group can do to aid the other. Likewise, most of the dwarves that once lived this far north have been decimated, and can offer little succor. The mhor established tentative contact with Toragin Hold in the 80th year of the Last Age, and managed a few trades of food and leather in exchange for weapons and armor. Soon after, however, a tribe of orcs called the Cloven Skulls began to explore the Mahalds' region. The people were sure that their final battle had come. Then, serendipitously, the warband was called away to help besiege the just-discovered Toragin Hold at the behest of the Feral Mother orcs. Though none like to speak of it, some wonder: could their mhor have revealed the dwarves' location in order to present the Cloven Skulls with a more tempting target?

Fallport District

In the Last Age, the demon Vorzelem rules a ruined city of tormented spirits and the walking dead. Wailing Lost writhe amidst the bones of shattered limestone buildings; those Fell with bodies torn limb from limb lay where they fell a century ago, screaming their torment in eternal starvation. Powerful free-willed undead and demonic beings, drawn to the palpable evil of the area over the last century, have become thralls of the dark master of the ruins. They are tasked to comb the desolate wilderness surrounding the region and bring fresh innocents to be consumed by Vorzelem. The demon does not always kill his victims immediately; some are kept captive for weeks, tormented and tortured for his sport before he tears them apart and feasts on their flesh. Despite this mastery of Cale and its denizens, though, Vorzelem is an unwilling lord of a damned demesne. He is a prisoner of the city, unable to voluntarily leave due to the conditions of his summoning 100 years ago. It is fortunate for both the Dorns and the Shadow that such evil is contained, for were he free to leave Cale, the demon would visit untold devastation upon the Northlands.

Fallport District comprises vast, rolling inland plains and a level coastline. Excepting the immediate environs surrounding the city of Fallport, the region is wild and over-

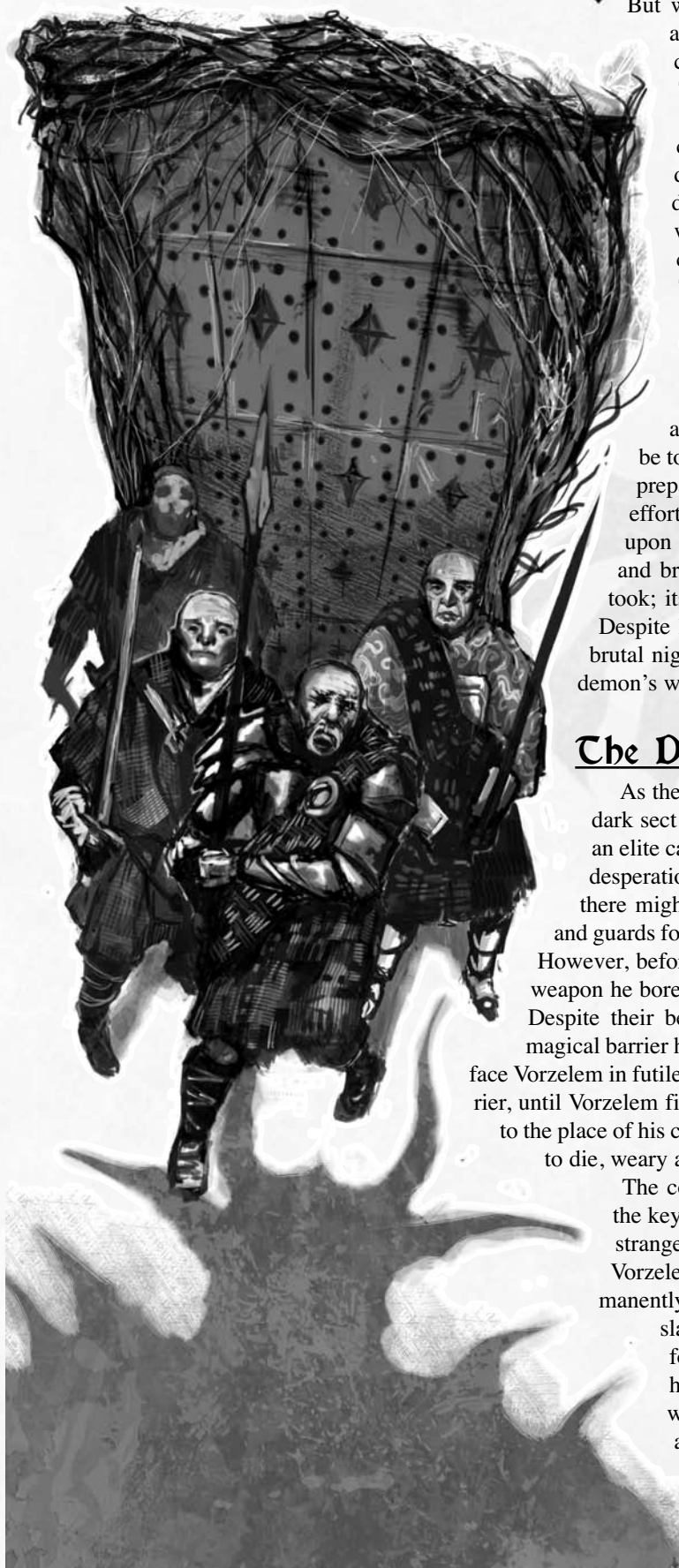
Falcon's Aerie

Falcon's Aerie was an old House Davin hunting lodge that has been converted into a stronghold for the House's remaining leadership. The fort, which began as little more than a large cabin with a palisade, is almost 4,500 feet above the Ishensa River Valley. Only one good path leads to the lodge from the lowlands, but several trails lead from it heading farther into the Kaladrin Mountains. Falcon's Aerie has expanded over the past 100 years to include three more residential buildings, which house a small warband, and additional storehouses that support the almost 300 permanent residents. From here, the mhor of Clan Mahald plans what meager defense of his people he can manage.

grown. Dorns attempting to survive in this harsh wilderness are sorely pressed. Refugees are scattered in ragtag camps across the plains, mostly concentrated along the district's eastern and southern borders. Those dwelling along the heavily patrolled road to Erethor are abused and oppressed by the orcs of the ever-moving war caravans. The region's few villages, far from areas controlled by Shadow, survive by locking their gates and keeping walls stout against the many horrors that stalk the lands. The plains surrounding Nalford and Cale are extremely perilous, overrun by large packs of the ravenous dead driven by wicked demons, as well as insane spirits shrieking for the blood of the living. Both refugee and servant of Shadow avoid these areas at all costs, though at times bands of Roland's Raiders risk them to avoid contact with enemy patrols. Bestial shadowspawn travel in packs near the western boundary of the district, while airborne predators, though more likely to hunt singly, are spread throughout the land. Though one might suppose that the dead that haunt the Foul Bog of Eris Aman would weed out both types of creatures, those shades seem to have a preference for those most similar to the creatures they once were: orcs and elves, and their cousins the humans.

The fall of Cale

When riders brought word of the fall of Nalford to the nobles of House Redgard, the warriors of the house were well prepared for the expected siege. Since the Shadow's forces had poured out of the Northern Marches, supplies were gathered, weapons were sharpened, and the cloaked, armored soldiery manned the walls, watching the plains. Thousands of years of vigilance and skill at arms had kept the city of Cale safe from all threats outside her walls; the warriors of Cale would once again keep the evil from the north at bay.



But what about the evil from within? While the soldiers armed themselves, a hidden sect sequestered in the catacombs of the city enacted their own dark design. They had planned long and patiently for this time: ancient texts containing malefic knowledge had been consulted, rare incantations were spoken, and forbidden rituals were prepared. When this secret group of dark legates brought forth the otherworldly dagger, wrought of a black, alien metal and emanating the coldest malevolence, the end of Cale was ordained. The blood of an innocent was spilled, and when the victim's blood had cooled, the horrific presence within the sacrificial blade entered the material realm. Vorzelem had been summoned.

Thus it was that the doom of Cale came, swiftly and absolutely, from within its unbreached walls. Truth be told, even had the mightiest of Redgard's warriors been prepared for the danger from within, their most valiant efforts would have failed against the force of destruction set upon them that night. The demon Vorzelem slew quickly and brutally, and gained more strength from each victim it took; its like had never before been seen in the Northlands. Despite her defenders' best efforts, Cale was laid low in one brutal night of violent slaughter. Not a single soul escaped the demon's wrath.

The Demon's Prison

As the demon Vorzelem was destroying the city of Cale, the dark sect that enacted the summoning ritual was discovered by an elite cadre of House Redgard's troops. They had been sent in desperation to find the source of the demon, in the hopes that there might also be some key to its destruction. As the legates and guards fought, the leader of the foul cult was mortally wounded. However, before he died, he locked himself and the strange malefic weapon he bore inside the vault in which the demon was summoned. Despite their best efforts, the guards were unable to penetrate the magical barrier he erected. Some abandoned their task, and went out to face Vorzelem in futile combat. The rest remained, striving to breach the barrier, until Vorzelem finally tired of the slaughter aboveground and returned to the place of his conception. Thus, the city's bravest troops were the last to die, weary and hopeless, in the bowels of the earth.

The commander who had sent the troops below was right; the key to the demon's destruction had been there. It was the strange ebony knife used to summon it to the physical realm. Vorzelem, as a Trapped spirit, is very difficult to destroy permanently, being able to re-manifest some days after its body is slain (see M2E, page 339). It is vulnerable to weapons forged of mithral, as well as those of lawful alignment; however, its true bane is the black dagger sequestered within the subterranean vault. If this weapon were used against Vorzelem it would suck the creature's spirit into its blade, preventing it from manifesting unless its spirit were once again brought forth with the proper ritual. Furthermore, once the demon is trapped in the blade, the weapon's destruction while

within the city walls would annihilate Vorzelem entirely. There is a danger to this boon, however. Were Vorzelem's spirit to be carried outside the city walls while within the blade, it would be freed from the terms of its summoning, and let loose to slaughter at will throughout the Northlands. Vorzelem fears the weapon and will not approach it, but has no idea that it might be the key to its salvation. If the demon were to learn this fact, it would not hesitate to risk its existence by tricking someone into using the weapon to bind it, then unknowingly deliver it from the ruins.

The Ebony Dagger

This strange, otherworldly weapon gleams with a black sheen, like the viscous ichor of some horrible beast. It is a +3 *bane (chaotic outsider) wounding dagger*.

The Shadow

The Shadow forces have a single primary concern in the Fallport District: Keep the war machine moving south. Second to this concern, and indeed a requirement of it, is to destroy any resistance elements that interfere with that war machine. Orc patrols therefore focus their attentions upon the road leading to Fallport and along the coast to Erethor. Villages are occasionally raided to drive their denizens south to the coast or away from the road, or to probe for information in the wake of Redgard raids. Legates and dark channelers are occasionally dispatched to the area, tasked with releasing vicious shadowspawn into the wild to hunt the resistance groups active in the region. Though these monsters are set loose leagues from orc-controlled areas, they are chaotic and unpredictable; every arc there are encounters between shadowspawn and traveling orc troops. This has unsurprisingly led to bad blood, and the occasional violent clash, between the masters of the shadowspawn and the orcs moving the war caravans.

City of Fallport

The coastal city of Fallport is a major stopover for soldiers, weapons, and armor moving along the Sea of Pelluria to the Erethor front. The port is infested with orcs, with thousands more dwelling in the vast subterranean caves that wend beneath the soaring sea cliffs. The orcs of the Gray Mother hold absolute control of their city; all humans under their dominion serve the Shadow, and any resistance activity is minor and ineffectual. The master of the city, the great orc warlord Dumuk, ensures that the war caravans move unceasingly over land and water.

The city's docks bustle with activity, as goblins press the human slaves to load gear and supplies upon the ships gathered tightly within the harbor. These unfortunate Dornish thralls rarely live even half their normal lifespans; their harsh masters drive them all the harder because they are so large and strong. The few humans not suffering the lash master's

The Last Defender

Jahan shambled from the snowy alleyway, nearly slipping as he emerged upon the blood-covered cobbles of the trade road. His sword hung limply from fingers that had long ago gone numb; the blade scraped the stones unevenly, the hilt bumping upward every so often when Jahan limped over one of the many savaged corpses littering the street. He had been cut off from the rest of his band when the legate brought down the watchtower with a black bolt of sundering magic; he remembered killing five of the savage oruks before the blackness took him. When he came to, it had taken him a long time to free himself from beneath the giant-kin's corpse.

Something was strange; all had gone quiet. Before his fall there had been the din of battle, the shrieks of the dying echoing loudly, heartbreakingly, all around him. Now Jahan heard only the eerie silence punctuated by the jagged metallic rasp of his sword upon the road. And the sky...before, it had showed the full moon shining through clouds, once black but gone red from the fires throughout the city. Now there was nothing but a dull, dark gray, gone crimson low on the eastern horizon. Morning...so soon, he thought. The battle is over. Then, upon the edge of his vision, he caught a subtle glimmer. Turning south, he looked upon the smoldering, sundered Gate of the Stalwart, the main entry to the walled city. From between its broken supports there shined a pale glow which seemed to beckon to him. Faint memories danced at the edge of his clouded mind; a brief sense of alarm flashed, then faded entirely. Wincing, he made his slow, agonizing way toward the pale light. Step after slow, dragging step, Jahan closed the distance.

Suddenly the rays of the morning sun burst from beneath the eastern clouds and fell upon Jahan's face...and passed directly through him. With a stifled cry, he remembered all – the hundreds of times he had lived this same bloody, black night – and once more it was all lost with the dawn. As he and the city's fallen faded, so too did his final thought: Nalford...I am sorry!

whip are mercenaries serving upon the ships of the Shadow's navy. Sorties of these vessels constantly patrol off the coast, protecting shipments moving upon the Pelluria's dark waters. These sailor crews long ago sold their souls to the Shadow, and their expertise has served to keep this coastal area well defended from pirates and the raids of Norfall ships.



Against the Shadow

Roland Redguard, last heir to his House, is more than just the leader of the most well-known band of Dornish resistance in the Last Age. He and his band have kept the fighting spirit of Dorns across the Northlands alive, serving as a living example of the indomitable will of this once-proud people. He and his band range from the edge of the Veradeen across the overgrown plains of Eris Aman, disrupting orc troop movements and war caravans, and destroying evil creatures in the wilderness. Roland has merged classic Sarcosan tactics with Dornish strength: speed of horse and ambush combined with overwhelming force are used to smash the enemy.

Roland particularly values the advice of one of his most trusted lieutenants, the ancient warrior Sturmhalt. This Dorn, who is well over 100 years old, is the last living son of Cor'Cran, one of the few survivors of Jahzir's bold raid against an orc warren on the edge of the Veil of Tears in the closing years of the Third Age.

Of those survivors, Cor'Cran was the one of the few warriors to escape being turned to Izrador's service. Even in Sturmhalt's advanced age, he retains great knowledge of orcs and their behaviors, and clearly recalls the tactics passed on from his father before the coming of the Shadow. His counsel

has greatly aided Roland's band in their long fight, but he cannot be long for this world.

Roland and his men receive some aid from the few villages to be found in these increasingly hostile lands. However, recently the flow of the well-crafted weapons and powerful charms of the Erunsil to Roland's band has slowed to a trickle, as huge numbers of orcs, giant-men, and beasts have begun to move south from the Highhorns into the northern Veradeen. Furthermore, the Fallport region becomes more and more dangerous as the threat of shadowspawn, roving demons, and the hungry dead grows every day. In addition, a skilled tracker and warrior for the Shadow has been sent to the area to acquire the trail of this band of rabble-rousers.

Ingulf Foestalker (orc legate 5/wildlander 5/beast tamer 4 [see *Hand of Shadow*]) leads his elite fist of fierce orc trackers in pursuit of the resistance elements in Fallport District. Mounted upon his swift hadukar, he relentlessly drives the tortured, twisted monsters under his command to seek out his prey, Roland. Ingulf intends to run down this young Dornish upstart and slay him like a beast in the wild.

Beset by these enemies, Roland and his men must exploit every advantage they can in their increasingly desperate bid to reclaim the north for the Dorns.

Respite in the North

In the Veradeen, the spirits of ice and snow are both respected and feared by the denizens of the forest. The Erunsil have appeased these elemental forces for millennia, but through the ages men have typically been ignorant of the powers of the great northern forest, often suffering horrible, frozen deaths at Xione's hands when seeking wood for a life-giving fire or hunting the forest's creatures to stave off starvation. However, there are some men who respect the cold lady and her charges. Through their alliance with the Erunsil, Roland and his warriors know they are sheltered at the whim of the spirits of the wood. When they must pass beneath through the Veradeen's snow-laden boughs, they take great pains to leave its trees and creatures undisturbed and to give obeisance to the Mistress of the Frozen Wood.

Recently, small assault parties from Roland's band have come across aid of another sort. As they range northeast of Skyrfell Pike, these heavily armed groups make targets of opportunity out of the shadowspawn they encounter. Their mobility on horseback and their powerful melee capabilities exceed those of the Erunsil, at least at the forest's edge, allowing them to take on some foes that the snow elves dare not hunt. After a few such battles, when seeking shelter

among the frozen trunks, the warriors came across what they considered lucky finds: bushes of berries unfrozen and edible, or thick copses of sheltering boughs to sleep beneath. However, as the men continue to defend the wood against the mounting incursions of the Shadow's beasts, they realize that there are mysterious forces at work. For, after the last few bloody battles, the wounded and exhausted men have consistently stumbled upon something they cannot explain: a tiny, welcoming cottage in the wood. This confounds the Dornish warriors, as their disparate targets often force them to bed down leagues away from their last resting spot. Yet, every night as the sky darkens, they round a bend or top a hillock to find the same warm and inviting cottage, beckoning them to enter. Within its walls they can rest comfortably upon warm bunks, and find plenty of firewood stacked next to the stout fireplace. While at first the warriors were cautious, suspecting evil enchantments were afoot, they soon decided that there must be some connection between their deeds of courage and this new refuge. Roland and his men know they are favored by some strange power nestled upon the edge of the frozen wood, and they give thanks to whatever benefactor aids them.

The Pirate Princes

In the last years of the Third Age, the Norfalls and their allies, Houses Redgard and Fallon, planned for the defense of the west. Having learned the brutal lessons of the Second Age, the Norfalls realized that the few Fortress Wall keeps that were still manned could not hold against Izrador's ever-growing army. Orc raiders and shadowspawn regularly bypassed the Dorn strongholds and ranged across the northlands. To protect their people, plans were put in place to evacuate the outlying villages and move the very young and the aged to new settlements in the Corbron Islands and along the southern shores of the Pelluria in the Green March. This plan, while far too limited in scope to save their entire house, at least guaranteed the survival of House Norfall.

When the dark storm finally broke, it was clear that the west was lost. Refugees streamed into Fallport seeking safety and passage over the Pelluria. Every seaworthy ship was used to ferry people and supplies to the offshore islands and the few villages still deemed safe along the edges of Erethor. The Redgards and the northern clans of House Norfall fought valiantly to slow the Shadow's advance in order to allow time for the evacuation of tens of thousands of clansmen, and the defenders paid a heavy price in blood.

The staggering number of orc troops, the loss of House Fallon, and the lack of reinforcements from the High King spelled the doom of Fallport. House Norfall's only hope was that the Pelluria would be enough of a barrier to protect its scattered people. To slow the Shadow's advance, Fallport's extensive shipyards and docks had to be destroyed. What could be dismantled and shipped to the Corbrons or the Green March was salvaged; everything else was burned or reduced

The Aid of Lady Winter

Roland's warriors have been shadowed for several arcs by Sabryn, one of the few remaining members of an ancient sisterhood, the Snow Witches. Also known as Lady Winter, Sabryn (LN Erunsil channeler 5/snow witch 6) has lived in isolation for years, using her powers to keep the wood safe against those who would harm it; the corpses of hundreds of orcs, men, and giant-men lay frozen throughout the glade she protects. However, the Shadow's forces are legion, and in the Last Age the Order of the Snow Witch, once again, is dying. Sabryn therefore has watched Roland's band carefully, and has noticed they respect nature and the frozen wood. After a season of consideration, Sabryn began to favor Roland's men with the power of her spells and enchantments, hoping to develop a mutually beneficial alliance. If these men continue to help her, Sabryn plans to reveal herself to their leader. In return for the continued protection of his raiders she will offer Roland and his band a powerful boon, the knowledge of the most important secret she protects: the great petrified tree in the center of her glade, a potent power nexus. However, in return she will ask of these Dorns her own boon: a female child to take as an apprentice, and eventually assume her mantle. For while preserving the cold wood, Sabryn must preserve something equally important: the future of her order.

The Desolate Ash

Spell Energy: 150

Feats Allowed: Craft Magical Arms and Armor, Craft Rod, Craft Staff, Craft Wand

Affinity: Cold effects 2

Recovery: None

Special: Now that it is dead, the petrified tree yields a limited amount of wood suitable for enchantment. Once all of its spell energy is depleted, the power nexus is drained.

to rubble. Ships deemed unable to make the transit were loaded with stones and sunk to foul the harbor. Even the great sea wall was shattered to allow the Pelluria's full fury to reach the city. As the orcs approached Fallport and the last ships departed, the city was set alight. Volunteers from all the House clans manned the walls as their city burned, ensuring that Fallport would be a charred ruin before it fell.



A Century of Darkness

Denied access to the Norfall fleet and the harbor of Fallport, the Shadow's offensive turned west toward Erethor and the elven port of Althorin. Lack of ships prevented the orc legions from immediately pursuing the Norfalls. The clans used their respite to rebuild, taming the Corbron Islands and building settlements in the eaves of the Green March. The first decades of the Last Age were a desperate time. Starvation, exposure, attacks by shadowspawn and corrupted elementals ravaged the already depleted House. For every raiding party that returned from Norfall lands with food and weapons, another was captured and slaughtered. Thousands died until safely hid settlements were built and stable sources of food could be found.

From these austere beginnings, House Norfall has grown to be the dominant power in the Pellurian Sea. The clans have colonized the entire Corbron Island chain, carefully husbanding the islands' resources and building self-sustaining communities. New shipyards have been built using the tools and skilled craftsmen evacuated from Fallport. As the century comes to an end, the Corbron Islands are secure; critical harbors are fortified, watchtowers dot the outer islands, and warships patrol the likely routes the Shadow would take to attack the islands. From their protected base, the Norfalls attack convoys leaving Fallport, Port Esben, and Davindale, denying the Shadow safe passage over the sea. Their attacks have sent hundreds of ships to a watery grave and delayed resupply of the Night King Jahzir's armies in the south.

The Shadow

The Shadow lacks both the expertise and the resources to effectively contest the Norfalls for control of the western Pelluria. While Fallport's harbor and shipyard have been rebuilt, the dearth of skilled craftsmen and precision tools limit the quality and type of ships that can be built. Shadow vessels are large and ungainly, with fortified fighting positions both fore and aft. Poor seamanship, the orcs' inherent fear of the water, and the danger posed by the Norfalls have forced the Shadow's Navy to hug the coastline and limit shipping to the eastern edge of the great sea, essentially ceding control of the central and western Pelluria to the Norfalls.

Dragons should have been the answer to the Dornish fleets, as they were at the beginning of the age, but few of the beasts care to serve the Shadow now that the savagery and glory of war has passed. Of those few, none dare to venture close enough to Theros Obsidia, in the shadow of which the Corbron Isles lay, to risk the wrath of Zardrix, Izrador's draconic Night King. The Shadow has resorted to releasing corrupted elemental spirits and specially bred shadowspawn into the Pelluria, conditioned to attack the settlements in the Corbrons and any ship not bearing Izrador's sigil. Additionally, collaborators from ports across the sea have been conscripted to build and man new ships to hunt the pirates. The traitorous captains hunt in packs, seeking to overwhelm the Norfalls by sheer numbers. To date, their success has been limited, as the Norfalls seem able to track their every move.

Against the Shadow

House Norfall has survived a century of darkness through the strength of their fleet, their close alliance with the elves, and their network of informers along the shores of the Pelluria. All three are crucial to their survival. The house does not have the manpower or resources to wage an open battle with the Shadow, nor to absorb the attrition from a prolonged fight. The pirates must choose their battles carefully; every life, every ship, is precious, and must be spent carefully to ensure the future safety of their people.

The most important Norfall resource is their fleet, the house's striking arm. The fleet numbers just over 100 ships, ranging from small, light scouts to a handful of heavy warships. The vast bulk of the fleet are the dozens of small, light raiders, designed to enter very shallow water and travel up the numerous small rivers and streams that flow into the Pelluria. The raiders are the forward scouts of the fleet, monitoring the Shadow's major ports and inserting agents all along the coastline. They are supported by traditional Dornish longboats, each able to carry 60–80 warriors. Equipped with both sails and oars, the longboats have enough speed and maneuverability to overtake merchant ships or escape from Shadow patrols. The largest and most dangerous ships in the fleet are the house's eight heavy corsairs. Almost twice the size of a longboat, the corsairs are designed to stand toe-to-toe with the largest of the Shadow's warships. Led by the Norfall flagship Banamor ("Slayer" in old norther), the corsairs are feared by the Shadow's minions throughout the Pelluria. In the past year, Banamor has daringly attacked ships in both Port Esben and Fallport harbors.

The Norfalls' second major asset is its alliance with the fey. The Pirate Princes have maintained good relations with the elven communities along the southern and western shores of the Pelluria since the early Second Age, particularly Althorin; all Northern goods destined for the elven capital once stopped at Fallport before transiting on Norfall ships to Althorin to be then transported upriver. In the Last Age, this alliance remains strong. The Norfalls patrol the coastline, ensuring that the Shadow is unable to use the sea to bypass elven defenses. The Pirate Princes also provide transportation for the Witch Queen's spies, and information on the movement of orc warbands and supplies destined to join the Shadow's assault on Erethor. In return, the fey provide timber for the construction and repair of Norfall ships and settlements, healing herbs, training for Norfall channelers, and permission to settle along the shores of the Green March.

The last of the Norfall's major assets is the loyalty of the Dorns and Erenlanders who survive off the Pelluria's bounty. Over the past century, the Pirate Princes have attempted to shield the isolated fishing villages and farming communities that line the coast from the worst excesses of the Shadow. Norfall ships bring food, healing, and if necessary, refuge. Threatened communities have been provided protection against bands of slavers and Fell, escaped slaves and others marked by the Shadow have been spirited away, and whole

villages have been relocated. The Norfalls' sacrifices and honor have not gone unrewarded. The fishermen provide information on orc patrols, a means of smuggling weapons to the Redgards and other resistance groups, and secluded harbors for the Pirate Prince's light raiders.

The Grotto

Hidden in the rocky coastline where the mighty Kaladruns thrust into the Pelluria is a narrow crack in the seemingly impenetrable mountains. The crack is the entrance to a carefully crafted channel that extends miles beneath the mountains. The lightless channel ends in a vast cavern that once served as a trading port for a long-forgotten dwarven clan. In a testament to the dwarves' craftsmanship, the stone piers, vaulted galleries, and numerous buildings look as if they were just abandoned. Only the centuries of dust tell the true story.

The Grotto can only be entered by ships with beams no larger than a Dorn longboat. Oars must be banked and any sails furled before entering the narrow channel. The miles-long journey is slow, as the ships can only be propelled by the natural force of the tides or by the crew pushing off the channel floor and walls with poles or their bare hands. Once inside the grotto, there is room for half a dozen ships, and more than enough housing for the several hundred Dorn warriors and shipwrights who use the abandoned hold.

Hunters of the Sea

They came out of the early morning fog. Four ships, sleek like hounds, racing across the water. At the first sight of the Norfall pennants, the alarm was sounded; but it was too late. The Norfall warships cut through the convoy, ramming two troop transports, splintering their hulls. Within minutes, the two troop ships rolled over and slipped beneath the dark water, carrying their war bands to the inky depths. Our own warships, heavily laden, lumbered through the waves, unable to turn to bring our weapons to bear or to escape toward the coast. In less than an hour, seven more transports were sinking or consumed by fire. Only our ship, protected by the billowing smoke and flaming debris, escaped the hated pirates. To this day, I can still smell the seared flesh and hear the screams of the orcs as they slid off their burning ships into the cold waiting arms of the Pelluria.

—Sallal Alazan, scribe to the Legate Melashan, Erenhead, 99 Last Age

The Black Tide

Izrador's corruption has slowly spread from Theros Obsidia into the waters of the Pelluria. For over 12 miles in every direction, the sea has darkened, killing all plant and animal life. The water seemingly absorbs light, casting no reflection on even the brightest of days. Rotting seaweed and dead fish create a dread miasma, adding to the despair that emanates from Izrador's city. The heavy, viscous water slows ships and forces rowers to strain at their oars. Even in the heaviest of the Pellurian storms, the water remains almost motionless, as if it were no longer of the natural world.

The Norfalls call the lifeless zone the black tide. The Pirate Princes have watched with concern as the zone expands hundreds of yards every year. The water spirits who still resist the Shadow refuse to come near the dead water. Raiders who have attacked ships in this blighted area claim that the dead who fall into the corrupted water are more likely than not to rise as Fell, and do so in a matter of minutes rather than in a matter of days. While the black tide's expansion is slow, it is a clear sign that not even the protective waters of the Pelluria will keep the Norfalls safe forever.

The grotto was found only by chance, a stray reference discovered in a carefully preserved book that spoke of trade with the dwarves in the early Second Age. Knowing the value of having a hidden harbor along the main Shadow supply route, the Norfalls spent the best part of a decade searching for the entrance. Finally in 92 LA, they found the safe harbor they desperately needed. The grotto is now the Norfalls' major resupply base in the eastern Pelluria. Months of food, spare sails, planking, and barrels of tar are stored in the old dwarven vaults. Strangely, a few times over the past year, supplies of salted fish and barrels of grain have disappeared from the warehouses. In their place are old but finely crafted dwarven weapons and tools.

Haventor

Hidden in the mists of the western Cobrons is the House Norfall stronghold of Haventor. The fortress is built into the face of the isle's western cliff, using unadorned rock bleached white from the ocean's salt and spray. Draped in shadows for much of the day, the fortress blends into the cliff side and is unrecognizable from the surrounding rock at a distance of more than 500 feet. With the exception of the fortress, the isle of Haventor has been left purposefully unoccupied. Only the

most trusted members of the House know the location of the stronghold. Meetings with fleet captains, the elves, and Norfall agents scattered across Erenland are held well away from Haventor, usually at sea or on one of the numerous uninhabitable rocks in the island chain; the Norfalls cannot allow the Shadow to have the opportunity to destroy the House leadership with a single strike.

Haventor is an unlikely location for a stronghold. The isle lacks a good natural harbor, has little arable land, and is surrounded by dangerous currents that rip through rocky shoals. Navigation to the island is exceedingly difficult, such that only specially trained pilots can guide a ship to safe anchorages along the cliff base. The isle looks to be a barren rock, suitable only for the thousands of albatross and terns that nest in its craggy face. Below that façade is a carefully constructed base, with ample provisions of dried food, a massive cistern for fresh water, and accommodations for the leading members of House Norfall and their three hundred-strong personal guard. The loss of the stronghold would, at least temporarily, cripple the House's ability to control their fleet and protect the Corbron Islands.

The Lost Fey: the Selkies

On a moonless night in 54 LA, a woman, not of House Norfall, came without oar or sail to the stronghold of Haventor. Emerging from the water, she slipped almost effortlessly past the guards and entered the chamber of Teren Norfall, then leader of the House. In candlelight, the woman had the features of an elven maiden yet untouched by the horrors of war. She smelled of sweet seamist after a storm and walked with an unnatural grace. The Prince spent hours with her, ultimately striking a bargain that would change the fortunes of war. When she returned to the sea just before the dawn, an alliance known only to those of Teren's blood was formed.

The woman was from a race of spirit fey thought long lost, the Selkies. It is said that they so relished the feeling of the waves and water that they gave up their immortality in order to take permanent solid form on Aryth. Normally, they look like aquatic mammals like seals, dolphins, and even otters. They can leave the water for short periods of time, however, assuming the guise of humanoids. They typically take the form of humans or elves, shapes they are familiar with from years of hidden observation. Their ability to mimic, however, is limited: their features are often imprecise, and their use of the language is strange and stilted. Under close scrutiny, they cannot pass as true humans or elves. They are also fairly weak in humanoid form, and none have ever trained with weapons. If danger arises, they can take on a hybrid form somewhere between their humanoid and aquatic shapes, a form best suited for underwater combat.

In the Time of Years, the shapeshifters roamed freely through the great Sea of Pelluria and up the Eren and Ishensa Rivers. When the Dorns arrived, the presence of these saltwater creatures in a freshwater sea confirmed what they had

already guessed: this was a magical place, laden with spirits and the supernatural. But the fey were shy, and retreated from the rivers as the brutal Dorns sailed ever farther northward; when the Shadow grew in the dark, they retreated entirely to the center of the Pelluria, eschewing contact even with the gnomes and elves.

As the Last Age wore on, however, the lost fey began to feel the Dark God's corruption spreading into the Pelluria. They knew that in time even their home would not be safe. For decades, they secretly watched the Norfalls, aiding lost sailors and gauging their worth as potential allies or protectors. In 54 LA they entrusted their great secret to Teren Norfall, and have been allies to his House ever since.

When in their element, Selkies are able to move with amazing stealth and speed. They are the hidden eyes and ears of House Norfall, able to go where human spies can not. The lost fey can enter harbors and swim alongside Shadow ships undetected. The information they provide is invaluable and has saved countless lives. If the secret of their existence were revealed, the Shadow would undoubtedly strive to corrupt the Selkies and use them against the Pirate Princes.

Skeln's Reavers

The most feared House Norfall captain is Skeln, the mhor of Clan Haland. Skeln commands a raiding group of twenty longboats. He has led successful raids against the docks at Fallport and Baden's Bluff, and has even sunk one of the Shadow's warships in sight of the Dark Tower. Skeln believes himself to be the sword of judgment of House Norfall. He punishes with steel and fire all those who support the Shadow, and sees no difference between humans who actively collaborate and those who, through forced labor, provide succor to the Shadow's garrisons. His raiders have burned human farms and villages along the length of the Pelluria.

Prince Jaden Norfall knows that, if left unchecked, Skeln's attacks risk alienating the Dorn and Erenlander villagers who should be their natural allies. Worse, the audacity of Skeln's raids, often undertaken more for glory than strategic import, may force the Shadow to concentrate its attacks on the Norfalls more so than previously. So far the prince has been unable to control Skeln and his reavers, and the mhor is too dangerous and too successful to remove from command without fracturing House Norfall. Skeln may have won most of his battles, but he is steadily losing the war for his house.



Port Esben District

The Traitor Prince Vildar Esben rules a domain that has remained almost untouched by the ravages of the last 100 years. Vildar continues to conspire against rivals both real and imaginary, manipulating his own children and clansmen to ensue that no one can possibly challenge his rule. Despite the ever-shifting political balance and the prince's often capricious nature, Port Esben is seen as a refuge from the worst excesses of the Shadow. While the other Traitor Princes' powers have waned and their lands slowly have been laid bare, Esben lands have grown stronger, their populations growing. Well-equipped House Esben troops patrol the roads and villages, and Prince Vildar even selects the legates who lead the temples and shrines in his lands.

The fall of Port Esben

Vildar Esben was the youngest of Prince Dorgal Esben's three sons. He was the only child from the prince's second marriage to a high-caste Sarcosan. Vildar took after his mother: short, slim, and dark complexioned, far from the Dorn ideal. His older brothers were easily a head or more taller and much broader, like true Dorn warriors. Vildar could never hope to match their skill at arms or their years of experience leading House Esben's warriors. Denied access to power and last in the Prince's favor, Vildar lurked in the dark-



est corners of his father's court, learning its secrets and reveling in the petty torments he could inflict on his enemies. The young Prince carefully orchestrated the removal of those who stood in the way of his leadership of House Esben. For his brothers, death was not enough. They had to be humiliated, their honor and reputations destroyed.

The first to fall was his eldest brother and heir to Dorgal, set upon and killed by Vildar's hired thugs in what appeared to be a tavern brawl. The elder Esben's body was found in a gutter in the worst part of the docks, stinking of cheap ale. His second brother was killed leading a patrol along the Fortress Wall. Men sworn to Vildar's service ensured that the route and strength of the patrol was passed to agents of the Shadow. The patrol was slaughtered, his brother's body defiled, and his head left impaled on an orc spear, sightless eyes staring south toward Port Esben. For his beloved father he reserved a slow torment, a rare and difficult-to-detect poison that sapped the strength, turning the once robust warrior into a mewling invalid, unfit to lead his people. Confined to his bed, Prince Dorgal was left alive long enough to see the least of his sons take his throne in 886 LA.

While the Dorns gathered their strength to weather the impending war against the Shadow in the North, Vildar prepared for his greatest betrayal. The young prince was not bound and blinded by Dorn honor. He had sat quietly in the war councils and knew that the armies in the Frozen North were the largest in an age. The fractured Kingdom of Erenland had little hope to withstand the assault, and what Vildar saw as his birthright would be swept away by blood and fire. Only through service to Izrador would he and his realm survive. When House Dale issued its call to arms, Prince Vildar recalled his soldiers and barred the gates of Port Esben. As the Northlands fell, the Traitor Prince met with Jahzir, the General of the Shadow, and pledged his eternal service to Izrador.

The Shadow

Prince Vildar has undisputed control over the traditional House Esben lands, a slowly growing area of the Barrens, and what used to be the eastern holdings of House Sedrig. The Traitor Prince refuses to allow Izrador's vermin, the orcs and goblin-kin, to man garrisons in his lands. Instead, Esben troops, well-trained and equipped, still proudly wear their clan colors and defend the roads and villages from desperate bandits, shadowspawn, and Fell. The various clans maintain a

standing force of just over 1,200 warriors, primarily infantry with an elite cadre of 100 cavalry. That number can easily triple in a matter of days if the militia is raised. Prince Vildar can also rely on his private guard, warrior legates from the great temple in Port Esben, and human mercenary groups that use the city as their base.

Port Esben

Port Esben is a carefully preserved relic of the Third Age, an ideal Dornish city. Armed human guards, clothed in House Esben colors, man the walls and patrol the city streets. Wagons loaded with produce enter the gates on an almost daily basis, and colorful markets are scattered throughout the city. Silver and copper coins bearing the Traitor Prince's visage pass between the citizens in exchange for goods and services. Refugees entering the city are not an uncommon sight. The wretched and the dispossessed come here seeking a semblance of security and order. Men, desperate for coin to feed their families, come to train in weapon pits in hope of

decorative border

serving in the city guard or in the handful of mercenary companies that are based and recruit in the city. All that Vildar asks in exchange is that one member of each family, preferably a child, be handed over as a hostage or conscript; that everyone worship, enthusiastically and of their own volition, at the Temple of Shadow; and of course, that every resident be willing to inform on his neighbor.

Over the past hundred years, this once-small port has been transformed. The city has been rebuilt on a massive scale, with broad avenues and large public squares, far in excess of what is needed for the small but growing population. On the surface, the city has a grandeur that befits the Traitor Prince's view of his role in the Shadow's hierarchy. Beneath that facade the city feels hollow, the population clustered in small neighborhoods connected by narrow cobbled alleys. Every citizen fears he might be accused of some form of treason or betrayal, simply because one of his neighbors needed a scapegoat when the guards came calling. The port, once the focus of the city with its large stone piers and sweeping breakwaters, is mostly empty, its shipping long since sunk by the Norfalls and sent instead through Davindale or Highwall. The piers now serve just a limited number of small fishing vessels that supply the local markets.

The grandest building in Port Esben is the temple to Izrador. Aside from Theros Obsidia, it is the largest shrine to the Dark God in the human-governed Northlands. With soaring towers and life-sized reliefs depicting Izrador's triumphs, it looms over the city, a grim reminder of the Dark God's dominance. Broad marble steps lead into the cavernous main hall, which could easily hold a thousand worshippers. Dormitories for legates and their servants surround the temple, forming their own small community distinct from the rest of the city. The temple's droning bells call the city to worship every night. Somber citizens, heads bowed, walk quietly to the temple, seeking simultaneously to please and yet avoid the notice of the dark-robed legates.

Esben Keep

Overlooking the harbor on the southeastern edge of the city is a grim and feared edifice: Esben Keep. The site has been in House Esben hands since the great Dorn migration north of the Pelluria. The keep has withstood harsh Pellurian storms, natural disasters, and war. As trade declined in the Third Age, the Esbens were unable to maintain the sprawling keep. The stronghold suffered centuries of neglect until the impending threat of the Shadow in the North led to efforts late in the age to strengthen battlements and replace crumbling walls. Of course, thanks to Vildar's treachery, the improvements weren't needed. In the Last Age, The Traitor Prince has attempted to make the keep a fitting symbol of his rule, adding plundered art, ornate fountains, and courtyard



gardens to its gray expanse. Behind the gilt and tapestries is a very dangerous labyrinth of secret passages, hidden rooms, dank prison cells, and torture chambers. Agents of the various family factions move through the darkness, spying, carrying messages, and conducting a silent war behind the walls. There is no safety and are no secrets inside the keep. This is Vildar's lair; he knows all that transpires in his home. Visitors are rare and their stays are short.

The Northguard

The first decade of Prince Vildar's reign was marked by revolts, attempted assassinations, and betrayal by members of his own family. The Traitor Prince could trust no one, sensing disloyalty even from servants and guards that had been in his household for decades. Brutal purges, tortured confessions, and replacement of house guards with hired mercenaries did little to relieve Prince Vildar's fears. The prince sought a means to ensure the personal loyalty of his family and those who were tasked to protect him. Mercenaries were inherently unreliable, as their services sold to the highest bidder. House guards had loyalties to their individual clans first and foremost. A better solution had to be found.

One man, Hakon Karlssen, a refugee from Davin lands, eventually earned the Traitor Prince's trust. The man had no

Favor of the Spirits

Their ancestor worship and reverence for spirits did little to aid the Dorns in the battle against the Sarcosans. As the legates moved among them in the Third Age and practiced their intrigues, the Dorns may even have been harmed by their beliefs; it was no mean feat to perform a dark right with the magic of Izrador, and claim that the magic proved the legate's connection with the ancestors. But in the Last Age, these spirits have arisen when most needed, and are the perfect ally for the beleaguered Dorns. Whereas literacy has been stamped out and records burned, the spirits have eternal memories. Though weapons are outlawed, the mere touch of a spectral warrior can kill his foe. And under a taskmaster that gives little rest, and in a land with few resources for the hunted, the ancestors who have returned know neither hunger nor weariness.

The most optimistic of the anuhlir say that this was all a part of the ancestors' plan, a test of Dornish resilience, but most are not so naïve. They rather accept the spirits' return with stoic thanks. Perhaps the loss of land and strength did not lessen the nobility of their race in the eyes of their ancestors. Perhaps the people will not be remembered solely for their failures, but also for the deeds they perform and the examples they set in this, the darkest of ages.

clan, no family, and had survived 20 years of service through his unquestioned loyalty. The Prince needed more like him: clanless, without kith or kin, and utterly loyal. His potential guards had to be molded from an early age before other bonds of loyalty could form, trained to venerate only the Traitor Prince. In 28 LA, the warrior Karlssen was sent to gather healthy Dorn children under the age of five to be raised as perfect warriors. For the past 70 years, each village under Prince Vildar's rule has had to provide a healthy child to his service every two years. The bi-annual seizure of children is known simple as "the tithe." Communities routinely deal with slavers to prevent their own children from being taken, purchasing healthy children stolen from families outside Esben lands so that they can be given instead to the Prince.

The children taken from the tithe are trained at a manor house within sight of the city's walls. They are raised to be unswervingly loyal to the Traitor Prince and to worship the Dark God faithfully. From an early age they receive training

in weapons, basic tactics, information-gathering, and concealment. They are provided with the best food and equipment. Their every need is satisfied through the benevolence of their great lord Vildar Esben. At age 16, their training ends and they join the Northguard, the Prince's elite military unit. The Northguard protect Esben Keep, and are the only ones allowed to carry weapons in the Traitor Prince's presence. They are sent throughout Esben lands, acting as the Prince's eyes and ears. Northguards are also given as gifts to powerful members of Vildar's family and House clans to serve as their personal bodyguards. Being assigned a Northguard is either a sign of the Prince's favor, a warning that Vildar may view you as a potential rival, or both. A Northguard is as likely to save your life one day as he is to take it the next. Every senior member of Vildar's family has been assigned at least one Northguard; they are the dagger poised to strike at the heart of Vildar's potential enemies.

The only people in power without Northguards of their own are the legates, who wisely prefer to keep their own bodyguards on retainer.

Sellswords

Port Esben is infamous for its human mercenary companies, comprised of men who willingly serve the Shadow, selling their honor for a few silver coins. Only soldiers of long-proven loyal service to the Shadow are allowed to form mercenary companies. Each company must be sponsored by a ranking member of the Shadow's administration, a collaborating lord or senior legate. The mercenaries are restricted to training in or near a major city, and may only travel the roads or roam the fronts listed on their contracts. With the ongoing offensives against the fey, mercenaries are in high demand.

Currently, three companies recruit out of Port Esben. They live and train in empty warehouses near the docks. The training regime is brutal, and men have been crippled or killed fighting for a place in a company. The most prestigious and largest of the mercenary groups is Hendred's Company. It has served with the elite of the Shadow's armies in Erethor, and its members are favored as guards for Cabal legates. The company has 800 men under arms, with another 100 currently training in Port Esben.

Vildar's Brood

Prince Vildar's personal power and his position in the Shadow's hierarchy have allowed him to satisfy his every desire. Over the past century he has taken countless women to his bed, but none have kept his favor for long or survived the dangers of his byzantine court. He has fathered at least 100 children, many of whom have taken the Esben name and returned to court to serve their father. Vildar's children have been high-ranking legates, mercenary captains, and assassins. Currently there are three Esbens serving in the Dark Tower in the City of Shadows, and one on the Night King Jahzir's

personal staff. The Traitor Prince toys with his offspring, pitting them against one another as they battle for his favor. Alliances inside the family are constantly shifting. A year rarely passes where one of Vildar's children, grandchildren, or great grandchildren does not mysteriously disappear, or is found murdered in an isolated hallway of Esben Keep. This game amuses Vildar and ensures that none of his offspring gain enough strength to move against him.

Vildar's Hound

Currently, the most dangerous of the Traitor Prince's countless children is Toran Esben (Dorn, wildlander 7/rogue 4), known as Vildar's Hound. Toran leads the House's huntsmen, a small group of mounted knights who strike out at the Traitor Prince's enemies and at any who oppose the will of the Dark God. He is Vildar Esben's seemingly loyal hunting dog, tracking his prey relentlessly. The Hound has yet to fail his father and will track a target for months if necessary. He has gone as far north as the city of Bastion to make a kill. Toran is feared and vilified even by his own family, many of whom have fallen to his blade.

Toran is completely amoral. There is no one he won't sacrifice to serve his needs. He has no allies; only people who, for a short time, serve as his tools. Toran is often accused of being as stupid as the hound he portrays, but he is no fool. He realizes that a family rival or Vildar's paranoia will ultimately arrange for his removal from favor, or his death. The only way to survive will be to eliminate his father and take his place as the leader of House Esben. To that end he has secretly begun to seek agents of the Norfalls and smaller resistance groups in the Barrens as potential allies. If he is discovered interacting with them, or if their usefulness to him ends, he will simply claim that he was spying on them, the better to unearth their secrets and find his prey.

Against the Shadow

There is no organized resistance in House Esben lands. The clans remain loyal to Prince Vildar, as he has shielded them from the well-known horrors that befell Davindale, Cale, and Fallport. The Traitor Prince's swift and unmerciful justice eliminates any who might rally the clans in revolt, and few are willing to risk being seen as one such enemy. The people believe that Vildar's spies are everywhere, informing the prince as to the slightest sign of disloyalty. Resistance is therefore limited to those seeking to shield their children from the Prince's recruiting tithe to fill his garrisons.

Many of these families attempt to flee Esben lands, preferring to face the dangers of the Barrens rather than lose their precious children. Some of the more isolated coastal dwellers also work with the Pirate Princes on the coast, either by passing information to them or by simply not reporting Norfall ships that are spotted coming ashore. Cooperation would be greater if the people believed that Prince Vildar's power was

Family Bonds

The guards came in the early morning, forcing them out of their homes to line the streets leading to the Black Temple. The city was eerily quiet, the crowd hushed, waiting to see who would be the latest victim of the Prince's justice. As the main square slowly filled with light, the keep's gates opened and a large armed procession marched out. A score of armored soldiers surrounded a man, stripped to the waist and bowed with the weight of his heavy chains. Whispers spread like wildfire through the crowd when the prisoner was recognized; it was the one of the Prince's own sons, a captain in the city guard. The son was thought to be a favorite of the Prince, popular with the soldiers and a skilled leader. There were those in the crowd who said his rise was too quick, that he had become too popular. To Prince Vildar he was no longer a loyal son, just a potential threat. Like all the threats that came before him, he had to die; a clear message to those who would challenge the Traitor Prince's rule.

waning in the eyes of the Shadow; so long as he keeps the orcs at bay, though, they have too much to lose to risk an uprising.

Rabbit's Hole

Humans are not the only ones to have found an uneasy refuge in House Esben lands. The least of the fey, a pack of increasingly rare highland imps, has for the past century lived on the edge of the stone-cursed village called the Barrens. From the outside, the imps' lair looks like the entrance to a small rabbit's warren.

Once inside, the warren opens up into miles of small tunnels and chambers for the almost 90 highland imps. They have successfully remained hidden despite their subtle attempts to help Dornish refugees who, in desperation, have attempted to reclaim the cursed village's fallow farms. The Imps have created small charms to ward newly built homes, increase the fertility of the flocks, and strengthen metal tools. The superstitious Dorn believe their good fortune is a sign that the spirits of the Barrens want to see their lost home restored.

Riismark District

Riismark is a divided district. It is constantly wracked by skirmishes between feuding orc tribes as they battle for land, slaves, goods, and pride. As many as two dozen lesser tribes hold territory in Riismark, both north and south of the Fortress Wall. In the middle of this chaos sits the Iron Claw tribe, dominating the landscape from the fortifications of house Dale's old capital city. Tasked with overseeing the migration of orcs to the south, the Iron Claw survives by claiming tolls and tithes and keeping the other tribes at odds with one another. Few but odrendor and Shadowspawn call the region home. Even the legates of the Order of Shadow rarely walk these chaotic lands; there is little to be gained here other than a brutal death.

The fall of Riismark

When Izrador's forces spilled south in the dark god's third attack on Eredane, the lands of house Dale were the first to suffer. Alone and overwhelmed, the fortified villages that had resisted so many orc raids were overrun in a matter of days by the bloodthirsty horde. Riismark itself held the longest, its defenders fighting the tide of darkness for a full four days. Between the orcs and House Dale there existed a long, bitter enmity, and no Dorn was left alive when the city fell. As the tide of destruction moved on, Riismark became the first human territory to be settled by orcs. Long having sought better lands, a wave of lesser tribes flooded into the area, claiming what ruined villages, watch-towers, and fortifications they could. Conflict quickly flared up in the district, as the tribes pursued their age-old feuds and fought over the soil. These conflicts have dominated the landscape ever since, and still run hot 100 years into the Last Age.

The Shadow

The Iron Claw was once part of the Mother of the Blooded Claw, a tribe that barely clings to life and which can no longer claim to be one of the 13 great tribes, despite the honorific "Mother" in its name. The Mother of the Blooded Claw tribe was splintered by war, with most of its strength bled out beneath the eaves of Erethor, but its end began far earlier, in the frozen north from which it came. There, as the call of war came and the tribe began its migration south, three young kurasatch udareen plotted together to claim power. They were Uhail, Noratha, and Morgatha.

A combination of potent poison and carefully concocted tribal conflict ensured that all of the mother-wives who outranked these three failed to survive the migration. However, ruling their people was not as easy as they had fantasized, and the three orc wise-women separated, each taking control of a part of the tribe. The bulk of the tribe headed south of the Sea of Pelluria, in search of war against the elves and glory for Izrador, and were led by Morgatha under the tribe's original name. Most of the rest remained at the site of the splintering, in the Cold Downs. Noratha led them under the name of

the Blooded Claw tribe, and sent her soldiers to serve Jahzir's army by securing and policing the captured Dornish cities of the north. Finally, the smallest group, a rabble of outcasts and wounded led by Uhail, raided and scavenged south into Riismark.

The tale of Morgatha the Raven Crone can be found in Forge of Shadow; she eventually took up roost in Steel Hill, sans most of her tribe.

Noratha and the Blooded Claw tribe have done nothing to distinguish themselves in the Last Age, and are one of dozens of tribes of little consequence. Uhail and her followers, finally, achieved surprising success.

Once Jahzir's armies passed by, the lands south of the Fortress Wall became the new battleground of the odrendor, as tribe fought tribe



to claim the territory. The young witch quickly learned to capitalize on the chaos. Through spells of domination and her sheer presence, she pulled the scattered, broken and straggling orcs of many defeated tribes into the ranks of her own, adopting them wherever she found them. Given a new sense of purpose, she laid her plans and ultimately led her orcs in taking the fortifications of Riismark. Having become the strongest military power in the district, in a land where no major tribe could contest her, she founded the Iron Claw. All bowed down and called her mother.

A scattered rabble forged into a tribe by the sheer will of a single witch, the Iron Claw number some 20,000 members. While once held together solely by their self-proclaimed kurasatch udareen, the tribe has continued as the dominant power of Riismark for almost four orcish generations. The old tribal discrepancies have long since been washed away or been adopted by all. The Iron Claw orcs are proud of their old diversity, seeing it as a strength and versatility no other tribe possesses. Mixing traditions, customs, and styles from all the absorbed minor tribes, they are some of the most varied and individual orcs in Eredane. Their only unifying feature is the claw-shaped scar that they all brand into their chests and breastplates.

Heavily outnumbered by the tribes that dot the landscape around them, the Iron Claw relies on its fortified, central position, as well as superior skill and equipment, to cow any threat to their authority. Morgatha keeps the offshoot tribe supplied with arms and armor forged in Cruach Emyr; their fine steel gear easily outshines the crude leather and iron tools of war their enemies bring to battle. As district overseers, the tribe also possesses a double legion of patrol orcs, trained and drilled at Highwall. This legion is the hammer with which the Iron Claw commands the land.

The Iron Hag

Ever since she took possession of Riismark and her tribe began their brutal quest for dominance, Uhail (LE orc channeler 10/kurasatch udareen 5) has been known as the Iron Hag. Grim and brooding even by kurasatch udareen standards, the ancient woman still retains every ounce of her sharp intellect and overpowering personality. Unlike her counterpart in Steel Hill, Uhail does not focus on charms and subtlety. An intimidating creature, she is as brutal and direct as a warlord in her dealings with tribe-mates and outsiders alike. She tolerates little intrigue, and never hesitates to use her magic to dominate the wills of others should it seem the quickest solution. She utilizes and respects ruthlessness, and punishes those who do not live up to her demanding standards.

Uhail and Morgatha have fallen into an uneasy alliance ever since the Raven Crone's return to the north. Having accepted and even praised Uhail and her new tribe, Morgatha now trades tools of war for the Iron Hag's slaves. Their legions cooperate in maintaining

dominance in their individual districts, allowing both tribes to hunt their enemies across the border they share. Still, both remain wary of the other's machinations.

Nagruk and the Legion of Claws

Nagruk (NE orc wildlander 6/fighter 4/orc commander 4 [see *Hand of Shadow*]) has been the warlord of the Iron Claw for more than two decades. A venerable odrendor soldier who climbed every rank of the legion to get to its top, he has seen no combat against the fey, but has fought against rival tribes across the Fortress Wall. After 50 years of fighting in Riismark, he has become quite skilled at tribal warfare; his many years in the wilderness of the north make him a skilled hunter of his own kind. Despite his age, he still stands tall, with his long silver-gray hair inter-woven with symbols of his victories. Most of his hundreds of killing scars proclaim orc, oruk, and Shadowspawn kills.

Nagruk commands the Legion of Claws, a massive orcish legion of 2,000 heavy infantry tasked with the defense of Riismark district. Despite its impressive size, the proud military elite of the Iron Claw has never fought as a united whole. Its presence is constantly required on multiple fronts and locations. Half of the force is split into warbands that secure various fortifications throughout the region; five hundred guard the fields and walls of the district capital; and the final 500 are kept in reserve, to be deployed wherever needed. Nagruk rotates his troops every year, ensuring that they do



not become lax or overconfident in their “hunting grounds.” If no combat presents itself, he finds a fight for his warriors simply to keep them sharp. In addition to the legion, Nagruk can call upon twice that number of tribal warriors and scouts from the Iron Claw, as well as a large number of auxiliaries rounded up from oppressed tribes and goblinoids in the region.

Legate Odrendor

Though the Order of Shadow is made up mostly of humans, there are orcs who tread the path of the legate. Most of them choose the path of the soldier legate, but some also become witch hunters or Voices of Shadow, preaching the dark word to their own kind. Orc legates in the other orders are almost unheard of. Life for an orc legate is not the path of honor and glory that many of them expect. The order views them as pretentious savages, while the mother kurasatch uda-

reen wives consider them dangerous upstarts. Despised by their human colleagues and feared by the mother-wives, these creatures become outcasts for their faithfulness.

In Riismark, the orc priests have found unity. Seeking to escape the constant threats and unfamiliarity that looms over them everywhere else, they have banded together in this wild district where no human legate dares to tread. Unchecked, they have grown in size and power throughout the last century, and now number as many as 200 faithful priests of varying power. Wandering the land, they preach the faith to all they come across. They give guidance and spiritual advice in return for tribute and offerings to the dark god. They have tamed Shadowspawn that drift across the Fortress Wall and recruited minions from all the tribes and races struggling to survive in the district, turning them into their own grand following. They have established and maintained small temples to Izrador throughout the region, though only the capital town of Riismark boasts one with a black mirror. Through their continued activities, they possess the only network of agents and authority that spans the whole district. Though officially acting simply as councilors, preachers, and advisors, they hold power over life and death. To the struggling tribes, their word is law.

The Devout and the Cabal dislike the level of power that the odrendor legates wield in Riismark. The orc priests oversee the black mirror, enforce the laws of Izrador, and travel freely throughout a district plagued by territorial conflicts. However, the orcs know full well that their power is as nothing compared to the vast resources of either faction. They have distanced themselves as far as they can from the influence of Theros Obsidia and the infighting that plagues the priesthood at large. Content with challenging each other for dominance, they refuse to be used as tools in their human counterparts’ power struggles, focusing instead on dominating the kurasatch udareen and lesser tribes of Riismark.

Sharaz the Priestslayer

Stronger than a boro and tall enough to spit an oruk in the eye, Sharaz of the Burnt Mother tribe (CE orc barbarian 9) is an intimidating figure, even to his fellow orcs. The able fighter was made a personal guardian and consort of his tribe’s kurasatch udareen, and was idolized by his fellow warriors. His pride culminated in the death of a legate. Tasked with escorting the priest along the Black Road toward the Scar, Sharaz made it less than 10 miles before the man’s insults drove him to snap his neck.

Reluctant to kill her minion over an infraction against the Order of Shadow, the kurasatch udareen exiled Sharaz and the men he had led on the mission. She equipped and supplied them well, and told them to head south. Together with his three dozen companions, the orc champion crossed the Fortress Wall. His band’s reputation was secured instantly, as the band destroyed a group of oruk-led raiders



almost twice their size, suffering only minimal casualties themselves. Sharaz then led his men in sacking the tower from which their attackers had come. As they kept wandering and fighting in Riismark, word of the band's deeds spread before them. Before long, orcs were coming to join them. With almost 100 skilled warriors under his command, Sharaz announced that their services were for hire for whoever paid the most. Since then, the hulking orc and his companions have been in the service of the Iron Claw.

The story of how Sharaz's murder of a legate is well-known, but has not endangered him so far. When they hear the tale, the orcish legates of the region maintain that any priest who cannot cow his flock deserves no better, and the spiteful kurasatch udareen of the lesser tribes cackle in glee and give him gifts. The greater Order assumes that the tale is blown out of proportion, and even where they to send men after Sharaz, they know that it would be a hard fight through Riismark. So long as Sharaz remains a petty warlord and his tales do not spread too far, they will leave him alone. And should he prove to be a lightning rod for descent, they can always send Shadowspawn or Trapped after him.

The Priestslayer's story has, however, drawn the attention of the White Mother. Several of the heretic band have infiltrated his group, and now number one-fifth of his soldiers. They may speak freely of their beliefs around their campfire, as Sharaz cares for nothing and no one who cannot enforce its own authority. Sharaz himself remains faithful, for he has witnessed many times the power of the mother-wives, and the dark god still whispers in his dreams. However, his willingness to listen as they preach heresy could turn him from his god, and Sharaz would make a powerful leader for the heretical movement, should they choose to reveal themselves.

Against the Shadow

Laid to waste by the orcs, Riismark sees little resistance activity undertaken by man or fey. A few human bands still roam the area, the bitter descendants of those who guarded the Fortress Wall. They carry their forefathers' feelings of betrayal and abandonment in their hearts, and have almost no contact with the outside world. Carrying no hopes of the restoration of their lands, but refusing to surrender their heritage as defenders of the north, they spend their days hunting and scavenging, attacking orc groups exhausted and decimated by the odrendors' conflicts with one another. As most believe no human resistance remains in the area, their attacks are usually attributed to orcs or Shadowspawn.

Though they have lost their lands, their towns, and almost all of their material heritage, the proud men and women's refusal to stop honoring the

vows of their ancestors has strengthened their bond to the supernatural. Forced to return to older, some say darker, ways in order to survive, the Dorns have rediscovered many things lost to them since the Second Age. Spirits of the land whisper to them of dangers and bounties, their ancestors guide them in battle, and throughout the bands the spark of magic has ignited into a raging fire. Their newfound gifts have allowed the warriors to take on bands many times larger than their own. The path they tread is a dangerous one, though, for as the taint of Izrador seeps into the land, it threatens any user of magic with madness and corruption.

The White Mother

The Order of Shadow is rare in the lands of Riismark; even the legate odrendor, the only priests of Shadow with a true presence in the district, are spread out over a vast area. On the barren moors, telling of the glories of Izrador is a task left to the kurasatch udareen of the individual tribes. However, these long-lived and natural enemies rarely cooperate or coordinate, spending more time squabbling than maintaining faith in the hearts of their warrior sons. In this anarchic environment of tribal struggles, the hidden movement of the White Mother has blossomed. Some even claim that the movement started in Riismark, beyond the reach of Izrador's



oppressive religion in the south and the watchful gaze of the great tribes' kurasatch udareen in the north.

Given room to operate, the agents of the White Mother have infiltrated almost every rank of orcish society, and even some apprentice kurasatch udareen have joined their cause. Traveling within Iron Claw bands, meeting when tribes stumble across each other in the highlands, even secretly accompanying the orc legates as they spread their faith, the

The Message

Darog shot out of his sleep, mouth open in a soundless yell of fear. The sun burned his eyes, and he fell back down, landing hard. Breathing heavily, he squinted and looked around. They were all still sleeping, some mumbling and stirring restlessly as they dreamed. Everyone but the guide. Silent and alert as always, the local orc sat close, watching him. Darog hated the way he looked so... calm, rested. Ready.

"What?" he spat.

"Don't you ever grow tired of it?"

"Of what?"

"The nightmares. Lying down as dawn burns your eyes, dreading what sleep will bring. Waking up in the sun, covered in icy sweat. Fearing your own dreams."

Lashing out, Darog grabbed the guide by the shoulder and pulled him close. His teeth bared and his jaw clenched, almost shaking with anger, his voice a whispered growl.

"I am not afraid!"

The guide's hand closed around his own, locking them together. Suddenly, he seemed less peaceful and submissive than when they had hired him.

"Only because when you wake, you drown your fear in an ocean of hate and rage. I can change that. Make you strong."

"I am strong. Hate makes me strong."

"Hate makes you a slave. His slave."

"Traitor!"

"Slave. Coward."

Unable to reach his cleaver, Darog went for his dagger, but the guide slammed his palm down on his, pinning it. Barking, he attempted a head-butt. The guide twisted, and Darog's face met a rock-hard shoulder. Then, he was on his back, held firmly in place. An arm crushed his throat. He struggled, but the guide was stronger.


"You have two choices. Listen, or die."

followers of the White Mother have spread throughout the district to the point where each settlement, each passing group, carries their eyes and ears. Tribal members, warriors, even their leaders, have all fallen under the spell of the hidden organization. As they struggle south, the White Mother orcs give their chosen candidates aid, guide them through the district, and advise them on the southern lands. They whisper to sullen, tired, and disheartened odrendor of a more meaningful life. As the orcs move farther from their Shadow-tainted homelands and the influence of the great tribes, the White Mother orcs plant the seeds of rebellion among them, hoping they will spread and grow by the time the orcs reach their destinations in the south. Their weakening of the orcish faith has gone so far that some minor odrendor settlements in the Northlands now pay only lip service to their god. It is a risky business, but the heretics are given more room here than among the tightly indoctrinated legions or the lands under the heel of the Order of Shadow. To the White Mothers, the chance to spread their ideas is worth the certainty of a brutal death when they are inevitably discovered.



CHAPTER THREE

New Rules



The orcs had been following Kael for three days through the mountains, but not hurriedly. After he lost his horse and most of his supplies in their initial attack, he reasoned, they must hope that the cold would do their work for them. Cowards. The wind blew cold, but the storm had quieted somewhat, and didn't produce enough snow to fill in his tracks. The orcs followed him easily, from just out of sight. He could already feel the pangs of hunger as he thought of his lost supplies. The storm had made game scare.

It would not end this way, he decided, frozen and starved on the side of some forsaken mountain, food for wolves. Kael felt the anger well within him and as that rage boiled, a new clarity of purpose swelled. If he was to die, he would die in battle with his axe held high. With as many of his foes dead beneath his feet as his blade could claim. As the cold seeped into his hands, he wrapped them tightly around the haft of his father's axe. A new warmth, the heat of anger, coursed through his arms. He imaged his hate surrounding him like armor.

The orcs heard his battle cries long before Kael's shape materialized from the blowing snow, and the front rank held bows at the ready. Black shafts flew and found their mark, but Kael would not be denied. What were a few arrows before what he had already suffered? With a furious roar he launched himself into the archers, drawing strength from his desperation. His eyes blazed with the certainty that he would not die an ignoble death. His enemies would suffer, as he had suffered, before they ended him.

Unable to defend themselves from his voracious onslaught at close range, their wooden bows sundered by Kael's anger and axe, several the archers lay bleeding before their allies could recover. The Dorn spun on the rest of the orcs, screaming. His foes hesitated, unsure if he was apparition or man. Kael smiled. The blood pumping in his ears mixed the songs of his fathers, and he knew that they were singing in praise for his deeds. This was his death, yes, but it was a death worthy of song.



The Dorns' proud warrior heritage has thrived in harsh climates, from the stormy seas of their passage to their more recent home in the frozen north. The men and women of the race push themselves beyond the boundaries of pain, fatigue, and despair that cause others to falter or buckle. They place great honor in deeds and actions, and believe that those who fail to live up to these ideals suffer great curses, and do not join with the honored dead in the afterlife. The rules that follow focus on those ideals of honor and strength.

Deprivation

The Dorns suffer, more than any other race, from life in hostile environments. Their neighbors, the dwarves and orcs, find shelter beneath the earth. Their kin, the Sarcosans and Erenlanders, live in more temperate climes. And their allies the elves, while living in a dangerous primeval forest, maintain a relationship with their home via the Whisper. The Dorns alone suffer constant climatic extremes, exposed to hardship and weather without large communities, without storehouses from which to draw supplies and without spirit speakers to beseech the land for aid.

However, it can be difficult to focus on this very real danger of the Dorns' existence without becoming bogged down in dice rolls and minutiae. Minor environmental dangers are hardly worth the valuable spell points that an *endure elements* represents, while major environmental dangers require such frequent dice rolls and inflict such major penalties that they rapidly become deadly.

The deprivation rules are an alternate system to reflect the dangers, and potential benefits, of climatic extremes and environmental hazards. They attempt to streamline the existing rules so that dice rolls can be made to represent entire days of travel, making the dangers of environmental conditions obvious without being overwhelming. Finally, they help the DM tell stories in which those driven to desperation, those with nothing left to lose, can find reserves of inner strength. With these rules, those who give themselves up to their suffering can experience a tempering that, though costly, allows them to emerge the stronger on the other side.

Note that these rules are appropriate for long-term, overland travel. For shorter durations of exposure, refer to the *DMG*. For the rest of this section, "deprivation check" refers to any Fortitude save made to resist environmental hazards, whether they use the deprivation rules, or the rules in the *DMG*.



Deprivation Circumstances

Circumstance	Modifier
Dorn	+5
Positive modifier on Survival check*	
Normal speed	+1 per bonus of +6
Half speed	+1 per bonus of +3
Stationary	+1 per bonus of +1
Appropriate gear	+1 to +4
Lacking food/water	-1 to -4
Fatigued	-3
Exhausted	-6
Feats	
Endurance	+8
Lucky**	+4
Self-Sufficient	+4

* The bonuses granted by a positive Survival modifier can be used by the character with the modifier, or granted to someone with whom he is traveling. These modifiers include not just ranks in the Survival, but the normal modifiers like Wisdom, bonuses from feats and favored regions, and the like.

** MIDNIGHT 2ND EDITION

Hazards

The first part of the deprivation rules is identifying the hazards faced by the heroes. Three levels of hazard exist for cold and heat dangers. When traveling for lengths of time through environments in which these hazards are present, characters must make daily Fortitude saving throws or suffer penalties. The save DCs vary by the level of the hazard, while the penalties suffered vary by the amount by which the character missed the saving throw. Characters may take 10 on the Fortitude saving throw. The DCs assume an average of eight hours of exposure.

Level 1 is considered cold weather (below 40° F) or very hot conditions (above 90° F), and has a daily deprivation DC of 20. Level 2 is severe cold (below 0° F) or severe heat (above 110° F), and has a daily deprivation DC of 35. Level 3 is extreme cold (below -20° F) or extreme heat (140° F), and has a daily deprivation DC of 50. Note that if the PC travels through different levels of threat during the same day, the DM should assign the penalty for the most common temperature extreme, or generate a rough average DC based on the amount of time suffering from each hazard.

Circumstances

Surviving overland travel in Level 1 conditions can be difficult, and at higher levels impossible, for most characters. Circumstances are used to offset the high DCs. The most common circumstance is the level of survival skill that the traveling characters can bring to bear; basic necessities like clothing, food, and shelter can also provide bonuses. On the other hand, a lack of these assets can inflict penalties. A total list of bonuses and penalties is provided in the **Deprivation Circumstances** sidebar.

Effects

If a character succeeds at the Fortitude save, he suffers no penalties. If he fails, he suffers 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per three points by which he failed the save DC. A character who suffers 25% of his hit point total in nonlethal damage from hazards is fatigued, and cannot recover from the fatigue until the character rests. A character who suffers 50% of his hit point total in nonlethal damage, or one who is fatigued and performs any actions that would cause him to become fatigued, becomes exhausted instead, and cannot recover from the fatigue until the character rests. The character can be assumed to suffer the total damage spread throughout the day. If a character suffers nonlethal damage equal to his hit point total (knocking him unconscious), he begins suffering lethal damage from deprivation.

Keep in mind that, in addition to their bonus to Fortitude saving throws against cold environmental effects, Dorns take half the normal nonlethal damage from cold environmental effects.

Strength of Spirit

Extreme circumstances sometimes drive people to extreme acts. By using these optional rules, characters may draw strength from their exposure to the elements. Only Dorns have the cultural background of loss, pride, and stubbornness to make these effects common, but particularly proud and resolute characters of any race may use these rules with the DM's permission.

In order to benefit from each of the states listed below, the character must voluntarily fail a deprivation check and take on the appropriate additional penalties. A character cannot benefit from any of the states of deprivation if they are incapable of succeeding in the deprivation check in the first place. A character may only benefit from one of the states of deprivation at a time.

For each benefit, the bonuses end if the character no longer fulfills the prerequisites (such as if he rests, is healed of his exhaustion with a *lesser restoration*, and so on).

Beyond the Veil: Your trials have caused your mind to wander and you see things that may or may not be there. If you would be fatigued due to deprivation, you may choose to become exhausted instead. You gain a +4 circumstance bonus to your initiative checks as your mind sees things before they happen. In addition, the Constitution cost to cast spells after running out of spell energy decreases by one (minimum of one).

Heightened Clarity: In your exhausted state, paranoia begins to overwhelm you. You are ready for anything, real or imagined. When you become exhausted due to deprivation, you take a -8 penalty to your Dexterity and Strength instead of the normal -6. While suffering this extreme exhaustion, you gain the uncanny dodge ability, as per the barbarian class ability of the same name. If you already have uncanny dodge, you gain improved uncanny dodge. If you already have improved uncanny dodge, you gain +4 effective levels when determining what level opponents must be to sneak attack you. In addition, you can call upon a hidden well of mental vigor, gaining a +4 bonus on Will saving throws.

Mind in Dreaming: Your tired mind notices minor details your waking mind would otherwise overlook. When you become fatigued due to deprivation, you suffer a -4 penalty to your Dexterity and Strength instead of the normal -2. In exchange, you may roll twice when making Listen and Spot checks, taking the better of the two rolls.

Suffer My Anger: Your anger keeps you warm, and the trials of your environment only strengthen your resolve to defeat your enemies. When you have suffered 75% or more of your hit point total in nonlethal damage due to deprivation checks, anger wells up within you. You gain the rage class ability once per day. If you already have this ability, you gain greater rage. In addition, the wounds inflicted by weapons are nothing compared to the pain you've suffered from the elements; you gain DR 1/-. This DR is cumulative with DR you may have from other sources.

Dornish Legacy Traits

The Dorns are a hardy race, drawing strength from their pain and finding an almost endless well of vigor when faced with hardships that would break weaker folk. If your MIDNIGHT campaign uses the Strength of Spirit rules presented above, Dorn characters may take advantage of Dornish legacy traits to expand their options. Legacy traits must be selected at first level and involve trading one or more of the normal Dornish racial abilities for another. Once the choice is made, it is permanent. You may take more than one trait, provided you pay the requisite costs.

Heart of the Dorn: You have a close tie to the Northlands, and the spirits of your ancestors speak to you on the wind. You need only be fatigued due to deprivation, not exhausted, to gain the benefits of *Beyond the Veil*. In addition, you can make due with half the food and water required for a charac-

New feats

Resilient

You are used to surviving in harsh climates and draw strength from your experience. Bad weather and harsh climes hold no fear for you.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to all deprivation checks. In addition, those traveling with you gain a +2 bonus to their deprivation checks (to a maximum number of characters equal to one-half your character level).

Strong-blooded

The blood of Dorn runs thick within you, and the fury of the land only makes you stronger.

Prerequisites: Dorn, 1st level only.

Benefit: You gain one Dornish legacy trait at first level without losing the associated racial ability. This trait is gained in addition to all normal racial abilities.

ter of your size. *Heart of Dorn* replaces the +1 bonus to hit with a two-handed weapon.

One with the Wilderness: You were raised on the run in the dangerous wilds of the north, and are constantly on the lookout for danger. When fatigued due to deprivation, you may gain the benefits of *Mind in Dreaming* without suffering additional penalties to your Strength and Dexterity. In addition, you gain a +1 insight bonus to Initiative checks made in the wilderness. This ability replaces the weapon familiarity with bastard spears and Dornish horse spears.

Readied Alertness: You are used to maintaining combat readiness for long periods without sleep. When exhausted due to deprivation, you may gain the benefits of *Heightened Clarity* without the additional penalties to your Strength and Dexterity. In addition, you only need six hours of sleep to be considered rested. This ability replaces the bonus skill points received at first level.

Uncrushable Will: You are a loner, and do not need others around to remind you what it means to be a Dorn. You may gain the benefits of *Suffer My Anger* when you have suffered 50% of your hit point total (rather than 75%) in nonlethal damage from deprivation. In addition, you gain a +1 bonus to saving throws against fear when you fight alone. *Uncrushable Will* replaces the +1 bonus to hit when fighting in a group of five or more Dorns and the bonus first level feat.

Covenant Items

Dorn history is rife with legends of powerful items handed down from father to son or mother to daughter, their stories growing with every generation. However, many of those stories bear a common theme: One dishonorable act curses the family, and the item, for all its power, also serves to carry that curse unto successive generations, until some great act redeems not only the item but the family name.

Each covenant item described here bears a dark curse brought on by the actions of a previous owner. Only a specific, truly heroic action can redeem the item and lift the curse that taints not only the item, but also the bearer. Several options are suggested for each item, and the DM is advised to pick one most appropriate for her MIDNIGHT campaign. Once a curse is lifted, the item becomes a normal covenant item, and may be removed or relinquished if the bearer wishes.

The Boots of Queen Talyn

A rare tale of greed and betrayal in House Sedrig is that of Queen Talyn Alard. In the closing years of the First Age, before victory was certain, this matriarch of Clan Alard gathered her family's great wealth, fearful that the Shadow in the North would somehow manage to overcome the forces united against him. While her serfs suffered the effects of a particularly harsh winter, she cloistered herself in her manor with its blazing hearths and extravagant feasts.

Unwilling to allow the forces of the Shadow to take her coin, she lavished it upon herself, her greed only fueling the misery of her people. In a feat of true selfishness, she commissioned the creation of an extravagant pair of boots to keep her toes warm as she sat inside her hall; meanwhile, her peasants froze to death outside. Thereafter, a chill that was beyond the physical crept into her body, a chill would not be banished no matter how high she ordered the fires built. She decreed that each peasant family should give up a portion of their firewood so that she might stay comfortable. Those who refused had the sod and stones of their homes torn down, and anything flammable they owned tossed into her many hearths. Eventually, the fires in one of those hearths burned out of control, and the manse burned. The only thing to have survived the conflagration was a pair of gem-encrusted fur boots, lovingly placed in a satin-lined metal coffer.

These women's boots are made of supple leather with ample rabbit's fur lining the inside. Several large jewels stud the outside. They are ostentatious by most standards, extremely so when compared to normally austere Dornish fashion. The *Boots of Queen Talyn* grant the abilities listed below to the wearer, so long as she is a woman of Dornish blood. Note that the boots' curse is not so discriminating, and affects anyone who dons them.

1st level: The wearer receives a +2 competence bonus to Appraise skill checks.

4th level: The boots function as *boots of the winterlands*.

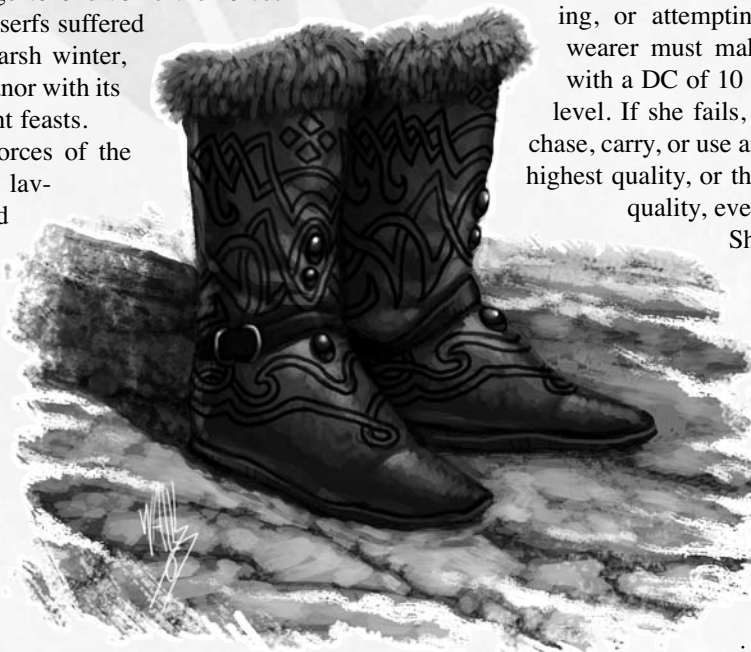
6th level: The wearer receives a +4 resistance bonus to saving throws against magical and mundane cold-based effects.

8th level: Three times per day, the wearer can activate the boots as though they were a *rod of metal and mineral detection*. The boots direct the wearer's footsteps in the direction of the precious metal or gemstones being concentrated on.

Curse: Once worn, the boots cannot be separated from the owner. The owner desires nothing but the best, even at the expense of others. This greed consumes her; she always insists on having the best, and when that is not possible, at least having something that looks better than what others have. When bartering for, purchasing, claiming, or attempting to use an item, the wearer must make a Will saving throw with a DC of 10 + one-half her character level. If she fails, she must refuse to purchase, carry, or use anything that is not of the highest quality, or that at least looks of high quality, even if only on the surface.

She refuses such "inferior wares" even if it means going unarmored, without weapons, or without appropriate cold-weather clothing (though the *endure elements* effect of the boots would keep her from freezing to death). The owner suffers a -5 penalty to this saving throw if she is a Dornish woman.

Lifting the Curse: Some great act of charity is required to free the boots from their curse. Giving away all of one's worldly possessions (assuming these possessions are significant), working for months without asking for recompense, or suffering deadly-cold temperatures so that others might be warm, are both possibilities.



Hrost's Valor

Hrost Oalluth was a braggart during the Second Age. A large man, Hrost was prone to telling tall tales that featured his great cunning and battle prowess. In particular, he ascribed great powers to the helmet he wore, which he claimed had been passed down by all the great warriors in his line.

One rainy evening, while boasting to fellow drunkards in an out-of-the-way roadside inn, a rider stormed in warning of an approaching band of orcs. After listening to a night of Hrost's tales, the Dorns considered themselves lucky to have such a great warrior and leader in their midst, and they all looked toward him for guidance. Unwilling to admit his lies, and praying silently to his ancestors, Hrost gathered the assembled men and went out into the night to meet the advancing orcs. In less than an hour the two groups stumbled into one other; the orcs howled battle cries to their dark god, while the Dornish villagers turned to Hrost to lead their charge. All they saw of their would-be leader, though, was the glint of his helm receding in the darkness as he ran away. The Dorns were all slain, cursing Hrost's name.

Hrost met his end soon enough. Back at the inn, he attempted to steal one of the dead men's mounts in order to make his escape. The beast threw the unfamiliar rider, and Hrost broke his neck in the fall, his face landing in a muddy puddle. Within a few minutes, he had drowned in a few inches of water. His helm would pass from one coward to the next for centuries, each drawing false bravado from the helm only to later meet a dismal end.

Hrost's Valor is an ancient dented Dornish helm that appears to have seen many great battles. Although the helm can be taken off, its wearer will never willingly part with it, and will don it whenever possible.

1st level: The wearer receives a +1 insight bonus to his armor class while wearing the helm.

2nd level: The bearer receives a +5 competence bonus to Bluff checks made to lie or impress others, even when not wearing the helm. Once per day, while wearing the helm, the

wearer may use a *charm person* effect, with a caster level equal to his character level. The wearer may use the effect on his turn as a free action, but it requires that the target meet his gaze.

6th level: The wearer gains an enhancement bonus to his speed of +10 feet.

9th level: The helm's wearer radiates an aura of courage. All allies within 10 feet are immune to fear effects (though the wearer himself is not). This aura does not function if the wearer is unconscious or dead.

13th level: Once per day, the wearer may cast *divine power* as a free action with a caster level equal to his character level.

Curse: The wearer of *Hrost's Valor* is prone to crippling cowardice. At the beginning of every combat, the wearer must make a Will saving throw with a DC of 10 + one-half

his character level, or become panicked. If the saving throw is successful, the wearer is only shaken. This curse affects even characters who are immune to fear due to spell effects, class abilities, and the like.

Lifting the Curse: Some great act of singular bravery and selflessness is required to lift this curse. The wearer might attack a whole force of orcs in order to buy time for a group of fleeing children, go toe to toe with a demon in order to save a young woman offered up as a sacrifice, or dive into a stormy sea surrounded by hungry sharks in order to rescue an unconscious sailor.



Rose

Ulfhild was born in a small northern village where he grew up to be a lout, with no taste for hard work. While others worked hard, Ulfhild did just enough to afford his next drink. Idleness and a foul temper made him into a solid drunk.

The innkeeper in Ulfhild's village was hiding refugees from the Shadow's agents, and few knew about it; but Ulfhild spent more time than most in the taproom, and he began to suspect that something was amiss. When a legate and his orc mob arrived one day looking for escaped fey, he offered

riches to anyone who could help him. All were silent, eyes kept low before the legate's wrath. Then the legate noticed Ulfhild drunk in a corner, and he smiled, for Ulfhild's weakness was clear. In exchange for a promise of all he could ever drink, Ulfhild sold the lives of not only the runaways but also the innkeeper and all those who had helped him. The legate proudly paid his debt with a fine wineskin which he called *Rose*, as he ordered the rest of the village burned. Ulfhild drank himself to death as he watched the flames rise higher and higher.

Rose is a large wineskin in good condition with a capped brass nozzle at the mouth. On the side of the skin, in neat stitching, is the image of a smiling young Dornish woman hoisting two mugs of ale as an offering to the viewer. The bearer of the wineskin will not willingly part with it, even to share his supposedly unlimited quantities of ale.

1st level: The bearer receives a +2 competence bonus to saving throws made to resist poison and intoxication. In addition, *Rose* is always filled with cool ale whenever the bearer drinks from it. Should someone else try to drink from *Rose*, there is nothing but dust.

3rd level: Three times per day, the bearer may drink from *Rose* to gain a measure of inner warmth, bolstering himself against the biting cold. When this occurs, all nonlethal damage taken from cold environmental effects is removed, as are any states of fatigue or exhaustion. However, *Rose* only creates the impression of keeping the bearer warm, and does not actually do so. The following day, the bearer suffers lethal cold damage equal to one-half the nonlethal damage that was cured by *Rose* the previous day.

If the deprivation rules are used, *Rose* can be assumed to be used throughout the day, curing all of the nonlethal damage taken that day.

7th level: At will, the bearer may drink from *Rose* and find his courage renewed, as if benefiting from a *remove fear* spell with a caster level equal to his character level. The bearer may perform this action even when suffering from a fear effect that would normally prevent him from taking actions normally.

12th level: The bearer of *Rose* gains a +1 inherent bonus to his Constitution score. This bonus is lost if he is separated from *Rose* or the curse is lifted.

Curse: Whoever bears *Rose* suffers from a horrible thirst for alcoholic drinks. He cannot refuse them and goes out of his way to consume them, constantly sipping from the wineskin. This leads to a near constant state of drunkenness, which inflicts a -2 penalty to Dexterity and Wisdom.

Lifting the Curse: To overcome the curse, the bearer might quest for a healing elixir to purge *Rose's* ale from his body, or drain it into one of the Black Mirrors, returning its fell magic back from which it came.

Vigdir

Caretakers of the Dead

The Dorns' close connection with their ancestors and the dead is reflected in two lines of spirits, collectively known as the *Vigdir*, or Caretakers of the Dead. Before the Sundering, the *Vigdir* were akin to angels for the first humans, protecting the bodies of the fallen and escorting their spirits into the afterlife. The soulful call of the Tadulos called out from the depths of the wild, where they stood watch over fallen wanderers. Their song led the fallen person's kinsmen to his body, while their vicious strikes guarded the dead from those who would scavenge or deface it, until they could be reclaimed by their family and given proper burial. Then, during the burial ritual, the Meruros reached through the eyes of the dead and claimed the souls of the fallen, that they may be ushered unto their rightful place of the afterlife on their feathered wings. With the Sundering, these spirits were trapped bodiless on Aryth, cut off from their missions. The *Vigdir* merged with the carrion creatures of battlefield in order to stay close to the dead of their chosen people; the Tadulos took the form of wolves, while the Meruros manifested as ravens. Knowing no other way, the simple, focused spirits followed the Dorns through the ages, gathering their souls as they died and amassing them into a collective, an Eternal spirit-place that the Dorns called *Fewyris*, or the "Waiting Place."

In their homelands, the Dorns respected these scavengers for what they were, manifestations of their ancestors and their links to the beyond. The wise folk of their people spoke of them, and their scalds sung of them, as creatures of power, to be respected and feared.

When the Dorns came to Eredane, the *Vigdir* traveled with them. As they grew closer to Izrador's seat of power, though, his whispers grew stronger and stripped away their will. The Shadow spoke of their futile struggle to help men who did not appreciate them. It offered to let them rest, to gather the fallen souls for them. Even when they resisted, their will was not entirely their own. The animal side of their spirits grew dominant, and the Dorns found their dead, particularly those who were found in the far north, more and more often mutilated and disgraced. With the crossing of the sea and the passing of time, old tales were forgotten and old songs were misremembered. The Dorns began to hate the carrion spirits as they did any other scavengers, and the *Vigdir* fell into Shadow. Eventually, the *Vigdir* abandoned their charges entirely, retreating to the *Fewyris* in confusion and pain, and waited there for Izrador to deliver the promised souls to them.



As the Vigdir left, a new horror became a part of Dornish existence: the Fell. The spirit speakers begged the Vigdir for aid, but they were beyond hearing. Soon the Northmen adopted new ways of burying their dead, desperate ways that required the dead to be defiled as mercilessly as any carrion creature might. What little faith the Dorns had in their ancient spirit guardians was lost.

Now, in the Last Age, the Vigdir have returned. Perhaps they awoke from their sleep in the land where time passed differently, or perhaps they realized that the Dornish dead were not returning to the Eternal as had been promised. A great rage boiled within the Vigdir, and they struggled to return to the realm of the living. By feeding on their fury and the seed of corruption planted within them by their dealings with the Dark God, they have recently succeeded in overcoming the bonds that joined them with the rest of the Eternal. Now the Vigdir have returned, filled with vehemence and anger. They are few in number, but they have returned to their duties as openers of the way for the Dornish dead. They have taken on one more duty, as well: revenge. Despite their honorable intentions, the Vigdir are often mistaken for simple carrion scavengers at best, or for astiraxes at worst. Thus, most Dorns seek to chase away and destroy some of their few allies in these desperate times.

Tadulos

Guardian of the Dead

Medium Outsider (Incorporeal, Trapped Spirit)

Hit Dice: 9d8+27 (68 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: Fly 50 ft. (perfect) (10 squares)

Armor Class: 13 (+2 Dex, +1 deflection), touch 13, flat-footed 11

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/–

Attack: –

Full Attack: –

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Howl, possession, trip (wolf form only)

Special Qualities: Bodiless, cold iron vulnerability, damage reduction 5/cold iron, sense death, soul ward, superior invisibility, world-sense (Dornish souls)

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +7

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 12

Skills: Hide +14, Listen +15, Move Silently +14, Search +12, Sense Motive +13, Spot +15, Survival +13 (+15 when following tracks)

Feats: Ability Focus (howl), Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary, pack (1d4+2), or reaping (2d10 plus 2d4 Meruros)

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always lawful neutral

Advancement: 10–15 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: —

A mangy wolf peers towards you through the blowing snow, its eyes burning with green flame. Its gore-drenched muzzle noses in the snow to reveal the frozen hand of a body, before it looses a long howl.

Wolf form

Manifested Tadulos: CR 5; Medium outsider (trapped spirit); HD 9d8+27; hp 68; Init +6; Spd 50 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +9; Grp +16; Atk +16 melee (1d6+10, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Howl, possession, trip; SQ Cold iron vulnerability, damage reduction 5/cold iron, low-light vision, scent, sense death, soul ward; AL LN; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 12

Skills and Feats: Hide +14, Listen +15, Move Silently +14, Search +12, Sense Motive +13, Spot +15, Survival +13 (+15 when following tracks); Ability Focus (howl), Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track^B

Dire Wolf form

Manifested Tadulos: CR 5; Large outsider (trapped spirit); HD 9d8+27; hp 68; Init +6; Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +3 natural, -1 size), touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +9; Grp +20; Atk +15 melee (1d8+10, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Howl, possession, trip; SQ Cold iron vulnerability, damage reduction 5/cold iron, low-light vision, scent, sense death, soul ward; AL LN; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 12

Skills and Feats: Hide +10, Listen +15, Move Silently +14, Search +12, Sense Motive +13, Spot +15, Survival +13 (+15 when following tracks); Ability Focus (howl), Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track^B

The Tadulos are the guardians of the dead, and they are charged with defending the bodies of fallen Dorns until the Meruros can claim their souls. The Tadulos are also responsible for making certain that the dead are found by their fellow Dorns or, if none are nearby, by those who seem likely to give the fallen an appropriate burial. They can only possess the bodies of wolves, and can only do so when they sense the body of a fallen Dorn.

The Tadulos are fierce enemies of the Fell. Since their return to Aryth, they have made it their mission to eradicate the Fell wherever they find them. The presence of the undead sends them into a fury that leads them even to abandon their duty in order to destroy the Shadow's blasphemies.

Those who can perceive spirits in their bodiless forms see the Tadulos as bold Dorn warrior women, proudly standing guard over fallen kinsmen with blades drawn.

Tadulos do not speak.

Combat (Bodiless)

Tadulos have few abilities in their spirit form, and are as rarely encountered as such. A Tadulos driven out of its wolf body immediately seeks a new one.

Possession (Su): Wolves and dire wolves only, save DC equal to 10 + one-half of the Tadulos' HD + the Tadulos' Cha modifier. When a Tadulos possesses a normal wolf, its transformation eventually alters its physical ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution) and natural armor to match those of a dire wolf.

Combat (Taking form)

Howl (Su): As a full-round action at will, a Tadulos can emit a soulful howl. Undead within 100 feet must succeed on a DC 17 Will save or suffer penalties as if shaken. Dorns who hear the howl receive a +2 morale bonus to saving throws against fear and enchantment effects. This is a sonic effect. The saving throw is Charisma-based.

Additionally, once per day when guarding a fallen Dorn, a Tadulos can emit a howl that is heard for miles around (10 miles per HD of the Tadulos). This howl has two effects. First, it summons a Meruros, should one be within range. Second, any Dorn who hears the call will instinctively know that it bodes ill for one of his kinsmen, and that the kinsman in question can be found near the howl's source. How the character interprets this feeling can vary; he may assume that the howling creature is hunting the fellow Dorn and means it ill, particularly when he finds the Dorn's dead body.

Sense Death (Su): Tadulos are drawn to the moment of a Dorn's death. They can sense it from great distances, and come as quickly as they are able to prevent the dead rising as fell. The Tadulos can sense the death of any Dorn from a number of miles away equal to the 10 times the HD of the dying character. For example, a 3rd-level Dornish warrior is slain by an orc patrol. If there is a Tadulos within 30 miles, it will come. The Tadulos then guards the body and waits for the arrival of the Meruros.

If a Tadulos finds other, non-Dornish bodies near the fallen Dorn, it mutilates them to such an extent that they cannot rise as Fell or be made into some other form of corporeal undead (though they may still become one of the Lost). Tadulos have been known to range around the bodies of their charges for many miles in search of other bodies to mutilate or corporeal undead to destroy.

Soul Ward (Su): So long as a Tadulos remains within a certain radius of a fallen body, it cannot rise as Fell or be made into a corporeal undead creature. The radius is equal to 5 feet per HD of the Tadulos. This ability does not protect a creature from ever rising, but merely suppresses the effect. So for instance, if a fallen character failed his save against rising as a Fell, or is animated as a zombie by a legate, it would remain inanimate as long as an unadvanced (9 HD) Tadulos was within 45 feet. As soon as the Tadulos moved away, however, the character would rise as one of the undead.

Meruros

Herald of the Dead

Small Outsider (Incorporeal, Trapped Spirit)

Hit Dice: 13d8+13 (72 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: Fly 40 ft. (perfect) (10 squares)

Armor Class: 20 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +6 deflection), touch 20, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +13/-

Attack: -

Full Attack: -

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Possession, soul pluck, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Bodiless, cold iron vulnerability, damage reduction 10/cold iron, summoned herald, superior invisibility, world-sense

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +11

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 25

Skills: Appraise +18, Concentration +17, Hide +19, Intimidate +22, Listen +19, Knowledge (spirits) +18, Move Silently +19, Search +18, Sense Motive +19, Spot +19

Feats: Ability Focus (soul pluck), Improved Initiative, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary, triad (3), or reaping (2d4 plus 2d10 Tadulos)

Challenge Rating: 13

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: 14-19 HD (Small); 20-23 (Medium)

Level Adjustment: -



A stately raven with some of the features of a predatory hawk sits atop the chest of a Dornish warrior who appears to have been cut down in battle. The unusually large bird deftly plucks out the dead man's eyes before moving on to the next feast.

Where the Tadulos guards the earthly vessel of the dead, it is the duty of the Meruros to claim the souls of the recently deceased Dorns and usher them into Fewyris and the Eternal. The Meruros have become spiteful and vain with their contact with the Shadow, and not all souls are reaped now. Some are left to rot and find their own way if the Meruros deems them unworthy, and competition between individual Meruros for choice souls often leads to bickering and infighting.

Those who can perceive spirits in their bodiless forms see the Meruros as grim Dorn hunters splattered in blood, shrewdly surveying the carnage of the battlefield.

Meruros can converse in a squawking version of Norther, if they choose to but normally only do so if offered shiny baubles.

Combat (Bodiless)

Meruros have few abilities in their spirit form, and are as rarely encountered as such. A Meruros driven out of its raven body immediately seeks a new one.

Raven form

Manifested Meruros: CR 13; Small outsider (trapped spirit); HD 13d8+13; hp 72; Init +7; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex), +1 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +13; Grp +9; Atk +14 melee (1d4, talons); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Possession, soul pluck, spell-like abilities; SQ Cold iron vulnerability, damage reduction 10/cold iron, low-light vision, summoned herald; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +11, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 25

Skills and Feats: Appraise +18, Concentration +17, Hide +19, Intimidate +22, Listen +19, Knowledge (spirits) +18, Move Silently +19, Search +18, Sense Motive +19, Spot +27; Ability Focus (soul pluck), Improved Initiative, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Weapon Finesse

Spell-like Abilities: At will – *cause fear* (DC 17), *deathwatch*, *detect evil*, *detect undead*, *disrupt undead*; 3/day – *gentle repose*, *hide from undead* (DC 17), *ray of enfeeblement*, *scare* (DC 18); 1/day – *circle of death* (DC 22), *death ward*, *enervation*, *fear* (DC 20), *harm*, *undeath to death*. Caster level 13th. Save DCs are Charisma-based.

Possession (Su): Ravens only; when fully transformed, use stats for eagle; save DC equal to 10 + one-half of the Meruros' HD + the Meruros' Charisma modifier.

Combat (Taking form)

Summoned Herald (Su): Meruros are less vigilant than the Tadulos, but tend to remain within their raven hosts for longer periods of time, using their keen senses to seek out the fallen and travel to them on the wing. A Meruros who hears the howl of a Tadulos reluctantly wings toward its duty.

Soul Pluck (Su): The Meruros is capable of pulling the souls of humanoids and monstrous humanoids from their bodies by consuming their eyes. This forever after prevents a creature from rising as one of the Fell (or any other corporeal undead) or Lost (any incorporeal undead), whether naturally or through direct necromantic magic. It also means that the creature's soul has departed, and it can only be brought back to life via a *miracle*, *resurrection*, or *true resurrection* spell.

This ability has varying effects when used on creatures that are either still living or are already dead. Against corporeal foes, living or dead, the Meruros' touch attacks produce a *vampiric touch* effect (CL 13, for 5d6 damage). Against incorporeal foes, the Meruros' touch are considered ghost touch weapons, and not only produce this *vampiric touch* effect, but also act as a disrupting weapon: the target must

make a DC 25 Will save or be destroyed. Caster level is equal to Hit Dice. Save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *cause fear* (DC 17), *deathwatch*, *detect evil*, *detect undead*, *disrupt undead*; 3/day – *gentle repose*, *hide from undead* (DC 17), *ray of enfeeblement*, *scare* (DC 18); 1/day – *circle of death* (DC 22), *death ward*, *enervation*, *fear* (DC 20), *harm*, *undeath to death*. Caster level 13th. Save DCs are Charisma-based.

Ancestral Warrior

Medium Outsider (Good, Native)

Hit Dice: 6d8+6 (33 hp)

Initiative: +4

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armor Class: 18 (+4 chain shirt, +2 large steel shield, +2 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+9

Attack: Masterwork bastard sword +10 melee (1d10+3/19-20)

Full Attack: Masterwork bastard sword +10/+5 melee (1d10+3/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Rage, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Aura of Menace, damage reduction 5/evil, darkvision 60 ft., Dorn traits, immunity to fear, petrification, and poison, low-light vision, resistance to cold 10, spell resistance 16

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +6

Abilities: Str 17, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +5, Concentration +10, Hide +9, Jump +12, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Spot +10, Survival +10, Swim +13

Feats: Cleave, Improved Initiative^B, Power Attack, Track

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually neutral good

Advancement: 7–10 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: —

A hardy Dornish warrior gazes past you, his eyes unfocused and a snarl of rage upon his face as he hefts a large battle-scarred axe. A fresh wound oozes from his side, his blood dripping through his rent armor, the color of which is strangely muted.

Ancestral warriors are the spirits of the long dead from the Dorns' past given form by the will of the Vigdir. The bodies of these spirits are things comprised entirely of magic, and are not truly real. They look as though nearly all the color has



been drained out of them, and are they are obviously not truly alive in the natural sense of the word.

Still bearing the wounds of the battle that brought them down, the ancestral warrior can only be brought back into the world of the living by a spirit speaker who treats with the Vigdir and then, only for a short time. While here, they follow the orders of the spirit speaker who summoned them, though they bear a particular hatred for creatures formed by the magic of the Shadow, such as astiraxes and fell.

Ancestral warriors speak Norther.

Combat

Ancestral warriors prefer direct confrontation. As one of the honored dead worthy of culling by the Meruros, all of them are brave and honorable. They are not foolhardy however, and use their abilities to utmost effect.

Any weapon wielded by an ancestral warrior is treated as good-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Aura of Menace (Su): An aura of fury surrounds ancestral warriors when they are fighting or angry. Hostile creatures within a 20-foot radius of an ancestral warrior must succeed on a DC 14 Will save to resist its effects. Those who fail take a –2 penalty on attacks, AC, and saves for 24 hours or until they successfully hit the ancestral warrior that generated the aura. A creature that has resisted or broken the effect

cannot be affected again by the same ancestral warrior's aura for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Rage (Ex): An ancestral warrior that takes damage in combat flies into a berserk rage on its next turn, attacking madly until either it or its opponent is dead. It gains a +4 bonus to Strength, a +4 bonus to Constitution, and a –2 penalty to AC. Once it has entered its rage, it can no longer use its spell-like abilities. The ancestral warrior cannot end its rage voluntarily.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *detect evil, light, rage*; 3/day – *aid, detect astirax**, *detect magic*; 1/day – *bull's strength, heroism*. Caster level 6th.

* MIDNIGHT 2ND EDITION

Ancestral Hero

Medium Outsider (Good, Native)

Hit Dice: 12d8+60 (114 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armor Class: 24 (+4 chain shirt, +3 Dex, +7 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 21

Base Attack/Grapple: +12/+20



Attack: +1 greatsword +23 melee (2d6+15/19-20) or mighty composite longbow [+4] +15 ranged (1d8+4/x3)

Full Attack: +1 greatsword +23/+18/+13 melee (2d6+15/19-20) or mighty composite longbow [+4] +15/+10/+5 ranged (1d8+4/x3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Battle cry, rage, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Aura of menace, damage reduction 10/evil and silver, darkvision 60 ft., freedom of movement, immunity to fear, petrification and poison, low-light vision, resistance to cold 10 and electricity 10, spell resistance 22

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +11, Will +10

Abilities: Str 27, Dex 17, Con 20, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15

Skills: Climb +23, Concentration +12, Hide +18, Intimidate +12, Jump +23, Listen +17, Move Silently +18, Profession (Sailor) +17, Spot +17, Survival +17, Swim +24

Feats: Cleave, Improved Initiative^B, Power Attack, Track, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword)

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 11

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually neutral good

Advancement: 13–18 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: —

The large Dornish man smiles at your approach, his strong hands resting on the pommel of his greatsword. His golden hair whips in the breeze above his braided beard. He is the image of the perfect Dorn warrior, calmly ready for battle.

Ancestral heroes are the greatest of the ancestral warriors. They are the legends of ages past, brought forth from the Eternal and wrapped in bodies of Aryth's natural magic by the Vigdir. They are images of human perfection, full of vibrant color and energy. Wherever they walk, they are surrounded by a constantly blowing cool breeze. They are adorned with trophies of their previous victories, and often carry additional weapons.

A spirit speaker that is capable of calling forth one of the ancestral heroes has a powerful and reliable ally with a thirst for battle. Like ancestral warriors, ancestral heroes follow the orders of the spirit speaker that summoned them, but they are especially dedicated to Dornish ideals and will not behave with cowardice or dishonor. They truly enjoy a challenge, and make efforts to pit themselves against the most difficult opponents in a melee.

Ancestral heroes speak Norther.

Combat

Ancestral heroes are the champions of the Dornish dead. They are heroes of song and legend, and are a beauty and a terror to behold upon the field of battle. They possess an endless supply of bravery, and are stronger than several normal men. Unless they are to play a role in some cunning plan, they charge the most powerful enemy on the field and challenge it directly.

Any weapon wielded by an ancestral hero is treated as good-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Aura of Menace (Su): An aura of fury surrounds ancestral heroes when they are fighting or angry. Hostile creatures within a 20-foot radius of an ancestral hero must succeed on a DC 18 Will save to resist its effects. Those who fail take a –2 penalty on attacks, AC, and saves for 24 hours or until they successfully hit the ancestral hero that generated the aura. A creature that has resisted or broken the effect cannot be affected again by the same ancestral hero's aura for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Battle Cry (Su): Three times per day, the ancestral hero can let out a great battle cry. This releases a 30-ft. cone that duplicates the effect of a *shout* spell (DC 18) cast at 12th-level. In addition, all Dornish allies within a 30-ft. radius receive a +1 morale bonus on saving throws against charm and fear effects and a +1 morale bonus on attack and weapon damage rolls for 5 rounds.

Freedom of Movement (Su): Ancestral heroes exist under a continuous *freedom of movement* cast at 12th-level. Should this effect be dispelled or otherwise negated, the ancestral hero can renew it as a free action.

Rage (Ex): An ancestral hero that takes damage in combat can choose to fly into a berserk rage on its next turn, attacking madly until either it or its opponent is dead. It gains a +4 bonus to Strength, a +4 bonus to Constitution, and a –2 penalty to AC. Once it has entered its rage, it can no longer use its spell-like abilities. The ancestral hero can end its rage voluntarily at any time. If it does so, it cannot rage again during the same encounter.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *aid, detect astirax*, detect evil, detect thoughts, endure elements; 3/day – bless weapon, cure serious wounds (DC 15), daylight, remove fear; 1/day – greater heroism, magic circle versus evil, neutralize poison, remove disease, see invisibility*. Caster level 12th. Save DCs are Charisma-based.

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Prestige Class: Spirit Speaker

“The ancestors call to us all. I answer.”

The Dorns have a close tie to their ancestors, and this tie is made manifest in those who walk the path of the spirit speaker. A spirit speaker is a Dornish holy woman or, rarely, a holy man. They are the links to those valiant warriors who have gone before, and keepers of the old ways. They are the *anuhlir*. Many spirit speakers were also accomplished warriors before they embraced the call of their ancestors, and can be expected to fight the Shadow just as furiously with force of arms as with the powers granted to them by their honored ancestors.

The spirit speaker draws his greatest strength from his ability to treat with the *Vigdir* to summon Dornish spirits back from the Eternal. These spirits can be made to perform duties for himself or other Dorns, albeit only for short periods of time. As the spirit speaker grows in power, he can even restore life to Dorn heroes who have left unfinished business behind.

Hit Dice: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a spirit speaker, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

Race: Dorn

Base Attack: +5

Feats: Greater Spellcasting (conjunction), Magecraft (spiritual), Spellcasting (conjunction), and either Armor Proficiency (light) or Shield Proficiency.

Language: Norther

Skills: Knowledge (spirits) 5 ranks

Spells: Able to cast at least one greater conjunction spell of 3rd level or higher.

Class Skills

The spirit speaker's class skills (and the key ability scores for each skill) are Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (spirits) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (n/a), Spellcraft (Wis), Survival (Wis) and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class features

All the following are class features of the spirit speaker prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A spirit speaker gains no proficiency in weapons or armor.

The Spirit Speaker

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1nd	+0	+2	+0	+2	Ancestral spellcasting, summon ancestor
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Armored Casting 5%, Augment Summoning
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Ancestral Recall, Bonus Feat
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Armored Casting 10%, Call Tadulos
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Ancestral Warnings, Gaze of the Meruros
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Armored Casting 15%, Bonus Feat
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Ancestral Favor
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Armored Casting 20%, Gift of the Vigdir
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Call Meruros, Bonus Feat
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Armored Casting 25%, Breath of the Vigdir

Ancestral Spellcasting: Spirit speaker levels grant benefits similar to channeler levels with regards to the art of magic, bonus spells, and bonus spell energy, but within very specific limitations. Spirit speaker levels stack with channeler levels for the purposes of determining the character's caster level for conjuration and greater conjuration spells, as well as for determining highest-level conjuration or greater conjuration spells that the character can cast. A character with more spirit speaker and channeler levels than levels in other classes adds +1 to his character level to determine the highest-level conjuration and greater conjuration spells he can cast. Additionally, each time the character receives a new spirit speaker level, he gains one new conjuration or greater conjuration spell of any level and school he can cast. Finally, the character's maximum spell energy increases by one point for every level of spirit speaker he gains.

For determining the caster level and spell progression availability of all other spells, the character's caster level increases by one for every two spirit speaker levels (though he retains the +1 for having more spirit speaker and channeler levels than other classes).

Summon Ancestor: Upon taking the first level of this class, the spirit speaker adds *summon ancestral warrior* and *summon ancestral hero* to his list of spells known, regardless of whether or not he can currently cast them. When casting either of these spells, the spirit speaker pays 50 vp less per spirit speaker level he has.

Armored Casting (Ex): The spirit speaker becomes used to wearing armor while casting spells. At 2nd level, the arcane spell failure of any armor or shield is decreased by 5%. Every other level thereafter, the arcane spell failure is decreased by another 5%.

Augment Summoning: At 2nd level, any time the spirit speaker summons an ancestral hero, ancestral warrior,

Meruros, or Tadulos, the summoned creature gains benefits as if it had been summoned with the Augment Summoning feat. If the spirit speaker already has the Augment Summoning feat, these benefits stack.

Ancestral Recall (Su): The spirit speaker communes with the heroic dead in order to learn from their example. At 3rd level, once per day the spirit speaker can spend a full-round action to cast about for the whispers of the ancestors and reroll a failed Knowledge check. The spirit speaker gains a competence bonus to this Knowledge check equal to his class level. This ability requires concentration and draws attacks of opportunity.

Bonus Feat: At 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels the spirit speaker gains a bonus feat. These bonus feats must be chosen from Extra Gift, Spell Knowledge, or any item creation feat.

Call Tadulos: A 4th-level spirit speaker can enter into a pact with one of the Vigdir. By forging a deal with a Tadulos, the spirit speaker can arrange for the summoning of the Tadulos ahead of time to be triggered by some other event. This functions as described for the *contingency* spell. The spell is cast instantly when the trigger event occurs. Once called, the Tadulos remains for one round per caster level of the spirit speaker.

In order to call the Tadulos and forge the pact, the spirit speaker must spend 24 uninterrupted hours performing the ritual and expend 6 points of spell energy. When the Tadulos arrives to fulfill its part of the pact, it claims a portion of the spirit speaker's life: he immediately loses 6 points of spell energy (some or all of which may be suffered as Constitution damage), and permanently loses 100 xp.

The conditions needed to call the Tadulos must be clear, although they can be general. If complicated or convoluted conditions are prescribed, the call may fail when triggered. The calling occurs based solely on the stated conditions, regardless of whether the spirit speaker wants it to. A spirit speaker can have only one pact with any of the Vigdir active at a time.



Ancestral Warnings (Su): Always open to the existence beyond normal senses, the spirit speaker hears whispers of the ancestors warning him of danger. Starting at 5th level, the spirit speaker receives a +2 competence bonus to Initiative checks.

Gaze of the Meruros (Su): The Meruros traffic in fear and death. Once the spirit speaker has achieved 5th level in this class, he gains a limited portion of that power. Once per day as a standard action, the spirit speaker can cast his gaze upon a single target. The target is affected as per a *fear* spell with a DC equal to 10 + the spirit speaker's class levels + his Charisma modifier.

Ancestral Favor (Su): By 7th level, the spirit speaker has become favored by the Vigdir. They seek to guide the spirit speaker until such time as his heroic death is before them. Once per day before knowing the results of a saving throw, the spirit speaker can chose to reroll a saving throw he has just made. The spirit speaker must accept the second roll of the die, even if it is lower. Should the spirit speaker be undertaking a truly heroic action, they may deem that the Dorn's time has ended, revoking their favor and preventing this ability from being used (based on the DM's discretion).

Gift of the Vigdir: At 8th level, the spirit speaker gains the power of legend. The spirit speaker gains the ability to cast *raise dead* as a 5th-level channeler spell, with the following exceptions. The spell is considered a greater conjuration (calling) spell. The target of the spell must be a Dorn, and even then, the reprieve from death comes with a price. The spirit speaker must name a condition that the target of the

spell must fulfill, such as quest he that left uncompleted or a murder left unavenged. This must be a goal that the fallen warrior held sacred in life, though the spirit speaker might share the goal. The individual who is returned to life has one day per caster level of the spirit speaker to complete the task. At the end of that time, or when the task is fulfilled, the target dies for the last and final time. If the subject of the *raise dead* spurns the gift of the Vigdir and avoids completing his assigned task, the Vigdir punish his cowardice and the drain 2 points of Constitution each day until the Dorn returns to his or her task. This damage cannot be healed until the individual returned to life takes up his mission again. Should the character's Constitution be reduce to zero in this manner, he simply fades away, his soul having been reclaimed.

If a Dorn dies in peace, with nothing left undone (an unlikely event in this brutal age of shame and loss), he cannot be raised from the dead in this manner.

Call Meruros: A 9th-level spirit speaker has further tied himself to the Vigdir. By forging a deal with a Meruros, the spirit speaker can arrange for the summoning of the Meruros ahead of time to be triggered by some other event. This functions exactly as Call Tadulos above, except as noted here.

The Meruros demands a higher price. The spirit speaker must expend 12 points of spell energy, both to forge the pact and to pay the Meruros upon its arrival; additionally, the summoning costs the spirit speaker 250 xp.

New feats

While the Dorns may have forgotten their past with the Vigdir, the Caretakers of the Dead have not. Some bloodlines find themselves charmed by these spirits because one of their ancestors long ago forged a pact with one of the creatures, irrevocably tying their the lives of their children to one of the Vigdir.

Born of Duty

One of the Tadulos is a patron of your family, and its closeness has colored your personality and filled your soul with loyalty. You feel a deep sense of duty and honor to protect those weaker than yourself on the battlefield, especially those who have been immobilized, knocked unconscious, or prevented from defending themselves. In particular, the Fell fill you with a great rage that you can release as a great battle cry similar to the howl of the Tadulos.

Prerequisites: Dorn, lawful alignment, 1st level only.

Benefits: Once per day as a full-round action, you can loose a fearsome cry. Undead within 100 ft. must succeed in a Will save or suffer penalties as if shaken. Dorns who hear the cry receive a +2 morale bonus to saving throws against fear and enchantment effects. The save DC is equal 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Charisma modifier. This is a sonic, extraordinary ability.

Additionally, your caster level is considered one higher for the *Call Tadulos* class ability of the spirit speaker prestige class.

Born of the Grave

One of the Meruros is a patron of your family, and its closeness has colored your personality and touched your soul with death. You feel are a cold individual who sees life and death as simple terms in an exchange. You know that eventually the Vigdir come for all, and that there is no way to avoid their reaping, but that only the worthy are worth saving. You feel no need to aid those who do not uphold Dornish ideals, and require suitable payment to aid such folk.

Prerequisites: Dorn, non-good alignment, 1st level only.

Benefits: You sense death's claim on others. You benefit from a permanent *deathwatch* effect, but you must concentrate as a full-round action to use it, and it can only reveal information about a target within 15 ft. to which you have line of sight. This is an extraordinary ability.

Additionally, your caster level is considered one higher for the *Call Meruros* class ability of the spirit speaker prestige class.

Breath of the Vigdir: At 10th level, the spirit gains power seldom seen anywhere else on Ayrth. By negotiating with the Vigdir, the spirit speaker gains the ability to cast *true resurrection* on a fellow Dorn as a 9th-level channeler spell. The spell is considered a greater conjuration (calling) spell. This ability functions as the gift of the Vigdir ability, with one exception: the individual returned to life has one week per caster level of the spirit speaker to complete the unfinished task.

New Spells

form of the Meruros

Transmutation

Level: Cha 3

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Effect: One willing humanoid

Duration: 10 minutes per level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

Howling a call for aid to the spirits of the north, the caster channels the spirit of one of the Meruros into the target, allowing him to take on that spirit's preferred shape. It turns a humanoid into a canine form, granting it many of a wolf's abilities and some special abilities related to the Meruros. Because the target must let the spirit of the Meruros bond to his spirit, only willing creatures can be affected by this spell.

First of all, the target's shape changes to that of a wolf. Any worn or carried items may either merge into his new form, be carried in his mouth, or fall to his feet, as he wishes. He gains a wolf's movement, bite attack, low-light vision, natural armor bonus, scent, and trip abilities, as well its bonus Track feat. He retains his own ability scores, saving throws, base attack bonus, class abilities, and so on. Casting spells with somatic components is impossible in this form, as is using weapons; by the grace of the Meruros, however, the verbal components of spells may be produced in the form of the wolf's howling.

Finally, the spirit of the Meruros cloaks the creature in a warding against the undead. The recipient of the *form of the Meruros* also gains the benefits of a *hide from undead* spell as if cast by the same spellcaster. This benefit lasts for the duration of the *form of the Meruros* spell.

The target may return to its natural form as a full-round action.

form of the Tadulos

Transmutation
Level: Cha 5
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Effect: One willing humanoid
Duration: 10 minutes per level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

Calling out with a screech for aid to the spirits of the north, the caster channels the spirit of one of the Tadulos into the target, allowing him to take on that spirit's preferred shape. It turns a humanoid into a bird form, granting it many of a large raven's abilities and some special abilities related to the Tadulos. Because the target must let the spirit of the Tadulos bond to his spirit, only willing creatures can be affected by this spell.

This spell functions just like *form of the Meruros*, except that the target gains an eagle's movement, talon attack, low-light vision, natural armor bonus, and bonus to Spot checks. Also, instead of a *hide from undead* spell, the target gains the benefits of both *death ward* and *freedom of movement* spells.

Summon Ancestral Hero

Conjuration (calling)
Level: Cha 7
Components: V, S, XP
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: One called ancestral hero or three ancestral warriors
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell functions like *summon ancestral warrior*, except that you may call an ancestral hero or three ancestral warriors. A task taking up to one minute per caster level requires a payment of 1,500 vp. For a task taking up to one hour per caster level, the creature requires a payment of 3,000 vp. A long-term task, one requiring up to one day per caster level, requires a payment of 6,000 vp.

The ancestral hero summoned is a typical figure of Dornish legend, represented by the statistics presented in this chapter. Advanced ancestral heroes might be summoned by unique rituals at the GM's discretion, but such beings demand larger, and often more exceptional rewards.

XP Cost: 500 XP.

Summon Ancestral Warrior

Conjuration (calling) [see text]
Level: Cha 4
Components: V, S, XP
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: One called ancestral warrior
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

By casting this spell, you request that the Vigdir send you one of the honored dead known as an ancestral warrior. If you know an individual warrior's name, you may request that individual by speaking the name during the spell.

You may ask the warrior to perform one task in exchange for a payment from you. Tasks might range from the simple to the complex. You must be able to communicate with the warrior called in order to bargain for its services. The bargaining is part of the casting time. The warrior called requires a payment for its services. This payment must take the form of weapons and armor that immediately disappear upon conclusion of the bargaining.

A task taking up to one minute per caster level requires a sacrifice of 500 vp. For a task taking up to one hour per caster level, the creature requires a payment of 1,000 vp. A long-term task, one requiring up to one day per caster level, requires a payment of 2,000 vp. The sacrifice is typically provided in the form of hides, furs, weapons, armor, grain, and the like, which disappears into the Eternal when the bargaining is concluded. A preferred payment, however, is in the form of the bodies (or merely the heads) of servants of the Shadow. Each HD of servant thus sacrificed is worth 10 vp for the purposes of the sacrifice.

A nonhazardous task requires only half the indicated payment, while an especially hazardous task might require a greater gift. If slain, the warrior disincorporates and returns to the Eternal. The warrior will not accept a task that seems foolish but may consider tasks that others would think suicidal, provided it would make a worthy death for a Dorn. If the task is strongly aligned with the warrior's beliefs, such as hunting an astirax, it may halve or even waive the payment.

The ancestral warrior summoned is a typical member of the Dornish dead, represented by the statistics presented in this chapter. Advanced ancestral warriors might be summoned by unique rituals at the DM's discretion, but such beings demand larger, and often more exceptional rewards.

At the end of its task, or when the duration bargained for expires, the warrior returns to the Eternal (after reporting back to you, if appropriate and possible).

XP Cost: 100 XP.

An Ancient Evil Stirs



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MIDNIGHT™

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