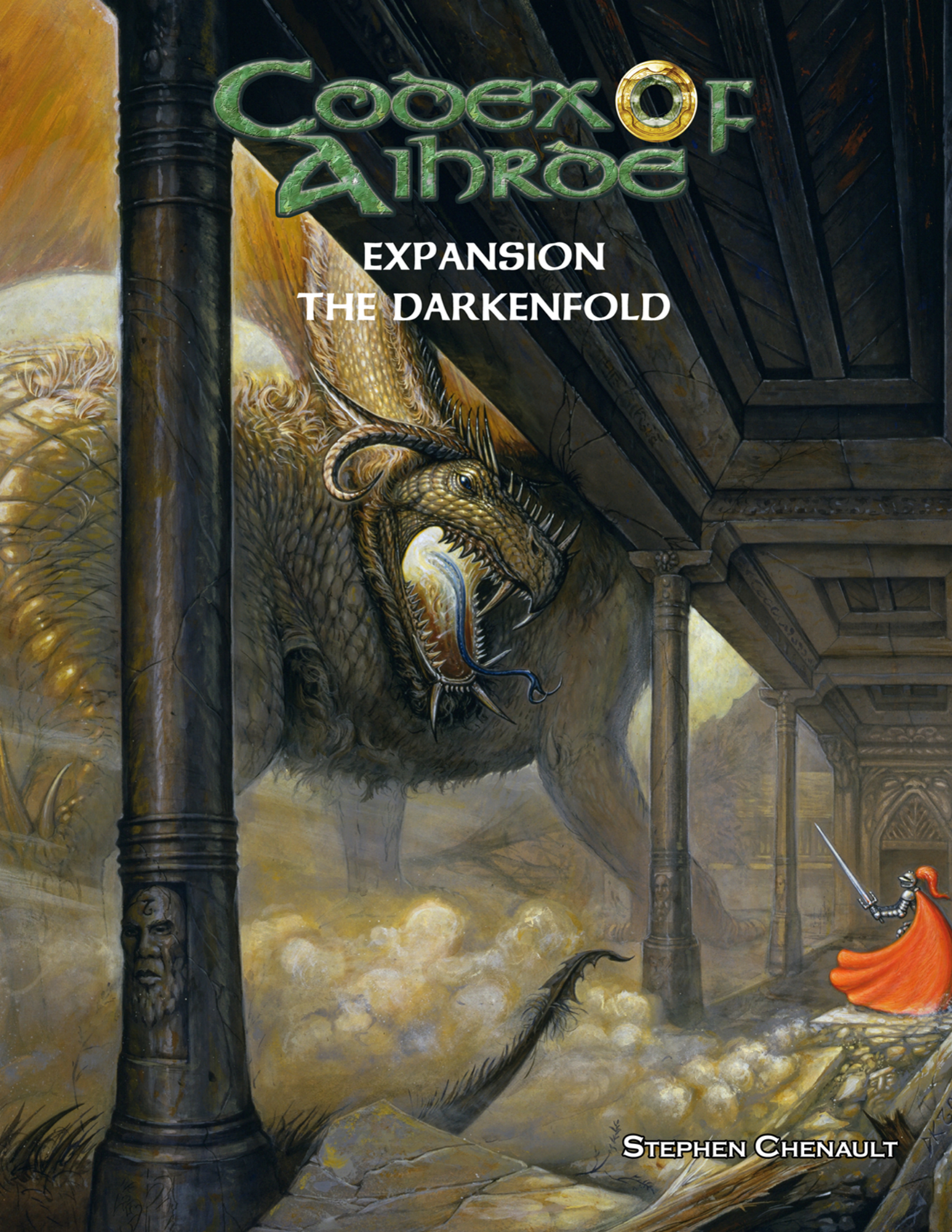


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EXPANSION
THE DARKENFOLD



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CASTLES & CRUSADES®

THE DARKENFOLD

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THE DARKENFOLD 1

THE DARKENFOLD

The Darkenfold was part of what was once the Ethvold, a forest which spanned across the entire southern reaches of Ethrum from the Rhodope Mountains in the west to the Ardeen River in the east. From the north, it covered the Shelves of the Mist, and much of Southern Kayomar to lap up against the feet of the Bergrucken in the northeast. Those days were long ago, when dragons were young, the sentients ruled the soil, and men and dwarves were few and unlearned (see maps). The Darkenfold is a remnant of that forest, stretching only several hundred miles from the Danau River and the Great Lothian Plains of Kayomar in the east to the doorsteps of the Rhodope Mountains in the west. In the south, the great Soup Marsh hems in the ancient trees, and the forest continues in wild growth from there to the far-off Shelves of the Mist in the distant north and west.

The Eldwood, to the east, another remnant of the Ethvold, holds the heart of the old wood, but the Darkenfold holds its dark memories. It is an evil wood, filled with its own wild abandon and creatures of ill intent. Those who live there know that the trees and the soil hold memories of their past glory and do not forget the axes of men, orcs, dwarves, and goblins that have plundered them of their wealth and life.

The forest itself is huge and has many prominent geographic regions, divided into three: the Northern and Southern Plateaus and the Mistbane River Basin. A series of foothills, bluffs, and small lakes usually referred to as the Breaks, divide the plateaus.

Grassy knolls, open meadows, and slow-running brooks pocket the forest deeps and break the sinister visage cast by the old trees. Here, where the sun shines, lilies, daisies, daffodils and other wild flowers bloom. At night, the light of the moon and stars spill through, and when the evening is still, the fey come out to dance, sing, and play. The forest is thick with these creatures. Remnants of the Ethvold, they came here long ago, before the Wall of Worlds girded the earth from the trackless wastes of the Void. Sprites, nymphs, nixies and pixies as well as water lilies, blue bells, wood chips and the like abound throughout the deep recesses of the forest. There are darker fey as well; boggarts, shadows, bullworts and carp snails dwell here. Indeed, many believe that the Darkenfold's nature derives from the Queen of the Unseelie Court who resides in the forest's southern reaches beyond the Downs in the Lily Fare.

Two main roads cut through the forest. The larger of the two, the Old Post Road, begins in the Town of Elne in the east and meanders through the upper reaches of the forest, until it veers north just above Ends Meet, to emerge in the Broken Steppes south of Petersboro upon the edge of the Shelves of the Mist. The Southern Way, a spur of the Old Post Road, is overgrown and weeded with small trees and is slowly vanishing back into the depths of the Darkenfold. Both roads are vestiges of the Age of Winter's Dark, when the Empire of the Horned God stretched even to these distant reaches. The Old Post Road in particular rises several meters above the forest through which it cuts, being fashioned of several layers of gravel and topped by cobbles. There is enough slant to provide run off, and two long,

shallow ditches run the whole length on either side of the road. In many places, the cobbles have cracked and slid away into the ditch, or the road itself has sunken into the moist ground. There were once way posts along the road, which the servants of the Horned God and other travelers used when traveling these dark eaves. They were generally one or two-room stone buildings with wood shingle roofs. But those have fallen into ruin for the most part or vanished into the forest entirely.

The Southern Way was never paved, and its condition reflects that. Its track is still visible in most places, but in some, it has vanished into the wood, covered now in young growth trees and brush. The ungerm began work on it at one point but gave up when the Winter Dark Wars began. The pile of rubble from the cobbles and equipment lies still where the Post Road and Southern Way join, though much of it is overgrown with weeds and the like.

Few men venture into the Darkenfold. Those who do are a hardy lot with stout axes and stouter wills. Some settle in the few clearings or along the old roads, and build strong wooden houses beneath the dark trees and along the meadow tracks. 'Tis unknown what motivates them. Whether some crime or want of justice has driven them, or whether they desire a piece of earth far away from the civilized world, they find a dangerous home in the Darkenfold. They trade in Greenbriar or Ends Meet on occasion, with the wood elves, or sometimes leave the forest to travel to larger towns such as Petersboro in the west and Elne in the east.

A small band of dedicated rangers have taken on the onerous task of protecting the forest and the folk who reside there. They





call themselves the Rangers of the Knot, for they meet in a glade wherein two ancient trees have wrapped their boles around each other. Only recently has the Druidic Council recognized the rangers. The Council promised to deliver them a sapling offspring of the Great Oak to help heal the Darkenfold.

There are numerous elf villages in the Millorian, the southern stretches of the forest. These elves live a semi-nomadic life in the woods, living in small villages, cleverly hidden by magic and the use of the natural surroundings. These folk trade in both Ends Meet and Greenbriar mostly with the frontiersman but they rarely if ever leave the forest. There are some halflings who live here as well, small enclaves in the forest deeps, usually near water, and gnomes also, most of these in the Timberland region.

There are other strange humanoids in the forest as well, the eschl. These savages live in the stone-age and seem to be a mixture of elf and orc. Their skin is dark colored, almost green and their faces are narrow and flat. They wear animal skins mostly, grease their hair for ceremonies and battle and wield a wicked array of stone and wood weapons in battle. They decorate themselves in all manner of trinkets, paint their bodies, and cut their hair in wild array. The eschl live in small nomadic bands that are generally part of larger tribes. They dwell throughout the forest, commonly found in the Powder River region and the lowlands north and south of the Dog River.

Beyond all the dangers that lurk herein, the Darkenfold is a land of great adventure. It attracts all manner of treasure-hunters, explorers, and freebooters; for the forest was once home to

the ancient Ethrum, the forbearers of all the humans of the region. The ruins of their once-great kingdoms lay hidden in the forest deeps. Old towers on hills, dungeons beneath them, temples, monasteries and the ruins of all manner of buildings house treasure long forgotten; gold and gems, magic artifacts and sorcery both pure and foul.

A NOTE ON FAUNA

These oak trees of the Darkenfold are a peculiar species of trees that are native only to the Darkenfold and give it its name, for the mature trees have a grayish-black bark that absorbs light. A campfire's light, for instance, will not flicker off the trees, but rather vanishes into the bark, as if the trees drink the light. At night, the forest is dark beyond imagining, cutting in half twilight vision and dusk vision. Anytime oaks are found in the Darkenfold they are considered this particular breed.

Light in the Darkenfold: Any light source, unless it is a powerful magical source, is reduced by half.

THE LIVING FOREST

In the Days before Days, when the Ethvold stood in her prime, the Val Eahrakun walked the world as children. From them came many things of wonder, and knowledge known only to them. The Ethvold was ripe for such seed and it flourished for it became the home of many gods, Let, Nunt, Heth, Amenut and the greatest of them all, Tefnut. The forest flourished and grew aware of itself as no other wood in the world.



In time however the gods were driven from the world by the Judgement of Corthain and with their passing beyond the Wall of Worlds their power faded. This coincided with the rise of men and the power of sorcery so that the Ethvold suffered many deprivations and slowly it fell away. First in the center, in the Lothian Plains, but later in the north, east and west. In time the power of it, the knowledge it once held became a memory, except in the Darkenfold. There, those memories were rooted deep in the ground and knowledge passed on to the trees, the awareness, remained and it became a dark thing so that the forest changed. No longer the glorious wood of yesterday, now it was a dark place, filled with resentment if not malice.

This awareness has made the Darkenfold a particularly dangerous place to live, for the forest can defend itself when it desires. It can move, if slowly. When it does it moves with a purpose, sometimes collectively, sometimes through individual trees, but when it does it is easy to become forever lost in the dark wood.

The oak trees in the Darkenfold move in a variety of ways.

Communicating: The trees in the Darkenfold communicate with each other through their vast root systems. Vibrations, fluids, moving soil are all indications that one tree is speaking to others. When a whole wood wakes up and begins speaking it can seem as if the ground itself is moving, if only slightly. To those with keen hearing or smell, the noise of this tree speak is loud indeed.

Reaching: The most common method is to reach out with their limbs. Hard, knobby, sharp lateral branches twist and bend to obscure paths, to slow travel, to reach into camps and move equipment. Such movements are not easy to discern and require a skilled forester to see them. Often trees are made aware of a creature's coming by other trees and they begin to bend down their lateral branches and block the path long before they encounter the creature. They do this after the creature passes as well.

Walking: When a tree walks it does not do so as other creatures do. The tree's roots begin to thrust out and pull the tree behind it. The earth is broken only a little as the tree passes over, for its passage is not swift, nor is it often very far. A few feet in day is usually the most they can move, though on occasion, they move faster. In this way whole paths disappear, watering holes are hidden and camps consumed. When the trees are woken and wish to harm others they walk to block a well traveled path, confuse rangers tracking, make it impossible to back track or pass without trace. One may bed down at the head of a wide trail only to waken the next morning to find the trail gone.

Breaking the Earth: When a tree wishes to make it even more difficult to pass an area they lift themselves up, roots breaking free of the soil, creating a mess of tangled holes, roots, ditches and the like. Many a swift runner has perished by crashing through the wreckage and falling prey to whatever caused them to run through the forest so swiftly.

Collective Action: The oaks can communicate, walk or reach as groups or individually.

INSECTS

The Darkenfold is filled with flying, glowing insects. They are everywhere, hounding travelers. The lights of campfires and magical implements always attract them. These glowing creatures weave in and out of the forest and in a way create light where there otherwise would be none.

MEN OF THE DARKENFOLD

Few men venture into the Darkenfold. Those who do are a hardy lot with stout axes and stouter wills. Some settle in the few clearings or along the old roads, and build strong wooden houses beneath the dark trees and along the meadow tracks. 'Tis unknown what motivates them. Whether some crime or want of justice has driven them, or whether they desire a piece of earth far away from the civilized world, they find a dangerous home in the Darkenfold. They trade in Greenbriar or Ends Meet on occasion, with the wood elves, or sometimes leave the forest to travel to larger towns such as Petersboro in the west and Elne in the east.

A small band of dedicated rangers have taken on the onerous task of protecting the forest and the folk who reside there. They call themselves the "Rangers of the Knot," for they meet in a glade wherein two ancient trees have wrapped their boles around each other. Only recently has the Druidic Council recognized the rangers. The Council promised to deliver them a sapling offspring of the Great Oak to help heal the Darkenfold.

There are nomadic men who move throughout the Troll Glades, Uplands and the Downs. Called "Coal Burners" these small family groups dig coal from the Spur and other hills. They trade it in the local villages or even in Kayomar to the north. The groups are small, rugged and speak a bastardized Vulgate. They are a tough people, generally honorable and kind if treated well. They occasionally get together to marry and trade. They worship the Og Aust.

There are numerous elven villages in the Millorian, the southern stretches of the forest. These elves live a semi-nomadic life in the woods, living in small villages, cleverly hidden by magic and the use of the natural surroundings. These folk trade in both Ends Meet, Greenbriar, and Greenlonesome mostly with the frontiersman but they rarely if ever leave the forest. There are some halflings who live here as well, small enclaves in the forest deeps, usually near water, and gnomes as well, most of these in the Timberland region.

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4 CASTLES & CRUSADES

But, beyond all the dangers that lurk herein, the Darkenfold is a land of great adventure. It attracts all manner of treasure-hunters, explorers and freebooters, for the forest was once home to the ancient Ethrum, the forbearers of all the humans of the region. The ruins of their once-great kingdoms lay hidden in the forest deeps. Old towers on hills, dungeons beneath them, temples, monasteries and the ruins of all manner of building houses; treasure long forgotten, gold and gems, magic artifacts and sorcery both pure and foul.

A NOTE ON ORGANIZATION

This book is a discussion of the terrain features of the Darkenfold. It is broken up into five distinct areas. The terrain for each area is arranged alphabetically. Rivers often get double entries, as they pass from one area to the next. Refer to the index where necessary.

A reference note accompanies any area or town that is more completely discussed in another book.

THE NORTHERN PLATEAU

The Northern Plateau consists of the Uplands and the Troll Glades. The Upland Valley Region –the Uplands for short–comprise the north-western portion of the forest, where lies the towns of Ends Meet, Greenbriar, Petersboro, and the Vale Wood. In the central, northern, and northeastern portion of the forest are the Troll Glades where ancient trees tower over meadows and slow-moving brooks. The trolls live here in disturbing numbers. Some are ancient and much rooted to the ground; others roam about causing mischief here and there. It includes the towns of Willowbreak, Brent's Trading Post, and Elne.

UPPLANDS

The Uplands extend from the feet of the Rhodope Mountains in the west, to an imaginary line that joins Lake Altop, Lake Hanging Rock, the headwaters of Rachel's Run down to the eastern edge of Heth's Perch in the east. In the north the Uplands are bordered by forest-edge Weathern Bluffs to Big Bend in the Powder River. In the south it is marked by an imaginary line that from Mount Hermitage, to Alice's Bluff, Gurthap Falls, and Heth's Perch.

ALICE

Alice lies at the end of the Southern Way, upon the top of Loretta's Bluff. It was founded by settlers moving south from Ends Meet. They cut a clearing out of the forest, built houses and settled down to the lives of woodsmen. At its height, with a population of 300 and more, it sported a smithy, a large tavern, a communal well and large communal barn. A series of tragedies however, forced the villagers to abandon their homes. Those that survived returned to Ends Meet or Petersboro.

Though it is abandoned, the village itself still stands. It consists of a dozen or so houses circled around a stone well house. Several houses lie within the confines of the forest, trees and

bushes growing up to the very doors. Others, including the two-story tavern, stand in the remnants of the clearing. They are all in various states of decay. The walls still stand for the most part, but shutters have fallen away, doors stand swollen and off hinges, dilapidated roofs barely hold out the rain and deadfall from the forest that has grown too close. Porches, outhouses, smoke houses and sheds are largely ruined, so overgrown with brush that they are hard to get into.

A small trail leads from the village's western edge into the forest and along the bluff. This trail leads to the Aeligor Monastery that overlooks the Pig's Trail.

It is haunted by the ghost of Loretta. Others, particularly from the Bottoms, come to Alice often, hunting for trinkets and other usable items for their homes. There are many fey who dwell in and around the barn and eastern edge of the village.

Reference: Shades of Mist

BATTLE MOUND

During the latter days of the Winter Dark Wars, after the Knights of the Holy Defenders of the Flame had hounded the orcs and ungerm from the Great Lothian Plains, they turned their attention to the lands about; these included the Darkenfold. The knights rarely fought in the forest, the terrain being difficult for their equipment and horses, however, several battles were fought by the knights and their rangers. The most famous of which was the fall Marel, a captain of Unklar's foot soldiers. Marel fled to the forest, sacked and burned Greenbriar and upon the approach of a large body of knights, fled deeper into the wood. Upon a clearing on the north banks of the Westerling River a group of rangers hemmed his troop of several hundred in, and there the knights found them. The battle was a wicked, grueling business but in the end Marel and the greater part of his people were slain. Seven knights of the Holy Defenders fell as well. The bodies of Marel and his people were heaped in a pile and buried.

The mound is about 60 feet high and dominates an otherwise flat region of a wide meadow that is roughly a mile long and half a mile wide. The Westerling River flows along the eastern edge of the clearing. In spring wildflowers grow in abundance up to the feet of the mound, but on the mound itself nothing grows but mushrooms and other fungi. It is the source of many rumors as Marel and his people were all buried with their harness on and pockets full of loot. Many believe that the mound is filled with treasure, but most avoid it as it lies too deep in the wood.

BOTTOMS

The bottoms are a low, swampy area that lies upon the east and west banks of the Mistbane River, between the Hermitage and the village of Alice. They extend about 15 miles north of the village, flanking the Southern Way in the west. The ground here is low and subject to constant flooding. The trees grow in thick clusters, surrounding small open patches of standing water and mud where thick grasses, duckweed, arrowheads and

bullrush grows in abundance. The copses consist of fast growing Alderwood, thin, tall trees with high canopies.

There are many dry spots however, what the locals call Bottom Islands. These usually consist of huge boulders and piles of rocks that are part of some ancient mountain, or who many jest are the remnants of giant tossing contests from the distant Rhodopes. These rocks offer a dry place to camp, rest, eat or just get out of the water. They are small however, rarely over a few dozen feet wide and long.

In the spring and early summer here, mosquitoes, black-head gnats, and other stinging insects are thick enough to taste. It is also home to a coven of witches and hags who dwell in various holes beneath the Bottom Islands, brooding on who next they might set upon their cook fires.

Travel here is slow due to the ever-present mud that clings to boots and gear.

DOG WOOD

South of Greenbriar lies the Dog Wood. This small wood extends from the Westerling River to the Road and south to the Meadows of the same name. The forest here is of oaks clustered together. The trails that wind across the rocky, moss-covered ground are often deceptive, for they lead to nowhere, as the forest itself traps the unwary.

DOGWOOD MEADOW

North of Heth's Perch lays the Dogwood Meadow. This large open glade in the heart of the forest sports deep grasses, blackberry bushes and a wide variety of wild flowers. The ground is moist, and the soil rich, receiving plenty of runoff from the Perch and more than enough sunlight. It attracts all manner of woodland creatures. Deer and elk come here to graze on the rich grasses, bear to eat the berries, wild pigs wander it to root around, and smaller creatures besides, from mice to skunks, porcupines and chipmunks.

It is a favored hunting spot for rangers and the hunters from Greenbriar, however they do not speak of it to strangers, keeping it as a secret, for its wealth in food and hides is great.

The Meadows are not without their dangers, attracting wolves, foxes, fast-running nakal dragons and other larger predators. Aerial creatures hunt the Meadows as well: dragons, chimera, and manticore fly high overhead waiting for creatures to wander into the area. These latter are rare, preferring their prey to come to them instead.

ENDS MEET

The small village of Ends Meet is located on the Southern Way, a few miles south of where that road intersects the Post Road. Not so very long ago, the village sprawled along the Southern Way, north toward the Post Road. But recent years have seen Ends Meet shrink in size so that it is technically no longer where 'ends meet' but rather where ends once met. The village now

consists of several dozen houses built close together along the road and others nestled deeper in the forest.

The Muddy Wash Creek marks the northern edge of town. The remains of an old stone wall mark the southern edge, but the wall is so disused that many of the rocks have gone into local chimneys. Its western edge is marked by Fair Weather Creek, though few houses actually go that far. The town has no real boundary in the west as the town once extended deep into the forest, but all that remains now are a few inhabited houses and the ruins of older dilapidated ones. The houses still occupied are low, thick-beamed structures with wooden shingle roofs. Heavy shutters and doors help keep out creatures of the night.

A small stone bridge arcs over the Muddy Wash Creek, an iron gate mounted on its southern end to keep out wolves and other animals.

Ends Meet is a clean and simple town where the people live in relative peace with the forest. There is a mill house, not really usable anymore, and though the old water wheel still turns, there is little now left to grind. There is a small general store, a tanner's shop, blacksmith and the well-known Cockleburr Inn and Tavern.

The inhabitants of Ends Meet are a peculiar bunch. The town is far from any beaten path. No caravans, no armies, no patrols make their way to western eaves of the Darkenfold. There is nothing there, or so all are led to believe. But what does attract the few visitors who come and those who choose to stay is the quiet. Ends Meet is the end of the road. It is where a weary traveler can find repose, where no one would think to look for him or her and where no one in Ends Meet would ask questions. Consequently, several of the inhabitants are very powerful and known adventurers (not known in Ends Meet, obviously). They are retired, of course, and have little intent to rouse themselves from their retirement unless the village itself comes under direct attack. Beyond these few, most of the folk here are stout, sturdy hands who have long grown accustomed to the harsh world within which they live. Like the folk of Greenbriar, they are friendly but cautious. They help travelers, but only after they have learned their quality.

It has become, in recent years, a destination for adventurers: knights, rangers, rogues, wizards and the like. They come to Ends Meet to heal from their escapades, to plan greater ones, to pick up rumors and other information or simply to get a warm meal, cold drink and a soft bed at the Cockleburr.

Total Population: 500 (extended)

Human: 500

Gnome: 0 +/-

Halfling: 20 +/-

Dwarf: 10 +/-

Elf: 30 +/- (visiting)

Government: There is no real government in Ends Meet. In general people defer to Otto the owner of the Cockleburr Inn and Tavern as well as the herbalist Ennith. Beyond that the locals govern themselves. There are no taxes, nor any attempt to do anything for the town itself beyond individual interests.

6 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Military: There is a local militia, led by Otto and two local mid-level rangers. In all the militia includes about 80 men and women relatively well armed.

Economy: The villagers subsist on hunting, farming and gathering. Some minor trade occurs with Petersboro to the north.

Religion: The people here generally worship the Og Aust.

Language: Vulgate

Major Guilds: There are no guilds in Ends Meet.

Reference: The Mortality of Green

FORDIUS BRIDGE

This bridge spans the Watchita River where the Post Road intersects that fast moving river. It is over 150 feet long and 40 feet wide. It was built by a young mage, who came from Greenbriar, and who spent his fortune to construct it. He died upon the bridge soon after its completion, slain by boar-riding goblins. The bridge has held his name ever since.

GREENBRIAR

Greenbriar sits astride the Old Post Road, upon the banks of the Westerling River. Populated predominately by humans, it is a community that survives through farming, a little animal husbandry and living off the bounty of the forest. Her folk are a hardy, stout people. They are generally leery of strangers, but they are welcoming and friendly to those whom they know or whom they believe bring them no harm or foul play. They are religious folk, all adhering to the worship of the Og Aust and the Great Tree, and they hold their forest to be one with the Eastern Wood, the Eldwood. They have concourse with the rangers of the Ranger's Knot and the druids in the Order of the Oak.

The village is walled with a simple palisade 12 feet high, with gates on either end at the road. It is largely designed to keep out animals and other simpler monsters. Most people live within the walls, but some live without in small, stout buildings. Greenbriar consists of several dozen close knit houses, the Long House inn, and a large communal barn. They have cleared the forest for several acres around their town and cultivate potatoes, carrots and other small yield crops. They free range small herds of hogs and a few cattle. There are plenty of dogs about the town that give warning should the need arise.

Their houses are stout affairs of thick wood, plastered with waddle. They lock their doors at night and rarely open them for anyone. They all have cellars in which they hide in times of danger, or if the threat is overwhelming, they flee into the Thicket to the north of town, hoping that the Og Aust will look after them.

Total Population: 250-300

Human: 250-280

Gnome: 10 +/-

Halfling: 4-8 +/-

Dwarf: 0 +/-

Elf: 4-8 +/-

Government: The town is governed by the heads of the 11 families who either originally settled the town or otherwise have a vested interest. These determine the town's small tax for upkeep of the wall and to help maintain peace and the upkeep of the roads within. No one is particularly forced to adhere to edicts of the council, however, banishment is a punishment meted out to some.

Military: They have no militia to speak of, generally relying on their forestry skills to keep them safe, however if pressed they can put together a small fighting force of about 75 men and women, decently armed with bows, spears and similar weapons.

Economy: Small trade exists with Petersboro and Ends Meet, largely in foodstuffs, wooden items carved in town and furs and the like. They also do a decent trade with travelers and the tinkers who wander the roads of the Darkenfold.

Religion: People adhere to the Og Aust, the Great Tree, and the forest itself. Many pay homage to the Naiads of Lake Altop.

Language: The Vulgate

Major Guilds: There are none.

GREENBRIAR BRIDGE

This bridge spans the Westerling River. It is a small stone bridge some 80 feet long and 20 wide.

GREEN HILLS

The land here, on the west bank of the Westerling, rises several hundred feet in gentle, forest covered hills that rise in very gentle slopes. There are few cuts or gulches here, as the trees have long since shaped the land to their desire. The trees here are oak, old and thick, hard-barked and forever in a foul mood. They do not like intruders of any stripe, be they woodland fey, humans, elves or dwarves. The country is easy to travel over as the thick, broad roots of the trees dig both deep into the soil, but cling to the surface as well, choking out all manner of underbrush. A host of small ponds and streams litter the Green Hills, feeding the trees.

Despite the animosity of the trees, several gnomes make their homes here. Called the wooden-faced people, they blend with the trees, do little or nothing to molest them and often go out of their way to keep others away. Despite this, other creatures, most with foul minds, come to the Green Hills seeking the magic of healing, for it is believed that the waters of the Green Hills, at least those that collect in small ponds beneath the tangled roots of the trees, offer healing. The druids and rangers know that the ponds must themselves be green of tint for the magic of the wood to affect any.

GURTHAP FALLS

The Wachita River is a stout stream that flows south, coming to and over the edge of the cliffs that separate the Northern from the Southern Plateaus. A sixty-foot fall sends the water tumbling down into the river bed below to flow along a forested bank on the right and a high cliff to the left. The Westerling follows a similar course, not far from the Wachita Falls, this

smaller river strikes the same cliffs and thunders over the sharp drop to pool and froth until they too continue their journey to the south, the forest to the river's left and cliffs to the right. The cliffs beyond the twin falls jut out like a finger pointing south. At the tip of the finger, the apex of this small peninsula, the two rivers come together in a bubbling mess of powerful water. There, the Wachita consumes the Westerling and the river flows, bigger and stronger to the south.

Upon this finger of land between the two rivers stand the ruins of Gurthap Castle. A stone wall crosses the peninsula at its base, built between the two waterfalls, and guards the castle from the forests to the north. A second wall spans the distance between the cliffs that overlook both rivers, offering more protection to the castle and whoever occupies it.

It was once home to an enterprising priest who sought to bring back the worship of Ornduhl, the Red God. In ages past a warrior of the Red God's body was entombed here, set in a magical chamber to honor his services to that evil god. Or so the priest thought.

Reference: Falls the Divide.

HETH'S PERCH

This low range of hills is only a few miles wide and long. It marks the northern post of Turner's Gap and the boundaries of the Dogwood Meadow. The hills rise several hundred feet above the forest, the highest being about 500 feet high. Both the Longspear Creek and Pete's Branch have their origins in Heth's Perch. These hills are very rocky and offer little in the realm of vegetation, though some hardier, small leafed plants cling to the ruts and gullies. Heth's Perch does offer a wide view of the surrounding land, the Meadow, Longspear and Pete's Branch as well as the distant Rachel's Run.

The broken, rocky hillside hosts numerous caves, fissures and overhangs. It is rumored to hold an ancient temple to the god Heth. Built in a monstrous cave, it sports a 40 foot statue of the god, overlooking a deep crevice where water flows too swift to swim. A small series of rooms were cut out of the cave, giving housing to the priests of that ancient god.

LAKE ALTOP

This wide, deep lake lies at the heart of the Westerling Wood and is the source for the Westerling River. The lake is fed by a host of underground springs all of which are funneled to the low-lying land upon the lake's northwestern corner. The water here moves quickly as it tumbles out over a series of small waterfalls and into the river itself.

The lake is a dozen miles or more across and up to 60 or 70 feet deep at its center and pools along the edge. The forest grows right up to the edges of the lake, which are broken up by numerous rocks that jut out and into the water, offering many shelves for fisherman or other creatures to sit upon.

The lake is home to a large number of fish, turtles and other

fresh-water animals. It is also home to a small colony of naiads. They are spirited creatures who have dwelt in the lake for ages without count. Many people in Greenbriar pay homage to them, leaving small offerings of hair, nails and blood in the water for the right to fish the lake. They rarely molest strangers unless one catches their fancy, through his or her beauty, charm or wit. In such cases they can be playful or deadly as the mood catches them.

LORETTA'S BLUFF

The 100-foot-high bluff extends from the Mistbane to within a few miles of Gurthap Falls. It marks the boundary between the Northern and Southern Plateaus.

The trees of the northern plateau grow up to, and in some cases, over the edge of the bluff. Roots jut out from the cliff face tangling back into themselves and the rocky dirt. Some trees lean far over and out from the cliff edge and from time to time these trees loosen huge chunks of the cliff which plummet the hundred or so feet to the valley floor. Loose wood is plentiful everywhere as are fallen trees, rocks and piles of tangled, dirt-covered roots.

In the west the bluff overlooks the Mistbane River, towering over the slow moving river by some 80 feet. Here the bluff is easier to travel along, but the further east one travels, particularly after Alice the more tangled the forest growth becomes. The bluff begins to lose some of its imposing height as well, tapering off to a bare 40 feet on its far eastern edge; it overlooks the Pig Trail that runs its length.

From the Bluff one can see out and over the Millorian for many miles. The country there is darkly wooded and characterized by low rolling hills. To the west the mountains loom over the whole landscape fencing in the Darkenfold and offering safe refuge to the Bowlgaardge orcs who dwell along its flanks.

LAKE HANGING ROCK

The smaller sister of Lake Altop, Lake Hanging Rock sits just north of the Old Post Road. It is 8-9 miles wide and 50-100 feet deep. Fed by innumerable underground streams the water is cool and filled with all manner of fish. The depth varies, but generally Hanging Rock's shores slip beneath the water in long gentle slopes, giving rise to a constant crop of reeds and wild water grasses along her shores. Cranes and other water fowl nest here frequently, making hunting for food and eggs a prime sport for rangers and woodsmen.

The lake gains its name from the small island that rises from the center of the lake. Several hundred feet long and a good forty feet wide, the small island is dominated by large stones that climb in a jumbled pile a good 40 feet above the water. From that heap a long singular rock formation a dozen feet wide and some 60 feet long juts out and over the lake, pointing as if a finger to the south. This is the famed Hanging Rock. It is a favored spot for rangers and druids to camp and many come to the small island to pray and make sacrifice to the Og Aust. It is said that if the offerings are good enough that the god Let will

8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

come to the pilgrim, blessing him with hope and the power to overcome evil.

LONGSPEAR CREEK

The Longspear has her headwaters in the highlands of Heth's Perch to the south. The creek snakes its way through a series of gulches and valleys until it empties into the Westerling at an odd angle. The creek is wide and deep, though plagued with many small rapids that require any traveling by boat to best them or port around them. In general the creek is 10-30 feet wide and 2-4 feet deep. It offers surprisingly good fishing.

The fishing attracts any number of creatures but several small bands of lizard men range the creek, fishing and hunting wild game. They are scattered groups but have built a network of tunnels south of the creek that serve them as a home. Rumors abound of a hidden wealth, given to the lizard men for the worship of Nunt, but few who venture into the region, return.

THE MEADOWS

The open forest between Loretta's Bluff and the Post Road is called by the locals the Meadows. Here the trees are old, tall and broad. Ancient oaks that own the land, these forest creatures are much of what the Ethvold of old consisted, for they twist and turn the earth like so much cloth and guide the streams into pools of their own devising. For this reason the Meadows are free of brush and because the roots of the trees are so deep and broad that scores of small, open meadows dot the area. Here the sun spills upon deep grass and wild flowers, berry bushes and dogwoods.

The fey come here in great numbers, dancing in the moonlight and hounding any and all who cross through with their jests, both benign and deadly. The fey serve as guardians to the forest giants, though the trees seem to slumber, unconcerned with the wild animals that pass by or the rangers who hunt them.

The people of Ends Meet come here to pay homage to the Og Aust or to bask in the sunshine. They hunt the woods but take care to leave the trees in peace for fear that if the forest were roused that only death would follow.

MISTBANE RIVER (UPPER)

The Mistbane River, or the Blue Creek, has its headwaters in the far Rhodope Mountains where it begins as little more than a trickle. It tumbles and flows, following many courses through the Shelves of the Mist, where it gains more strength from tributaries and earns its river name. It breaks free of those hills just north and east of the small town of Petersboro and the north-western Darkenfold.

As it enters the Darkenfold the river widens and slows its pace considerably, drifting down beneath the eaves of the Darkenfold where it continues its southern journey.

The Upper Mistbane is slow, ranges from 80-120 feet wide, and is rather deep except in the two fords, Merric's Ford and the seasonal Spoundown Ford, that breach its travel. Patches of light

or heavy fog, which reduce visibility considerably, accompany the Mistbane's flow. Considered by many of the locals to be dangerous, they avoid the fog at all costs. They speak of tales of ghosts who snatch the unwary from their roosts and carry them to the seas beyond. It is known to the learned that banshees occupy these patches of fog.

The river continues its course through the Darkenfold by turning sharply west in the Millorian and passing through Lily Fare, an even danker and deadlier portion of that horrible wood.

The banks of the Mistbane sport many wonderfully tall and full-bodied willow trees. These trees often reside on small grassy knolls at the water's edge allowing their branches and leaves to brush the water. They are vaguely-sentient relatives of the older sentient trees and treants. These willows serve the river as guardians of sorts, offering refuge from the river or the forest, or both.

Frog Island: Where the Pig's Trail and the Valley of the Frog meet the shores of the Mistbane, overlooked by Loretta's Bluff is a small island. Upon a small island in the middle of the river, stands a huge stone statue, worn by rain and erosion. Despite its age the shape is easy enough to make out. Carved in the dark gray granite is a huge, frog-headed man, sitting upon a throne; he is nude, and carries only a scepter. He looks to the west, toward the mountains; at his back is a broad valley, flanked in the north by steep cliffs and more forest and in the south by huge elm and maple trees.

MERRIC'S FORD

Lying due west of Ends Meet, the ford offers the only easy crossing of the Upper Mistbane. It is rock strewn and offers little room for carts or wagons, but is easy enough to cross in low water. During the spring and early summer, when the rains come so heavy, the ford rises to about 3 feet, still passable, just a little more treacherous.

MOUNT HERMITAGE

This area comprises a series of low hills rising from the forest floor, not more than 300-500 feet high, covering some 10 square miles of the forest. The Mount, a name that refers to the whole area, is sparsely forested, and covered in a thick layer of grass. Huge rocks jut out from the pasture here and there offering excellent cover and sometimes shade. It is a favorite feeding ground for the wild deer and elk that dwell in the forest. The gulches that divide the several hills are worn steep with centuries of runoff. Two creeks have their origins here--one running off to the Bottoms in the south west, and the other bubbling up from the southern feet of the hills and heading southwest toward the Mistbane River.

Near this latter creek is a large cave opening that leads into an underground cavern beneath the Mount. A witch, Nodjmet, and her family dwell here. They are a particularly wicked minded crew and often cross the river to poke around Alice and the edges of Ends Meet for people to rob.

Reference: Shades of Mist.

PALADIN WALK WOOD

The Paladin Walk lies upon the slopes of Weather Bluffs, extends between the two rivers, the Westerling and Watchita, and down to the Post Road. It is large oak and hickory with a great deal of underbrush. A number of game trails give access to this part of the forest. Several small ponds dot the landscape as well, offering cool drinking water. The trees here are particularly dark, with rough bark absorbing light more than normal in the Darkenfold.

The Paladin Walk earns its name from the four Holy Defenders of the Flame who were captured by the unger and orcs during a skirmish upon the Post Road. They were stripped of weapons and armor and tortured for some time. Once done the orcs put their eyes out and set them in the wood to walk blind and naked. Three of the paladins died of exposure or animal attacks but the fourth survived the ordeal and eventually created a shrine to Durendale in the forest. Its location is hidden to all but the noble and just.

PETERSBORO

This town is lodged firmly upon the north western edge of the Darkenfold and in a deep bend of the north bank of the Mistbane. Here high walls, almost 20 feet, are interspersed with towers and several gates, however they are built from one end of the bend to the other, her river side being guarded only by the swift moving current of the river itself. The streets are cobbled, and the houses made of stone and shingle roofs. In all its a stout town, easy to defend and well off. About five thousand people make their living in and around Petersboro, hunting, mining, stonework, farming and trading with whatever comes out of the mountains that stand upon their doorstep or the forest itself.

Petersboro is a rough frontier town who have maintained their independence despite the massive expansion of the Kingdom of Kayomar, which lies to the east, after the Winter Dark Wars. The people are fierce, tough and independent. A large number of inns and taverns dot the town as do all manner of shops that sell wares of almost every description, much of it the plunder of ancient ruins that litter the region.

In general the town is dirty and rough. It is dangerous to pick a fight as many people have friends to come to their aid. The most notable establishments are the Merry Roof Inn and Tavern, for the more general client, the Four Wheels Bakery and Drink is a den of wicked inequity, and the Humblest Acorn is a place for hard drinking and friendly brawls. A wizard of some power dwells in Petersboro, Ising Maul. He is a friendly sort, trading in magic and sorcery, and filled with a great deal of knowledge. He is not particularly liked by the Stone Mason's Guild as he deals too freely with strangers from the Darkenfold.

Total Population: 5000 (seasonal 7000)

Human: 4500

Gnome: 50 +/-

Halfling: 500 +/-

Dwarf: 100 +/-

Elf: 200 +/-

10 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Government: Petersboro is governed by a council that is controlled by the Stone Masons. The council has about 24 people on it, though this varies, and includes the owners of the three main inns, Ising Maul, and other notables; 12 of them are always the Masons, and they control many of the others. They are tight knit group and seek to keep Petersboro free of any influences that might infringe upon their business.

Military: The town has a small guard 40 strong. It is always commanded by a Stone Mason, usually of 4th or 5th level. The town can raise about 450 extra troops and will impress another 2-300 in times of need, these latter usually taken from people passing through. The troops are all infantry with medium to heavy armor and weapons.

Economy: The town exports worked stone to Kayomar. These are usually statues, benches, tables and the like, but include rough stone, cut stone and the masons themselves, who travel to the kingdom under contract, to build castles and houses, repair walls etc. They are fiercely loyal to the Stone Mason Guild, passing a percentage of all monies to it. Beyond that there is a lively trade in raw materials, furs, plants etc. as well as plunder from dungeons.

Religion: No dominant religion. There is a large temple to Buro, the stone giant god.

Major Guilds: Stone Masons, Cult of the Swords.

THE THICKET

The Thicket, as the locals call it, lies to the north and east of Greenbriar and runs the length and breadth of a deep basin, along the west bank of the Westerling River. The Patch is a vast, deep, tall thicket of blackberry bush with accompanying briars and in all comprises about twenty square miles of the forest. This river often spills into the basin, making the ground there soft and spongy—perfect for the interweaving limbs of the native brush. Few animals live here: only birds, mice, shrews and the like, as well as fox, bobcats, rabbits and small deer.

Movement through the Thicket is almost impossible unless one knows the trails. The trails themselves are generally small animal tracks and not passable by humans. Certainly those in heavy armor or carrying large packs are going to find movement tremendously difficult, as the tangled mess of limbs and thorns catch onto almost everything. At best, movement in the Thicket is about two miles a day.

The folk of Greenbriar have prepared the Thicket as a safe haven and flee there when faced with overwhelming danger. They have stored several large caches of food, beer, clothing, weapons and other supplies to meet any needs they may have. These are kept in small beaver-like dwellings built in the heart of the Thicket by weaving the longer branches of the blackberry brush together.

THORNY HOLLOW

The Hollow, a small, circular box canyon in the Green Hills, is only a few hundred feet long and wide. The canyon walls are 20-30 feet high all around, keeping most creatures out.

A small cave cut into the wall of the canyon leads to this extremely secluded area. Within is a small pond, fed by a spring beneath the rocky ground. The canyon is dry and rocky, very little grows here.

Reference: The Mortality of Green

TURNER GAP

South of Heth's Perch is a low lying region of the forest, the trees here are growing in thick clusters with some open meadows between. Not until several miles south does the country begin to rise again, climbing up into the Spine that further marks the boundary between the two plateaus. Turner Gap is well known in local lore, for here Bridge Turner, a ranger of some repute, met his end, slain by the wild men of the wood (the eschl). It is rumored that during the running fight that he shot an arrow of wondrous power, designed to slay dragons, at one of his tormentors and that the arrow remains lodged in the tree that it pinned the eschl to.

VALE WOOD

The Vale Wood lies south of the Post Road, between the Watchita and Westerling Rivers. It is an extension of the Paladin Walk Wood, consisting of large oak and gnarled hickory trees. A great deal of ash and white oaks have taken a firm footing down near Gurthap Falls however, and these afford that area a light tone to an otherwise very dark forest.

Animals abound here, wild deer, boar and the like. It is the particular haunt of a wicked pack of wolves led by a large, one-eyed gray wolf that has an unnatural intelligence, for he is the descendant of a lycanthrope. He speaks the vulgate and knows the habits of humans well. All attempts to capture the beast have failed and many that pass down the road leave him and his pack sacrificial food for a peaceful journey.

VALLEY SPRINGS

The forest north of the Meander marks the boundary of this wood and it is where the Darkenfold begins in earnest. The trees here are old and bent with roots that have torn and twisted the earth. Their bark is dark and they drink the light of day, torch and fire as if ever thirsty. But here too begin a host of small streams that tumble their way to the Watchita or the Mistbane. Valley Springs lies on both sides of the Mistbane.

The country here is a favored haunt of trolls, though they do not stay for long, ranging into the springs to hunt woodsman down from Petersboro.

WATCHITA RIVER

The headwaters of the Watchita being in Rhodope Mountains, it tumbles down through the Shelves of the Mist in rapid courses until it enters Valley Springs and the Darkenfold. It is a fast moving river, slowing only where it widens into lake-like basins, but picking up speed as it goes. Only after Gurthap

Falls does the river slow considerably, swollen at that point by the Westerling. It ranges from 50 to several hundred feet wide, though the latter stretches are very rare.

Where the Post Road crosses is one large bridge, Fordius Bridge, crossing the river. It is a favored river for the rangers who can travel north to south along its course rapidly in canoes.

WESTERLING RIVER

The Westerling's headwaters lie in Lake Altop, a large still lake in the Westerling Wood. The Westerling begins with a series of rapids as it curves north and west, before it begins to cut its way south. It is broad, usually about 60-80 feet across and deep, ranging up to 15 feet deep in places. It is filled to overflowing with all manner of fish, including giant gar, who hunt the range of it, feeding upon anything they encounter.

It is bridged only at Greenbriar, though two fords lie further down before it ends in the Watchita at Gurthap falls.

WESTERLING WOOD

The Westerling Wood lies north of the Post Road and in the Big Bend of the Powder River. It is a sprawling wood of old growth hickory and oak. The wood is thick here, making travel difficult. A plethora of small creeks wind their way in and around the tangle roots, adding to the traveler's pains. All manner of beast abound here, both animals and magical beast.

The forest of the Westerling has a mind of its own as well, often moving the earth to block or redirect trails that have been cut through it. The process may take days and weeks, or hours, depending upon the need and desire of the trees. For this reason it is a favored haunt of druids, who come here for solace or healing, or at times to better understand the primeval world as it was in ages past.

TROLL GLADES

The Glades extend from Rachel's Run and Round Top in the west to the Perth Timberland in the east, and north from the Cypress Swamps to a line that follows Rachel's Run, the Powder and Mistbane Rivers to Thompson's Point. It is a wild country, the haunt of many trolls and the eschl.

BARREL WOOD

From the Inigg Gorge to Lilly Pond and all the way to the Post Road stands the Barrel Wood. This old growth stand is dominated by a broad flat country cut by several rivers and where massive oaks, some over a hundred feet tall with canopies some sixty feet broad, tower over all. The canopy of these giants is thick and during the spring and summer blocks out the light of the sun almost completely, and shards of light managing to cut into the darkness. During the fall the leaves turn slow and fall slower. Only during the winter months does the light of the sun grace the forest floor, but even then the thick tangle of branches leave it in shadows.

Where the light does cut through and to the floor a small lush, flowering plant grows. Called by the locals Barrel Flowers, these deep orange and green flowers offer a sweet nectar for those who find them. Chewing the petals releases the juices which invigorate any who ingest them, giving them energy for whatever exertions must come. The forest itself is a haunt of a tribe of eschl, the Aawnu.

Reference: Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde.

BENT'S TRADING POST

Bent's Trading Post sits upon about 4 acres of elevated land on the banks of the river. The post itself abuts the river, about 12 feet up a steep bank. It is owned by two retired adventurers, Karl of Nagel and Gotthold Kratz. The compound is not walled. It consists of 6 buildings: the main store and tavern, bunk house, warehouse, barn and smithy, Gotthold's house, and an outhouse. A large stone-ringed well dominates the compound's central yard.

The compound is usually muddy, as it frequently rains and snows in the Darkenfold. The ground is trampled and no grass grows anywhere, though weeds cling to the sides of buildings, wood piles and the like. Karl and Gotthold are not good caretakers and items are frequently tossed aside or left about the compound. For this reason, there are broken tools leaning against buildings, an anvil next to the well, a large fire pit with half burned materials heaped about it, an upturned boat, and other sundry items scattered about. The post is not walled as the two retired adventurers have little fear of creatures of the night; the wolves warn them of any danger and they know that the wild men keep the post somewhat protected.

Gotthold and his wife live in the small house, but Karl lives in the main store in the back, near the kitchens. It is here that mead is brewed and meats cooked. The mead here is simple and a little flat, the meat often over-cooked on the outside and raw on the inside.

Bent's is a refuge of sorts. It offers rooms to rent, food, drink, supplies and the like. Almost anything can be purchased here. However, fighting between patrons is forbidden. The peace is kept by a simple series of rules and punishments:

Karl's Law

Offense	Punishment
Fighting	Death
Thieving	Death
Burning Things	Death
Busting Things	Death
Spell Use (except healing)	Death

Reference: Upon the Powder River

CYPRESS SWAMP

North of the Powder River lies the Cyrpress Swamps. The swamps include a broad deep creek and the land around it, which sinks into a morass of mud and boggy quicksand. The forest is dominated by cypress trees, red buds and willows. Some few

stands of tall, thin white oaks grow here as well. It is dangerous country, home to stirges, tavis wyrms, and other foul creatures. The water in the swamps is brackish, and though hard to drink, quenches one's thirst in a pinch.

DAMENHEIT BRIDGE

Where the Post Road crosses the Powder river stands the Damenheit Bridge. It is 160 feet long and 40 feet wide, made of stone with a 4 inch rail.

ELNE

The town of Elne is built upon the eastern bank of the Danau River. Two major roads intersect in Elne. The Post Road extends from the sea in the east, where stands the town of Breilington in Kayomar, through the Eldwood to the town of Elne. There it crosses the Danau at the Elne Bridge and enters the Perth Timberland and the Darkenfold. It stretches the length of the Darkenfold until it reemerges at the town of Petersboro in the distant west. The Lundtrecht Road goes south from Kayomar, through Elne following the course of the river. It passes through the edge of the Eldwood where that forest joins the Darkenfold. Beyond that the Lundtrecht Road ends in Havershaw.

Elne is a Free Town with no real government. It is wild and filled with boisterous peoples.

Elne sprawls along the two roads and river with no real discernible pattern aside from its apparent need to cling to either the river or the roads. Only a small section of the town, Ritter District, is walled, an area roughly 60 acres in size. The Ritter District houses several powerful merchants, a wizard, and several nicer taverns, inns, eateries and the like, as well as a dozen or so wealthy families. It is cobbled as well.

The rest of the town consists of houses made of mud bricks and timber, with thatch roofs, or in the very lucky instance, wooden shingles. It is rather dirty, as none of the streets (aside from the Post and the Lundtrecht) are paved. The town experiences a constant flow of traffic, particularly during the Spring and Summer months when the merchants are carting goods north and south. Adventurers, brigands, rangers, and wild folk come here to step off on journeys into the forest in the west. During these seasons the town overflows with people of all descriptions, small bars and eateries spring up everywhere and the place becomes something of a wild road-house town. It is known for its open bars, rough crowds and good times.

Elne attracts the worst and best of all peoples. It serves as a major destination and kick off for people adventuring in the Darkenfold and Eldwood. As such many strange artifacts, jewels, gems and odds and ends are found in the bazaars of Elne. Mercenaries, freebooters, mendicants, traveling friars, wandering wizards and the like mingle with the locals. Merchants cart goods from Kayomar or from the Vale of Oth and the City States of the south. Braying mules, oxen, carts, wagons and crowds of people fill the muddy streets during the day and crowd the bars at night.

12 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Notable Locations include the Merry Gentleman, Murad Blacksmithy, Whale's Maw, Three Saddles Livery and Stable, and the Mark.

Total Population: 2000 (seasonal 6000)

Human: 5000

Gnome: 50 +/-

Halfling: 500 +/-

Dwarf: 100 +/-

Elf: 200 +/-

Government: The town is a Free City with no government. It has a council that employs (at their own expense) a mercenary guard.

Military: Elne boasts no true military. It relies upon Kayomar and the Lords of the North to keep them safe. They do have a town guard, however. It comprises 100 able bodied mercenaries. They are commanded by an 8th level fighter who is a member of the warrior guild, The Cult of the Swords. Many of the mercenaries are part of this cult as well. They are well equipped with scale mail, shields, pole arms, crossbows and bows and swords and axes.

Economy: The economy of the town thrives entirely on trade. It sits upon the north/south trade road that carries goods from the lands of Kayomar to the City States of the south. This route includes goods coming across the ocean and up the Danau River. The town boasts a large market for river boats and barges, wood being plentiful across the Elne Bridge and in the Perth Timberland.

Religion: There is no official religion. There is a small church to Ore-Tsar and a temple of the Og Aust. This latter is little more than a cromlech built on the outskirts of town, but it is considered a holy place by many who follow the old gods.

Language: All Languages, most commonly the Vulgate or Common.

Major Guilds: The Cult of the Swords has a heavy presence here. There are no active guilds with power. There are several informal merchant organizations. The most powerful merchant in Elne is Carrigan the Boatswain.

GOTTLAND WOOD

The Gottland Wood is a large stretch of forest that extends from the Long Branch to Round Top, the Post Road and the Powder River. It serves as the heart of the Troll Glades, for here Troll Lords gather in greater numbers than anywhere in the Lands of Ursal. They move about slowly, rooting to the ground like the trees they once were, waiting for any that might pass by so that they can slay them and devour them.

Their influence has poisoned the earth, the rooting toes spilling their own evil essence into the blackened soil and this poison has spread to the trees that grow here as well. In consequence the trees are stunted, ranging only about 60 feet tall with thick, but narrow canopies. Their boles are wide and limbs grow low to the ground. Mosses grow in abundance on boles and limbs alike. The forest is malevolent as well, entering the eaves of it one feels their thoughts upon them, seeking to push them out.

Often the trees crowd in on travelers blocking their paths or moving in toward camps.

It is dark here, darker than usual. The trees grow tight, boring into the ground, or stretching out their roots across large shelves of rock that jut over creeks and ponds. It is a tangle of dark thought that attracts will o' wisps at night, who call to travelers to leave off the road and enter the wood, there to be devoured and lost forever.

INIGG GORGE

The eastern slopes of the Spine give way suddenly to a deep gorge that cuts through the Darkenfold for 30 miles. It is narrow, rarely ranging more than 20-80 feet wide, but it is deep, roughly 50 feet at the beginning, slipping to below 100 feet in places. The forest grows up to the very edge of the gorge, at times the trees mingling with one another over the cut. Roots coil out of the soft earth, climbing down the steep walls of the gorge like so many vines. The gorge is largely dirt and mud from top to bottom, making climbing it difficult as it gives way as often as not. At the bottom of the gorge a wad of deadfall from the forest above sinks into the mire of mud and soft clays. Water frequently pools here, and during the rainy season the gorge fills up a dozen feet or more far quicker than most would expect. Many a poor soul has drowned in the gorge after the adventure of some thunderous storm. Rachel's run frequently spills its banks and floods the eastern part of the Gorge.

It is home to a number of creatures. Pseudo dragons people the upper reaches of the gorge, nesting in the roots, high above the ground. A number of birds join them. At the bottom however, it is the favored hunting ground of maegle dragons who settle in the mud, waiting for some beast trapped in the gorge to wander by them. The Perigu, an eschl tribe, lives here.

Reference: Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde.

LILLY POND

Lilly Pond lies just north of the headwaters of Pete's Branch. It is a deep, still pool of water, barely a hundred feet across. The old growth trees that populate the Barrow Wood grow up to and in the waters of the pond. Their far reaching canopies giving cover to the whole water but for the very center, the only place in the pond graced by the light of the sun and moon. The water is cool, rising up from well over a hundred feet below, and very refreshing.

There are plenty of fish, a few turtles and other aquatic animals here, but it is the water nymph that dwells in the deep caves at the pond's bottom that rules the pond. She rises to bathe in light and air whenever the opportunity presents itself, and for this reason is usually only seen late at night or midday. Of course those who disturb the pond frequently garner her attention, and she rises to investigate and intervene if she deems it necessary.

LONG BRANCH CREEK

The Long Branch runs for many miles through the Gottland. It is a low water creek, a dozen or more feet wide, but very shallow.

Its course is strewn with boulders and rocks. It is a fast moving creek, deceptively easy to ford, for those who do too quickly often slip and fall on rocks made slick with moss and algae. It is prized for the gold found in its sandy bottom.

PERTH TIMBERLAND

In the north and east, the edges of the Darkenfold are hemmed in by a ring of long, lean black-jack oaks called the Perth Timberland. These trees are small, 30-foot-tall on average, and possess tangled short branches covered in thick green leaves. In the autumn, the leaves cling to the trees for many weeks after the first frost and rustle in the never-ending wind that blows across and through the forest roof. Branches, bent and gnarled, hang to the ground to mingle with the thickly-tangled thorns and bushes growing in the rich, black soil. Travel here is not easy due to the thick bramble which oft times overgrows the few existing paths. The Perth Timberland makes entry to the forest arduous and maintains the dark, deep mysteries within.

The Perth is home to the many creatures of the Darkenfold as well as bandits and other riff raff that have fled the law of Kayomar and other Kingdoms. It offers a gentler refuge than the deeper forest to the west, but still one that dissuades the horse-riding knights of the Kingdom from pursuing them. There are many bounties to be collected in the Perth.

PETE'S BRANCH

The fast running river tears through the lower reaches of the Barrel Wood as if it had anywhere else to be. Its origins lie in the Heth Perch highlands to the west, where it tumbles out from a series of high water falls and broad pools. Once on the flat ground of the Barrel Wood it cuts a rapid pace, following a rocky road it cut long ago. The river is favored by rangers and the eschl who live nearby for once a canoe is placed in the water it tends to move quickly until the river itself spills into Rachel's Run. Even this, however, is not without its dangers for there are many sets of small rapids that up end the inexperienced and end journeys before they have begun.

'Tis said that long ago the priests of Let built a temple of wood and stone that spanned Pete's Branch, but that long ago it was sacked and burned and only the shadows of it remain.

PLATINUM BREAKS

The Platinun Creek has cut a wide deep gash in the forest creating a series of broken stone shelves that tumble down to the Powder River. The creek snakes its way across the shelves, frequently overflowing its banks. For this reason it is always wet here, and the rocks slick with slime and algae.

Platinum was discovered here some years passed and beneath the shelves are a hive of tunnels, dug out in search of the precious metal. They have long since been abandoned and are little more than caves dug out of the stoney ground, many partially filled with water from the stream above.

POWDER RIVER COUNTRY

South and east of the Glades stands the Great Eastern Forest, also called the Powder River Country. This is a term that refers to all the land north of Rachel's Run to the Danau River.

POWDER RIVER

The source of the Powder River lies in the Rhodope Mountains. It tumbles down from the mountain slopes and into the Shelves of the Mist, flowing through deep canyons and past high bluffs. Here the river is swift, narrow and deep. It cuts its way through the bedrock of the uplands, then tumbles out of the Shelves just north of the Darkenfold. There it widens and slows. The river's course cuts a crown off the top of the forest, snakes through the Paladin Kingdom of Kayomar, and then dives south, reentering the forest. There it widens further and slows even more.

The Powder River is wide, averaging roughly 100 feet across. During the rainy season, the river swells its banks in the flatlands, widening up to 120 feet or more. The current is generally easy to manage and not too strong. In the west, near the Shelves, there are several difficult rapids. Further east and south the river is smooth flowing, offering the traveler little more than an open road. The water carries a great deal of silt down from the highlands to the west, gathering here and there, dotting the river with sand bars. These sand bars come and go, depending on the amount of rain that falls.

There are islands sprinkled throughout the river. During the rainy season these often vanish beneath the river. The banks range from level with the water to a dozen feet or more above the current (such as at Willowbreak Village). The trees of the Darkenfold grow right up to the edge of the river, their leaves and branches dragging through the current, and their roots washed clean by the flowing water. The oaks are often crowded-out by willow trees whose thin, leafy, whip-like branches offer many places to hide.

A great many fish live in the river, offering plenty to eat. There are also larger animals as well, including river otters, beavers, and alligators (toward the Long Branch). The alligators swim the river, but primarily keep out of the deeper, faster water. There are other creatures that occupy the water, including large predatory fish.

Travel on the Powder is usually done by canoe, though some small boats ply the water. There are a few establishments on the river. Willowbreak is the largest. A castle, Easfold, kept by the Rangers, is north of the village, as are several river-taverns; Bent's Trading post is to the south of the village, and some few scattered homes dot the riverbanks.

RACHEL'S RUN

The long, fast moving river known as Rachel's Run, spans over a hundred miles of the forest. It begins just south of Round Top, bubbling up with a small but swift current, fed by some underground stream. It picks up speed quickly and cuts through the forest with some momentum, not breaking its run until

14 CASTLES & CRUSADES

joined by Pete's Branch, when it broadens and slows into a swift, but gentler current. Where Wilson's Creek joins, the Run swells even more and begins a meandering course for some few miles until dropping off into a low break and picking up speed and momentum, sandwiched into an ever narrower channel. It does not stop until it breaks into the Powder many miles beyond.

During the rainy season the Run often spills its banks, flooding the land around. When this happens it often spills into the Inigg Gorge, creating a massive torrent of a waterfall, carrying a great deal of dead fall into the gorge, clogging its eastern reaches.

ROUND TOP

The large flat rock formation rises some 150 feet above the forest floor. The Gottland and Westerling Woods grow up to the edge of the huge outcrop, though they break against it like water on the shore. Its cliffs are jagged, broken rock and very difficult to climb. There are few paths to the top, and those that do exist are dangerous and require at least some climbing. Few make it to the top of Round Top.

Once there the hills rise in a gentle curve for a few hundred feet until it flattens out entirely, becoming a huge flat rock covered plain in the middle of the forest. It is not round at all.

It is the home of several flying creatures, wyverns and the like making their nest in the crevices along the top or the caves on the cliff sides. Others dwell here as well, but the most famous inhabitants were the dwarves who carved out several holds in ages past. Their whereabouts are known by only a few however, if any at all.

THE SPINE

The Spine is a low range of jagged hills that mark the southern boundary of the Northern Plateau. They are the most dominant feature in the central Darkenfold. It is a narrow range, only a few miles across at the furthest point. Climbing the slopes of the Spine is easy enough, the hills are steep, but offer a host of small trails and switchbacks that make scaling them pretty easy. However they are tall, consisting of jagged, broken rocks at their apex. Once topped travel becomes difficult for the steep hills give way to a country ruined with narrow gulches and breaks. A trail winds its way along the top of the hills, looping north to overlook Zinc. Once one leaves the trail, travel becomes very difficult.

Many creatures find purchase here, nesting or holing up on the hillsides. It gives predators a perfect vantage to see far and wide over the forest. But the area is rife with kobolds for they have dug out many small warrens in the Spine. And because kobold is one of the favored meats of manticores, those legendary beasts are rarely far from the Spine.

THOMPSON'S POINT

Thompson's Point is a narrow jut of land that lies at the confluence of the Danau and Mistbane Rivers. A wall, 30 feet high, and 12 feet thick at the base, with battlements and towers crosses the peninsula from one river to the other. There are also

a large amphitheater, several old, long abandoned structures, a tower, and a stone pier. It is not known who built them or why, but they are now occupied by drifters, adventurers, boatmen and other people who ply their trades on the river. People arrive, pitch camp, rest and recuperate, or prepare for the next leg of adventure. There is almost always people here. However, it is as dangerous as it is safe, for many are killed in brawls, murdered in their sleep and so on.

TUSKLAND

Between the Long Branch and Rachel's Run lies the Tuskland. This is the land of the boar, wild pigs, called razorbacks. The beasts grow up to 5 feet at the shoulder and can weight hundreds of pounds. They are vicious and semi-intelligent, descendants of wereboar from long ago. They are mean, aggressive and vindictive. As well, they have long memories and will remember a hunter long after they have left the Tuskland. They are the terror of travelers on the Post Road.

Because of the herds of razorbacks, that sometimes grow to 30-40, the trees are a particularly tough breed of oak. There are large black oaks, their bark thick and gnarled, their canopies huge and dense. These beasts of trees can withstand the constant rutting and tusk scraping of the boars. The vegetation grows dense in the Tuskland, the earth is rich and damp and constantly churned by the pigs, making for fresh growth most every spring. But it is a growth filled with small thorny hawthorne trees, devil's walking sticks, coral bean plants and other thorny flora.

It is a region prized to hunters and rangers, but a dangerous one. Orcs come here in large numbers, hunting the wild pigs. But dwarves do as well, seeking beasts to train as mounts.

WILSON'S CREEK

The rapid moving waters of Wilson's Creek begin in the highlands of the Spine. Bubbling up from a number of underground springs the water is pushed out into a series of small ponds that overflow, tumbling down the hill's flanks, mingling until they become a fresh torrent. The creek cuts into the forest with some speed and continues its way to the larger Rachel's Run. Like its brother and sister waterways Wilson's Creek is an avenue for rangers and skilled boatsman.

The fishing on Wilson's Creek is exceptionally good and it often harbors small bands of Eschl who live on its banks, and fish its water. An old dwarven keep stands upon the southern bank, about 4 miles into the forest, north of the hills. The keep is a small affair, consisting of a tower, an outbuilding and large wall. The lord of it is buried in the stone beneath the tower and his spirit is said to keep watch of his holdings. The name Angrod is chiseled upon the flagstones of the floor.

ZINC

The ramshackle town of Zinc lies at the end of a long broad holler, nestled beneath the high ridges of the Spine. The houses are old, dilapidated affairs built some decades ago when zinc

was mined in the area. All the miners are gone now and the town itself little more than a den of thieves. Wild shrubs and deep grasses mark the yards of existing houses and the clearings where houses used to be. The roads are overgrown tracks with little care given toward the maintenance. A creek runs through the town, meandering on toward Pete's Branch to the north.

Its human population lives in the several dozens of houses that remain. There is a tavern of sorts, a huge, wide face building with a porch called the Grinder. It is a single story affair, but sprawls in every direction. The brew here is stout, the patrons mean and untrustworthy, the proprietor an old retired cutthroat and pirate, the whores (both male and female) are hard and desperate, and the stechn is overpowering. Here all manner of business is conducted.

There are several other shops in Zinc, an armorer of sorts and a purveyor of trinkets and collectibles. This latter's store is little more than a flea market of over-priced junk.

The goblins live in a network of caves on the edge of town. The orcs dwell in a makeshift village of yurts and are led by a priest of the Horned God. He is the de facto authority in town for his strength and religious zeal. The kobolds live a little out of town, in what the locals call the Pit.

The Pit is the old mine. It is as advertised, a pit 250 feet in diameter, and roughly 300 feet deep. A network of wooden catwalks snake around the pit climbing down to its bottom, which is under about 15 feet of water. The catwalks lead to any number of caves, some half dug, some connecting with others that line the walls of the pit. Here the zinc was pulled from that ground and hauled north. Though the miners are gone, kobolds have taken up residence here. The hive is large, some 300 strong and very aggressive.

Total Population: 1000

Human: 200

Goblins: 500 +/-

Kobolds: 300 +/-

Orcs: 100 +/-

Government: There is no government in Zinc. The town is a ramshackle conglomerate of groups that look out after their own.

Military: Zinc has no standing army or militia or guard, however when threatened the various groups gather together in a loose confederation to defend the town. It usually numbers 800 of all races. The priest of Unklar almost always leads.

Economy: There is some trade.

Religion: There is a temple to the Horned God here, as well as a Cult of Ornduhl.

Language: Vulgate.

Major Guilds: None.

THE BREAKS

The breaks refer the dividing line between the Northern and Southern Plateaus. They consist of Mount Hermitage, the Bottoms, Alice, Loretta's Bluff, Pig's Trail, Gurthap Falls, Thorny

Hollow, Heth's Perch, Turner Gap, Dogwood Meadow, Lilly Pond, Pete's Branch, Zinc, The Barrel Wood, and the Inigg Gorge.

THE SOUTHERN PLATEAU

The Southern Plateau consists of the Millorian in the west and the Downs in the east, both comprising the heart of the Darkenfold. The Millorian is a deep wooded country of hills and low ridges. There are numerous creeks and brakes, small ponds, lakes, fens and the like. The Millorian was never conquered by the minions of Darkness. Indeed the Downs remained unconquered as well, for here, in these deep woods dwells the Unselee court, where the Dark Lady of Fey rules. The Downs are rolling, forested hills. They stretch for many miles to the very borders of the Great Soup Marsh. Elves, halflings, gnomes, goblins, bugbears, and other creatures populate the Millorian and the Downs. A few hardy humans live in those parts, and they share their world with all manner of beast, animal, and monstrous creatures. These woods are the hunting grounds of some of the greater and lesser miasmal dragons, the nakal dragons being the most common. The fierce creatures are highly predacious and hunt all manner of creatures.

MILLORIAN

The Millorian is a land of the wood elves and comprises the western reaches of the Darkenfold. From the Pig's Trail to the north, it extends to Pendle River in the south, from the Bowlgaardge to the Low River Country and following a line down to Lily Fare at the headwaters of the Red Mud River.

BOWLGAARDGE

This is a rough broken county that overlooks the West Wood. Several deep valley and gulches house the orc tribe that gives the region its name, the Bowlgar and their main cantonment called Bowlgaardge. The area is dry and rocky, with tangled hawthorne trees and scrub oak dominating the flora. But by and large it is a wasteland, the vegetation trampled, earth chewed up, water sullied and so forth. Travel here is extremely dangerous as the orcs are everywhere, living in large and small villages.

The Bowlgar orcs are a tribe of orcs that number in the thousands. The villages spread up and into the mountains to the west, and throughout the valleys, though Bowlgaardge is by far the largest. They are armed and fierce raiders, and range into the western and southwestern reaches of the forest, and often by boat far up the Mistbane. The orc warlord, Maelgg the Red, leads them, and lately an Umbrian wizard has joined them.

CHERRY HILLS

These hills lie in the deep south of the Darkenfold and are considered sacred to the wood elves who live in the Millorian. They climb hundreds of feet above the forest roof, allowing the far-sighted to see for many miles. The hills are awash in color for the elves cultivate a wide variety of flowering trees, crape myrtles, plum, red buds, dogwoods and magnolias. They have dwelt here for many centuries and have sculpted the land to fit

16 CASTLES & CRUSADES

their desires. Pools and small falls abound. Glades and meadows filled with birds and bees top the Cherry Hills. Here the elves maintain their many temples, paying homage to the gods, to Mordius, Tefnut and Wenafar most of all.

But the hills are not easy to reach for the elves guard them well. Fey have been set upon the edge of the hills, will o' wisps and bogarts, their purpose to bemuse or slay any who approach the hills without permission. And there are always elves present, watching for any who might interpose. And the hills themselves are set with magical traps to snare the unwary and uninvited.

Despite this the Cherry Hills are a wondrous place, for the elves cultivate honey and a wine made of the plum of their beloved plum trees. They feast and make merry as they are want, and those lucky enough to join them, remember the fest for as long as life remains in them.

COLD MIST WATERS

This series of lakes in the southern Darkenfold is home to a wide variety of creatures. Elves, kobolds and goblins are forever warring over its many shores. Battle is joined in canoes and fought with missile weapons and long hafted axes and one slays the other in a never-ending contest. The lakes themselves range in depth from the very shallow to the very deep, but all are interconnected by streams and small rivers.

But despite the constant bloodshed spilled into the waters, the Cold Mist earns its name from the mist that forever hangs over them. Warm air from the Silt Bay pulls the cool waters up creating the fog banks that cling to trees and lake alike. The wind peters out against the feet of the Cherry Hills, only strong enough to push the moisture up to water the tree-glades of the elves there.

The Cold Mist Waters are home to more than just warring demi-humans. For a host of fey, water sprites, nymphs, dryads and the like dwell in the forests all around, making the land about one of enchantment and mystery, where the strange is far more normal than not. But these creatures bring other, more foul minded to the Cold Mist Waters, blue dragons come to bath in the deep waters of the lakes and feed in the streams.

ELKHORN DEEPS

South of the Great Spur lies the Elkhorn Deeps, a wide broad forest that stands from the hills to the sea. It is an old wood of oak, hickory and beech. Here the trees grow tall and deep. Their roots burrow undisturbed and their canopies spread far and wide. Beneath which, the forest is green, lush grasses grow in abundance, moss covered boulders and rock shelves abound, lily-covered pools, ponds of rush grass, flowering vines and light touched meadows create a realm both serene and beautiful.

These are the hunting grounds for the elves for they are filled with elk and deer and other grazing animals, but too they attract nakal dragons and other predacious monsters. But too dryads and other wood fey wander the Elkhorn, crossing over from the Cold Mist Waters. Travel is easy in the Elkhorn Deeps but can

be dangerous if elves are encountered. Such encounters can go either way, depending on the mood of the elves and attitude of the traveler.

GREAT SPUR

The Great Spur is a series of hills that extend out from the Rhodope Mountains, east into the southern Darkenfold. They include the Valley of the King (see below) and two snow capped peaks, Rim Top being the most prominent. Travel here is easy enough, trails criss cross the range of low hills, but the hills bisect the wood elf domain and as such is considered part and parcel of their realm. The Spur is filled with hosts of small springs and run off from the high peaks that feed the Mistbane to the north and the Cold Mist to the south. Some trees grow here, evergreens higher up, but in the valleys and gulches it tends to be smaller oak, hickory and cherry wood trees.

Many creatures dwell in the spur. Peryton nest here as do manticores and other large predators. They dwell high up in the mountains, avoiding the elves and others that routinely cross the mountains.

HIGDEN BOGS OR WOOD

The name is a bit of a misnomer, for the land is a rich forest and not a bog at all. Only along the banks of the Mistbane, extending for a few miles east is the land a marsh. The rest is verdant country. This low lying region of rolling hills lies between the Mistbane and the Watchita Rivers, hemmed in by the Pig's Trail in the north. The soil here is rich and black and the ground ripe for giant trees. Here massive white oaks tower over all, some from shallow, broad valleys, some over a hundred feet tall. Their leaves and tangled branches provide a dark shade for the host of flora that grows beneath the canopy, a wide variety of brush, small trees, grasses and the like. In many ways the forest is terraced here, with an upper terrace of white oak and a lower of the normal forest.

All this makes the Higden particularly dark during the spring and summer, little light passing through the thick and dark leaves of both terraces. What does filter through in faded shafts of pale yellow or white. It is dark and quiet, for the spongy earth emits few noises to disturb the whole.

The thick vegetation and the failing light make travel here difficult. Trails do not remain long and the crowded forest floor does not allow creatures to pass easy. The bogs are known for the many birds that dwell in both terraces and the host of wildlife that pass beneath the wood's eaves.

The Higden has the highest trees in all the Darkenfold and has attracted many of the followers of the Og Aust. Their temples stood for many years, long abandoned now, their ruins remain.

LILY FARE

This small glade lies at the feet of the Cherry Hills, consisting of a series of ponds and a stand of tall, straight sycamore trees. The Fare is open for the trees are spaced far apart, and the ground

covered in lush grass and flowering plants. These trees, white with tints of darker bark, capture the light of the moon and hold it so that the Fare alone, of all the Darkenfold is lit by a pale luminescence, even on the darkest of nights. The Fare is well watered by several streams, the water of which is cool and alive.

Few come here for the Fare is dangerous; its beauty hides a malaise that comes upon those who come to Fare and partake of it. The water revives the desire of comfort and the grasses invite sleep and rest and those who lay their heads down upon the ground can't help but hear the murmuring of the trees as they tell one another the tells of the world in the Days before Days. Many come to the Fare, but never leave, their bodies wasted away with time, but never with want for the sleep is comforting and the tales worth hearing.

LOW RIVER COUNTRY

The Low River Country includes a huge swath of forest that begins at Gurthap Falls, follows the course of the Watchita River to the Mistbane, angling back north and east to Heth's Perch and the Hollow and back again to Gurthap Falls. The ground here rises only a scant dozen feet or so from the Wingnut Bottoms, but does so quite dramatically on the northeast axis to Heth's Perch.

The ground here rarely floods but does serve as something of a watershed from the higher plateau to the north. In the rainy season, the many creeks and streams swell, the depressions fill with water, and the whole area becomes a water-logged land where travel for anything heavy is difficult. The rain and water give birth to a plethora of plants, from trees to bushes, deep grasses, clinging mosses and the like. The Ovlof eschl live here.

Reference: Harvest of Oaths

PENDLE RIVER

The Pendle River is a slow moving stream, broad and deep, fed by the many lakes of the Cold Mist Waters. It wanders through the furthest reaches of the forest until it spills out into the Silt Bay. It is a favored hunting ground of the halflings of Green Lonesome, but is well known for its giant gar, who eat just about anything that has the misfortune of falling in the water.

PIG'S TRAIL

This trail is a dry creek bed that extends from the Mistbane the length of Loretta's Bluff until it peters out a mile or so west of Gurthap Falls. It is easy enough to travel.

RIM TOP

This mountain towers over the country around it, some 11,400 feet high; it is the last vestige of the Rhodope Mountains. Its slopes however are gentle, and climb to the snow-capped peak in a series of broad shelves accessed by natural trails and switch backs. Its snow feeds much of the country around it when the rain isn't falling, which is rare. From its height one can see as far away as the Spine in the north and the sea in the south.

It is home to many flying creatures, manticore, peryton and the like. They make their nests on high and hunt the woods for many dozens of miles. It also holds a huge dwarven outpost, carved into the mountain thousands of years ago. The entrance overlooks the eastern approaches of forest. The doors have long been closed and few have the courage to plunder the ancient world.

SPOONDOWN FORD

This small low water ford lies south of Loretta's Bluff and breaches the Mistbane between West Wood and the Higden Bogs. It consists of a huge jumble of rocks. It is 4 feet deep and the water here moves quickly as the banks of the river contract. It is impassable during the rainy season.

VALLEY OF THE KING

This broad, deep valley is sacred to many of the peoples of the region, for here the ancient Ethrum carried their dead kings and queens and laid them to rest in stone holds carved out for them by the dwarves who lived in the high peaks of Rim Top. Fourteen Kings and eleven queens they set in stone biers cut into the mountains. The dwarves, to honor those who aided them in their many wars with the goblins, set the stone with magic runes and guarded the wealth of monarchs and their bodies from plunderers. In all their wisdom they did not know that when they sent the human kings "to stone" that they bound them to the material world.

In after ages the power of the Ethrum fell away, the valley was abandoned and left to the wilds of the Darkenfold. Trees crept into the deep vales and climbed the hills until the whole of the valley became a forest. Shadowed by the mountains it took on a particularly dark character for the sun never touched the ground beneath the forest. In time the digging roots upset the tombs and some were broken open and their spirits set free in the valley.

It is a haunted place, the ghosts of the kings and queens of old holding it as their own, though in truth their minds do not know where they are and only remember small shades of their former life, but they are filled with the loss of death and are malevolent.

WEST WOOD

This beleaguered section of the forest lies upon the doorstep of the Bowlgaar orcs, who continually plunder it for wealth. It is dark and twisted, carrying a stench of decay and death, and altogether malevolent. The wood is thinned, many of the young trees scoured, notched or cut down. The old trees fare little better, for these, though the orcs fear them too much, have little ability to defend themselves in open war and bear the marks of many attacks. Many are broken, their branches dead. And in their place briar bushes, poison ivy, and clinging vines grow everywhere. Worse, huge spiders have come here, settling in the twisted roots and dead hulks of the trees. They are huge and spin their webs or build their traps throughout the West Wood. Other evil creatures have come as well, making the whole of the West Wood a pitiable wasteland.

18 CASTLES & CRUSADES

The elves have warred with the orcs from time, trying to save the wood from destruction, but the orcs are rooted deep in the hills and mountains above.

RIVER BASIN

The Mistbane River Basin is the narrow stretch of river-land between the foothills of the Rhodope Mountains and the forest. The River Basin runs the length of the Darkenfold, veering east into the Millorian. It is a slow-moving river until it reaches the eastern reaches of the Millorian where it narrows and picks up speed. There, it becomes a thundering torrent tumbling into a wide lake and wetlands in the southern Downs. It slows to a crawl again and eventually empties into the Soup Marsh.

BOLAN DROPS

The Bolan Drops are part of this country. They are distinctive in the River Basin from the Wingnut because, where that region is flat, the Bolan Drops are not. The Drops are a series of ridges, each higher the further north one goes. The ridges themselves are roughly 40-60 miles long and run east-west, however, there are multiple shorter ridges that fan out north and south and along all points of the compass after that, making the entire country one of broken hills and ridges with a general line of march on an east/west axis.

The ridges are cut and splintered by a host of deep gulches, carved out of the land by years of rain and run off. Near the top, along the ridge lines, the gulches are filled with tangled scrub, brush and small, dried up trees that eke a living out of the sparse soil. Deeper in the gulches where the sun struggles to reach there are older trees, far older trees. These well-watered sentients feed on the rich soil and the water and grow fat, their girth at times a dozen feet or more. Their canopies are broad and thick and hang low to the ground. Oak vines thrive here, crawling across the ground and coiling around the base of the old forest giants.

LAKE OF NUNT

In the long ago Days Before Days, Nunt came to Aihrde. His path was a lonesome one, for his mind was twisted with visions of the River of Erde, which is the path the dead must travel. His thoughts were lost in the gloaming of life. At some point, he came to the Ethvold and there, beneath the cold dark eaves of that vast forest he found a sanctuary. He settled beneath the waters of the lake that now bears his name and took the guise of a large white fish. Settling upon the bottom of the lake, he became a conduit from this world to the next. Or so the legends say.

What is known is that the Lake of Nunt lies deep in the Low River Country and is visited by few. The land about is dangerous, prone to flooding and filled with all manner of predacious beasts, dark hearted trees, and fey whose lust for distraction has led more than a few to their untimely deaths.

The lake itself is large, some 8 or 9 miles from east to west and half again the size from north to south. The waters are still, cool

and deep, the center of the lake being roughly 420 feet from the surface. Very little plant life grows along the lake's edge, and the pebbly beaches that surround it afford little purchase. The plants that do grow are devoured by fish before they become much more than a small shoot. For this reason the lake remains the same size, year after year, swelling during the rainy season, and losing only a little during the dry.

Few creatures find purchase here, a dozen types of fish, frogs, and turtles. Beyond that, the giant carp keep all at bay, devouring the young of anything that attempts to settle in the lake itself. For this reason the lake offers good fishing for those brave enough to eat fish from the lake where a god of death is purported to dwell.

Reference: Harvest of Oaths

MISTBANE RIVER

The Watchita joins the Mistbane in the River Basin region. With increased strength the river widens and deepens, in places up to 150-160 feet across. It slows considerably however, allowing for much easier river traffic. The patches of mist continue to plague travelers on the river but they are easier to skirt and avoid the banshees within.

The banks of the Mistbane continue to sport many wonderfully tall and full-bodied willow trees. These trees often reside on small grassy knolls at the water's edge allowing their branches and leaves to brush the water. They are vaguely-sentient relatives of the older sentient trees and treants. These willows serve the river as guardians of sorts, offering refuge from the river or the forest, or both.

But the dangers from aquatic beasts grows tremendously as giant fish and river monsters feed upon whatever falls into the current, or what they can knock into it.

Once the Powder Empties into the Mistbane the river swells to enormous proportions, some 250 feet across and 30-40 deep. Eventually the Mistbane passes Thompson Point and spills into the Danau River.

WINGNUT BOTTOMLANDS

The Wingnut Bottomland, or the Bottoms for short, extends from the Bolan Drops in the east, to the Lake of Nunt in the west. It abuts the Inigg Gorge and Thistle Ridge in the north and the Mistbane River in the south. As its name indicates, it is a low lying area that is as much a swampland as it is a forest. The ground, as well as the flora, is very different in the Bottoms than elsewhere in the Darkenfold.

The ground in the Bottoms is moist and rich in nutrients. It plays host to a wide variety of mosses, grasses and smaller wetland shrubs. The moss in particular grows everywhere, carpeting the ground, crawling up the boles of trees, and hanging in wads from the branches overhead. Silver maples dominate the Bottoms, spread out generously, allow easy passage between them. These tall, silver-white trees, with high canopies and bright green leaves grow throughout, thriving on the ample water and rich

earth. Only a few of the forest's more dour trees, the oaks, grow in the Bottoms, and most of these lie in the north, along the edge of Thistle Ridge. There the oaks represent an old stand of trees and are very large and deep rooted.

The Bottoms are open and going here is easier than in other sections of the wood. Elsewhere tree roots cling to the earth like gnarled fingers, coiled in and out of the ground, creating many pitfalls and snares for the unwary; here however, the wet earth allows the maples to sink deep and their roots are rarely exposed, creating a largely flat expanse of bottom land. The aforementioned grass and moss creates an almost comfortable ground cover.

Despite this, the Bottoms are home to many thick-leaved bushes, berries and thorny vines. These grow wild and deep in the spring and summer, dying off in the fall. They are generally thin stalked and do little to impede movement, though they do restrict visibility due to their large leaves.

The Bottoms are not without their dangers however. Many fallen trees have submerged in the soil, tripping up those who move too fast and feeding a fierce species of tusked boar. But the ground is the real enemy, for the wet earth plays host to small grass-covered ponds, sink holes, quick sand and mud pits. Many fall afoul of these water traps and are consumed by the Bottoms, their flesh adding to the soil's thick nutrients.

THE DOWNS

The Downs consist of all the land south of the Mistbane River and east of a line from Lily Fare and the eastern edges of the Cold Water Mist Lakes and Pendle River. In the south it is hemmed in by the Great Soup Marsh. It is the land of fey, where the unseelie court resides beneath the rule of the Alabaster Queen. It is an enchanted land, perilous and beautiful.

BOOTSTRAPS

Upon the banks of the Pendle River stands Bootstraps, a large tavern, inn and supply depot. Owned by the halfling freebooter Bootstrap, it offers the traveler everything they might desire, from good food and drink, to weapons, armor, food, animal companions and even warm flesh to sleep with. Bootstraps sits upon a bank some 40 feet above the river.

The compound is walled with a wooden palisade and consists of the tavern itself, a three story inn, though one story is underground, and a large barn that serves as a warehouse. Bootstrap employs a dozen or so humans and halflings as guards, servants, cooks and shop keepers. They offer leather-working, an armorer and blacksmith. Everyone who works at Bootstraps can fight and they do. The halfling himself is a friendly fellow who enjoys good company and tall tales. He has very close relations with the halflings of Green Lonesome.

CASTLE ON THE HILL

This is the domicile of the Green Wizard. A powerful, evil bent of a man who lords over this stretch of the Mistbane River. He

has embraced the primeval world and taken it as the creed by which all should follow, that being that weak must be put to death, bondage, or hide in fear. To this end he has constructed a castle from which his minions ply his trade, which is mostly slavery. He hunts the wild eschl, taking their young and selling them in the slave markets to the west. His is an altogether evil disposition and most of all the denizens of the Darkenfold wish death upon him. Many try, but none have yet succeeded.

To protect himself the Green Wizard enchanted his castle and lifted it from the ground. It now floats about 20 feet above the ground, and only a few hundred from the river. To keep his many enemies from sneaking up upon him he destroyed the forest for a mile around his Castle on the Hill and has set many eyes to watching the forest and river.

The castle itself sits above a broad rock roughly 400 feet wide and 300 long. A series of outer and inner walls enclose a network of buildings. He and his minions reside within. A small fleet of river boats serve to move goods up and down the river. These are anchored in the Mistbane.

DOG TROT

This small run of a creek tumbles into Two Dogs River; it is wide, about 12 feet, and floored with rocks worn smooth with the water's passing. A long path follows the west bank of the creek, allowing quick passage to the River. The path is never overgrown.

GREEN LONESOME

Green Lonesome is a town of halflings. It was built during the reign of the Horned God, by halflings fleeing to the Darkenfold who found themselves banding together. A loose camp became a town of sorts, though it remained secluded and the halflings used the forest to guard and hide it. For this reason many of the houses here are built into the hills and beneath the roots of giant trees. It would be easy enough to enter the town without knowing it if the whole was not guarded by a broad series of interconnected, though seemingly natural hedges.

After the end of Winter's Dark the halflings built a more natural, stone wall. Twelve feet high but topped with a series of flowering thorn bushes. Several gates, some well hidden, offer entry and exit. Within, the town sprawls over dozens of acres of ground, tucked and hidden into the several hills.

The more recent town center consists of more normal waddle and daub houses with red clay shingles. This includes the main tavern, the Butter's Cream, and the smaller, though more boisterous, Wolf Pad. Both offer food, drink and a place to sleep, the former in individual rooms, the latter on the floor of the common room. The town also offers a smithy, a few shops where supplies are found and other common amenities.

The halflings here are friendly until crossed, then they are merciless and almost vengeful, remembering well the torment their ancestors suffered under the hands of the Horned God.

20 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Total Population: 1000

Human: 50

Gnome: 20 +/-

Halfling: 900 +/-

Dwarf: 10 +/-

Elf: 100 +/-

Government: The town is run by the elders of the community. Their word is not law, but almost always respected.

Military: The halflings are able to put about 300 able bodied men and women into battle. These usually wield bows, slings, clubs and other missile weapons. They are little organized, usually fighting hit and run tactics, with a heavy reliance on the bow.

Economy: The halflings are self sufficient people, though some trade with the wood elves occurs and with the men of Ackium.

Religion: Wulfad is worshipped by most, but all pay homage to Mordius, Tefnut and Wenafar.

Language: Vulgate and halfling.

Major Guilds: None.

GUM SPRINGS

This broad, deep lake is fed by several hot springs that lie beneath it. The water bubbles to the surface hot, creating a steam that hangs over much of the whole lake. The basin that serves the lake is large and the water cools the further north it goes, so that the lake has a mixture of very hot water and very cool. All of the hot springs lie upon the southern banks and that shore is forever shrouded in mist. The Water Eaters, an eschl trive, dwell here.

Gum Springs is a favored haunt of the halflings from Green Lonesome. Others from further north journey here for their soothing waters, many coming here to die.

HOBBLE FOREST

In many ways the Hobble Forest is the largest in the Darknfold. It begins on the south banks of the Mistbane, and the slopes of the Spur and Cherry Hills (in the west), extending to the banks of the Danau River in the east and the Escarpment in the south. It includes the all the forests around Green Lonesome, down to the Southern Fence. In the Hobble Forest the peculiar oaks native to the Darkenfold dominate. These great trees tower above the moss-covered ground, their leafy canopies blotting out the light of the sun. Larger than their cousins north of the Mistbane, these trees drink the light of the fire, both magic and mundane, and when they do they seem to grow darker and cast shadows on the minds of any who pass beneath.

The Hobble's broad steps are haunted by enchantments, both old and new, by fey that hunt for sport and hunt for pleasure. The nights are forever filled with odd lights and sounds, with hosts of glowing insects that mingle with fey, too small to see beyond their glow. In the day the forest is heavy with silence, the moss covered ground absorbing sound like a thirsty man water. Creatures of all descriptions pass beneath these eaves but

they too seem to move quietly and speak in hushed voice, giving the wood its name, for all things are hobbled here. The silence is pregnant with expectation and that expectation with a terror that is primeval.

It is not uncommon to encounter any number of creatures here, but many who do come never return to their homes, for the Hobble Forest devours them. The Mikuk, an eschl tribe, live here, though they are seldom seen.

LUTHER'S CUT

This long deep gorge extends east to west for miles. In the west it begins as a narrow gulch, but rapidly broadens and deepens until it is a good 60 feet deep and a quarter mile across. It snakes on for mile after mile until it climbs its way back up to the forest floor. The gorge is rocky, with little vegetation, though plenty of dead fall and run off from the forest above. It is used by many creatures in the Delium wood as a road, so much so that a clear trail winds its way through bottom of the gorge.

The gorge is plain to see for the forest does not grow up to the edge, the ground all around the gorge is slightly elevated and very rocky, allowing only the toughest of trees to take root. These are usually black jack oaks, small, twisted, gnarled affairs. This is true for both the north and south face of the Gorge. The cliffs leading down into the gorge are steep, but in many places offer some avenue to climb down or up.

It is a favorite haunt for many predators, for creatures passing up and down the Cut are easy targets for a well laid ambush. Wyverns ply the air above, looking for prey they can cart off to the forest above and devour.

OAK STAND

The Stand is a land of fey, where the unseelie court resides beneath the rule of the Alabaster Queen. It is an enchanted land, perilous and beautiful. The Oak Stand is a stark section of the wood, where the trees and earth and sky all seem to blend to one. The branches of the thick-boled trees are tall and the leaves a deep green, so much so that they cast a haze into the very air, creating a filtered light that falls from sun or moon. For these reason everything in the Stand seems to be beyond a haze. But in the deeps, where the roots bore into the ground, the green is ever thicker, for the moss grows here, thick, like a carpet. The moss is forever releasing spores that seem to float around in the windless trees, adding to the haze.

At the heart of the Stand are twelve large, dead, leafless oaks. They grow in a broad circle several hundred feet around and surround a cool, calm lake that casts a perfection reflection of the moon, but never the sun. This is a magical land, for here the Alabaster Queen holds court, and from her woven gown of white are many doors to many planes and through which all things must pass that come and go from the Stand. Here in the Oak Stand she holds her court, passing from whatever ethereal life she leads to step into the world of Aihrde and bring her power and wisdom to bare on whatever tasks have occupied her mind. Her people gather from far and wide when she comes.

Dark fey, foul minded boggarts, nymphs, clever sprigs and sprites and all the other myriad lesser Val Eahrakun whose thoughts are less than pure. Here the very brave or very foolish come to meet her and beseech boons and power.

The Alabaster Queen holds court only when she desires and there seems no rhyme or reason to when it might be. People will come to the stand and suffer death or the terror of opened worlds waiting for her to return, for the water is perilous to drink and the dead trees gates to other worlds.

OXBOW LAKE

The Oxbow is part of the Red Mud River. Here the land is low and wet and the river has, over time, flooded it in several feet of water. The lake itself is several miles wide and covers the better part of 12 miles from east to west, and for the most part it is shallow, ranging between 2-4 feet. The river has cleared the area of most sediment, exposing the red clay beneath, and these clay deposits have created a golden environment for the shallow lake.

It is easy enough to walk through the Oxbow until one gets to the deeper channel cut by the Red Mud River. But through the lake cypress and willow trees grow, rooting wherever the soil is rich enough to sustain them. Wild grasses attract water fowl and a species of small water buffalo. Other creatures come here to hunt; young green dragons are not uncommon.

RED MUD RIVER

The Red Mud's head waters lie in the Cherry Hills, there a multitude of streams feed the mouth of what is, at first, a swift flowing river. Its channels are tight in its opening courses, crowded with boulders and almost impossible to navigate, but as it pass the Oak Stand it broadens and enters the country where it earns its name. The river follows red clay deposits from the Stand to Oxbow Lake. Here it is broad and shallow and moves considerably slower than in its beginning.

Men come up the Red Mud from Mud Island and Crossed Folks to mine the clay from the river bed, for it is rich and red and makes stout material to manufacture all manner of goods, including shingles for houses. It is a dangerous business however, for the Downs are an enchanted wood. The Flat Rounds, an eschl tribe, live here.

SOUTHERN ESCARPMENT

The Escarpment marks the end of the Southern Plateau, beyond which the land dips into the low, coastal regions of the Soup Marsh. It begins its rise on the western bank of the Danau River. The escarpment is a dozen feet high; it is a hundred feet above the Soup Marsh. The forest itself grows up to the edge of the Escarpment, trees hanging over the edge, roots half in the earth and half hanging down the cliff's face like so many ropes. Flowering vines cling to the cliff face from the marsh below to the Escarpment above, allowing purchase for rangers, rogues and other skilled climbers. So tangled is the edge in the forest growth that to pass from the north to the south is a risky

endeavor, many a traveler having stepped out of the forest and over the edge before ever they knew they were there.

It runs the length of the Soup Marsh until it dips back down again where the northern shores of the Bay of Brand lie. Birds and other creatures nest here, taking flight out and over the Soup Marsh in hunt of prey.

SOUTHERN FENCE

The Southern Fence is the furthest reach of the Darkenfold. The forest spills out past the Pendle River and its tributaries, clinging to the dry, sandy ground with a persistence that is a testament to the strength of the forest itself. The trees here are short, with broad, low hanging canopies, and grow in a jumble, mixed with thorn-bearing hawthorne trees. Travel here is very difficult for there are few trails above two or three feet high, cut by deer or pigs, and the low hanging trees and thorn bushes create an inadvertent hedge-like wall for the forest further north. This hedge is miles deep, abutting the river to the north.

A number of were-boar have taken up residence in the Fence, carving small homes for themselves from the bramble, but following the tracks of dogs and wild pigs to move from one spot to the next.

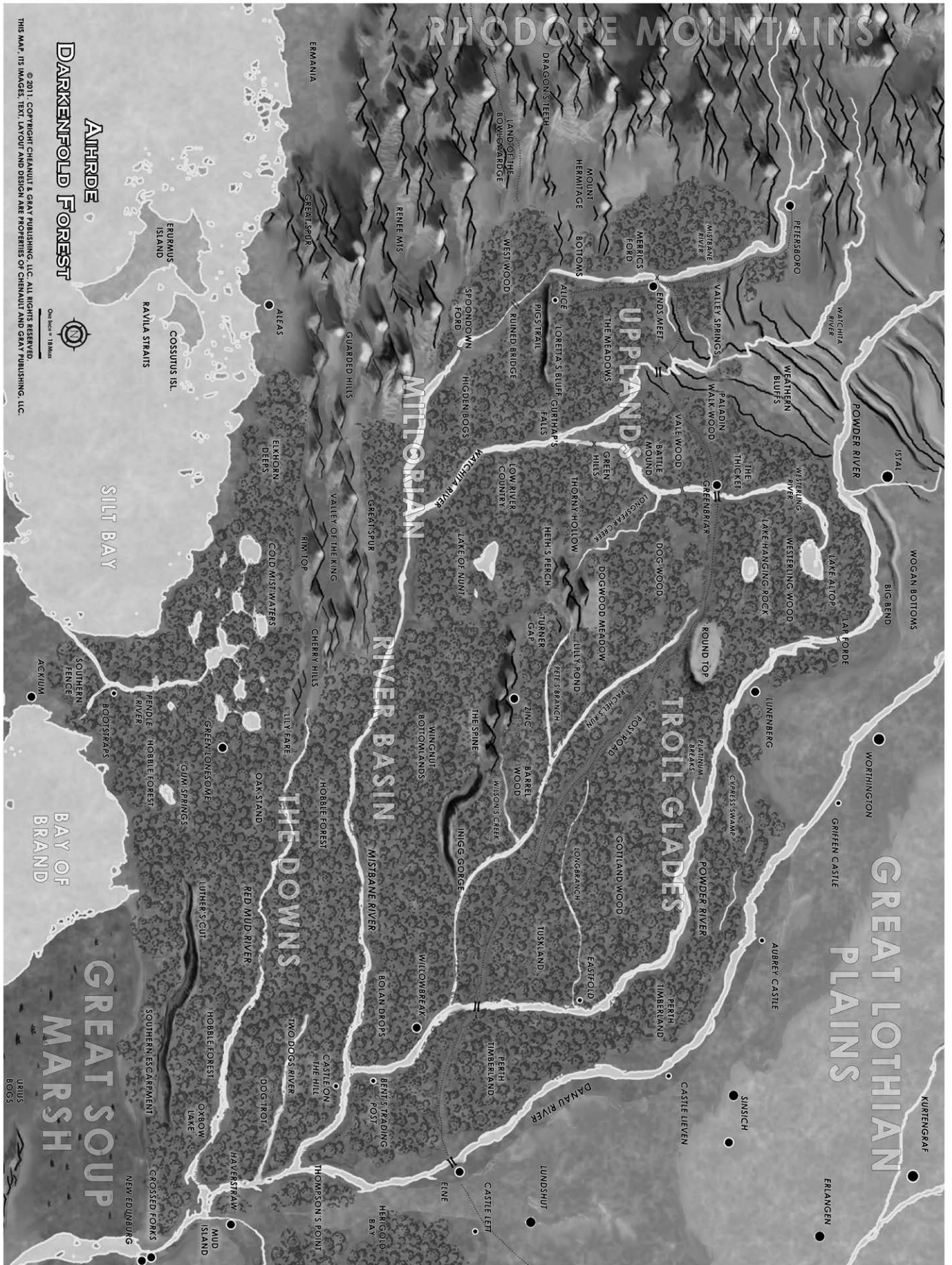
It is near the town of Ackium, the furthest reach of Brindisium. This rough and ready border town reflects the harsh forest to the north.

TWO DOGS RIVER

The Erinul Flow, called Two Dogs by the Halflings, is a short, broad river that cuts its way through the Delium Wood until it spills into the Danau River. The river itself follows a rather straight course, but a narrow channel creates a great deal of white water. Coupled with several small falls the river is a difficult river to travel upon, only the most experienced put canoes in the Two Dogs.

It is a favored haunt of the Halflings, and earns its name from the famed canines of the huntress Myreal, whose dogs ranged the banks of the river until they were lost in a sudden flood. Myreal died of grief and her bones were never found. The dogs are seen from time to time, howling their misery upon the banks, looking for the huntress.

22 CASTLES & CRUSADES



RHODOPE MOUNTAINS

GREAT LOTTHIAN PLAINS

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UPPLANDS

MILTORIAN RIVER BASIN

THE DOWNS

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