

Creative Commons Notice

The entire contents of this document are released under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0). You can freely reuse any or all of its contents up to and including copying them word for word in your own projects, including commercial projects, so long as you include the following attribution:

“Some content in this project was taken from the Traveler’s Guide series by Chamomile Has Adventures. You can find a link to this book, the rest of the Traveler’s Guide series, and other books produced by Chamomile Has Adventures, at this address:

<https://chamomilehasa.blog/chamomile-has-adventures/>”

Cenezi

Cenezi used to have a Lord Protector until rival city state Direnze attempted to install a new ruler to capitalize on the waning popularity of the drunken and irresponsible Lord Protector who last held the throne. They drummed up some reasonably likely looking peasant to pretend to be a long lost heir disposed of by the current ruling dynasty, sent some mercenaries to make the transition, and then got blindsided when a dragon showed up and couped the coup forces.

Being ruled by a dragon is not generally considered an envious position, but Arkanthul had two key political advantages: The existing Lord Protector was so weak and poorly thought of that he was completely unable to rally the people of Cenezi around him, removing him as a realistic option, and the people of Cenezi were eager to side with anyone who wasn’t their hated rivals in Direnze. Arkanthul claimed to be backing the legitimate Lord Protector early on in the civil war between him and Direnze’s appointed pretender, but by the end of the war Arkanthul himself was so much more popular than the drunk he was nominally backing that he devoured the princeling and openly declared himself tyrant of the city by fiat.

Arkanthul was (and is) only a young red dragon, making a bold gamble for a domain he can sit on for the very long term, which means he was in no position to single-handedly destroy Direnze’s entire army, but having a dragon on your side also provides a hefty military advantage. Between the Direnze Knights and multiple mercenary companies, including Dragon Company based in Cenezi itself, Direnze’s faction had more than enough firepower to bring down one dragon, and Arkanthul had to build a rival coalition out of the Necromancer’s Guild, the Temple of Razbol, and the city’s kobold population (now consolidated into the Piccoli Draghi).

Initially, the Temple and the Guild opposed both Direnze and one another, but Arkanthul was eventually able to broker a truce between them and get both of them to agree to long term

membership in his regime. The initial blows against Direnze swung the allegiance of Dragon Company, and when Arkanthul was able to secure an alliance with the Ayanga Tuurai Clan of the Horned Horde, their reinforcements finished off any hope Direnze's forces had of securing the city.

That was several years ago, and now Arkanthul's rule over the city of Cenezi is consolidated and the coalition he assembled has gone from ad-hoc government to the established regime, although state capacity remains pretty limited.

Blood Brotherhood: The Blood Brotherhood is an orc supremacist street gang active mainly in the city slums near the docks. As you might expect, they're exceptionally socially regressive, believing in strict gender roles, a racial hierarchy with orcs at the top and other races in various positions of servitude or extermination, and absolute loyalty to an authoritarian hierarchy that promises to enforce their social norms. They're also a pack of bitter, disaffected losers who can't really effectively agitate for anything except when being used as cannon fodder by an unscrupulous leader. Relatedly, the Temple of Razbol sources most of their muscle from the Brotherhood.

Dragon Company: Dragon Company is a mercenary company who've based themselves out of Cenezi for over a decade. Before Arkanthul's rise to power, they were known as Lightning Company - they rebranded afterwards as a gesture of loyalty at the end of the civil war. Dragon Company (then still called Lightning Company) were originally part of the Direnze coalition, but they started switching sides pretty freely once the Temple of Razbol and Necromancer's Guild started providing effective resistance. Near the end, they went all-in on Arkanthul's coalition, helping to crush Direnze forces at the docks with a surprise attack. Their casualties throughout the war were light, largely because they picked their battles and only ever fought when heavily favored to win, which means they presented a fairly serious threat to Arkanthul's battered coalition, and Arkanthul accepted the peace offering.

Several years later, Dragon Company have rebuilt half of the ruined neighborhood of Corte delle Arti into a fortress now known as the Company Town. Because their headquarters is now so heavily fortified and commands such a large chunk of the footprint of the town near the docks, evicting Dragon Company is as difficult as ever for Arkanthul. Even so, the deal Dragon Company negotiated at the end of the civil war - half of an entire neighborhood of the ruined city to rebuild and run as their own personal fiefdom and no taxation on their mercenary activities whatsoever - galls Arkanthul to no end, and he would like nothing more than to have them destroyed, their Company Town looted, and the spoils brought to his hoard.

Goblin Gang: The Goblin Gang is one of Cenezi's racially divided street gangs. Goblins got on pretty well in Cenezi before the civil war, being ordinary citizens like anyone else, but they had no particular representatives in Arkanthul's ruling coalition afterwards. While Arkanthul himself has no particular opinion on the goblins one way or another, the Blood Brotherhood street gang is backed by the Temple of Razbol while the Piccoli Draghi street gang is indirectly endorsed by Arkanthul's Praetorian Guard.

The Goblin Gang is a recent thing, caused by the rise in power of the Blood Brotherhood and Piccoli Draghi in the slums near the city docks. They have adopted some of the racist ideology of the Brotherhood, at least insofar as hating orcs and kobolds, but are less decided on other races. They tend to hold humans in at least some contempt for ignoring the situation in the slums, but unlike the Piccoli Draghi, who are committed to draconic supremacy, and the Blood Brotherhood, who believe in an elaborate racial hierarchy with orcs at the top, the Goblin Gang aren't pre-committed to any specific opinion on gnomes or dark elves or tabaxi. They are certainly worshipers of Culora, the goddess of the goblins, and despise Razbol, god of the orcs, and to a lesser extent Anima and Trezire, associated with the city's thieves and necromancers (respectively), but they otherwise aren't particularly religiously committed, either.

Gudthump Clan: The Gudthump Clan is a clan of hill giants that Arkanthul brought with him from the hills deeper inland from Cenezi, in the direction of Glimmfall. The Gudthump Clan of hill giants is a collection of exiles from the Thulduk Clan near the glacial regions far to the north, a pack of cannibals chased out of their clan for the act of consuming sapient beings who then bounced around the edges of Glimmfall for years being chased around by the Horned Horde, Spindle Orcs, and Glimmfall Fellowship of Scholars until they fell in with Arkanthul at the edge of the Silver Sea, becoming his shock troops in exchange for protection.

The Gudthump Clan are led by a sociopath who eats people for the sheer thrill of ending sapient life in a particularly gruesome way, surrounded by dimwitted hangers-on who think there is a direct link between cruelty and strength and are too stupid to notice that their clan of cannibalistic bullies got the stuffing kicked out of them in one place after another for years, something which only came to an end when a dragon decided they'd be useful as grunts. Arkanthul keeps them in the castle where he can personally intimidate them out of doing anything stupid. Once the Praetorian Guard fills out its numbers, he hopes to kill the unreliable Gudthump Clan in exchange for the more professional Praetorians, but this is a project that will take at least one decade, possibly two.

The Merchants of Death: "The Merchants of Death" is a name used by those outside the group it describes (the fancy term here is an "exonym"). They mostly call themselves just "the Merchants" or sometimes refer to themselves as "Corte delle Arti" after the neighborhood they operate in (the part that hasn't been taken over by Dragon Company's Company Town, at least). The Merchants of Death are merchants who sell primarily to mercenaries and adventurers: Arms dealers, magic item sellers, and potioners, mostly. During the war, they made their living selling to both Arkanthul and Direnze. Now the war is over, they use Cenezi as a base of operations to sell items to adventurers coming in from other cities. The Silver Sea is torn between many city-states with patches of wilderness in between, making it a haven for adventurers and mercenaries, so the merchants have plenty of business.

The Merchants of Death have no special arrangement with Arkanthul. They were decidedly neutral in the civil war and thus aren't technically a part of the winning coalition. They have, however, single-handedly funded the reconstruction of Corte delle Arti, the only fully restored

section of the city (unless you count the Company Town, which was restored into a fortress), and almost single-handedly funded (through various taxes) the reconstruction of the Lord Protector's citadel into Arkanthul's draconic lair. Without the merchants, Arkanthul has no tax base and gold stops flowing into his hoard. As such, he has a keen interest in making sure they feel welcome in the city. Indeed, he wants the city to be as welcoming as possible - the more non-monetary benefits he can offer the Merchants of Death, the more they'll put up with Arkanthul taking a greater and greater cut of their profits. Certainly it helps the merchants to have a dragon on their side when dealing with adventurers.

The Necromancers' Guild: The Necromancers' Guild is not well thought-of throughout most of the Silver Sea and allowing their practice had always been a point of contention even within Cenezi. Indeed, part of the initial reason why the Temple of Razbol made a go of resisting the Direnze-backed pretender to the throne is that this seemed like their opportunity to expand their influence over the city enough to crush the Necromancers' Guild by force, something which the Direnze pretender did not seem especially likely to do. For their own part, however, the Necromancers' Guild hoped to take advantage of the glut of corpses provided by the war to create a more-or-less self-sustaining army that would allow them to expand from a semi-legal fringe institution to a major power.

In the end, Arkanthul brokered an agreement between the Temple of Razbol and the Necromancers' Guild in which the necromancers got basically everything they wanted: Explicit legal protections for the practice of necromancy, unlimited access to all the bodies buried in the old graveyard across the river, and control of the neighborhood of Ossidiana, which they have mostly not bothered rebuilding from the war, only repairing their own tower and keeping the rest of the neighborhood as a ruined buffer state.

Membership in the Necromancers' Guild is almost completely closed, with the necromancers generally marrying amongst themselves and training children in the guild from birth, creating an insular and xenophobic society that still hasn't abandoned the siege mentality from their days of borderline-illegality despite now being part of the ruling coalition (and in all fairness, another, equally prominent member of the ruling coalition still hopes to destroy them).

Piccoli Draghi: The Piccoli Draghi are a kobold street gang, and thus have no official membership. Gang members hang out in certain locations and tend to help one another with illegal activities, and at a certain level of involvement you can be said to be "in the gang," but there's no form to fill out or official membership certificate. The Piccoli Draghi do have a more formal institution than the other street gangs, though, in that Arkanthul recruits his personal palace servants from their number. While Arkanthul's palace guard are his half-dragon praetorians and a clan of hill giants he brought in as muscle, the Piccoli Draghi are the ones who run messages or fetch things. Living in a palace, even as a servant, is enough of a step up from living in the slums that most of the Piccoli Draghi see being accepted into the service of Arkanthul as an ultimate life goal, and worship the dragon as a god.

The Praetorian Guard: The Praetorian Guard are the half-dragon and dragonborn children of Arkanthul. Being a dragon, Arkanthul does not reproduce sexually, but pours blood across a hoard of gold and gems. The blood infuses the buried gemstones with draconic power, and hatches out kobolds, half-dragons, and with a big enough hoard, a true dragon wyrmling. Arkanthul's hoard is not that big, but it is big enough to generate half-dragons and plenty of kobolds. The latter act as servants, messengers, and scouts within Arkanthul's stronghold, but the Praetorian Guard proper are the half-dragon elites and their dragonborn children (half-dragons can breed with humans to create dragonborn - humans are able to breed with an astonishingly wide variety of creatures).

The Praetorians are Arkanthul's most loyal and most capable minions. They number less than a dozen, but each of them is individually a match for the average adventurer and the whole set together are worth at least a hundred ordinary soldiers and could plausibly wipe an adventuring party. Arkanthul is very careful about making sure not to lose any of his precious Praetorians, whose main duty is to guard his palace, and when he does deploy them, it is usually in full force, both to minimize the losses and to come down on whatever required such a response with such overwhelming power as to hopefully deter any future troublemakers for a good long while.

The Temple of Anima: The Temple of Anima is a thieves' guild hidden in the River District, in a section of the city that has yet to be repaired. The Temple of Anima accepts only master thieves and are dedicated to stealing from all the most well-guarded treasuries across the Silver Sea. While a good deal of their thieving is motivated by rank greed, they do claim to be worshipers of a trickster god and as part of that god's rites they seek to prove to all the powerful that they are never safe, that there are no walls against chaos, only speedbumps, and sooner or later the chaos will swallow them.

The Temple of Anima is, of course, hoping to rob Arkanthul blind, but stealing from a dragon is not a task undertaken lightly. While it remains an abstract goal, they have no immediate plans for how to do so, but are instead committed to watching and waiting for an opportunity to strike.

The Temple of Razbol: The Temple of Razbol, god of war, blood, and the orcs, are a strictly hierarchical religious organization whose existing chain of command allowed them to become a government any time they need to. Indeed, holding up discipline and hierarchy as religious virtues means that the bulk of Cenezi's state capacity (i.e. their ability to do things like collect taxes, run a census to find out how many people even live in their walls, construct fortifications or other useful things, check to see if people are actually obeying the nominal laws and dole out punishments if they aren't, etc. etc.). While the rest of Arkanthul's coalition largely keep to themselves until called upon to crush some major foe, the Temple of Razbol are the active enforcers of the law and what little bureaucracy the city state has.

The Temple of Razbol used to be one of many religions in the River District of the city where many of the city's wealthier inhabitants lived. During Direnze's attempted coup, the other religions all folded like matchwood struck by a cannonball, while the Temple of Razbol's militant ethos and existing hierarchical structure allowed them to put up meaningful resistance, integrate

into Arkanthul's coalition, and seize total control of the River District, constructing the Cathedral of Razbol there in the aftermath.

The Temple of Razbol are informal allies with the Blood Brotherhood street gang, and provide support to them against the Piccoli Draghi and especially the Goblin Gang. They maintain a vicious rivalry with the Necromancers' Guild, although they do not dare draw the wrath of Arkanthul in pursuing it too openly, for the Guild would have an undoubtedly decisive advantage in a confrontation if Arkanthul were to take their side.

Darkwood

Locations of the Darkwood

The Crystal City: The Crystal City was once the capital of Elluevian Forest, inhabited mainly by high and grey elves. The crystal spires were grown magically from the earth, bending and curving by means of sorcery as they extended from below to form rooms and corridors without the need for any sculpting at all. The elves are long gone, and for a time plantlife overgrew the crystal structures. However, because the crystals were grown whole from the ground, the roots and vines have not damaged them at all. When a young green dragon moved in and their poison spread throughout the region, killing all plant and animal life in the city, the crystal spires remained, empty but untouched by the passage of time.

The dragon is only one of the new inhabitants of the city. The Thornhearts make the Crystal City their main base of operations, a cult of dark druids who seek to put an end to agriculture out of the belief that becoming dependent upon a specific plot of land to survive is what has allowed tyranny and war to take hold of a world that previously knew them little, if at all. Whatever the drawbacks of nature, red in tooth and claw, it never had any despots.

The Thornhearts have retrieved a branch of the Eternity Tree from the Keepers' Sanctuary in the Oldwood, and have planted it deep beneath the earth. This tree has the power to alter the balance of life and death. Traditionally, the elves would use their own deaths as sacrifice to power the tree, granting themselves a ghostly immortality. The Thornhearts have been kidnapping humanoids and awakening animals so that their sapient souls can be sacrificed to the tree, using the power to infuse themselves with dark animating energy and thus transform into wood woads, shambling mounds, and ultimately treants. The blights created as a side effect of the process, viewed by the elves as a manageable problem well worth the benefits of the tree, are only a further benefit to the Thornhearts, growing their army with hundreds of tiny minions.

The Thornhearts' constant use of the tree causes a toxic ooze called blight. Twig, needle, and vine blights grow naturally from it. On its own, the use of the tree causes blight to spread not even throughout the entirety of the Crystal City, but the Thornhearts gather it up into toxic nodes, creating channels of blight through corrupted root networks that gather into pools, which push the radius of blight expansion further. The blight spreads from their Crystal City lair first into the Treants' March, then into the Oldwood and Talon Mountain, and eventually across the river to consume the Dunwood and Farwood.

The Thornhearts use all manner of monsters and other allies to defend the blight nodes that form once every few miles, to prevent Gweir in the Oldwood or other enemies from clearing the pools away and causing all the nearby blight to wither.

The Dunwood: The Dunwood sits in the southwestern corner of the Darkwood, on the western side of the river. Depending on who you ask, the First Inn is either just barely in or just barely out of the Dunwood. Either way, adventurers arriving at the First Inn can enter the Dunwood just by going south.

The Dunwood is locked in conflict between two ancient forest spirits, Galdin and Sheolin. Back before the fall of the elves, these two were sibling spirits of the woods, Galdin a mighty stag and Sheolin a bear. Seeking a weapon to use against the Fey Queen, however, the Keepers of the Eldar used the dark magic of the Eternity Tree to twist Sheolin into a hideous spider and unleashed her subsequent brood upon the forest. The Fey Queen warned Galdin of the Keepers' evil intentions so that he could not be similarly transformed, pit Galdin and Sheolin against one another, and continued on her subversion of elven society having hardly even been inconvenienced.

The conflict between Galdin and his elk against Sheolin and her spiders continues on to this day. Neither can truly die. No matter how thoroughly dismembered and destroyed their bodies are, healing potions can still bring them back to life, including special brews Gweir can make specifically to revive fallen forest gods. If you kill one or the other and camp on their body, though, that'll keep them from coming back at least as long as you keep watch over the body.

If Galdin dies and stays dead, the spider population, no longer held in check, will grow out of control and swarm across first the Farwood, then east of the river into Talon Mountain, the Oldwood, and Treants' March, consuming all animals larger than a fieldmouse and breeding an ever larger brood until the entire forest is exterminated and they begin to starve to death *en masse* from lack of food. They won't be able to survive the green dragon's poison to infest the Crystal City, and the lack of other animals there means they'll rarely wander into it anyway (nothing to hunt), but since the green dragon's own poison is already killing everything in there, it hardly matters.

On the other hand, if Sheolin dies and stays dead, the adventurers at the First Inn will eventually hunt the spiders to extinction for their venom. This will take something like twelve to eighteen months, which means it's probably outside the scope of the campaign and spiders will remain a

threat in the Dunwood indefinitely, but it's something you can toss into the epilogue if the party successfully puts Sheolin down.

The Farwood: The Farwood is the last stronghold of the old elves of Elluevian. The Fey Queen had almost every elf who opposed her rise to power hunted down and killed, and then took her thralls with her to dance a dance of ruin across the world, leaving the forest almost completely empty. It has subsequently become known as Darkwood, and most outsiders don't even know there are still elves living in it. The Rangers of Elluevian, about fifty strong, still try to maintain the border, although they have been unable to hunt down Sheolin and her brood, prevent the dwarves from setting up their colony under Talon Mountain (even with the aarakocra's assistance), or prevent the goblins from streaming across their borders and into the Farwood.

The goblins are fleeing annihilation at the hands of the Lich King. Once the Lich King and Troll King had both ruled over Skyreach Kingdom. The Lich King made his capital there, while the Troll King left some of his vassals, mostly goblins, and marched on to further conquest elsewhere. With the forces of light essentially annihilated, the Lich King has decided that the Dark Council is over and has consolidated his rule over Skyreach by killing all the goblins and converting them into zombies and skeletons.

The surviving goblins have fled Skyreach and appointed their own Goblin King, who is seeking to resettle the allegedly abandoned Farwood and fortify it against potential pursuit by the Lich King before he can finish mopping up survivors back in Skyreach and turns his attention to chasing down the refugees.

Ishina, leader of the Rangers of Elluevian, does not know or care why the goblins have come to the Darkwood. She was there when Elluevian fell, and she's never gotten over the lost glory of the elves. With the exception of the aarakocra, who were there since the glory days, Ishina despises the notion of any non-elves crossing the border.

With only about fifty rangers left, she can't be too overt about this, and she is friendly with adventurers of the First Inn (these, at least, are not the tip of the spear for full-on colonization of the abandoned elven fortresses and towns). She calls the goblins "invaders" and seeks to use the adventurers to decimate their armed forces, for while there are thousands of goblins trying to enter the forest, they have only a few hundred armed goblins, and of those only a few dozen are powerful marauders, alchemists, or wolf riders, and only one functional goblin mech. Though the goblins still hold the upper hand in a direct confrontation, the elves know the local terrain better, and with a bit of assistance storming the goblins' dug-in positions at the fringes of the Farwood, the remaining combatants - and subsequently, the goblin civilians - will be little more than target practice for the Rangers.

A river divides the Farwood off from the Oldwood and Treants' March to the east. The river originates in Talon Mountain, and it's possible to get around it that way, but far more convenient to cross a bridge the elves built for exactly that purpose. Unfortunately, that bridge is also haunted by the ghost of an Elluevian Ranger who held it against dozens of the Fey Queen's

thralls to prevent them from crossing into the Farwood to carry out the Fey Queen's purge of all her political enemies. This heroic feat saved the Rangers, but alas, the ghost holds the bridge still and will only allow past those he recognizes as allies. Generational turnover being what it is, the only two people he still recognizes as anti-Fey Queen are Ishina and Gweir.

The Oldwood: The Oldwood is primarily the domain of Gweir, the last of the Keepers of the Eldar, though she despises the title now. After seven hundred years, Gweir has come to the conclusion that the eldar were fools who made a broken world and the elves were fools for trying to fix it. She tries to keep the Darkwood in as good a shape as she is able, but after seeing the results of grand ambitions to save the world, she has resigned herself to a rearguard action. Trying to destroy evil only feeds it, but performing triage works insofar as it does at least slow the spread of darkness.

Gweir is attempting to hold back the advance of the Thornhearts, but without outside assistance, she can barely even slow them down. Though a powerful druid in her own right, many of the blight node defenders have her cleanly outmatched in terms of action economy, which is a decisive advantage even when they lack the raw power of a seven-hundred-year-old druid. Gweir does have an extensive network of animal spies throughout the Oldwood and Treants' March, however, and any actions taken by any adventurers in either of these locations will be reported to her unless the adventurers specifically take care to make sure that no one, not even squirrels or robins, is listening in.

In order to get rid of Gweir, the Thornhearts have enlisted the aid of a werewolf pack, who are leading a small army of dire wolves in a hunt through the Oldwood. The werewolves have a secondary objective as well, to capture several awakened deer rescued by Gweir and bring them back to the Crystal City to be sacrificed to the Thornhearts' Eternity Tree. They freely share that they are hunting awakened deer on behalf of the "dark ones" in the Crystal City, in the hopes that passers-by might have leads, but do not mention Gweir, in case the people they're speaking to are her allies (they do not expect deer to have any allies amongst predatory creatures, and any humanoid ancestry are plainly predatory from their forward-facing eyes, limiting peripheral vision to allow attention to be focused on a single target).

A satyr named Liam also wanders the Oldwood. This used to be where all the best parties were, and Liam remains nostalgic for them. Liam left when things started heating up as a result of the forge under Alla'diel and didn't come back until after the conflict had completely blown over and Elluevian had been almost totally abandoned and renamed to the Darkwood. From a garbled game of telephone with the aarakocra, he believes that some great evil lay underneath the mountain, the elves unleashed it while mining out the star metal for their forge, and it laid waste to their kingdom.

Finally, the Oldwood is also home to the Eternity Tree of the Keepers of the Eldar. The Tree is located in the haunted ruins of the Keepers' Sanctuary, guarded by the ghosts who return with each sunset so long as the tree is intact. The ghosts go through the motions of their previous

lives, heedless of any distraction, but if they perceive any threat to the Tree (including non-elves so much as setting foot within the Sanctuary) they will stop at nothing to kill that threat.

Talon Mountain: Elluevian's troubles began with a meteor that fell on Talon Mountain. The crater it created soon collapsed on itself, leaving star metal buried underneath the ground. The elves debated for some time what to do about it, but ultimately the Fey Queen's subversion convinced the elves that this gift had been sent by fate to empower the elves to bring justice to the world. They dug up the star metal, the dark elves created a great underground forge to work the metal into weapons and armor that the elves could use to bring peace to the world, and the elves began a series of disastrous wars that weakened them, divided them, and ultimately allowed the Fey Queen to enthrall them and lead them off to serve as her personal carnival of horrors.

The aarakocra who lived atop the mountain watched all this passively. They always opposed the plan to use the star metal and refused to participate, but seeing as how they had no use for the interior of the mountain, they agreed the elves could do what they liked with it, so long as it had no consequences for the aarakocra or the surface of the mountain they lived on. The elves were true to their word - the surface was untouched, and not one aarakocra was harmed as Elluevian was wracked with external war, then internal war, then total domination by a dark lord.

In the aftermath, the aarakocra decided to lay claim to the tunnels as well as the surface of Talon Mountain, destroyed all the entrances to the underground, and vowed that no one would ever set foot in the star metal mines or operate the forge ever again. Aarakocra generations are short, and while hardly a lifetime and a half has passed for humans, three and change have passed for the aarakocra, and the story of what happens to the elves has become garbled. They now believe that the forge was not just a metaphorical curse that led the elves to ruin, but literally cursed, such that the weapons that came out of it possessed their wielders and turned them into bloodthirsty tyrants.

The dwarves do not believe this. They have come to resettle Alla'diel (whose pronunciation they have bastardized into Aldeel), since it's vacant and full of hyper-valuable ore. The aarakocra border guards skirmish with dwarven supply caravans coming up from Lumitas regularly, but have so far refrained from an all-out attack on the growing dwarven settlement. Partly, this is out of hope for a peaceful resolution, that the dwarves can be persuaded, through some combination of self-preservation in the face of a haunted forge and intimidation in the face of aarakocra power, to give up and go home. Mostly, however, it's because aarakocra aren't good at storming dungeons.

Treants' March: Treants' March sits between the Oldwood and the Crystal City, and it is the main battlefield between Gweir and the Thornhearts. As the adventure begins, the Thornhearts have a fairly decisive upper hand, controlling pretty much the entirety of the March. This is where most of the blight nodes extending from Crystal City are located, guarded by such horrors as evil treants with swarms of blights and/or wood woads to support them, mega-centipedes whose bodies dissolve into swarms of centipedes upon death, and massive vampiric mists that suck the life out of entire trees at once to heal themselves.

It's also home to the myconids' fungal core. Myconids never hopped onto the civilization bandwagon, since they can already process rotting organic material into food and don't need any extra steps between the compost heap and consumption, and thus don't really immediately benefit from agriculture. This does put a fairly low (if soft) cap on their population, which means agricultural underground dwellers - like dwarves - have a pretty easy time assembling armies big enough to push them around. The myconids have decided that the Thornhearts are right about civilization, and help defend the blight nodes here, sucking the life from trees known to host dryads or other spirits loyal to Gweir.

Gweir has few effective forces left in the area (pretty much just those dryads getting parasitized by myconids), but her animal spies blanket the area, and she'll know almost anything that occurs here. If passing adventurers clear the defenders on a blight node, she'll come by within a few hours to decontaminate the area and push the blight back, regardless of whether the adventurers inform her or even know she exists.

Treants' March is also where the Thornhearts' pet troll roams. The troll was originally raised by two women named Katerina and Lisandra. The pair had been taught by the slightly mad Transmutation expert Percy in Lumitas and were now investigating the troll's ability to acquire the properties of the creatures it ate by trying to run controlled experiments, feeding it specific prey. By the time the Thornhearts arrived, only Katerina remained. They fed her to her pet, stole her research, and then tossed dogs and wolves into its dungeon cell until they were confident it had absorbed enough loyalty to be a reliable minion. Katerina and Lisandra's abandoned cottage can be found here as well, with the abandoned oubliette nearby.

Darkwood Conflicts

The Darkwood is driven by a total of five main conflicts. Each of the five can also be split out from the rest of the Darkwood and used separately in another setting.

Goblins vs Elves: The goblins are attempting to resettle the Farwood. Nobody knows how many elves, if any, are left in the Darkwood, and the Goblin King's scouts have reported that the fringes are certainly empty, so he's started moving in. After her rangers reported these scouts' presence, Ishina ordered them to kill as many goblins as possible in hopes of driving them out. She doesn't know or care why the goblins are here. They're a traditional enemy of the elves and she hates them on principle. No effort at negotiation was made and she didn't even warn them that the woods were still inhabited and they weren't welcome here before she started killing them.

Ishina is unmistakably evil, her "invasion" narrative is a lie which unravels immediately if the party bothers to talk to the goblins before committing to her side (and the party will not necessarily encounter the elves first), but a large chunk of players will probably fall for it anyway, because D&D embraces racism against goblins pretty ubiquitously despite having made them a

playable race in 2016 (if you run a Darkwood adventure in the year of its release, that means goblins have been potentially the good guys for six years, but there's still better-than-even odds that a randomly selected party will believe Ishina immediately when she asks for their help to kill people they've never met).

Particularly for a party that has never played a campaign with this tone before, this can come across as kind of mean. Unfortunately, there isn't really any way around this. Ishina is actually a very easy villain to thwart for a party who groks that elves are not automatically good nor goblins automatically bad, and that just because someone claims they're the good guys doesn't necessarily mean they are. She's militarily weak, she has minimal treasure to offer the players (she probably has some ancient elven art objects lying around that she's willing to trade away if it means protecting the ancient borders of Elluevian, but she's a hunter-gatherer with no gold income whatsoever, so she can't keep it coming), and her lies aren't especially difficult to unravel.

Despite this, even if everyone at the table has agreed that they want to play a campaign with a less pulpy, more factional tone where villains aren't necessarily cackling evil wizards, and everyone has agreed that racial alignment is dumb and sometimes elves are evil and goblins are good, a party's first encounter with that kind of thing *actually happening* almost always ends with them being duped into siding with the villains at least temporarily. Even people who want to play this kind of campaign don't tend to realign their mindset for it until they've made at least one catastrophic mistake.

If you want to weigh things a bit more heavily in favor of your players figuring it out before they accidentally an ethnic cleansing, you can make the innkeeper of the First Inn a goblin who left Skyreach years ago. They know about the Lich King's slaughter of the Skyreach goblins and are doing what they can to help, but won't bring it up unprompted. This gives the players an obvious character to ask about the alleged "invasion" who actually does know what the goblins' side of the story is, but still requires them to bother to ask.

Of course, if you want to use Darkwood as a pulp adventure rather than a gritty factional bloodbath, you can jolly well give Ishina a handlebar mustache to twirl and let her rant about goblin filth defiling the sacred boundaries of Elluevian, at which point anyone who's even slightly paying attention will be able to clock that she's a bad guy.

If the players side with Ishina, then the Thornhearts can easily spin a "this is why adventurers are bad" narrative out of it, but Ishina's hatred of the goblins isn't rooted in a sedentary lifestyle. She doesn't lead a sedentary lifestyle. She and her rangers might consider themselves successors to a fallen civilization, but they are personally hunter-gatherers, and this has not stopped them from murdering refugees out of racial animus.

Regardless of what side they take, the elves and goblins are not very powerful. The goblins are spread out, which means they don't have more than a few dozen combatants in any one location, and the elves have only a few dozen combatants, period. Both of them should be

within the abilities of a level 3 party to handle. If you're concerned that just dropping your party on the map and saying "explore!" might see them wandering directly into the Crystal City to be TPK'd by Thornhearts, you can nudge them towards the Farwood to get started with something easy.

Galdin vs Sheolin: Galdin and Sheolin are forest spirits, once beloved siblings, now bitter enemies since the elves twisted Sheolin from her former bear form into that of a monstrous spider. Now her brood threatens to grow out of control, with Galdin barely keeping her in check and preventing her children from devouring the entire forest.

Sheolin is, mechanically, a good enemy for 4th level characters, who can also be overcome at 3rd level with a bit of preparation and effort. She's perfect for the Dunwood, which is very easy to access very early on, so you want 3rd-level adventurers to stand a chance against her.

Thematically, Sheolin's backstory certainly makes it clear that the elves of Elluevian were, despite being victimized by a dark lord, not necessarily the best of people. Sheolin's corruption happened after the establishment of the Great Forge but did not particularly involve star metal weaponry, so it may or may not serve as a hint that the aarakocra's (and Liam's) version of events is inaccurate, and the elves used their power irresponsibly and selfishly simply because they were irresponsible and selfish.

Certainly, what happened to Sheolin didn't actually have anything to do with star metal, which means she serves as another indication that the Thornhearts are at least partly wrong. Sheolin was corrupted with druidic magic, and while the people who corrupted her were, incidentally, sedentary, they didn't have to be in order to be targeted by the Fey Queen, or to want to kill the Fey Queen, or to be able to corrupt Sheolin to make her into a bioweapon.

Sheolin's ultimate goal is to kill basically everything in the forest because KILL CONSUME MULTIPLY CONQUER. She might make promises not to attack the First Inn, but she has insufficient control over her brood to enforce those promises even if she wanted to, and the Inn will fall under attack if Galdin is defeated.

This does not make Sheolin especially compelling or sympathetic, and you can expect players to side against her, but in the interests of player agency, I recommend allowing them the option to help her instead. Even if they, for some reason, decide to help the treacherous spider god, it changes basically nothing about the rest of the plot. Sheolin's brood will need time to work their way through the entire food supply of the Darkwood, so the only real difference is that spiders sometimes show up in the Farwood or Talon Mountain (the spiders don't even become non-hostile).

Dwarves vs Aarakocra: While the elf/goblin and Galdin/Sheolin conflicts demonstrate that the Thornhearts aren't entirely right, the dwarf/aarakocra conflict (as well as the fate of the Elluevian elves) demonstrates that they aren't entirely wrong, either. Some wars *are* fought for control of sedentary assets on the command of kings and warlords. The dwarves and aarakocra would

have no reason to fight if it weren't for the existence of the Forge of Alla'diel and the nearby star metal mines, which the dwarves only want because they can sell the weapons and armor produced from it for treasure. While the dwarves are not seeking to extract wealth from the aarakocra, they are definitely fighting the aarakocra in hopes of extracting wealth.

This war is basically inevitable. The dwarves will not back down from the star metal. They came here specifically to mine it, they believe (correctly, even) that the aarakocra's concerns are pure superstition, and they aren't taking any land that anyone was actually living in. The aarakocra will not back down either. They believe the star metal brings only ruin (which is more-or-less true even if they're wrong about the details), that they have a duty to protect the world from it since they live on top of it, and that they have every right to claim the tunnels under a mountain they've been living on for millennia and which are not otherwise inhabited, even if the only thing they do with those tunnels is forbid other people from entering them.

Players are sometimes tricky and come up with unexpected solutions, but generally, you should expect this war to continue to its bloody finish and for the players to side with the dwarves. The dwarves are offering star metal weapons and armor to their allies, and the aarakocra are offering the warm feeling of knowing that you have prevented people from acquiring star metal weapons and armor. Given the lack of any decisive moral arguments one way or the other, greed will probably carry the day.

Your players might also decide, since neither the dwarves nor the aarakocra can provide a reason for their war ironclad enough to murder the others over it, to just stay out of it completely. This does mean a chunk of content goes to waste, but it's a valid choice and I strongly recommend you let them take that route if they want.

This is not to suggest that siding with the aarakocra isn't an option players *can* take, just that you should expect them not to.

Gweir vs Kierath: Gweir is a bitter old cynic who doesn't think it's possible to fix the world beyond doing small amounts of good for the people you know personally, which isn't really fixing the world so much as just making do with the mess. Grandfather Kiereth and his Thornhearts are utopian zealots who are so convinced that they can fix the world that they're willing to sacrifice millions in pursuit of their goals.

Both of them fundamentally agree that agriculture was a mistake. In the days before agriculture, if you took control of another tribe's land, that meant the tribe had to find new land. Sucks for them, but even worse is the paradigm under agriculture, where taking control of a tribe's land means taking control of that tribe. The victors can enslave their defeated enemies if they want to, and they usually do. Without farms, this is impossible. The defeated would simply walk away to hunt and gather in some new land. The ways in which kings, warlords, and adventurers can store wealth and use it to oppress their subjects have only grown more varied, and in many ways more hideous, as time has gone on.

Gweir has no confidence that Grandfather Kierath can change any of this. She has no particular criticism of his plan, just a general intuition that utopian projects don't work and can't be used as a justification for anything. The eldar thought they could fix everything, the Elluevian elves thought they could fix everything, and both of them killed a huge number of people for nothing. The Thornhearts will just make it a hat trick: Tons of people killed for a third time, and everything is still broken at the end of it all.

Gweir is not especially moved if Grandfather Kierath is defeated (nor the Lich King's army). It's good that however many thousands or tens of thousands of people aren't going to die, but defeating them doesn't change the underlying brokenness of the world, just prevents a misguided attempt at fixing it. Not one of the thirteen dark lords of the Dark Council is defeated (the Lich King has at worst suffered a minor setback), and even if that specific cadre of villains were brought down, nothing would've changed about the world to prevent more like them from rising.

Gweir is plainly the more sympathetic of the two (her bitter cynicism is probably not very endearing, but it looks great next to Grandfather Kierath's homicidal hubris), but if the players side with the Thornhearts instead, the only significant change is that the final boss is now definitely the Lich King's death knight, and also any conflicts the party has not already resolved when they join the Thornhearts are now conflicts they will want to resolve with the maximum possible violence on both sides so that the Thornhearts can more easily mop up the survivors.

The Lich King: After a few months consolidating total control over Skyreach, the Lich King sends a small army under command of a death knight to finish off the fleeing goblins. He doesn't show up in person and meaningfully opposing him is beyond the scope of this particular book. His death knight's main function is to serve as a suitable final boss if the players decide to side with the Thornhearts (not likely if they didn't start out there, but playing a party who are Thornhearts from the beginning is intentionally supported) and to give the Thornhearts' argument one last potential bite: If the party have been running around butchering enemy factions, there probably aren't enough forces left in the Darkwood to fend off the Lich King's attack...unless the party sides with the Thornhearts, who can recover from their losses very quickly (at least for blights - wood woads and treants take longer).

This raises the question of how much of the Darkwood needs to be unbutchered for the Lich King to be repelled. Defeating the death knight leading the undead army requires defeating several waves of undead, culminating in a fight with the death knight, necromancer, ghoul assassin, and vampire blood mage. Exactly how many waves precede this confrontation depends on how many factions are still around and willing to help the PCs.

It's worth noting that a faction needs to not only have their military forces more or less intact to participate, they also have to be willing to join the PCs. Necromancer hordes being what they are, defense in depth only makes them stronger, so if everyone refuses to join forces and instead fights separately, this results in multiple separate battles, each with the combat power of

just the one faction fighting, which is going to make it difficult to get through to the leadership on any of them.

It's also worth noting that a faction's military power may have degraded significantly. Most notably, if the Talon Sentinels and the Aldeel Militia have been fighting a full-scale war for months without the party intervening one way or another, they will be badly depleted by the end.

Faction	Military power
First Inn Hirelings	1
Elluevian Rangers	1
Goblin King Forces	2
Galdin	1
Sheolin	2
Talon Sentinels	3
Aldeel Militia	3
Gweir	1
Thornhearts	5

Military power	Waves defending death knight
0	13
1	9
2	7
3	5
5	3
8	1
13	0

The First Inn Hirelings are the most likely to desert (particularly since you may or may not even have hirelings in the First Inn). They're mercenaries, they're not in this for your revolution, and once a major threat with minimal loot like the undead army shows up, they're out.

In the event that the elves and goblins are both still alive, Ishina will attempt to make an alliance with the undead forces. They're here for the goblins, after all, and as long as the necromancers

kill them all, reanimate them, and then leave, Ishina has no problems with them. Unfortunately for Ishina, the death knight leading the army finds her offer to be petty and insulting. He kills her and adds the elves to the list of targets to be slaughtered and reanimated (the players are most likely not present for this and will not be able to intervene, but if they're with Ishina when it happens, it makes little difference - maybe they get Ishina out alive, but the death knight's position is pretty clear either way). Regardless of the elves' opinion of the party, they have no choice but to fight the undead, and unless the party has somehow antagonized the elves far past the point of reason, they may as well coordinate their efforts with other factions in the Darkwood.

Sheolin is given military power just in case, but it's basically impossible to get her on your side. She can (and will) make whatever promises she wants, but she lacks the control over her brood to actually keep them. Undead don't have delicious body juices to suck out, so they won't be targeted by the spiders.

The Talon Sentinels and Aldeel Militia are both perfectly willing to defend the forest against an omniscient maniac's army of mindless undead abominations. If one or, somehow, both factions made it this far unscathed, they will likely form the backbone of resistance against the Lich King's attack.

If the inter-factional conflict was sufficiently bloody, the Thornhearts may be able to present themselves as the only answer to the Lich King, even to a party who otherwise opposes them. They're also powerful enough (barely) to stand a reasonable chance against the Lich King on their own, so a Thornheart-aligned party can wipe out as many other factions as they want without backing themselves into an impossible final battle.

Fighting the death knight without the support of any factions is basically suicide for many reasons, not the least of which being that a good deal of the reason why the death knight is assigned so monstrously high a CR as 18 is because of their Hellfire Orb attack, which can instantly put a 7th or 8th level party from full health to their last legs, and only needs to be a little lucky to TPK them outright. If encountered as part of a larger battle, the death knight has already expended their Hellfire Orb for the day, and while they're still a harrowing foe to defeat (especially backed up, as they likely are, by skeleton minions), a level 7 or 8 party should be able to manage, especially if they've got a few stray allies of their own (goblins, elves, dwarves, etc.) on the field. If you're really concerned about your party being killed, you can put the mighty Gweir on the battlefield on their side, although this risks overshadowing the players in what is possibly the final encounter of the Darkwood.

Drachzee

Drachzee is split up into six neighborhoods: The slums of Blüten Row, the taverns and piers of Dockside, the sewers and tunnels and catacombs below in the Drachzee Underground, the

workshops of the Guild Quarter, the menacing estates of Hell's Quarter, and the magical wealth of Zauber Bazaar. Jokers' Wild, the gambling ship, is anchored in the bay - Annette Vogel never leaves it.

Each neighborhood has a number of points of interest, each of which is given an Investigation DC to locate, intended for use with the urbancrawl rules found in Harlequin's Guide to Cities and Poison and in the non-Creative Commons sections of this book.

Bluten Row: Liebes-Luten-Bluten ("Love-Lies-Bleeding," referring to a plant commonly grown in the area) Row is, strictly speaking, a specific street near the western wall of Drachzee, but "Bluten Row" is used to refer to the whole neighborhood. Other names include Love-Lies-Bleeding, Beggars' Quarter, and Blood Row. The upper levels of the ill-maintained tenements (constructed usually by their own inhabitants without any guild-certified architect or carpenters involved) are sometimes referred to as the Kestrels' Nests or just the Nests, since the Kestrels often hang out up there. The Kestrels' Nest singular refers to their primary hideout, but since it changes location annually (and sometimes more often than that), the entire upper region is full of abandoned Kestrel nests, so some people refer to it collectively as the Nests. The tenements get more fragile the higher up you go, and the rooftops are often safe to traverse exclusively for halflings and children.

Bluten Row is where the street gangs are at their strongest, and everyone wants a slice. The Horned Union, the Path Of A Thousand Steps, the Messina, and the Kestrels are all active here, with the Kestrels active here almost exclusively and the Path Of A Thousand Steps active here more than any other neighborhood. The people here survive by picking up menial labor jobs, eking out an existence as lamplighters, longshoremen, and construction laborers, with a few making a living as a servant to someone rich enough to pay a slums-dweller a silver piece a day but not rich enough to have servants' quarters on their premises. Some make their living in flea markets, buying and selling not-quite-junk for copper pieces, and a small handful of extremely visible thugs and enforcers make more money than anyone else by extorting the locals out of a spare copper here and there until it adds up to real money (that is to say, gold pieces - though still not a lot of them).

The Monastery (DC 10): The Path Of A Thousand Steps maintain their compound in Bluten Row, a walled off monastery on several acres of land (a footprint otherwise unthinkable in Bluten Row) which they snapped up after a fire that many allege they caused themselves to clear the ground for construction. The Enlightened Master dispenses the secrets of the path to universal harmony to his most trusted followers within.

The Brawling Ring (DC 15): Bare knuckle boxing is a time-honored way for people who can't afford much besides their fists to blow off some steam, and Bluten Row likes to honor its (shortened) name by getting the blood pumping and flowing out of people's noses. The Brawling Ring is just a circle worn into the dirt of the Row itself where people show up to punch each other lots, with no specific schedule or owner or anything. People sometimes fight for free, and when there is prize money, it's because one or both combatants are betting on themselves to

win, often betting against their opponent (quite a few ring fights start with “bet you a copper I can take you in a fight”).

Cursed Jack (DC 15): Cursed Jack is a street enforcer for the Horned Union who works the Row, but he’s best known for his gambling habit. His name refers to the curse allegedly placed upon him. Rumors vary as to where it came from, but the nature of the curse is that Jack is an insanely lucky gambler, but always loses all of his winnings (and sometimes more besides) before the end of the night. Sometimes a single game will take all he’s made, which is why people keep playing him, hoping they’ll be the lucky executor of the curse tonight, but even if Jack quits while he’s ahead, he will inevitably lose his winnings to a dog tearing open his coin pouch or a pickpocket bold enough to lift off of the Horned Union or *something*.

The Dust House (DC 15): The Vogels’ dream dust operation needs someone to shake down the dust cats for the stuff, and given the rapidly debilitating psychological effects, those someones are usually people with no other way to survive. Or who’ve been outright kidnapped and enslaved, if desperation isn’t bringing in enough employees. The Dust House is watched over by invisible imps and guarded by vicious bloodletters and bearded devils.

Street Fights (DC 15): The street gangs in Blüten Row periodically get into street fights with one another. Sometimes they’re even lethal, and since untangling exactly who was responsible for what is more trouble than the Assassins’ Guild is usually willing to bother with, they generally don’t bother retaliating unless they need a mission to initiate a new assassin and don’t have anything else suitable to give them. A gang can only tolerate so many losses before they collapse, so losing twenty or so street fights (to any combination of opponents) will bleed a gang dry and remove their street presence entirely. In practice, that sounds tedious and the party probably won’t want to actually do this, but if they settle in for fighting twenty skirmishes in a row just to personally destroy an enemy, that is technically an option.

The Trailhead (DC 15): The Path Of A Thousand Steps’ foundation is laid in the slums, where they operate soup kitchens and homeless shelters that helps them make a favorable first impression upon the beggars. In particular, those who are pushed into Blüten Row from other, more prosperous parts of the city often find the Path’s Spartan but clean shelters to be a welcome reprieve from sleeping on the streets. Under the circumstances, it’s easy for the newly homeless to ignore the Path’s reputation for brainwashing, and step across the lip of the recruitment funnel. The Path’s main shelter is called “the Trailhead,” as it is the first step on the Path.

The Kestrels’ Nest (DC 20): The Kestrels are a gang of street urchins mostly between the ages of eight and fourteen who operate mostly in the slums, mainly as pickpockets and burglars, and mainly targeting other street gangs. Kestrels will occasionally make nocturnal excursions to try and burgle wealthier estates in the Zauber Bazaar or Hell’s Quarter, but the usual outcome for such bold action is that the Kestrels get in far over their heads and are forced to flee before even getting past the perimeter.

Once a Kestrel starts to near the upper end of the age range, they tend to back off of a specific gang (or two) in hopes of joining them after they “graduate” from the Kestrels. The Messina and the Path Of A Thousand Steps absorb lots of graduating Kestrels, but tiefling children are at least loosely under the protection of the Horned Union and thus rarely have incentive to join the Kestrels, who the blackguards hunt like vermin whenever they can be bothered to enter the slums at all.

The Kestrels’ Nest is their primary hideout, and it changes location once a year (or sometimes more often, if there’s an emergency). Every year on Samhain, the Kestrels find a new towering tenement top to be the Nest, abandoning the old one. This ensures the current Nest’s location isn’t known to other street gangs who regularly absorb former Kestrels into their ranks. Kestrels who are planning to “graduate” to the Messina or the Path Of A Thousand Steps usually leave in September or October. The other gangs could make an offer to an older Kestrel earlier in the year and probably convince someone to give up the location of the Nest in exchange for a position in the gang, but most of the time there’s no point in bothering. The Kestrels are a nuisance, and raiding their Nest without knocking the whole thing over would be hard as Hell for fully grown criminals anyway.

The Woman of the Cart (DC 15 or DC 25, depending on whether she wants to be found): An old woman sells trinkets from a cart for a copper each, usually on Blüten Row itself. She seems senile, but questions about who she is or where she came from are dodged with enough consistency that many suspect she’s at least partially faking it. She’s seen scavenging through junk piles in the Row and Dockside fairly often, presumably to replenish her stock, and the knick-knacks tend to be more found art than anything else, but rumor is that some of the items are enchanted.

The Scribes’ Guild have contacted the Assassins’ Guild about removing this threat to their monopoly on enchantment. Even if the old woman of the cart isn’t actually selling enchanted items, the rumor alone threatens the Guild’s domain, and having her killed is much simpler and easier than launching a full investigation of her wares and then making the results known to the public.

Dockside: Most people who aren’t part of a guild either work the docks as fishers or longshoremen or else end up pushed into Blüten Row to scrape out a living (or not). There are two main docks, the Fishers’ Docks and the Captains’ Docks, although fishers will sometimes obstinately call the latter the Pirates’ Docks. Not because they condemn piracy, but because they insist that they are themselves captains of their fishing boats (even if they have no crew).

These two - fishers and pirates - are the lifeblood of Dockside’s economy, which is itself the foundation of Zauber Bazaar and the Guild Quarter. The fishers feed the city, and the pirates bring in plunder that they spend on ale and wenches, weapons and repairs, and if they’re really successful, magic items.

The Union Hall (DC 10): Constructed after the triumph of the Lord of the Damned, the Union Hall is the meeting place for the Horned Union. As Annette Vogel reconsolidated power in the aftermath of the Lord's departure, most of the more prominent members of the Horned Union married into the Vogel family, and the Union fell back into near-poverty. Their Union Hall is old and weathered, now, but not ruined. The Horned Union meets here regularly to drink and sing together, give speeches, and discuss Union business including everything from a longshoreman's strike to demand better wages to a violent takeover of Messina territory in Bluten Row. The main hall is open to the public except on specific nights when it's being used for members-only meetings, while the offices and lounge of the upper floors are always members-only and are often used as a safehouse for Union members who need to lay low.

The Vogel Warehouse (DC 10): The primary business done Dockside is the Vogels buying trade goods from pirates either for use in Drachzee or to resell to other cities (sometimes the same cities who planned on buying from the original merchant before the pirate attack). While most of Dockside has minimal presence from blackguards and devils, the Vogel Warehouse is guarded by bearded and horned devils, has an invisible imp on guard duty over the goods themselves ready to raise an alarm at all times, and security is managed by an erinyes. The trade goods are almost certainly too large to be stolen, hidden, and fenced, but the treasury used to buy the goods from pirates is just one chest stuffed with gold and jewels, worth ~20,000 gp for anyone bold enough to heist it.

The Yellow Fiddle (DC 10): No one building could hope to serve the many transient pirates of Dockside, but the Yellow Fiddle Inn and Tavern is the most famous tavern of Dockside.

The common room of the inn stretches up four stories tall, large balconies wrapping around the entire wall on the second and third floor, while the top floor has a number of platforms connected by catwalks. Atop these platforms are where the Yellow Fiddle's famous duels take place. Most duels are bare knuckle brawls on a single platform with a net stretched across the third floor to catch anyone who is knocked off. For duels that are less about competition and wagers and more about settling personal scores, however, the tables on the bottom floor are cleared away, the net is removed, and any who fall from the fourth floor down to the first face the risk of serious injury or death.

Net fights with bare fists are practically the official pastime of the Horned Union, but they ban their members from participating in netless fights or fights with weapons. Pirates do not have such a ban, and will even fight sword duels to first blood or first fall just for the thrill, sometimes even without a net. If a feud between two pirates becomes irreconcilable, it's often fought in the Yellow Fiddle as a netless sword duel to the death.

The Yellow Fiddle also has a lively gambling scene, and many of those who do well here receive invitations to Jokers' Wild out in the harbor.

The Lush Armadillo (DC 15): The Lush Armadillo is a rundown inn with terrible drinks and worse beds, which stays in business because it is the primary means by which the Vogel family sells

dream dust to pirates. Given the effects of dream dust on the psyche after just a couple of years, even most pirates avoid the stuff, but enough of them partake to keep the Lush in business. There's always at least one bloodletter or blackguard on hand to make sure customers pay with gold instead of iron.

The Pirates' Docks (DC 15): The docks themselves are easily found, but in order to wrest the city from the Vogels, an enterprising party of adventurers will need to find and persuade the pirate captains to see things their way - or else sink their ships and scatter their crews to make it clear that pirates are no longer welcome in Drachzee. These captains will be spread out all across the area surrounding the Pirates' Docks. Exactly which pirate captains are currently at port in Drachzee varies, but the defaults are Captain Murc Bounder, Captain Ochonk, and Captain Starling.

The Jaded Angels (DC 20): The Jaded Angels itself is just an ordinary inn that's easy enough to find, but it holds a secret: It's the point of entry for the magic item smuggling ring. The Vogels buy magic items off of pirates for prices which are simultaneously pitifully low for their value and yet incredibly high in absolute terms. Because they bring in such stupendous amounts of money anyway, pirates rarely care to haggle and potentially agitate their one safe port on Weskven Coast, and are usually happy to toss any magic item they don't personally use in with all the other goods for whatever price the Vogels name.

But this means there's a lot of money to be made in smuggling magic items past the Vogels, and the Jaded Angels is the inn where pirates in on the scam drop their goods off for much higher prices, to later be resold in the Zauber Bazaar.

Sera Tlezi (DC 20): There is a vampire in Drachzee, who has left at least three different victims entirely drained of blood. This encroaches upon the Assassins' Guild's monopoly, so they're trying to hunt the vampire down. The vampire's name is Sera Tlezi, and she's staying in the otherwise unassuming Fancy Lamp Inn, one of more than a half-dozen inns that cater to pirates and other transients in Dockside. Sera has broken free from her vampiric sire far south in Tvalti and come to Drachzee to hide out until the heat dies down and she can establish herself independently elsewhere. She isn't used to operating without the support of her sire's connections, so while she is very powerful, she is also very isolated and flailing a bit.

Drachzee Underground: The sewers beneath the city are connected to natural caverns, which are in turn connected to the catacombs beneath the Necromancers' Guild on a hill at the outskirts of town. Collectively, they're known as the Drachzee Underground.

The Necromancers' Guild (DC 10): The Necromancers' Guild is not, strictly speaking, in the Underground. It's on a hill at the outskirts of Drachzee. The underground does connect directly to it, however, the necromancers having converted the hill into a catacomb with multiple connections to the guild hall above, to the point where it's basically just a large cellar full of skeletons.

Despite their spooky trade, the Necromancers' Guild is more similar to the Scribes' Guild than to the Assassins' Guild. The trade they have a monopoly on is bringing back the dead, whether through reanimation or revivification, which means they might put out a hit on the party for unauthorized use of a *Raise Dead* scroll (or especially direct use of *Raise Dead* if the party gets their hands on 5th level spell slots), and their guild hall is full of reanimated skeletons and ghouls, but they get extorted by the Vogels just like the regular guilds and don't directly participate in enforcement the way the Assassins' Guild does.

The Corpse Bracket (DC 15): The Corpse Bracket is a secret underground (literally) fighting arena in the catacombs underneath the Necromancers' Guild. The most legendary fighters come to compete here for a prize of thousands of gold in a single-elimination tournament. Every bout is to the death, and the Necromancers' Guild claims the corpses afterwards. From their perspective, the Corpse Bracket is a means of buying several powerful corpses. The Guild doesn't have thousands of gold pieces just lying around all the time, and a smaller prize wouldn't entice anyone to participate in such a lethal tournament, so the Corpse Bracket only runs when the necromancers can afford to pay out the prize money.

The Assassins' Guild (DC 20): The Assassins' Guild is hidden deep in the sewers underneath Drachzee. The Guild are ultimately mercenaries and might be willing to switch sides to someone who can outbid the Vogels, but most likely this will end up being a straightforward dungeon crawl once the party is able to find the place. The assassins are powerful, but they aren't an army, so a party close to the level cap should be able to manage clearing the whole building. The assassin treasury is also several tens of thousands of gold coins deep, whether the party get their hands on it by storming the guild hall or by sneaking in for the ultimate heist.

Vale Harker (DC 25): Vale Harker is a rogue assassin hiding out in the natural caverns of the Drachzee Underground. She took a contract from an unknown patron on Gabriel Vogel, but the assassins discovered her before she could escape the city. Now she's hiding out in the underground, waiting for an opportunity to sneak out to the surface and head to the city of Lumitas where she'll collect her thirty thousand gold piece reward. She doesn't have a whole lot of money on her right now, but she could probably be convinced to give the party a share if they help her escape the city. Of course, this raises the question as to whether or not she is trustworthy, and she is not. Once out of Drachzee, she will pick up the money at Lumitas and then vanish into the shadows.

The Assassins' Guild, on the other hand, is very happy to pay out her bounty to a Guild-certified assassin who brings them Vale's head. In fact, they'll pay out the bounty to any *non*-Guild certified assassin who brings them Vale's head, provided that person agrees to join the Assassins' Guild immediately and play along like killing Vale was a test of their skill assigned by the Guild. That specific course of events probably won't happen, but it speaks to how eager the Assassins' Guild is to get rid of Vale.

Guild Quarter: The Guild Quarter is where everyone who produces stuff directly lives and works, so named for the four (out of a total of seven) of the city's guilds headquartered here:

The Smiths' Guild, the Carpenters' Guild, the Tanners' Guild, and the Weavers' Guild. People are crammed in here just as tight as they are in most of the city, but at least all the buildings are constructed and maintained by certified Guild carpenters and aren't at risk of sudden collapse.

The Guilds of Drachzee are a series of interlinked monopolies maintained in order to satisfy the demands of an extortion racket. The Vogel family demands a certain amount of protection money from each guild annually, and anyone who can't pay is left to the mercy of the street gangs (and if the street gangs aren't doing enough damage, the blackguards and devils will pick up the slack). In order to ensure they can hit their quotas and have enough left over to make a living, the Guilds enforce a monopoly on their respective trades, hiring assassins on anyone who tries to practice or teach the trade without guild approval.

Guild Halls (DC 10): The Carpenters' Guild, Tanners' Guild, and Weavers' Guild are huge workshops where dozens of people gather to produce their respective goods. These guild halls further serve as the locus of the even greater number of artisans spread throughout the Guild Quarter (and occasionally Blüten Row, Dockside, or the Zauber Bazaar), who usually operate shops directly below or adjacent to their homes.

Each Guild hall holds between several hundred to several thousand gold in its treasury, depending on how recently the Vogels' collectors (or occasionally a different gang's collectors, if the take is too small for the Vogels to be bothered fighting for it) have come by. While the Vogels and their diabolic allies would be terribly displeased to learn that someone (other than them) is robbing the guilds, they don't have any permanent guards on the carpenters', tanners', or weavers' halls, so these are relatively lightly guarded by mercenaries. Theft is prevented mainly by the threat that anyone who robs a guild hall will get the Vogels' full attention.

The Smiths' Guild has a similar take, but (as described below) actually do have a bunch of devils hanging around all the time.

Smiths' Guild (DC 10): The Smiths' Guild is a huge foundry where dozens of smiths are pounding out tools, weapons, and armor at all hours of day or night. The Lord of the Damned still buys weapons from Drachzee to supply his legions in the south, and the smiths work 'round the clock to meet that demand, not to mention the needs of the low-grade skirmish warfare between bandits, adventurers, and monsters (not that there's firm boundaries between any of the three) that the countryside is perpetually embroiled in.

The Smiths' Guild is home to a fighting pit where bloodletters, bearded devils, and horned devils test a random selection of weapons on each other and any mortal willing to step into the ring with them. The devils, being made entirely of soulstuff, are drawn back to Hell where they rematerialize after being slain, so no attempt is made to make the fights non-lethal.

Dream Merchants (DC 15): The bulk of the sales of dream dust made within Drachzee come from the Guild Quarter. The artisans here can't afford large purchases, but there are a lot of them and a large percentage of them make small purchases regularly. The people of the Guild

Quarter don't have much hope that tomorrow will be better than today, but they have enough disposable income to buy sweet dreams.

Messina Hideout (DC 20): The Messina are a powerful criminal syndicate spread throughout Weskven Coast, and have wanted to take over Drachzee for over a century. It agitates them to no end that Weskven's crime city is not controlled by its premier criminal network, and they fear the Vogels may one day expand to take over criminal operations in Lumitas, Dammerung, and the City of Whispers, putting the Messina out of business.

The Messina hideout in the Guild District is where they coordinate their war on the Vogels, recruiting from disaffected guildsmen and women who're hoping to move up in the world and find that the Vogel regime has locked them out of any advancement further than they've already gotten. The Messina have difficulty finding any criminal enterprise in the city that the Vogels don't already control, but have managed to set up a magic item smuggling ring. Magic items are brought in by pirates in Dockside and smuggled to their Guild District hideout to be reworked by an artisan of the appropriate guild to appear to be legitimate guild work, whereupon they can be sold in the Zauber Bazaar without the Vogels noticing.

Barbani the Red is in charge of the Messina operation in Drachzee. The Assassins' Guild hunt him relentlessly, so he rarely sets foot outside the hideout.

Hell's Quarter: Hell's Quarter is the section of the city where powerful Vogels have their estates, with the Brimstone Fortress of the blackguards looming over the verdant boulevards of the crime princelings.

The Brimstone Fortress (DC 10): This fortress is under the command of the erinyes Captain Hatred Massri, and is home to the blackguards and most of the diabolic allies of the Vogel family. Its highest tower holds an imp roost where dozens of the tiny spies swarm, and its barracks are home to a hundred and sixty-nine bloodletters and bearded devils each along with a similar (but fluctuating) number of mortal blackguards. The officers' quarters host a smattering of horned devils, succubi, incubi, and Captain Massri's own quarters, along with the quarters of Vincent Vogel, the captain of the Blackguards.

Of course, the fortress is almost never at maximum capacity, with the imp roost all but empty at most times, as the imps scour the city for secrets and traitors, and over half the martial devils deployed to patrol the streets and guard the Vogel estates at any given time. The officers' quarters are often near-empty, with their nominal inhabitants instead staying aboard the Jokers' Wild with Annette Vogel. Even so, brute force alone will likely not be enough to clear this citadel unless the party have amassed a sizable coalition of allies willing to make a direct assault - and there are few such people in a rogue city. An assassination campaign might whittle the mortal blackguards down, but any devils slain will recorporealize in Hell and return at next nightfall from the diabolic portal built into the cursed foundations of the fortress.

But perhaps that portal could be shut down, choking off the reinforcements, or even reversed, sucking the devils back in. Or perhaps, the devils being loyal to Captain Massri rather than to any Vogel, a party with a sufficiently impressive reputation might be able to cut a deal with Captain Massri. The fall of Drachzee to the Lord of the Damned was a coup at the time, but a hundred years later, with the Dark Council ruling nearly the entirety of Weskven, the light touch with which Drachzee is ruled is something of an embarrassment. Perhaps the party could offer more damned souls than the Vogel regime provides.

The Brimstone Fortress is also where Captain Massri keeps the pay for the blackguards and the devils. For the blackguards, this is a chest with a few thousand gold pieces locked in it, a pretty small payout for robbing a literally goddamned fortress. For the devils, however, this means keeping a hefty stock of agony extracted from the souls of the damned. While each individual vial would fetch a price of only 100-200 gp, there are hundreds to be had, for a total payout well into the tens of thousands if you can steal and fence them.

Vogel Estates (DC 10): Any self-respecting thief who hears there's about a dozen estates belonging to the Bad Guys is going to want to rob at least one of them. Any given Vogel Estate will be protected by at minimum an imp and a blackguard, and generally speaking only has a few hundred gold pieces' worth of spending money just lying around, but will often have all kinds of art objects worth 500 gp+ as well, totaling well over 10,000 gp if all of it gets shoved into Santa sacks and made off with. If the Vogels know someone is plundering their riches, security will likely increase quite a bit. At maximum readiness, each estate could have over a dozen devils patrolling its grounds, and the Brimstone Fortress can send a hundred more to surround any estate where an alarm is sounded.

The Dream Palace (DC 15): Corso Vogel buys wagonloads of dream dust and then resells it to off-duty blackguards, other Vogels, and anyone else who can afford the extortionate prices at his estate parties. This is why his estate has been dubbed the Dream Palace. Between parties, his estate is basically just a regular Vogel estate, but while one of the parties is ongoing, it's full of rich people with tons of spending money so they can keep the dust coming.

Melisentia and Jasper Vogel (DC 15): Melisentia and Jasper Vogel are siblings who have always despised one another, doubly so ever since their parents died and they became the joint inheritors of the profits from the Smiths' Guild extortion racket. Each of them desires the full profits for themselves, and they've both taken out a hit on each other. The Assassins' Guild has collected payment for both jobs and will pay them out to any guild-certified assassin who completes them - including if one person kills both of them. A job's a job, and nobody tells the Vogels who they can or can't take out assassination contracts on, which, as far as the Guild is concerned, includes other Vogels.

Jokers Wild: Jokers Wild is a pleasure ship permanently anchored in the Drachzee Harbor amidst the wreckage of the pirate ships belonging to all those who sought to thwart the Lord of the Damned's takeover. Annette Vogel lives on the ship, and visits to it are invitation only. Guild masters, Vogels, fully knighted blackguards, and full devils (but not tieflings) have a standing

invitation, but everyone else must either be invited directly by Annette or else accompanied by an invited guest.

Jokers Wild is the highest stakes gambling in all of Drachzee, if not all of Weskven. Legend has it that Annette didn't actually intend to betray Don Vogel, but got sucked into a high-stakes game with the Lord of the Damned and was pressured into wagering her soul. When she lost, she was locked into the Lord's side whether she liked it or not.

Whether or not that's true, being a gambling ship first and foremost means there's no greater stakes games in all of Drachzee, nor any greater heist to be had, than on Jokers Wild. Plus, you will probably want to kill (and possibly replace) Annette at some point.

Zauber Bazaar: The Zauber Bazaar is where Drachzee's merchants sell stuff to adventurers. The Bazaar itself is small, home to only a handful of different shops run by different Guilds, but the vast amounts of wealth brought in by adventuring parties means that the area surrounding the Bazaar is the most prosperous part of all Drachzee except Hell's Quarter (and Hell's Quarter is rich principally because they're skimming off the top of Zauber).

Lubeck Casino (DC 10): The Lubeck Casino is the premier gambling destination for anyone who hasn't been invited to Jokers Wild. Merchants, blackguards, and devils all frequent it regularly, so it's a good place to gamble for a significant amount of money and to potentially pick up some debts from powerful people.

It's also got tens of thousands of gold pieces in its vaults, if anyone wants to recreate Ocean's Eleven with wizards.

The Scribes' Guild (DC 10): Though they're called the Scribes' Guild, their purview also covers all enchantment of magical items. This makes them by far the wealthiest guild, with even more money flowing through them than the Assassins' Guild. The Vogels keep a close eye on them, and their guild hall is guarded by many devils rather than the mercenary enforcers used by most other guilds.

The Dust Store (DC 15): The Dust Store sells the dust harvested from catshee in Blüten Row to the merchants and artisans of Zauber. It presents itself as a shop of wonders and delights, and sells many trinkets and sweets alongside the dream dust, but despite its efforts to present itself as wondrous rather than desperate, it does worse business than any other arm of the dust trade in Drachzee, with the possible exception of the Lush Armadillo over in Dockside. They still turn a profit, though.

Maria Fennick (DC 15): The merchants of Zauber Bazaar can all afford protection contracts with the Assassins' Guild, so the assassins don't accept contracts on them. But when a Vogel puts out a hit, you don't tell them no. No one's really clear what Maria Fennick did to get Melisenta Vogel angry at her, but whatever it was, it was enough to get a contract taken out for Maria's head. Like most merchants in Zauber, Maria has several mercenary bodyguards to protect her

and her stock from a smash-and-grab, but that shouldn't be much of an impediment to a skilled assassin.

Hennquin's Magic (DC 20): Hennquin's Magic is the ultimate destination of the magic items smuggled past the Vogels. The Vogels normally refuse to buy magic items off of pirates for anything but a fraction of their true value, because pirates will have a hard time selling them at all in other cities, and even half the value of magic items is still enormous. This allows the Vogels to then sell the items at full price to adventurers in the Bazaar. That leaves fully half the value of a magic item - hundreds if not thousands of gold pieces - to be saved if the Vogels are cut out, and Hennquin has conspired to cut them out. He sells smuggled magic items that have been made to appear as though they're certified by the Scribes' Guild.

Glimmfall

Overview Overview

This overview is split into parts:

- Ruins of the Mana Kings is a description of each region of Glimmfall as it stands today, and is what you want to read if your players are going into the Betwixtlands for the first time and you need to figure out what's in there.

- The Mana Kings describes each of the eight Mana Kings in alphabetical order by the school of magic they established. So the Queen of Wards and Glyphs is first because she established the school of abjuration, and the Shapeless Sovereign is last because they established the school of transmutation.

Ruins of the Mana Kings

A thousand years ago, the Mana Kings ruled over a huge swath of territory, masters of all eight schools of magic. In their ancient empire, magic was commonplace. Driftglobes lit city streets by night, and teleportation gates linked major cities together, replacing overland trade almost completely. Golems performed all manual labor, and healing elixirs were so commonplace that a deadly plague meant nothing more than a line at the apothecary. The capital city, it is said, was a massive golem itself, a mile across and with the spires of the city stretching dozens of stories into the sky.

As the power of the Mana Kings grew, so too did their greed and ambition. They turned upon one another, each seeking to become a grand hegemon of all magic, turning their golemworks to producing armies for war, their mana wells extracting huge amounts of mana to fuel ritual

magic the likes of which has never been seen before or since. The land was scarred with massive meteor strikes, the skies darkened by eternal thunderstorms. The mana sucked out of the earth's ley lines to fuel this mighty empire proved unsustainable, and the earth itself became barren and turned to dust. Ultimately, the Mana Kings destroyed what they were fighting one another for control of. The surviving Mana Kings disappeared from the history books. Their realm, cursed and uninhabitable, was totally depopulated.

A millennium later, the earth has begun to heal. Though much of their territory remains wasteland, fertility has begun to return to the soil at the edges, and bold adventurers have begun making expeditions into the dusty ruins. The Glimmfall Fellowship of Scholars have built a society based on excavation and study of the fallen empire, recovering and refurbishing many magical marvels, though there are many places deep in the heart of the empire that they still dare not enter, being too far from the outposts they have created at the fringes. None can say exactly how much magical wealth is still concealed in this unplundered heart, but if the legends are true, then somewhere out there still is the lost capital, the walking city of the Mana Kings.

The Spindle

The Spindle is a long arm of territory that stretches out from the Mana King's territory, following a river through mountainous terrain. Even in the age of the Mana Kings, this was a remote location, surrounded on all sides by treacherous and infertile ground. The orcish nomads surrounding the terrain were considered a threat by the Mana Kings, the string of now-derelict fortifications built throughout the region intended to keep them at bay. Now the Glimmfall gnomes have refurbished several of the fortifications as outposts for their expeditions deeper into Mana King territory, and do regular trade with the orcs, who take the magic items dug up by the gnomes and carry them to modern civilization on the coast far to the west for a hefty profit.

When the Beast Lord passed through the area nearly a hundred years ago, the Spindle became the western extreme of the territory loosely controlled by his own nomadic empire, but the beastfolk tribes at this point maintain more of a rivalry with the orcs than an open enmity, rarely engaging in direct violence and instead resolving disputes through competitive monster hunts to prove the superior prowess of one clan or another without having to kill anyone.

This region is thoroughly excavated/plundered, and the wilderness has a fairly dense monster population. Although their lack of sedentary expansion prevents them from ever pushing them out of the region altogether, the local nomads regularly go on hunts to whittle down the population of bulettes, wyverns, grey renders, and other hill monsters that lurk in the wilds. Adventurers headed into the Mana Kings' territory via the Spindle often join the orcs in their hunts, for the orcs have been made very wealthy by their pivotal role in the magic item trade, which means they can easily hand out several hundred gold to adventurers whose hunting prowess impresses them enough.

The Dead Miles

The Kings' Way was a highway that once spanned the entirety of the Mana Kings' domain from west to east, connecting with the Spindle River on one side and to the ports of Torren on the east. The region of the Kings' Way between the Spindle River and the West Rune Gate are now called the Dead Miles, for they are overrun by the undead remnants of the army of the Necromancer King.

The Dead Miles are home to Kallast, the first capital of the Mana Kings, the center of learning and administration back in the days before they had so mastered magic as to be able to create a golem massive enough to carry a city on its back. When the Necromancer King assassinated the Queen of Wards and Glyphs, he fled here to escape the wrath of the coalition that sprung up to destroy him. He was eventually assassinated himself by his own courtiers, and the Dead Miles split into many petty, bickering undead fiefdoms. These fiefdoms were shoved aside whenever the Seer Queen or the King Betwixt were marching armies through the Miles to attack one another, but neither ever properly occupied the area, and after going to ground while the armies fought, the undead warlords would emerge once more. Vampire counts and mummy lords still lurk in ruined strongholds, and packs of roving ghouls and wights still wander the countryside, mad with hunger after centuries of being hemmed in with no living flesh to consume.

The Dead Miles are mostly stripped of magic materials and loot, but the powerful undead lieutenants of the fallen Necromancer King still hold onto a few choice artifacts, and are themselves a source of undead materials. Rumor has it that the Necromancer King himself sleeps in some stronghold in the catacombs of Kallast, overrun as they are with skeletons and zombies. Of course, there's rumors that *every* Mana King is secretly still alive (or, in this case, animate) somewhere, and probably most if not all of them are only rumors...but if the Necromancer King *is* under there, he has undoubtedly kept a full set of six of his most powerful and cherished magic items to attune to upon awakening.

The Firgulin Mountains

The Firgulin Mountains separate the Dead Miles on their north from the Glow on the south. In the dying throes of the Mana Kings' wars, the Firgulin Mountains were regularly washed with blood from the battles between the King Betwixt on the north and the Seer Queen to the south. The twisted wreckage of the Seer Queen's destroyed golems still lines the heavily fortified mountain passes, and the skies are still permanently darkened by the twisting thunderstorm the King Betwixt conjured across the peaks to blind the Seer Queen's supernatural vision, which relied on connection with the stars.

Though much of the Seer Queen's divinatory magic infrastructure, the observatories and orreries and scrying pools, have been laid waste by the King Betwixt's armies, some escaped destruction. If the eternal storm could ever be dispelled, their divinatory powers would be usable again. Likewise, though the flesh and blood armies of the Seer Queen have long since fled (or rotted away), her golem forces left tens of thousands of wrecks of every sort of golem imaginable just waiting to be salvaged for parts or restored to proper functioning.

The Seer Queen's demise is fairly well attested, having given every last ounce of power in her body to a final assault on the West Rune Gate after having finally broken through the Dead Miles. The defenses of the Gate proved too powerful, and her enervated body collapsed, never to stir again. She was borne back to the Finguln Mountains for a state funeral, and of course there are rumors, as with every other Mana King, that actually she was merely injured, not slain, and that the state funeral was just a cover to prevent the King Betwixt from hunting her down during his subsequent retaliatory invasion. Some rumors of Mana King survivors are fairly plausible, but this is not one of them. The historical records give us an exact date and cause of death, and a funeral was held.

The Gramling Flats

The Gramling Flats are north of the Dead Miles, stretching from the Spindle River on the west all the way to the Vissken Reach and the Crimson Grass on the east. The south end of the Gramling Flats is bounded by the Dust River, a riverbed full of fast-flowing, choking sand that sucks in any creature or craft that steps upon it and regularly sends up whirlwinds to suck down things that fly above. Past a few dozen yards, it is possible to fly over the Dust River safely, but there's a question of whether or not you'd want to, considering that on the other side is the deadly Rune Waste.

Undead from the Dead Miles, sinspawn from the Crimson Grass, and monsters from the Spindle all wander into the Gramling Flats, but for the most part they are very sparsely populated and made dangerous principally because of their sheer size and the lack of edible food or potable water in them. Crossing the Gramling Flats requires either significant investment of resources or a highly skilled survivalist.

One point of refuge in the Gramling Flats is the Leon Monastery, a small monastery carried on the back of a rook construct that the Glimmfall Gnomes have refurbished. It walks back and forth from the Crimson Grass to the Spindle, providing safe transportation for gnomes and adventurers alike, provided they can pay the 25 gp per passenger fee, which is usually waived for adventurers who've proven themselves capable enough to serve as guards against the monsters of the Flats. The gnomes of Leon Monastery aren't easily impressed by mere boasting, but adventurers who have won the respect of the orc tribes near the Spindle or who have retrieved magic items from deeper within the realms of the Mana Kings already are welcome to free room and board on Leon Monastery any time.

The Vissken Reach

The northerneastern boundary of the Mana Kings' territory, covered in driving snow and howling winds that pierce the empty fortresses of the Mana Kings' northern border, the Vissken Reach was the site of a rebellion by a lieutenant of the Crimson King. The Crimson King was the leader of the coalition against the Necromancer King, but the lieutenant in charge of defending the Vissken Reach became dissatisfied with his leadership, believing that the Crimson King was

maneuvering himself into a position to seize control of all the Mana Kings just as the Necromancer King had. The Vissken rebellion dissolved the coalition against the Necromancer King, who escaped to the Dead Miles, and led to the internecine butchery that consumed the Mana Kings until their magics were spent and their civilization lay in ruins.

Though the initial rebellion went well, the Crimson King was able to hold the Vissken advance off at his core territory in the Crimson Grass, and once the initial push began to stall, it was only a matter of time before the rebel soldiers were seduced back to the side of the Crimson King. After the defeat of the rebellion, the Crimson King left many of his sinspawn here to garrison the region, but this frostbitten monotony was essentially exile for the sinspawn, who sought nothing but more extreme experience. When the Crimson King fell to the King Betwixt, the Vissken Reach was totally abandoned, and now all manner of creatures have moved in from the north, from werebears to ice trolls to white dragons, ranging in disposition from welcoming to standoffish to immediately hostile.

The Crimson Grass

Once one of the more densely populated lands of the Mana Kings' realm, the Crimson Grass was the capital of the Crimson King. The titular grass itself causes a pleasant haze in those who spend too long walking upon it, making them easily suggestible to persuasion both magical and mundane. The devastation of the declining years of the mana wars saw the grass withered away (the Crimson King had long since been cast down by the King Betwixt), but now it has begun to return. The places where it grows thickest are the sites where magical items and materials are kept in large quantities, especially the Grail City and its Crimson Palace, feeding on the enchanted power of the items kept therein.

The sinspawn of the Crimson King still roam the area in large numbers, especially where the grass has begun to regrow, many of them having entered torpor when the grass withered only to awaken again now that it regrows. These were once ordinary humanoids, but they reshaped themselves to enjoy ever-greater experience in life. At first, they molded themselves into supernatural beauties of conventional standards, but before long this, too, grew stale, and so they used mutagenic alchemy to warp themselves into all manner of bizarre shapes, becoming impossible thin, impossibly bulky, adding wings or extra limbs or becoming worms with a great devouring maw that could do nothing but constantly consume. The sinspawn are not unreasonable and can be negotiated with, and some of them are even friendly, but many others are selfish and cruel.

Elemental servitors and fiendish allies of the King Betwixt, bound to eternal service and unable to leave their posts no matter how long it's been since there was any King Betwixt to serve, continue to guard several of the strongholds and watchtowers that pepper the Crimson Grass. Originally placed here to keep the region subdued after the King Betwixt conquered it, now they are bound by magical oath to sit and watch over empty lands forever. Occasionally, some sinspawn come near enough to give them an excuse to go out and give battle.

On the southern border the Dust River flows, but at the Bridge Harmonious an ancient battle is fought and refought, on one side by sinspawn who still recall that it was here that the forces of the Crimson King were broken and the King Betwixt rose to power, and on the other side by the extraplanar servitors of the King Betwixt. The sinspawn fight out of pure spite, as though winning the battle now would somehow reverse the consequences of having lost it centuries ago, while the elementals, celestials, and fiends on the other side are unable to defy the commands of their long lost sovereign to hold the desolated territory.

Every Mana King is rumored to have secretly survived, and so too with the Crimson King, said to be slumbering still in some hidden chamber of the Crimson Palace, or else having retreated into some secret stronghold of the Vissken Reach or the Gramling Flats. Given how thoroughly defeated he was by the King Betwixt, this is one of the least plausible stories of surviving Mana Kings.

The Taltos Coast

The Taltos Coast is a semi-tropical region on the eastern edge of the Mana Kings' territory, east of the Crimson Grass and the Betwixtlands. The coast itself is quite densely populated by bustling port towns and hidden pirate coves, and even the more inland areas are being steadily reclaimed.

One of the earliest conflicts of the decline of the Mana Kings was the Taltos Rebellion, when the people of Taltos, always independent-minded, rose up against the extortionate misrule of the increasingly decadent Crimson King. The rebellion was short-lived, though Taltos rebels would remain a harassing force throughout the entire bloody internecine mess that followed, but the Taltos got the last laugh in the end. When every other region of the Mana Kings' lands was rendered uninhabitable, the Taltos were still able to eke out an existence on fishing. When the mana wells sucked the earth dry, even the fish of the sea began to die off near the coast, but Taltos fishing boats could range out past the area of the effect, keeping themselves alive - barely.

That was a long time ago. With the land beginning to heal, the Taltos Coast is now a prosperous region once more, steadily resettling the obliterated inland region. Their ports are full of smugglers and pirates taking advantage of the lack of central government, but the pirates don't cause trouble in Taltos, knowing the value of a safe port to return to. Being that it was continuously inhabited and that a large chunk of those inhabitants were and are pirates, Taltos was picked clean for magic items ages ago, but it's a valuable safe haven on the eastern edge of the Mana Kings' former territory. Several outposts of the Glimmfall Scholars are maintained here, as Taltos makes an excellent home base for expeditions into the neighboring Crimson Grass and Betwixtlands as well as for the Vissken Reach and Torren Flats, which do not have direct borders but which are not too far.

The Torren Flats

The Torren Flats is where the Kings' Way terminates at the coast in what was once a prosperous port city. The locals here, however, were too densely populated to survive off of fish alone like the Taltos to the north. When the farmlands dried up, everyone who wasn't able to leave was instead starved to death.

These days, the area is primarily inhabited by the Glimmfall Scholars and by the wandering constructs of the Shapeless Sovereign, whose younger sister held the land as their lieutenant. Early in the chaos, the King Betwixt took advantage of the Torren Flats' indefensible position and sought to capture the wealth of its abundant fertility. The Shapeless Sovereign sent troops and supplies as best they could, but the Shapeless Sovereign's territory (what is now known as the Glow) could only reach the Torren Flats via the Mirage or the Cinderlands, leaving the Sovereign's ability to reinforce Torren at the whim of the Phantom King and the Burning Queen, respectively.

Though the Shapeless Sovereign's golem armies arrived piecemeal, just about all of them did eventually arrive in Torren, and there they remain, seeking to harass the forces of the King Betwixt. Centuries later, they're very bad at target recognition and frequently attack anyone on sight.

The Glimmfall Gnomes have a large settlement at the Stormbringer Dam, which they believe could be used to magically revive the land. It's attached to a large mana well, and although the Mana Kings ultimately used their wells to extract unsustainable amounts of life from the planet, they were used perfectly sustainably for generations before the decline of the Kings, and the gnomes suspect the mana well could be activated to revive not only the Torren Flats, but every region adjacent to the Dust River - maybe even the Rune Waste. On the other hand, if they're wrong, the thirsty mana well could suck the life out of regions as far away as the Taltos Coast, devastating the resurgent populations there.

It is said that one of the golems destroyed here was a particularly powerful golem with a rebellious streak. The Shapeless Sovereign's sister was usurped by this golem, who tried to create a golem kingdom, only to be crushed by the King Betwixt's relentless advance, drowned in the Dust River. Perhaps purifying the river might reveal an angry and powerful golem seeking to kill and replace organic life once more.

The Betwixtlands

The lands of the King Betwixt were and are known as the Betwixtlands. The Dust River flows to the north, blocking them off from the Crimson Grass and, at the eastern edge, from the Taltos Coast as well, while the Torren Flats sit on the east and the Mirage to the south. On the west, the Kings' Way leads up to the foreboding East Rune Gate, which bars passage to the Rune Waste beyond.

Here, the border between different planes grows extremely thin. The land once grew with the abundance brought by a direct connection to elemental planes, with farmlands fed directly by

the purest waters and forges lit by the hottest fires of the elemental planes. None of it survived the manic greed of the mana well that still sits, tall and forlorn, in the capital city, every last drop of life having been used to power the King Betwixt's final, desperate offensives against the Seer Queen.

Gates still lie across the lands, empty rings half-buried in the earth, guarded by elementals, celestials, and fiends still bound by the oaths the King Betwixt extracted from them even now, centuries after the king's death. The King Betwixt was the most powerful of all the Mana Kings at the height of the war, and his territories were never breached by invaders, but rather fell into ruin when the mana ran out. As such, the Betwixtlands' crumbling fortifications are still fully manned by extraplanar servants, who've hardly taken casualties at all. Because of the strength of the defenses here, the magical materials and artifacts are almost completely unlooted, although the most legendary artifacts were naturally the first to be targeted and are now mostly gone, snapped up by the first wave of adventurers who managed to survive. Even with the greatest treasures looted, the Betwixtlands are second only to the Rune Waste and perhaps the Glow for magical treasures.

The King Betwixt was never defeated, but instead marched into his own undoing by way of the magical arms race with the Burning and Seer Queens. As such, the rumors of his survival are some of the most credible, most claiming that he took refuge on the other side of one of the many portals which dot his land before they shut down. If one were to go about opening up those portals, it would help restore the land to abundance, yes, but you might also find what was perhaps the most ruthless and skilled of all the Mana Kings fully rested and ready to return to his conquests.

The Mirage

The Mirage sits between the Betwixtlands on the north, the Cinderlands on the south, the Torren Flats on the east, and the Glow on the west. At one point it was one of the most bounteous and abundant lands in all the Mana Kings' realms. Nobody's sure what it is now, other than blanketed permanently in many layered illusions. The grandiose and vain Phantom King once ruled from here, but after making enemies of the King Betwixt *and* the Burning Queen simultaneously, he was hemmed in. Both his enemies extended their mana networks to suck energy from deeper in his lands, and though his illusions prevented them from physically entering his territory (without being quickly turned around and led into a deathtrap, at least), he was unable to retaliate.

Now the Mirage is a labyrinth of unreality. For all anyone knows, the land there is still fertile, and it is more filled to the brim with magical treasures than even the Rune Waste. Most of those who enter do not emerge, and those who do emerge are not totally certain what was and wasn't real, so it's anyone's guess.

It is assumed the Phantom King must've starved to death within his own defenses as the lands became infertile, but nobody knows for sure. Perhaps he is still hiding somewhere in the Mirage.

The Cinderlands

The Cinderlands was the region belonging to the Burning Queen. It is bounded by the Mirage on the north and the Glow on the west. The Burning Queen was a master of devastating battle magic, and during the closing years of the internecine conflict between the Mana Kings, she made ample use of it, reducing her once abundant land to a fiery waste pockmarked by craters. The heart of her land is perpetually on fire, the living population long since fled or burned away, the lands guarded by golems immune to the heat.

The Cinderlands were never as prosperous or powerful as the Betwixtlands, but like the Betwixtlands they are *mostly* unplundered, with only a few adventurers having returned from here alive. The place is unsurprisingly home to huge amounts of fire materials, with multiple lands ravaged by perpetual fires sustained by volcanos' breaths, but there's also plenty of living copper in the golems and many other elemental materials from golems empowered with weapons of ice, lightning, acid, and other elements. Many of the golems of the Cinderlands are also equipped with gunpowder weapons, from muskets or pepperboxes to small cannons or mortars mounted on the larger golems, often firing grenades that explode into sticky webs, hallucinogenic gas, or oozes. Though there are many Mana King regions overrun with golems, the Cinderlands golems have by far the most diverse and fiendish weaponry.

It isn't known what became of the Burning Queen. Legend is that despite her fire immunity, she eventually created fires so hot that even she was burned away. As with all Mana Kings, it is rumored she is still alive in the Cinderlands. This rumor is of middling veracity, as on the one hand there are no credible reports of how she died, but on the other hand, it isn't clear why a Mana King as aggressive as the Burning Queen would've just sat in her inferno twiddling her thumbs for centuries.

The Glow

Another abundant breadbasket of the former Mana King territories, the Glow had the misfortune of being located between the Betwixtlands, the Cinderlands, and the Firgulin Mountains.

After the assassination of the Queen of Glyphs and Wards by the Necromancer King and the retaliatory assassination of the Necromancer King by his own courtiers, the subjugation of the Crimson King by the King Betwixt, and the self-entombment within the impenetrable Mirage of the Phantom King, there were only four Mana Kings left: The King Betwixt, the Burning Queen, the Seer Queen, and the Shapeless Sovereign. With the Mirage being effectively impassable and any campaign into the Firgulin Mountains one way or another being a logistical nightmare, the primary avenue of conflict for all the Mana Kings was to pass through the territory of the Shapeless Sovereign in the heart of it all. Alliances shifted, with all three of the southern rulers at first confronting the King Betwixt together but the Burning Queen later drifting away from the coalition and attacking the Shapeless Sovereign and the Seer Queen.

History has not recorded exactly when or how, but at some point in the constant battles over their territory, the Shapeless Sovereign was slain. The three remaining Mana Kings continued fighting over the Sovereign's former territory, which changed hands regularly.

The Glow was never sucked as dry for mana as other regions because no one could ever lay long term claim to it, and the ruler of the week would often destroy infrastructure while retreating before whoever was currently ascendant. However the area was, if anything, more devastated, as the repeated magical assaults from all sides left the place constantly baking in expended mana. Every inch of the place still thrums with magic of every king, though especially evocation, divination, transmutation, and conjuration, even to this day. This is where it gets its name: "The Glow" from the constant glow of magic that anyone with *Detect Magic* active is practically blinded by.

The golem armies of the Seer Queen and the Burning Queen as well as the extraplanar servitors of the King Betwixt still occupy fortresses here and there, but mostly the area is constantly devastated by magical storms that conjure monsters from nothing, reshape creatures (including local wildlife) into fearsome chimeric horrors, and spit out fireballs and lightning bolts at random.

As with all Mana Kings, rumor holds that the Shapeless Sovereign never died. Although no specific occurrence of their death is recorded, the Shapeless Sovereign's territory is *incredibly* hostile to all life, making it unlikely that they remained, and if they fled their territory, it is not clear why they have not yet resurfaced elsewhere. On the other hand, the Shapeless Sovereign is known specifically for the ability to reshape themselves and for doing so regularly, so they are perhaps most plausible of all rumored Mana Kings to survive, simply on the grounds that they are by far the most capable of having gotten out of the realms of the Mana Kings altogether despite there being no mention of any survivors.

The Rune Waste

Across the sucking sands of the Dust River to the north are the Gramling Flats. Through the East Rune Gate are the Betwixtlands, while through the West Rune Gate are the Dead Miles. To the south the approach is wide and open, but covered by the terrible hostility of the Glow.

In the center is the Rune Waste. The heart of the empire, the impregnable stronghold of the Queen of Wards and Glyphs, who ironically was the first Mana King to be slain, thus ushering in the transition from decadence to chaos that finally claimed their civilization. Somewhere within this lifeless husk of a heartland, the walking city of the Mana Kings still strides.

The Rune Waste's defenses are untouched. Though the Seer Queen once overran the Dead Miles, she never breached the West Rune Gate. Though the coalition against the Necromancer King battered away at the East Rune Gate for over a year, they did not breach it (he fled to the Dead Miles after the Shapeless Sovereign joined the coalition, knowing he could not defeat coalition forces without a Rune Gate to hide behind).

And in the hundreds of years since the disappearance of the last three Mana Kings, not one creature has ventured into the Rune Waste and survived.

Perhaps the most far-fetched of all the rumors of surviving Mana Kings is the rumor that the Queen of Wards and Glyphs is still alive somewhere in the Rune Waste. Evidence in favor of this rumor is limited to the Rune Waste being so supremely lethal that nobody knows what's going on in there. Evidence against is extensive: If the Queen had survived the Necromancer King's attempted assassination, why did she not join the coalition to retaliate against his attempted assassination? Why did she not reclaim her territory when it sat abandoned for years after the Necromancer King fled to the Dead Miles? Even if she had predicted that she would be unable to quell the chaos and instead found some solitary fortress to bunker down through it, why not emerge in any of the centuries since?

The rumor of the Queen of Wards and Glyphs' survival is almost certainly just wishful thinking: Having not survived to the chaos, she is untainted by it, and many people like to think of her still as the good queen, the one who, had she only survived, would have fixed everything. The one who might still fix everything if only some heroic adventurers could find where she slumbers. And given that the Rune Waste *has* so far killed literally everyone who's entered it, maybe that's true.

But more likely the Queen of Wards and Glyphs is long dead, and it's time to move on from the Mana Kings. Loot the ruins, use what's useful, and break down what isn't into raw materials to reforge into something else.

Sidebar: Who's Alive?

The Ruins of the Mana Kings section is written from the perspective of what the Glimmfall Scholars know, intended for reference when players make History or Arcana checks related to a region. A consistent theme is that the fate of the Mana Kings is never given for certain - any one of them could still be alive. Being in the Creative Commons, anyone is free to write any version of this story and sell it commercially, but in the original release, a major theme of the region is that the past is over and not coming back. The Mana Kings' legacy remains relevant in some ways (most notably in the magic items left behind), but they're all dead and their empire will never be reborn.

The Mana Kings

The Queen of Wards and Glyphs is the Mana King of the school of Abjuration. She ruled over the Rune Heart, now known as the Rune Waste, and maintained the two Rune Gates that the Kings' Way passed through. Her defenses were considered to be utterly impregnable, which is why the Necromancer King assassinated her as his opening gambit in an effort to become the grand hegemon of magic. His assassination was successful, but her failsafes alerted the other

Mana Kings to what had happened and they formed a coalition against the Necromancer King. The Queen of Wards and Glyphs is often thought of as the good queen. Because her death began the chaos that destroyed the Mana Kings, she is untainted by it, and it is easy to believe that somehow she would have solved everything if only she had survived.

The King Betwixt is the Mana King of the school of Conjuraton. When the Queen of Wards and Glyphs was assassinated by the Necromancer King, he was a founding member of the coalition against the Necromancer King alongside the Crimson King and the Burning Queen. The Phantom King would later join as well, but the East Rune Gate held against any effort to open it up. The killing blow came when the Shapeless Sovereign joined the coalition, opening up an attack from the south, the only direction from which the Rune Heart, former territory of the Queen of Wards and Glyphs, was left open.

The coalition entered and besieged the Dead Miles west of the Rune Heart, where the Necromancer King was able to hold due to the defenses of the West Rune Gate. The Seer Queen had, by now, also joined the coalition, but the Necromancer King was able to keep her bottled up in the Firgulin Mountains due to the difficult terrain. The coalition broke down when the Burning Queen and the Crimson King began to squabble with one another.

The King Betwixt retained control of the Rune Heart after the Burning Queen and the Crimson King departed to their home territories to prepare for war against one another, but the Necromancer King had so desolated the Rune Heart during his retreat that the King Betwixt's main base of power would remain the Betwixtlands, which sat directly between the lands of the Phantom King, the Burning Queen, and the Crimson King. Seeing the writing on the wall, the King Betwixt attacked the Torren Flats, an abundant enclave of the Shapeless Sovereign cut off from their main territory in Rivers and Lakes (what is now called the Glow), and from that base of power was eventually able to make alliance with the Burning Queen to defeat the Phantom King, pushing him into the Mirage from which he never emerged, and then to turn about and defeat the Crimson King. When the Necromancer King's courtiers assassinated him, they offered their loyalty to the King Betwixt's ascendant power, giving him control of the whole country from the Spindle to the Taltos Coast.

The Seer Queen, the Burning Queen, and the Shapeless Sovereign made alliance against the King Betwixt - the Seer Queen had been at war with the Necromancer King for ages and thought she was entitled to control the Spindle and the Dead Miles now he was defeated, the Shapeless Sovereign was still prosecuting the war for the Torren Flats, and the Burning Queen was convinced to join the alliance for fear that the King Betwixt would inevitably conquer her if the Seer and the Shapeless fell. The King Betwixt led a massive army southwards, but was defeated. The King Betwixt was able to repel repeated counterattacks in the Dead Miles and the Rune Heart, and eventually the alliance between the three southern powers would break down. The Seer Queen eventually succeeded in capturing the Dead Miles from the King Betwixt, but her subsequent attack on the West Rune Gate was a failure. Having given all of her power to the failed attack, she fell ill and died soon thereafter. The Firgulin Mountains fell quickly to a counterattack from the King Betwixt.

By this point, the land was effectively dead, and there were not sufficient resources for the King Betwixt to invade the Rivers and Lakes - not yet called the Glow, although it had certainly assumed the magically tormented form that would later bestow it that name - or the Cinderlands. He retreated into a demiplane in stasis to await the rejuvenation of the land. The mana tower that powered the demiplane was deactivated by scavenging adventurers centuries later. They didn't even realize they were killing an ancient tyrant - they were just crowbarring magical materials out of a ruin they didn't understand. The King Betwixt died of dehydration before awakening from his stasis.

The Seer Queen is the Mana King of divination. She joined the coalition against the Necromancer King and made repeated attempts to invade the Dead Miles from her stronghold in the Firguln Mountains. This would prove to be a trend, for though the Seer Queen would go on to become one of the longest surviving and most militarily active of the Mana Kings, she spent the entire chaos trying to break out of the natural chokepoints of the Firguln Mountains, first into the Dead Miles to the north and later into the Rivers and Lakes (later called the Glow) to the east. Eventually, the Necromancer King's servants realized there was no hope of fending the Seer Queen off any longer, nor any hope of making alliance with any other Mana King so long as they were associated with the one who had killed the Queen of Wards and Glyphs. In order to escape the wrath of the Seer Queen, they assassinated the Necromancer King and surrendered to the King Betwixt.

The Seer Queen continued her attacks, now against the King Betwixt, though she would sporadically fight against the Burning Queen for control of the Glow, first as an ally of the Shapeless Sovereign and later, after their defeat, under her own initiative. The Seer Queen did eventually capture the Dead Miles and make an assault on the West Rune Gate, threatening to break into the Rune Waste, but her attack was unsuccessful. The defenses of the Queen of Wards and Glyphs proved too strong. Having sapped all of her own energy in the attack, the Seer Queen fell ill and died soon after her retreat back to the Firguln Mountains.

The Crimson King is the Mana King of enchantment. He founded the coalition against the Necromancer King to kill him in revenge for his assassination of the Queen of Wards and Glyphs. He was joined in this by the King Betwixt and the Burning Queen initially, and shortly thereafter by the Seer Queen and the Shapeless Sovereign. It was the addition of the Shapeless Sovereign to the coalition that brought doom on the Necromancer King, for the Queen of Wards and Glyphs had built no significant defenses along the south of her territory, where she bordered the Shapeless Sovereign. The Necromancer King desolated the Rune Heart, turning it into the Rune Waste, and retreated beyond the West Rune Gate to his own territory in the Dead Miles.

The West Rune Gate proved to be impregnable and any efforts to attack through the Gramling Flats or the Firguln Mountains proved useless. The Necromancer King's efforts to become hegemon of all magic had failed, but he had effectively turtled up in the Dead Miles. The

Crimson King and the Burning Queen had a falling out, and the Crimson King returned home to prepare for war with the Burning Queen.

The Crimson King had used his powers of enchantment to become king of four different regions: The Gramling Flats, the Vissken Reach, the Taltos Coast, and his heartlands in the Crimson Grass. As his extended absence during the coalition against the Necromancer King would show, however, his control had always been predicated on his being able to personally smooth over any conflicts. In his absence, the incompetent mismanagement of the economy and justice system suddenly seemed much less tolerable. A peasant rebellion had begun in the Taltos Coast, one of his lieutenants posted to Vissken Reach (effectively an exile from the decadent delights of the Crimson Grass) had seceded, and beastfolk raiders were overrunning the Gramling Flats.

The Crimson King was able to put the peasant rebellion down quickly and enlisted the aid of the Phantom King to keep the Burning Queen busy while he dealt with the rebellion in the Vissken Reach. The brutality with which both rebellions were put down were used as a pretext by the King Betwixt, who had by now secured the valuable Torren Flats, to attack. The Crimson King had barely finished getting his house back in order and still hadn't seen off the beastfolk from the Gramling Flats when the King Betwixt began his attack, but the Crimson King held considerably more abundant territory even after the King Betwixt's annexation of Torren and the Rune Waste (which had been left nearly worthless by the Necromancer King's pillaging). Despite the material advantage, however, the Crimson King was defeated. He retreated into the Gramling Flats, where he was caught between the King Betwixt and the beastfolk and slain.

The Burning Queen is the Mana King of evocation. She joined the coalition against the Necromancer King in revenge for his assassination of the Queen of Wards and Glyphs. It was hoped her legendary mastery of offensive magic would allow them to break through the East Rune Gate and into the Rune Heart which the Necromancer King had taken over, but even the Burning Queen's powerful evocations were insufficient. After the Shapeless Sovereign joined the coalition, coalition forces were instead able to go around the defenses and attack from the unguarded south. The Necromancer King retreated behind the West Rune Gate to his center of power in the Dead Miles. The coalition fell apart when the Burning Queen was once again unable to breach the defenses, leading to a falling out between the Burning Queen and the Crimson King, the coalition leader. The two returned to their own lands to prepare war.

The Crimson King's lands were left in disarray by his absence, so he recruited the Phantom King into an alliance to keep the Burning Queen busy while he sorted out his house. The Burning Queen responded by recruiting the King Betwixt into an alliance of their own. The King Betwixt had many enemies (as did the Crimson King - it was a mess up there), but ultimately the Burning Queen and the King Betwixt pushed the Phantom King deep into a labyrinth of illusions that would become known as the Mirage. The Phantom King was effectively removed as a threat, but the Burning Queen struggled to make any use of the lands covered by the Mirage, as getting too far into the illusions would make it impossible to return.

The King Betwixt consolidated control of the north, and the Burning Queen joined an alliance with the Seer Queen and the Shapeless Sovereign to hold off the King Betwixt's attempted invasion of the Rivers and Lakes (now called the Glow). They succeeded, but disagreements over the Burning Queen's troop movements through the Rivers and Lakes in order to avoid the Mirage led to a breakdown in relations and the Burning Queen attacked the Shapeless Sovereign. She would ultimately seize control of the Rivers and Lakes, but she would remain enemies with both the King Betwixt and the Seer Queen. The war made her center of power in the Cinderlands and her territory in the Glow and parts of the Mirage so hostile to life that no one even noticed that she had completely burned herself out - literally - by the time of the Seer Queen's conquest of the Dead Miles and attack on the West Rune Gate.

The Phantom King is the Mana King of illusion. Always a friend of the Crimson King, he was a relatively early member of the Crimson King's coalition against the Necromancer King in revenge for his assassination of the Queen of Wards and Glyphs. The Phantom King contributed almost nothing to the coalition in practice, but made another alliance with the Crimson King to keep the Burning Queen busy while the Crimson King sorted out the many rebellions and encroachments that had sprung up during the coalition war. The Burning Queen made an alliance of her own with the King Betwixt. The Phantom King was defeated, and wove defensive illusions so elaborate they became known as the Mirage.

None who entered the Mirage ever returned, and the Phantom King lived in safety there during the entire rest of the chaos. At the end, however, the land was sucked dry and unable to sustain life anymore. Still unable to effectively fight the forces of the King Betwixt or the Burning Queen, even with their leaders dead or in torpor, the Phantom King starved to death inside the Mirage. If we count the King Betwixt's date of death as when he entered the torpor from which he would never awaken, the Phantom King was the last of the Mana Kings to die. Admittedly, this is a strange way to count time of death - the King Betwixt would have awakened from his torpor eventually had he not been killed while sleeping.

The Necromancer King is the Mana King of necromancy. He sought to become the grand hegemon of all magic. Estimating that the Queen of Wards and Glyphs would be invincible unless taken by surprise, the Necromancer King assassinated her and assumed control of her lands in the Rune Heart, now known as the Rune Waste. Word of his assassination got out, and the Crimson King led a coalition against him. The Seer Queen joined the coalition, attacking him in the Dead Miles, but he was able to use the chokepoint terrain of the Firgulin Mountains to keep her bottled up. The Burning Queen tried to blast the East Rune Gate down and break into the Rune Heart, but the defenses constructed by the Queen of Wards and Glyphs were too strong.

Then the Shapeless Sovereign joined the coalition, opening the way to attack the Rune Heart from the south. The Necromancer King desolated the Rune Heart, turning it into the Rune Waste, and retreated west to the Dead Miles, using the West Rune Gate to fend off any further attacks. The coalition broke down as the Crimson King and Burning Queen began to bicker with

one another and most of the other Mana Kings returned to their lands to defend themselves in the new era of chaos.

The Necromancer King continued fighting with the Seer Queen, but she steadily gained the upper hand. His own courtiers, knowing that they could not defeat the Seer Queen alone and that they had no hope of allying with any other Mana King while still associated with the assassin who started the war, assassinated the Necromancer King as a peace offering to the King Betwixt, who had recently defeated the Crimson King and an enclave of the Shapeless Sovereign, to join his kingdom and make him the pre-eminent power amongst the remaining Mana Kings.

The **Shapeless Sovereign** is the Mana King of transmutation. They retained neutrality through much of the conflict, and was the last Mana King to join the coalition against the Necromancer King. When they did so, it opened the way for coalition forces to attack the Rune Heart from the south. The Necromancer King retreated west to the Dead Miles, and the coalition broke down. The Shapeless Sovereign remained neutral in the ensuing chaos until the King Betwixt attacked their enclave in the Torren Flats, seeking to gain an advantage in his war with the Phantom King and the Crimson King.

The Shapeless Sovereign reinforced their sister, who held the Torren Flats as the Shapeless Sovereign's lieutenant, as best they could, sending their most powerful war golem to assist. But the war golem went rogue and started reprogramming other golems into a golem uprising. The King Betwixt ultimately defeated the rogue golem, the Shapeless Sovereign's sister, and the Crimson King. Now in control of the entirety of the north, he amassed an enormous army and attacked southwards. The Shapeless Sovereign made alliance with the Seer Queen and the Burning Queen, and was able to repel the attack.

The Burning Queen sought open passage through the Shapeless Sovereign's lands in the Rivers and Lakes (now called the Glow), which made the Shapeless Sovereign wary of a potential surprise attack once the Burning Queen's troops were past their outer defenses. The alliance broke down, and the Burning Queen tried to conquer the Rivers and Lakes in order to have a direct route to the King Betwixt's territory in the Rune Waste. The Seer Queen joined the Shapeless Sovereign, but the sheer power of the Burning Queen was too much. The Shapeless Sovereign's true form and position was so ephemeral that they were reported dead multiple times both before and after the point when the Burning Queen actually killed them, but within a few years of their demise it became clear that one or another of the reports of the Shapeless Sovereign's death must not have been greatly exaggerated.

The Goblin Fells

Clans of the Fells

The Lich King, Troll King, Black Prince, the Sahuagin High Priestess, the Hive Queen, and the Beast Lord all got their start here, a nascent Dark Council that descended upon an unsuspecting halfling community. The halflings have always been tougher than they look and the Pugshire Knights are legendary fearsome opponents despite their size, but getting sucker punched by half a dozen dark lords at once was too much.

In the aftermath, the Council stripped the land for its resources and marched onwards. The Lich King and the Troll King headed north to fight with the Order of Elemental Harmony in what is now known as the Scramble. The Hive Queen and the Beast Lord went east to lay waste to the Ranseur Mountains of the dwarves and giants. The Black Prince and the Sahuagin High Priestess marched south towards Lumitas.

The halfling territory, then known as the Idyllburgs, was considered the least prestigious of their conquered territory, and largely abandoned to the goblins who gathered there, early minions of the Council (especially the Troll King) who were phased out in favor of a smaller number of more elite troops as supply lines grew longer. So long as the goblins kept the grain flowing to the front lines, the Dark Council didn't really care what they did with the halflings or each other. Once the Dark Council settled into their new capitals across Weskven Coast, their demands for supplies from the territory, now called the Goblin Fells, became largely symbolic, a tribute exacted mainly to remind the goblins who's in charge.

The goblin clans fight constantly with one another and the halfling remnants. The Pugshire Knights still carry on the fight for liberation of the Idyllburgs, and the past few decades have seen some progress - now that the goblins' initial alliance has passed from living memory, the clans mostly see each other as their primary rivals and the Pug Knights as kingmakers and wildcards rather than a common enemy. The Pugs have been able to regain some lost territory by making agreements with one clan to capture a castle or village from another, putting small pieces of the Fells back under halfling control.

letdhamab Kapul: Goblins are much smaller and weaker than most other creatures, so the letdhamab clan of goblins prizes mechanical brilliance above all else.

Kodarshakur Kapul: Goblins are small and weak, but dire wolves are very big and strong. The Kodarshakur measure their might by the bonds they create with their wolf mounts and companions.

Puldru Kapul: Goblins are small and weak, but they don't eat much and they grow to maturity quickly. The Puldru Kapul value unity and overcome problems with sheer numbers. They also raise a lot of spiders, both for their poison and to add even more to their numbers.

Shaljut Kapul: The Shaljut value adaptability, particularly with regards to terrain, hiding from dangerous aquatic creatures on land and dangerous landbound creatures in the water, staying out of reach until they find an opportunity to strike in a moment of weakness.

Zhoganug Kapul: The Zhoganug value stealth and sudden strikes. They're led by bugbears, which makes them less contemptuous of pure strength than the other goblin clans, but the first and most important of their skills is stealth.

Time and Territory

Hamlets and Strongholds

The Goblin Fells campaign presented here revolves around a vicious battle for control of farmland that takes place from the start of August to the end of October, because that's the harvest season, so control of farms directly gives stocks of grain and other produce each month, with later months giving more as the harvest season peaks.

The farmland is measured in hamlets. There are a total of thirty hamlets in the Goblin Fells, each of which produces one abstract unit of food at the end of August, two at the end of September, and four at the end of October. The faction which controls the homestead is able to store up the harvested food at the end of each month. A hamlet can also be pillaged, immediately harvesting half of that month's food value (to a minimum of 1), but destroying the hamlet. Destroyed hamlets do not produce any food for the remainder of the year (you can rebuild the homestead itself, but if the fields have been pillaged, it's done).

The exact value of a food unit is abstract, but it is about a full wagonload, enough that a raiding party could plausibly make off with one or two units if it has several dozen people filling their packs (or better yet, if you capture one or more wagons full of food while they're in transit), but a single person sneaking into an enemy granary to fill their pockets with flour isn't going to make a dent.

The hamlets are mostly inhabited by subjugated halfling peasants. Goblins naturally live in forests, so while they're *capable* of living out on plains like halflings or humans (just like humans are capable of living in forests and sometimes develop entire cultures who do so for millennia), they prefer not to. Instead, the Kodarshakur Kapul, Ietdhamab Kapul. and Puldru Kapul live in the Dunwood (the section the Kodarshakur live in is sometimes called the Fangwood, and the section the Ietdhamab live in is sometimes called the Gorenwood, but it's all one continuous forest), the Shaljut Kapul live in the Muckdowns, and the Zhoganug Kapul live in Cliff Town. In order to totally conquer a goblin clan, not only must all of their controlled homesteads be overrun, their stronghold must also be seized.

Timeline

The following timeline assumes no player intervention. The pace of events might even push the players into enough of a reactive posture to make this actually happen, but they may also force some events (particularly battles) early and prevent other events (particularly monster attacks) from happening altogether. Goblin forces won't risk a second battle after their forces are depleted from the first, so if a player forces a battle between two goblin clans who are scheduled for a battle, that battle doesn't happen. If only *one* of the two goblin clans has been in a battle of the players' devising, however, the other clan is certainly still willing to attack.

August 1st: Kodarshakur/Ietdhamab battle.

August 15th: Hive attacks begin.

August 21st: Clan battle.

August 29th: Giant boar attacks begin.

September 12th: Wyvern attacks begin.

September 14th: Clan battle.

September 28th: Spider attacks begin.

October 4th: Clan battle.

October 9th: Carnasus attacks begin.

October 23rd: Harpy attacks begin.

October 31st: Final battle.

There are two kinds of events on the timeline. The hive, giant boar, wyvern, spider, carnasus, or harpy attacks are all *monster attacks*, that is, attacks by creatures who don't want to control the farmland, but who are attacking for other reasons, usually because they want to eat the halflings (and odd goblin) living there. The harpies aren't literally monsters, but they have no desire to occupy the farmsteads long term, so they resort to pillaging even when they have the strength to hold the territory, and thus mechanically work the same way as monsters.

Three of the monsters border a specific clan's territory and attack that clan's territory before any others, targeting other clans randomly only when that clan no longer controls any homesteads. For example, the spiders begin by attacking the Puldru Kapul, and attack other clans randomly if the Puldru are completely out of farmsteads (even if they still have their stronghold in the Dunwood). The other three are fliers who attack randomly from the start because geographic distance isn't really a big deal for them.

-The boar borders the Ietdhamab Kapul.

-The hive patrollers border the Kodarshakur Kapul.

-The spiders border the Puldru Kapul.

-The harpies and carnasus most closely border the Zhoganug Kapul and the wyverns most closely border the Shaljut Kapul, but they're all fliers who freely ignore boundaries and attack at random anyway.

Whoever they're attacking, a monster attack destroys one hamlet on the day they first proc, and then roll a d10, waiting that number of days before they destroy another. There is no upper limit on how many hamlets one monster or group of monsters can destroy.

The other event is a goblin clan attack. This is when one goblin clan attacks another, hoping to acquire more farmsteads, or at least pillage some. The first event is always the Kodarshakur attacking the Ietdhamab, because it happens as the campaign opens so the players cannot possibly cause it to unfold differently, but the next three involve one of the other goblin clans attacking *someone*, but who, exactly, depends on goblin politics (see below).

Regardless of who's attacking who, the outcome of a battle the party is not participating in is determined by rolling a 1d4 per company for each side. The winning side takes hamlets from the losing side equal to the difference between the rolls. For example, if the Puldru Kapul, with three companies, attacks the Shaljut Kapul, with one company, the Puldru roll 3d4 against the Shaljut's 1d4. If the Puldru get a 7 and the Shaljut get a 2, the Puldru take five hamlets from the Shaljut. Fatalities are light enough to not bother worrying about it one way or another. Goblins are mostly skirmish fighters and aren't much interested in pursuing highly-lethal methods of war in a situation where, as far as they know, they will probably fight a war more harvest seasons than not for the rest of their lives. They're perfectly happy to kill their enemies (including other goblins), but they fight at range as much as possible and make liberal use of their ability to disengage as a bonus action to try and keep enough distance that they can quickly escape danger if the battle is turning against them.

The numbers involved are low enough that a party can fight entire goblin companies and win, especially once they're 5th level or higher, so the question of how the party interacts with these battles is a question of how many goblin companies they intend to fight. Each company defeated (through any combination of retreat or fatalities, though retreated goblins might reform companies to show up in later battles) will affect the die roll. If all enemy companies are defeated, the goblin clan's ability to defend territory outside their stronghold totally implodes. They roll 0d4, the other clan makes a roll and occupies territory as normal, and any remaining hamlets are divided evenly amongst goblin clans with at least one functioning company (even if it's a company they reformed from retreated goblins after suffering a total defeat of their own earlier in the campaign).

It should be noted that nothing about this system is particularly intended to scale up to combats that can't be modeled almost entirely with the existing combat rules. The point of the die rolls isn't to be a real mass combat system, but to resolve a combat small enough that you *could* play it out with minis, but probably don't want to if the party isn't there (particularly since, if the party isn't there, it's probably because they don't particularly care which side wins).

Instead of a battle, a goblin clan may instead raid. When they raid, they roll 1d4-1 for each company they have and pillage that many hamlets of the target clan. The party can't necessarily thwart a raid, depending on how fast they can travel and how soon they hear about it. By the time a messenger even begins to tell them about a raid, it will presumably have already started, which means even if they can teleport directly there (an ability that's far outside the recommended level range to begin with) it may already be too late. The party may at least be

able to pursue the raiders, defeat them, and capture their wagons full of pillaged grain for their own faction.

During the final battle, all the goblin clans are willing to attack again to secure farmland just before the final harvest. If the battles up until now have gone very well for the party, this might not be an especially climactic confrontation, more picking off a straggler. There might not even be any foes left to battle at all. If the battles have gone very poorly for the party, then there's probably two mostly-intact coalitions ready to assemble their forces for a final battle with hundreds of goblins to either side (and a few dozen halflings tagging along with one or the other of them).

If the party have done considerable damage to some of the goblins, but not so much that the remaining goblin clans can't form a coalition of similar-ish strength to whatever clan or clans the party has sided with, then any remaining goblins will unite against them to try and kill the outsiders who have made the war uncommonly bloody, even for a bad harvest year. The one exception is if the party has been working for a specific goblin clan consistently throughout the war (i.e. they picked one goblin clan to be the victor and supported them), in which case that goblin clan will remain sided with the party. The Pug Knights are the reverse: Unless the party has directly antagonized them (while still leaving them with enough forces to be a meaningful part of the battle, so presumably they tried but failed to destroy the Knights in the field), the halflings will not join any coalition against the party, but instead stay out of it and let the goblins take however many casualties trying to deal with the party (of course, the Pug Knights will be on the party's side if the party has been consistently supported them).

Goblin Politics

Goblin clans are extremely loyal internally, and totally mercenary externally. Goblins don't have supernatural resistance to being charmed or intimidated and can sometimes be fast-talked or bullied into going against their better judgment just like anyone else, but broadly a goblin is loyal to their clan but deals with all outsiders with naked realpolitik.

This means goblin clans form coalitions and pick targets based on balance of power, with different clans making alliance with one another based purely on making sure no one coalition becomes powerful enough to overwhelm the other and become hegemonic.

For example, at the campaign's start, the Puldru Kapul is the most powerful, with three companies of warriors. This means it's much harder for them to find allies, because every clan fears that the Puldru might become powerful enough to conquer the other four outright and become the indisputable hegemon of the region. The Kodarshakur, the second most powerful clan (arguably, they and the Ietdhamab both have two companies), have become the leader of an opposing coalition and picked up the weaker Zhoganug and Shaljut clans. The Kodarshakur's two companies plus the one company each from the Zhoganug and Shaljut clans means the coalition has a total of four companies' worth of combat strength.

If the letdhamab joined the Kodarshakur's growing coalition, that coalition would have a total of six companies and would be able to handily trounce the Puldru's three. In the aftermath, the Zhoganug and Shaljut would split, with one going to the Kodarshakur and the other going to the letdhamab. Based on the current strength of the clans, this would be a perfectly even balance, that would likely end in peace until one coalition or another developed an edge somehow, but if the fight against the Puldru resulted in uneven casualties between the Kodarshakur and the letdhamab, there might still be an imbalance of power after the battle. Whether that imbalance favors the Kodarshakur or the letdhamab would be a coin toss. So if the letdhamab join the Kodarshakur against the Puldru, they will surely win the coming battle, but might be setting themselves up to lose a follow-up battle.

On the other hand, if the letdhamab join the Puldru, the Puldru coalition will command a total of five companies against the Kodarshakur's four. That's a fairly even match, so there might be peace. If there isn't peace, the letdhamab will be in the stronger coalition. So the letdhamab make an alliance with the Puldru, leading to the battle between the Kodarshakur and the letdhamab that opens the campaign.

This chain of reasoning wasn't inevitable - the letdhamab might've decided to take the sure win against the Puldru and risk the odds getting stacked against them in the aftermath. What you should take from this example is the way goblins make alliances. Firstly, most of the decisions were very straightforward. The Kodarshakur, as number two, naturally headed the coalition against the Puldru (though the letdhamab could've potentially done the same thing, but the Kodarshakur got there first). The Shaljut and the Zhoganug, as weaker clans who would be first in the Puldru's crosshairs if they were to become hegemonic, were quick to join the opposition coalition.

Only the letdhamab had a complicated decision to make, and that decision was informed purely based on balance of power and self-interest. Past alliances didn't come into it at all. The letdhamab don't care who they were allies with last year and don't anticipate their decisions this year will affect who is willing to ally with them next year (except in that getting a stronger position this year will make it harder for them to find allies at all). The coalitions aren't even permanent within a year.

After the letdhamab/Kodarshakur battle, the balance of power will likely tilt towards one or the other of them. If the Kodarshakur (the current underdogs overall) win, the coalitions might remain stable as things tilt towards parity. If the letdhamab win, however, and thus weaken the Kodarshakur's position even further, they might leave their alliance with the Puldru and recruit the Shaljut and Zhoganug into a new coalition to oppose the Puldru, while the weakened Kodarshakur might have to join the Puldru to keep the newly ascendant letdhamab in check - which means the outcome of the battle between the letdhamab and Kodarshakur might lead to a total inversion of both their allegiances.

Feeding The Beast

Two units of food is enough to get a hamlet through the winter alive. Each company of warriors requires five units of food. Thus, each hamlet fully secured through the entire harvest season can feed both themselves and one company of warriors.

Each goblin stronghold requires seven units of food to feed. Since their whole culture was founded by dark lords installing a regime of extortionists to feed their armies, the goblins of the Fells are pretty opposed to doing the kind of farm labor that makes up 90% of medieval economic activity, but large chunks of the goblin population are engaged in smithing, tanning, medicine, alchemy, mech repair, or other occupations that involve neither farming nor battle.

A destroyed hamlet requires three units of food. Destroyed hamlets usually do not lose much population. Subjugated peasants flee immediately when their homes are under attack, so they take few fatalities, and raiders are there for the loot, not to murder helpless peasants for giggles, so they don't bother attacking any peasants with the sense to run away. This means a destroyed hamlet has just as many people to feed and also requires some extra seed to get next year's crop going. Goblins still want to control a destroyed hamlet, because at the start of the next harvest season it will be a regular food-producing hamlet again.

Destroyed companies require no units of food at all. If they weren't able to reconstitute themselves after the battle, that means they've actually been killed to the point where survivors can be rounded down to zero.

Lumitas levies a tax of sixty units of food at the end of each harvest season. They don't care who pays, so long as someone does. The general agreement in the Goblin Fells is that everyone pays two units of food towards the levy for every hamlet they control at the end of the harvest. If, for whatever reason, that isn't working, Lumitas will first resort to sending an official to work out a specific payment plan for each individual clan, one that's likely to lean more on weaker clans in order to prevent the Fells from uniting against them.

If it comes to it, though, Lumitas has more than a thousand troops under arms at any given time just to patrol the walls and keep the markets orderly, could easily hire hundreds if not thousands more mercenaries, and if they felt it was important enough, could levy thousands more of their own citizens for a total army that outnumbers even a fully united (including the Pug Knights) and full strength Goblin Fells coalition by at least ten to one. That's if their dark lord sponsors like the Black Prince and the Fallen, who now rule over the even more militarized lands to the south, hang them out to dry, which is not especially likely - the last thing the lords of the Dark Council want is vassals getting it into their head that they don't need to keep paying their tribute, even if it isn't their vassal, specifically, who sets the precedent.

The goblins know this, and absolutely none of them are going to suggest trying to defy Lumitas, but if the party manages to convince (or "convince") them otherwise, the question is not who will win, but how much of an inconvenience it will be for Lumitas to crush the Fells. Depending on when you're reading this, there may or may not be a Traveler's Guide to Lumitas going into detail about what the party can do about that long term. For purposes of this book, though, the

Goblin Fells do not have the resources to resist Lumitas directly and someone must pay the sixty-food tax or else everyone loses.

That means a total of sixty food is required to feed the hamlets, fifty for the ten companies (including the Pug Knights) in the Fells, thirty-five for the strongholds, and another sixty in tribute to Lumitas. 205 food is required to fully feed the Fells. Due to the weak growing season, 210 is all there is to harvest, even without a single hamlet lost. Hypothetically, everyone could embrace Communism, distribute resources evenly, work together to make sure not even a single hamlet is lost, and have a tiny surplus by the end of the year. Realistically, someone's going to starve this winter - but it doesn't have to be you.

Halfling Politics

After decades of fighting a guerilla war from the hedges and hills, the Pug Knights have finally reclaimed a few of the subjugated hamlets. They're a small and weak force, but not noticeably smaller or weaker than the Zhoganug or Shaljut Kapul. Their entry into the balance of power is recent and none of the goblins like them, but none of the goblin clans like each other, either, so they're as willing to make alliances with the halflings as anyone else. The halflings despise the goblins right back and cling to a dream of liberating the entirety of the Idyllburgs one day, but this year, they're effectively the same as any other goblin clan, making alliances based purely on opportunism, trusting no one and being totally untrustworthy themselves.

But there is one key difference: They're much more willing to accept help from psychopath adventurers whose uninhibited bloodlust and greed threaten to upset what frail sense of order the region has. Goblin clans are certainly not unwilling to accept help from adventurers and are happy to give them a share of the loot for their services, but they balk at corpse-strewn battlefields in a way that halflings do not. The only way things could get much worse for the halflings is if the Pug Knights got crushed or someone like the Lich King showed up to kill *everyone*, down to the last peasant, so as long as adventurers aren't targeting halflings, the halflings are more willing to ride the carnage to victory.

Halflings are also a lot less scared of Lumitas. They're not eager to pick a fight with the city, but they don't dismiss the idea out of hand, either. The way they see it, Lumitas is just like the goblins - a much stronger enemy who can nevertheless be defeated with enough persistence and courage. They're certainly nervous about challenging such a powerful foe, especially if the adventurers have just barely delivered them victory over the hated goblins and given them something to lose, but they're a lot more open to the idea of fighting back against the Lumitas levy. Unfortunately for them, they're no more capable of actually resisting Lumitas' enormous resources.

Starting Territory

The following list denotes which factions start with how much territory. Each of the five goblin clans also has their stronghold. The Pug Knights have a stronghold of sorts, the ruins of Idyll

Crossroads, but a hundred years after it was razed, there's not a whole lot left besides some crumbling, overgrown walls.

Puldru Kapul: 9 hamlets
Kodarshakur Kapul: 6 hamlets
Ietdhamab Kapul: 5 hamlets
Shaljut Kapul: 4 hamlets
Zoghanug Kapul: 4 hamlets
Pug Knights: 3 hamlets

Ker-Is

The Depths of the Ocean

The ocean and its inhabitants can be broadly divided into three layers: Littoral, mesopelagic or "blue water" territory, and the abyss.

Littoral territories are near the coasts. They're close enough to the surface that natural light is usually enough to see by. Due to their proximity to the surface, littoral creatures are often able to breathe air as well as water and walk as well as swim, although not always. Similarly, littoral creatures are known to surface creatures and vice-versa. While they don't always get along with surface worlders, any more than surface worlders get along with each other, littoral creatures tend to view their surface neighbors the same way they view their neighbors deeper in the ocean: Neighbors, with whom they might have good or bad relations.

Littoral peoples include the sea elves, merfolk, koalinth, kol'ksu, and lizardfolk. As the lizardfolk demonstrate, littoral creatures don't even have to be primarily aquatic.

Goblinoids are a famously adaptable species, and the koalinth and kol'ksu are aquatic goblinoids. The larger koalinth are more-or-less aquatic hobgoblins, while the smaller, nimbler kol'ksu are more-or-less aquatic goblins. They have an ancient enmity with the sea elves, their primary rival for control of the littoral waters, but this enmity has taken a backseat to their fight with the sahuagin in the Age of Darkness, as the Sahuagin High Priestess has led the Empire of Dagon to subjugate the bulk of the littoral lands.

The sea elves are a race of proud hunters who are now themselves being hunted by the sahuagin of the Empire of Dagon. They consider themselves defenders of sea life and often form bonds with dolphins. They were formerly the avowed enemies of the koalinth and kol'ksu,

who sought to establish a Culorate Empire beneath the waves, but both sides of this old conflict are reconsidering priorities in light of the tyrannical sahuagin.

The merfolk are less organized than the militant koalinth or even the sea elves. Merfolk adore beauty in every physical sense: Sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Their intense passions make them prone to violence, but also deeply loyal friends. Their flighty, mercurial nature meant that merfolk were never firm allies or enemies of either the sea elves or koalinth, but they join the others in opposing the sahuagin.

The lizardfolk are primarily a land species, but just like other littoral peoples, they are adapted to both land and water which gives them an interest in controlling both. The lizardfolk are deeply reclusive, desiring above all else to be left alone, which means they interact little with the other three littoral powers. As the Empire of Dagon stretches its claw over the littoral territories, however, the lizardfolk's flooded swamplands are now being invaded, driving the lizardfolk into conflict with the swamp-dwelling humans as their traditional lands are seized and they are forced outwards. The lack of common language means that the lizardfolk, who might otherwise have made alliance with the humans and halflings against the encroachment of the sahuagin, have instead been pushed into conflict, just as it previously prevented the lizardfolk from learning of the approaching sahuagin forces from the merfolk, koalinth, or sea elves.

The littoral territories are the frontier of the Empire of Dagon. A handful of heavily guarded fortresses seek to control the territory here, but sahuagin control is relatively weak. They have limited power beyond the walls of their fortresses and the reach of their spears.

Blue water or mesopelagic territory is far away from both the coasts and the abyssal plain. It's deep enough underwater that natural light is never brighter than the grey light of dawn and solid surfaces are rare. Creatures who live here do not lie down, they float.

Some cities are built along the continental shelf, far below the coast but still on the gentler slope where the abyssal plain far below gradually climbs up to where islands and continents reach above. Most, however, are great coral towers that stretch up from the abyssal plain below to reach the mesopelagic waters within a few thousand feet of the surface. The lower levels of these towers are often sparsely inhabited, as they stretch up from the lifeless depths where living creatures of any sort become more rare.

It's possible to dive that deep, whales and tritons alike can make the trip and survive, but for the most part, these foundational layers are only there to support the mesopelagic spires. Avenues are built between the spires to hold buildings between them, a three-dimensional city where roads go up or down as easy as east or west. Roads are important to provide spaces between buildings for people to swim, but because the actual structure of the road itself does not have to hold up people walking on it, the roads can be and often are beautiful mosaics. There's no such thing as a dirt road, all roads are built, and building in simple patterns, like alternating white and green bricks, is hardly any more difficult than building the road in the first place.

Tritons also build floating settlements of kelp on the surface of the ocean, where the ceiling is the foundation and the walls stretch downwards below the water. These floating buildings are much more limited in how much weight they can hold up. If you put too many crates in a store room, the whole building might be dragged down, and once the building is no longer buoyant, it won't just sink a few feet. It will sink all the way to the abyssal plain if you don't drop some weight. Despite this inconvenience, tritons still make floating kelp villages in order to live in the sunlit waters of the surface, the "blue water" parts of their domain, where the sun is strong yet there is no coastline in sight. Sea elves often also live in this part of the ocean.

Ker-Is is the triton capital, an ancient city that sank beneath the waves millennia ago and became the crown jewel of triton society. It is from drowned Ker-Is that the tritons learned how to build structures up from the abyssal plain, towering into the mesopelagic, pulling them from the stone age many thousands of years ago. It's been in triton hands for so long that it's unrecognizable as a surface city except in its deepest foundations. Unlike many triton cities, whose foundations are a thousand feet of solid rock, the foundations of Ker-Is are full of lightless chambers and corridors and windows looking out over the black void, leftovers from an era when Ker-Is was built on an island and there was a beautiful ocean vista outside, never built over because almost nobody living in the city since it sank cares about the bottom half of it and so the only remodeling that ever happens is occasionally filling in entire city blocks with pure stone to reinforce them. There is a deep one population here, but not nearly enough to actually fill all the empty space left behind.

The city's ancient treasures were picked clean millennia ago, but being full of well-hidden and thoroughly abandoned chambers and passages means that people who need to hide a lot of treasure or a sizable population will sometimes stash it down in the bathypelagic levels of the city.

The sahuagin now rule over Ker-Is, the Sahuagin High Priestess having subjugated it a hundred years ago at the start of the Age of Darkness. The tritons and the sahuagin were ancient enemies, and the sahuagin reign over the tritons is callous and brutal. The only saving grace is that the sahuagin still do not number very many in Ker-Is, the bulk of the High Priestesses' forces having followed her into the Elemental Plane of Water to capture Rl'yeh from her sahuagin rivals and become the undisputed empress in Dagon's name.

The *abyssal territory* includes both the literal abyssopelagic as well as the bathypelagic region further up and the hadopelagic even further down, beneath the abyssal plain at the bottom of the ocean, in trenches and caverns six miles below the surface. These share in common the total lack of natural light. The bottom levels of Ker-Is lie in this region, but they are leftovers from when it was a surface city, largely uninhabited. Tritons can dive this deep, but it is not their natural habitat.

Life down here is sparse, but not at all unheard of. The deep ones call these depths home, building their villages and towns sometimes on the abyssal plain, but often in the caves of the hadopelagic, for the deep ones are uncomfortable in open spaces. The deep one towns built

into caves are carved with tentacled, many-eyed aberrations, which they are psionically linked to by the design of the watchers who created the deep ones deep in ancient times.

The Empire of Dagon reaches down to these depths, as the sahuagin's keen scent makes them perfectly at home navigating without sight. They struggle to hold territory in the hadopelagic depths only, and then only because the nature of trenches and tunnels is that it is easy for the deep ones to hide. Able to extract little use from the deep ones, who struggle to interact with present reality amidst their constant psychic visions, the sahuagin seek to exterminate them completely, but there are many places to hide in the deepest depths of the ocean trenches.

The Empire of Dagon

The Empire of Dagon's governing legitimacy is drawn from the worship of Father Dagon and Mother Hydra. According to the Empire's doctrine, these two created the sahuagin and gave them dominion over all the ocean in order to propagate the war against the hated surface dwellers. Father Dagon and Mother Hydra are demon avatars, avatars of the entity called the Abyss, and priestesses of Dagon and priests of Hydra are warlocks channeling power from the unconscious, non-sapient demonic power source of the Abyss. Father Dagon and Mother Hydra are demon avatars who are theoretically capable of intelligible plans, but unlike demons of other entities like the Hunger or the Devouring, demons of the Abyss are inherently inscrutable and have no intelligible plans. This means the sahuagin are free to make up whatever they want to be "the will of Dagon," and indeed they do.

The capital of the Empire of Dagon is the drowned city of R'lyeh, beneath which is imprisoned Cthulhu, another avatar of the Abyss. Although many think of it as an aquatic creature because of its squid-like face and current address, Cthulhu is a creature from beyond the stars, capable of flight through the ether of the Astral Sea using its wings. It is adapted to many environments and can certainly survive underwater, but it is actually relatively weak there. Cthulhu is, in the telling of Empire of Dagon, the arch-nemesis of Dagon and Hydra. Where Dagon is the vastness of the ocean, Cthulhu is the vastness of the stars, naturally opposed forces, and when R'lyeh rises from the oceans and into the stars once more, the sahuagin empire will be destroyed. The Cult of Dagon is dedicated to preventing this from happening.

All of this is, for the most part, so much mythology behind the sahuagin's rabid expansionism. Sure, Cthulhu is a real thing buried under the real city of R'lyeh and, as a demon avatar of the Abyss, capable of some pretty serious destruction, but real talk, the Sahuagin High Priestess currently ruling R'lyeh has pretty good odds of defeating it single-handedly. Cthulhu's ability to effortlessly devour a dozen hapless commoners is pretty intimidating if you're a hapless commoner, but the dark lord of the ocean domain wouldn't get out of bed for that. If there's any practical reason to keep Cthulhu imprisoned forever, it's that a demon entity can only have one avatar at a time, so keeping Cthulhu alive but helpless means that neither Father Dagon nor Mother Hydra can ever regenerate and take over the empire from the High Priestess.

The Sahuagin High Priestess lost a power struggle with the priests of Mother Hydra a hundred years ago. Taking her followers, she went to the surface world and became a founding member of the Dark Council during their assault on the Idyllburgs and the city of Lumitas. She and the Black Prince headed south into Mulmish Swamp and Dammerung. From there, supported by both Lumitas and Dammerung, the Sahuagin High Priestess successfully conquered Ker-Is after an extended war with the triton kingdom, and subsequently used them as a staging ground for her assault on R'lyeh and her glorious triumph over the priests of Hydra who had once ousted her. After consolidating her rule over both Ker-Is and R'lyeh, she has begun expanding outwards, gobbling up some of the lesser marid emirs, conquering the littoral peoples on the coast of Weskven, and establishing zones of control in other seas and oceans of the mortal world.

Though the current council ruling Lumitas was installed by the Dark Council that the Sahuagin High Priestess was and technically still is a member of, now that she has consolidated the bulk of the ocean around herself, the High Priestess hopes to destroy the city to secure her coastal flank while she prepares to subjugate the marids and the storm giants to become undisputed ruler of all the ocean once and for all.

Marids

The marids are the main rival to the Empire of Dagon in the Elemental Plane of Water, but they are a loose coalition who fight each other and the giants of the Ordning as often as they fight the sahuagin.

Like all the genie powers, the marid emirs run slave fiefdoms. Unlike the more brutal efreeti and dao, whom the marids despise, they pride themselves on being “fair” and even “generous” slave owners, and while that does have *some* effect on how they treat their subjugated minions - you would much rather be a marid's slave than an efreet's - the marids delude themselves when they imagine that their slaves lead good lives under a gentle patriarchal guidance. The sheer ego of the marid, and the eagerness of their slaves to reinforce that ego to avoid punishment for being “ungrateful,” means that most marids genuinely think they are beloved by their slaves. In truth, unsurprisingly, the overwhelming majority would jump at any chance of escape or rebellion that they felt certain they could get away with it.

That last caveat does separate marids (and djinni) from the efreeti and dao, however: A marid's slaves live in fear of punishment and under the despair of knowing they have hardly any control over whether their fortunes improve, but despite the deleterious effect this has on the human soul, they do lead lives of relative comfort, which gives them a lot to lose, which makes them reluctant to take up arms against their masters at first opportunity, even as they would celebrate if some outside force destroyed them.

And although the marids are vain slaver tyrants sitting atop large piles of wondrous treasures - exactly the sort of people that adventurers love to kill and rob - they are allies of convenience against the Empire of Dagon. The Empire of Dagon are the most powerful nation in the

Elemental Plane of Water by far, and while the marids are collectively second, their lack of unity means that each of them individually are amongst the weakest. If a containment war against the Empire of Dagon ever fails, the marids will be the first ones subjugated to the new planar hegemon.

Amira, the Pearl Emira: Amira is the wealthiest of all the marids. Her sun-dappled littoral emirate lies on the coasts of the Feywild, and the top spires of her glimmering pearl palace can be seen from the shore at low tide. Amira's genasi guards are armored entirely in only the most finely crafted pearlescent armor.

Faisal, the Crab Emir: Faisal's palace lies atop an underwater mountain that rises above the surface of the Elemental Plane of Water when the tide recedes. Crabs and lobsters are commonplace in the nearby waters, ranging in size from merely large to stupendously oversized. Emir Faisal's guards armor themselves in crab plates and arm themselves with massive pincers.

Farah, the Kelp Emira: Farah's emirate is choked with kelp forests, sticky and slimy, which make it difficult to traverse for anyone not thoroughly familiar with the terrain, as the genasi and sea elves who live there are. Farah has no dedicated palace, but instead wanders about through the tangled woods with her sizable entourage, hosting festivals and parties whenever they arrive at one of the sequestered villages and towns. The ocean muck of the kelp forests gives way as the elevation rises into the mud and tar pits of the Ooze Swamp, the border with the Elemental Plane of Earth. Farah was once the great rival of Fazira, the Pitch Emira of the dao, until the Hive Queen overran Fazira's emirate and imprisoned her in a lamp. The Hive Queen not being well-adapted for aquatic invasions and being far away from the depths where the Empire of Dagon holds sway, Farah has enjoyed many years of peace.

Jabbar, the Leviathan Emir: Jabbar's emirate is on the icy border with the Elemental Plane of Air, where the great ice shelf breaks off into icebergs. The mightiest of these bergs is carved into Jabbar's palace, which he can magically steer through the water. The surface levels of the iceberg are heavily militarized to guard against the raids of the frost giants, who fight Jabbar for control of the glacier. Jabbar makes his fortune by chiseling out enormous monsters, a mile long or more, who are entombed in the icy surface, and whose mighty scales, bones, and abundant meat make for valuable building materials in the underwater.

Rania, the Coral Emira: Rania's emirate is a vast coral forest, with reefs growing thirty feet tall and exploding with life sequestered within the branches. Rania's genasi servants and triton and sahuagin slaves harvest the coral to bring it to Rania's palace, a cacophony of colors which is always expanding outwards. In addition to the colorful corals, Rania loves music, and the hallways of her palace echo with strings at every hour of the day. The combination of the high availability of food due to the many fish in the corals and the ease of hiding mean that there are many small communities of one or two hundred people hiding out in Rania's emirate without her much noticing or caring about them, as long as they don't make trouble.

Samir, the Abyssal Emir: Samir's palace is located deep within the lightless depths of the hadopelagic, lit by bioluminescent lanterns that dot his palace in curving rows that coil like tentacles. Most marids have a few air-breathing slaves - the difficulty of keeping them alive so far underwater is a demonstration of wealth if nothing else - but most of Samir's aquatic slaves and servants are trapped in a similar manner, for so far below the surface is the abyssal palace that leaving it without bathypelagic armor would cause most creatures to be instantly crushed by the pressure.

Samir's emirate bleeds directly into the void of the Shadowfell and is cut off from the rest of the Elemental Plane of Water by the territories of the Drowned, a cult of elemental water dedicated to flooding all reality. The Drowned are unfriendly towards only partially elemental genasi and outright hostile towards fleshy creatures like the deep ones who are the primary inhabitants of Samir's emirate, which means Samir is in a state of perpetual low-grade war with the Drowned. Since the Empire of Dagon are on the other side from them, this leaves Samir without any immediate interest in fighting them. With that said, it's not at all impossible. It's fairly easy to swim an army through the outskirts of a foe's territory without being intercepted, as three-dimensional space gives plenty of options for going around an interception force as long as you aren't slower than them.

Soraya, the Fish Emira: Soraya's twilight emirate sits at the crossroad of many currents. Many merfolk live there, subsisting off the large bounty of fish that the currents bring through. Soraya's palace can be easily seen through the gloom of the mesopelagic, as there is little to obstruct sightlines, a castle of underwater rock magically suspended in the middle of the water. Soraya's domain is very empty and open, which makes it possible to see very large creatures from a long way off, and the whales and odd leviathan can loom across miles and miles of the emirate. Soraya's territory lies closest to that of the Empire of Dagon, and hers is the emirate they are most likely to bite off in the event that they win a war against an enemy coalition, which means Soraya is the most militarized of all the marids.

Tariq, the Shipwreck Emir: Tariq's emirate is a dimly lit graveyard of thousands of ships dashed on rocks and accumulating in jagged valleys. Tariq holds court in a great conglomeration of wrecked ships, from which he sends out his genasi crew to loot the new shipwrecks that drift in, called magically from oceans across the planes to rest here. Sunken cargo is brought back to his palace of ruin, accumulating a great and gaudy corsair hoard.

The Forces of Dagon

The vast majority of the Empire of Dagon's forces are concentrated in the Elemental Plane of Water. A single legion is deployed to hold the littoral frontier. There are two cohorts at each of the four fortresses and another four sent to the swamps to establish a foothold there. The city of Lumitas can easily raise a legion of troops to defend themselves long term and can hire mercenaries to briefly deploy several legions, so this force is not nearly sufficient to sack the city, however it is also very difficult to counterattack in the swamp and largely flying under the

radar due to the remote and difficult to traverse location. Their job is to secure a beachhead so that further forces can be brought in from the Elemental Plane of Water later. Each of the swamp clans and the lizardfolk struggle to raise a full cohort's worth of troops, which means it will be difficult for them to get the upper hand on Dagon's swamp forces through numbers alone.

The sahuagin baron leading the legion four of the legion's cohorts in the city of Ker-Is, four holding the gate that leads into the Elemental Plane of Water, another three, including a merrow cohort, hold the nearby countryside, and the last cohort is deployed to the depths to keep the deep ones suppressed.

In the Elemental Plane of Water, the scale of the conflict escalates quickly, with even the smallest of factions commanding an entire legion, often several, and the Empire of Dagon commanding over a dozen legions in return. If the Empire of Dagon is able to increase the gap between their own military and the size of the potential coalition against them, even by a small margin, it will be easy for them to peel off three or four legions to subjugate Ker-Is once more, massively outnumbering the force the party helped the tritons overthrow. As it is, the Empire of Dagon is slightly outnumbered if all of the Elemental Plane of Water (even excluding the Drowned, who hate everyone) united against them. The Empire of Dagon would very much like to destroy a few of the marids or especially the storm giants while they're still weak, but any attack threatens to unify the others to maintain the balance of power.

Amira: 3 legions
The Drowned: 3 legions
Empire of Dagon: 18 legions
Faisal: 2 legions
Farah: 1 legion
Jabbar: 1 legion
Ordning: 4 storm giant legions, 2 frost giant legions
Rania: 2 legions
Samir: 2 legions
Soraya: 2 legions
Tariq: 2 legions

It is also worth noting that the Empire of Dagon theoretically has even more forces than this. For starters, they have two legions deployed to the Ker-Is region, and they control or contest other submarine locations in the mortal world as well, deploying two or three legions to maintain their footholds in various seas and oceans. For example, the Empire of Dagon has several legions fighting the tritons for control of the depths of the Vermillion Sea.

The Sahuagin High Priestess who rules the Empire of Dagon could give up on these conquests, recall her legions, and potentially swing the balance in her favor - but then a party of plucky heroes might just as easily go to the places her legions have just departed and convince the people there to join the coalition against her in the Elemental Plane of Water. The gates connecting places like the Vermillion Sea to the Elemental Chaos are ancient and powerful

magic, even the Sahuagin High Priestess can't turn them on and off on a whim (except for the ones she can, but that's not many of them). In fact, if you live in the future and in one of the timelines where the Traveler's Guide to the Vermillion Sea gets released, you could combine that book with this one.

But there is a perfectly good reason why the Sahuagin High Priestess does not recall her frontier legions, and it is because doing so might increase the size of the enemy coalition by as much or more as it increases her own forces, while ceding great swaths of territory to her enemies in the mortal plane even if she wins. So long as she holds the gates connecting the Elemental Plane of Water to various oceans of the mortal world, she can deal with those mortal enemies one by one (as she is attempting to do with Lumitas), and word of these sackings and conquests will never reach the marids or the storm giants. Once she's finished destroying the scattered potential foes in Lumitas and the Vermillion Sea, then she can withdraw her forces from there to bring the hammer down on her foes in the Elemental Plane of Water, secure in the knowledge that it doesn't matter if the marids seize this or that gate to the mortal seas for a few weeks or months - there are no friendly armies left out there to recruit to the coalition.

So, if you run Ker-Is first and the Vermillion Sea later, that is why the Empire of Dagon left a bunch of troops in the Vermillion Sea while fighting for its life in R'lyeh.

Lumitas

The Council of Lumitas

Since the Dark Council took over a hundred years ago, the City of Lumitas has been ruled over by an aristocratic council of five major powers, each answering to a different one of the dark lords who've come to hold dominion over the city. Getting anything done requires a simple majority of votes on the council, and just about every cobblestone, coin, and creature of the city belongs to one or the other of them.

Arcane Academy of Lumitas: The Arcane Academy of Lumitas is alphabetically first, but is a relatively minor faction. They study wizardry, making expeditions into Percy's Quarter to study the artifacts left behind there, and generally speaking do not wish to be disturbed from this pursuit. They produce magic items to keep themselves funded and the school's "archmage" (technically, as a wizard who leads other wizards, an accurate title, but he's not nearly as powerful as true archmages like Percy) appoints a representative to the Lumitas Council, who abstains on most votes and gets involved only when something relevant to the Academy's narrow interests comes up, at which point she'll exchange a few favors to ensure their work continues.

Carnival Occultus: Julietta Chuquey is the Ringmaster of the Carnival Occultus. Originally the Luminant Carnival, a vigilante organization who supported the popular watcher mayor Sardorak, the Carnival was taken over by the Fey Queen's powerful enchantment magic. Following a civil war within the Carnival, the new Carnival Occultus took over and became part of the city's aristocracy. The Carnival Occultus' nightly carnivals can spring up anywhere, sometimes taking place in private estates, other times in public squares, and sometimes in entirely hidden locations secreted in the city's underground, its hinterlands, or through a portal into the fairy plane of Reverie.

The Carnival's political agenda is generally to tear down the borders of society altogether. Nothing is true, everything is permitted, and there should be more sex, drugs, and rock and roll. The Carnival are usually allies with House Evnesh and the Grave Society, and more likely to be enemies with the Church of the Blood Pentarchy and the Galloway Orcs, although exact coalitions fluctuate constantly. While House Evnesh dislikes the Carnival's loose and organic approach to hierarchy, a loosely-defined popularity contest rather than a rigid caste system, they find common ground in the belief that things like drug trade and prostitution should be totally unregulated. The Grave Society likewise wants extremely taboo things like desecration of graves, cannibalism, and murder to be considered acceptable, and wouldn't particularly miss social hierarchies if they fell, since they often have sire/child hierarchies that are enforced by supernatural bonds and don't require law or tradition to back them up.

While the Carnival were at one point being directly influenced by the Fey Queen and adopted a lot of her methods and aesthetic while she was active in the city, that was a long time ago and the Fey Queen has long since moved on, leaving the Carnival to their own devices. Because of their love of illusion and glamour, the Carnival Occultus allows anyone to join and rise in their ranks not so much as a matter of policy as an inevitability. When every night's a masquerade, you really can't be an exclusive club, which means the Carnival is where people go when they hope to break into the aristocracy.

The Carnival is also extremely dangerous to be a part of. Even their public-facing events - known as the Facade - result in the occasional mysterious disappearance. Venturing into the backstage areas to try and quietly join a crew without anyone noticing you weren't there in the morning is much, *much* more dangerous, as the gloves come completely off in these areas, which are known as the Deep Carnival. In practice the people who do well in the Carnival are usually the ones who were born and raised within it. These people have mentors who know how to navigate the Deep Carnival safely, and who can provide protection to those who wander into a closet full of evil clowns who need some fresh red dye to keep their noses from turning that unpleasant copper-y color. Without such guidance and protection, those who venture into the Deep Carnival usually don't last six weeks.

Making matters worse, if an established carnie notices someone they don't know following them around and copying their actions (the easiest way to navigate a minefield is to step in exactly the same places as someone who knows where the mines are), they will often intentionally feed such people into dangerous situations they can't get out of through simple imitation. There's

even a term for such copycats - a “shadow,” usually in the sense of letting someone know “you have a shadow.” When referring to an outsider, the term is derogatory, but carnie children are often told to “be a shadow” in order to stay safe, and “little shadow” is a term of endearment for them.

This makes the Carnival much more bloodline dependent than it might first appear, although there’s nothing to stop existing carnies from taking unrelated people under their wing, nor is it strictly impossible for someone to join of their own initiative and manage to survive long enough to work out how things work on their own.

Although becoming a proper member of the Carnival (and surviving) is easiest done with the help of an existing member, advancement in the Carnival is purely down to winning the respect of other carnies. A leader in the Carnival’s only qualification is that when they go into the Deep Carnival and say “you lot, I’ve got an idea, follow me” people actually get up and get involved. They usually have self-styled titles like Grand Magician or King Jester, and sometimes there will be two leaders with competing titles, like a Chief Acrobat and a High Acrobat. Since there’s no formal org chart, two leaders with a similar gimmick might end up sharing a lot of followers. Almost every carnie leader will have a handful of people with similar skills and compatible personalities who form their crew, and within the crew the “leader” is often thought of as more the one who’s in charge of public relations rather than holding any special authority. These crews are usually about four to six people strong and don’t need anyone giving commands to stay organized.

In order to interact with the ruling council of Lumitas, the Carnival needs a specific person who casts votes for them at council meetings. This is the Ringmaster, who is usually selected by a meeting of Carnival leaders taking a vote. Close votes can be contentious, because exactly who is and isn’t allowed to come in for a vote is totally ambiguous, but usually carnies are able to settle on a Ringmaster by a wide margin. If the leaders are narrowly enough divided that the vote could be swung depending on who gets to be counted as a voter, then the usual solution is to make the next carnival election-themed and let *anyone* in to vote. This is really an election-rigging competition, since the Carnival does not enforce the kind of careful security needed for a popular vote to be counted fairly, but even this satire of democracy is scandalous to the rest of the Lumitas ruling class (except the Grave Society, who make a point not to be scandalized by anything), which exerts considerable pressure on the Carnival not to do it too often (though on the other hand, it also exerts pressure on them to have an “election” every once in a while just to see the looks on the Gallaway Orcs’ faces).

Church of the Blood Pentarchy: Bishop Augustin Balzac leads the Church of the Blood Pentarchy in Lumitas. While all of the council members have a dark lord patron of one sort or another, Bishop Balzac actually answers directly to the Black Prince as part of the religious hierarchy that the Prince leads. Not only that, but the Black Prince rules Dammerung, another coastal citystate and thus a direct rival to Lumitas. This makes Bishop Balzac and the Church in general a subject of deep suspicion to the rest of the council.

Despite this general attitude of suspicion, balance of power means that the Church is often drawn into alliance with the Galloway Orcs and House Evnesh. The Church seeks to impose a rigid faith-based hierarchy, and while the orcs and dark elves alike disapprove of the “faith-based” part of that agenda, they’re on board with the rigid hierarchy. The Church supports brutal public punishment for even minor crimes against the aristocracy and theocratic policies entrenching the Blood Pentarchy as the state religion and requiring worship. This latter is difficult to pull off in the face of four other factions who view the Black Prince as a rival to Lumitas’ power, but the Church is sometimes able to horse trade support for theocratic policies in exchange for supporting other policies they might normally oppose.

Hypothetically, the priests of the church can take anyone as an acolyte, but they’re under no obligation to take anyone in particular and they favor taking on only young children of existing clergy (the Church of the Blood Pentarchy not only has no taboo against priests marrying, it has no taboo against priests having multiple spouses - although sex outside of marriage is still strictly forbidden). Parents unable (or just unwilling) to raise a child will sometimes leave infants on the doorstep of a Pentarchy church in the hopes that they will be trained as acolytes, but the fate of these abandoned children is far more often to be bell-ringers and lamplighters.

All advancement within the church is dependent upon approval from superiors, and positions open up only when a new congregation is formed or when an existing cleric dies and needs to be replaced. New congregations almost never form, so a deacon can become a priest only when an existing priest dies or is promoted, and promotion from priest to bishop can happen only if the bishop of the city dies or is promoted to archbishop (which almost never happens, as the archbishop is almost always chosen from amongst the bishops close to the religion’s capital in Dammerung). Sith promotions don’t generally work in the Church, because if you kill your superior, your superior’s superior is unlikely to want to keep you around, but conspiracies to create a vacancy by killing your superior’s rival aren’t unheard of. If you are a deacon and wish to become a priest, you could kill a priest that your boss dislikes, creating a vacancy that your boss will nominate you for.

Galloway Orcs: The Galloway Orcs are an orc tribe that have adopted the trappings of high society to the point of pretension. They wear lots of velvet and ruffled lace, the hilts and hafts of their weapons are decorated with gold filigree and gems, and their cuirasses are embossed with symbols of their specific noble bloodline, rockin’ abs, or sometimes both. Galloway Orcs love to tell stories of high adventure starring their ancestors or especially themselves. They seem to get ambushed by “street ruffians” surprisingly often, and given how often the attacker doesn’t survive the encounter, you’d expect Lumitas’ morgues to be positively overflowing with the bodies of would-be muggers. Many of them also go on periodic excursions to distant lands or at least out into the wilderness to hunt monsters or seek glory in war.

The Galloway Orcs are more friendly with the Grave Society and the Church of the Blood Pentarchy. Like all the factions of Lumitas, they view the Church with suspicion because of their direct ties to the ruler of rival citystate Dammerung, but the Galloway Orcs find the Church to be useful allies when lobbying to maintain strong divisions between the classes. The Galloway

Orcs are aristocrats through and through, and cannot stand the idea of the peasants gaining ground socially.

They would find themselves very much at home with House Evnesh, were it not for the fact that House Evnesh views orcs as a slave race. The Galloways view orcs as inherently (but not necessarily uniquely) nobler than most other races, born warriors with the pride and courage of an aristocrat flowing in their veins. They constantly bristle and rattle their sabres at Evnesh's disrespect. The two factions have a very different view of dueling, with the Galloways looking on it as a contest of valor, strength, and will, straightforward and unambiguous, while Evnesh considers duels to be as much a legal battle as a martial one, in which the goal is first to slip some dirty trick in through a loophole, only falling back to martial supremacy if that fails, and this difference in perception is the only reason why the two don't engage with constant duels with one another.

Lacking any common dueling tradition and both being proud, cruel, and imperialist cultures, the Galloways and Evnesh bubble over into open, unregulated violence if they spend too much time in proximity to one another, which is the reason why the city is divided into different territory for different factions - the Galloways and Evnesh started it so that they could create neighborhoods where their rival was not allowed to venture, and the other factions got in on it to get leverage over the Galloways and Evnesh. The Grave Society, Carnival, and Church all walk freely through each other's territory even when they are on poor terms with one another, but since only the Galloways or the Evnesh can be tolerated in most places, not both, the three other factions grab bits of the city so that they can pick which faction is allowed and which is not.

The Galloways' alliance with the Grave Society is mostly one of convenience. They have no particular spite for the Grave Society, and that's enough to found a tenuous alliance on the grounds that they dislike the pseudo-populist Carnival and are in a cold war with Evnesh.

Membership and rank in the Galloway Orcs is strictly determined by bloodline. Most of the Galloway Orcs are Galloway Knights, there are a few Galloway Barons, and the head of the Galloways skips over count for the more impressive sounding title of Duke Galloway. The Duke and the Galloway Barons each rule over fiefdoms in the hinterlands, although many of them prefer to stay in estates in the city (their fiefdoms are no more than a few days' ride from the city anyway). Some Galloway Knights have small fiefdoms of their own, but most of them are either hedge knights, who live on and help protect the fiefdom of a landed knight, or else they are bachelor knights with an estate in the city (often within the grounds of a baronial or ducal estate). A Galloway Knight with hedge knights serving them is called a baronet knight, and a landed knight with no hedge knights under their banner is called a "landed knight," although strictly speaking baronet knights also qualify for that category.

Grave Society: The Grave Society are a bunch of wights and ghouls and other undead who literally eat the lower classes. Their existence is an open secret, and their leader Monsieur le Blanc unives openly as leader of the Society and their representative on the Lumitas Council, but nearly all of the members of the Grave Society besides Monsieur le Blanc feign living.

Their society is dominated by powerful wights who make up a secret society called the Rictus Friends. Each member of the society adopts an alias based on a color. Their leader is Madame or Monsieur (currently Monsieur) le Blanc, and other members have names like Monsieur le Rouge or Madame la Violette. Each of the Rictus Friends have a number of lesser wights and ghouls (not to mention usually dozens of zombies or skeletons) under their necromantic control, and when one of the Friends is destroyed, the most senior wight of their own creation inherits the title. If a Friend is destroyed with no animate wight childer, then the title is retired completely and Monsieur le Blanc picks some mortal to kill and reanimate as a new Friend with a new color. This is why there is no Madame la Bleu - she and her heirs were destroyed, and replaced by Madame la Grise.

Their serial murder isn't strictly legal and the other factions will occasionally conspire to crack down on it if they feel it's getting out of hand, but except when there is a specific edict passed by the Council to combat undead murders, the city watch generally leaves such matters alone. The watch refer to them as "cryptic cases," allegedly because they're just so darn hard to solve, but in actuality it means "don't try or a ghoulish aristocrat will eat your brains." These cases are sometimes called "spooky murders," particularly by the Carnival Occultus, or anyone else who feels like mocking the watch for failing to solve them more than showing tact for the bereaved.

Despite the Carnival's mockery, the Grave Society can count on them to hold out against any edict encouraging the city watch to be more active, which makes them allies on the council. The Galloway Orcs are perfectly happy to have explicitly different laws applying to the commoners as to the aristocracy, so while they find the Rictus Friends somewhat distasteful, they're happy to make an alliance to maintain the balance of power.

The Church of the Blood Pentarchy rejects the undead as an abomination against the natural order of the world, and the Grave Society view themselves as being in competition with House Evnesh for living people who need to disappear. Evnesh kidnaps them to sell them down the tunnels to dark elf society, and the Grave Society eats them alive, and the city can only tolerate a relatively very small number of mysterious disappearances so each citizen kidnapped is one who can't be eaten.

Guild Lord: Another minor faction, the guild lord is the representative of the guilds to the Council of Lumitas, elected by vote of the city's twenty-one guild masters. Theoretically the guild lord can be anyone, although in practice they are always one of the guild masters. The guild lord generally votes only when economic issues come up, and then votes for whatever increases trade in the city without threatening any guild monopolies. The Adventurers Guild was outlawed when the Dark Council took over a hundred years ago, so none of these guilds are particularly exciting anymore, just butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers.

House Evnesh: House Evnesh isn't actually captaled out of Lumitas. The aboveground city takes significant getting used to for dark elves, and the highest of the house, the Matriarch and her daughters and sisters and so forth, remain underground in dark elf cities far away. House

Evnesh has always had more surface contact than normal, though, and when Lumitas fell, an opportunistic spider priestess named Faelith assembled a large enough raiding force to join the coalition of dark lords who established control over it in the aftermath. Elven lifespans being what they are, Faelith still sits on the Council of Lumitas, representing House Evnesh.

House Evnesh isn't viewed with as much suspicion as the Church of the Blood Pentarchy, because while they do ultimately answer the Dark Elf Matriarch (and fairly directly at that), the Matriarch is not seen as a rival for control of the coast and its shipping routes the way the Black Prince in Dammerung is. Nevertheless, House Evnesh and the Church maintain an alliance, if only of convenience, as the two outsider factions. The Grave Society are locals who were turned undead by a dark lord, the Carnival Occultus are locals who were enchanted by a dark lord, and the Galloway Orcs at least went very native by grabbing plots of land everywhere, and so none of them directly answer to powers outside the city the way House Evnesh does.

House Evnesh are also popular with the Carnival Occultus. They're frequent visitors to carnival nights, and many of House Evnesh are adept in the backstage areas known as the Deep Carnival. While the more public-facing parts of a carnival event, known as the Facade, are fairly safe (the Carnival wants people to attend, after all), everyone knows people go missing in the Deep Carnival. Everyone also knows that in order to join the Carnival Occultus (and thus enter the lowest rungs of the city's aristocracy), you have to go to the Deep Carnival. Thus, a steady trickle of hopefuls goes backstage, and sometimes they don't come back. Sometimes it's because a carnie plays a lethal prank, but sometimes it's because House Evnesh abducts them and sells them down the tunnels towards dark elf territory far, far away. House Evnesh is also in the business of buying people in order to settle debts with their families. This is completely illegal within the city's jurisdiction, which is why House Evnesh maintains their market fifteen feet underground - the city's jurisdiction having been ruled to extend only ten feet below the surface, thanks largely to political maneuvering by Faelith.

The Grave Society does not much appreciate this winnowing down of their herd of living humanoids to feed on, but their opposition is more due to balance of power than spite: House Evnesh could get too powerful if they could count on all three of the Carnival, Church, and Grave Society. The opposition from the Galloway Orcs is a lot more personal. House Evnesh openly considers orcs an inferior race fit only for slavery, and the state of cold war the Galloway Orcs have engaged in as a result is a pretty restrained response, all things considered. The Galloway Orcs kill dark elves who enter their territory on sight and vice-versa, while each maneuvers politically to try and shrink the others' territory, wealth, and status within the city. Each ultimately hopes to crush the other entirely someday, but such ambitions seem firmly out of reach, at least for now.

Lumitas Politics

It's generally assumed that if the party is coming to Lumitas, it's probably because they want Lumitas to change its policies somehow. Lumitas' military is massive, thousands strong even

before they levy additional forces, hire additional mercenaries, or call upon their allies. If the party wants to change anything (and they don't have thousands of their own troops), they'll need votes on the Lumitas Council. How many votes depends on what they'll want to change.

Most policies require a simple majority of the Lumitas Council, four out of the seven votes. Councilors can abstain, but tied votes default to maintaining the status quo. If the party is coming here from the Goblin Fells, they probably have the goal of ending Lumitas' annual levy on the Fells. The most obviously heroic policy change to push would be to extend the ban on slavery further underground, so that House Evnesh can't run a slave market fifteen feet below the city surface to dodge the law. Both of these would require four votes on the Council.

This is more than just a matter of completing quests for four out of seven members of the Council, because House Evnesh would like you to not do that, and will be calling in favors of their own. It is therefore important not just to get favors from Council members, but also to thwart House Evnesh from calling in favors of their own, or (counterintuitively) to complete quests for House Evnesh and ask them to forgive debts to other Council members in exchange for you forgiving their debt to you, thus ending their influence over a specific Council member. More details on this sort of thing can be found in Irena's Guide to Intrigue and Illusion.

If House Evnesh's slave market just below the Gold District is banned, however, they'll probably just establish a new one out in the hinterlands somewhere, past the walls, where Lumitas law doesn't apply. This will make it considerably more difficult for House Evnesh to get kidnapped victims to market before they can be retrieved, but it won't stop them completely. Expelling House Evnesh from the Council and the city would put an end to their slaving completely, but to remove a council member requires the vote of all the Council except the member being expelled. This will require not just building a coalition, but convincing hostile factions to work together while also totally cutting off the target from their support.

It's also basically impossible to convince the Council to do this twice. If you maneuver to get House Evnesh expelled from the Council and then try to do the same thing to the Grave Society, every remaining Council member will be wondering whether they might be next and coalition against you (with possibly the exception of the two neutral representatives, the Guild Lord and the Academy representative - but those two votes won't sway the Council alone).

One way to get around this is to build a new coalition by adding new members to the Council. One obvious choice is to add a ratling representative to the Council, as the ratlings are a significant population in Lumitas with no representation. You might also try to get Percy added to the Council, if you can find him in his Tower and wake him from stasis.

Getting a party member added to the Council is probably going to be impossible, because the party does not represent anything but themselves, and if individual people can be added to the Council without any history in Lumitas or backing from a dark lord patron, then why not add each individual spider priestess or Rictus Friend to the Council and give their respective factions

a dozen votes each? If the party could manage to get a unanimous vote for adding themselves, then Evnesh and the Grave Society could, too.

A single party member might be able to get in if they manage to convince the Council that the party is now a permanent and militarily or economically vital institution within Lumitas, but adventurers have a reputation for wandering off to find the start of a new adventure as soon as the old one has ended, and this will be difficult to overcome. The Council will not vote to add a party leader to their number if they have any concern that the party might vote on only a handful of issues they care about and then call the job done and leave. Handing out government power to such itinerants would harm the perception of Lumitas' political stability, making it a less desirable trade destination, which puts them at risk of losing economic relevance compared to Dammerung and Drachzee.

Regardless of who you choose, adding a new member to the Council requires a unanimous vote from all existing Council members.

Lumitas Neighborhoods

The Deep Carnival

The Deep Carnival is a metaphorical location, referring to all the “backstage” places the Carnival Occultus operates to keep their festivals and other celebrations or entertainment venues running. A brewery might become part of the Deep Carnival for a few weeks as the Carnival brews up enough booze for a huge celebration, and then go back to being a normal part of the city. A theater run by the Carnival might be part of the Deep Carnival during rehearsals, but then become part of the Carnival's public-facing territory, called the Facade, during a performance.

But the Deep Carnival also refers to the sections of the fairy plane of Reverie that the Carnival Occultus have plugged into Lumitas using various fairy circles, magic doors, and other portals. You can enter a door into the Carnival estate in the Gold District and emerge in their boardwalk in Riverway. The boundary between the Deep Carnival and the rest of Reverie is less firm, but this is how most medieval boundaries are - this castle belongs to one kingdom and that castle belongs to another, and presumably the exact border is the midpoint between the two, but nobody knows where that actually is. At best there might be a sign marking a boundary along the road, and you just have to eyeball the rest of the border from there, and even that isn't universal - and certainly isn't common in Reverie.

Any time the party enters the Deep Carnival, roll 2d6 on the following encounter table. If they roll a result they've had before, then they know the way and don't have to deal with any further encounters. If they're here specifically to explore the Deep Carnival, they move to the uncleared encounter nearest the encounter they rolled (i.e. if they rolled a 7 while exploring and 7 is cleared, try 6 or 8 instead). If they roll a new result, then not only do they have to deal with whatever it is they've encountered, they must also roll again to try and reach their destination.

Turning around to back out is of no help. Reverie being what it is, successfully retracing your steps exactly may still take you to a different place than where you started, potentially a place further from the doors leading back to Lumitas. Some encounters, however, are marked as an exit leading to a specific neighborhood. The party can always exit into that neighborhood upon rolling that encounter.

2d6 result	Encounter
2	Crimson Hedges [Mithras Forest exit]
3	The Crossroads Court
4	Hunt For Youth
5	Tea Party
6	Hags' Ball
7	Carnival Grounds [Lumitas Underground exit]
8	Pixie Kidnappers
9	Fairy Feast
10	Carnival Funhouse [Riverway exit]
11	Healing and Killing Springs
12	Carnival Estate [Gold District exit]

Carnival Estate: The Carnival Estate in Gold District is a mansion the Carnival Occultus took over during the Dark Council's rise to power, after they were subverted to the service of the Fey Queen. She merged the Estate with Reverie and it now exists in both places simultaneously. It is booby trapped in much the same way as the Funhouse, for much the same reasons, although it has much more of a fancy mansion aesthetic rather than the clown theme of the Funhouse.

Carnival Grounds: The Carnival Grounds are the Carnival Occultus' main party spot in Reverie. When a festival is running (frequent), it is not part of the metaphorical Deep Carnival, but rather part of the public-facing Facade. It is, however, physically located in Reverie. It is perpetually night time here, and the lantern lit carnival grounds are enchanting in both senses of the word. While the carnival is ongoing, any creature seeking to leave must make a DC 15 WIS save to do so, and will find themselves trapped for several more hours if they fail.

The magic of the carnival causes those who visit to react with childlike wonder to its amusements, and clouds the memory upon departure, so that memories of the carnival are a vague haze of wondrous beasts, sideshow games, and amazing performances, but if you strip away the high quality of its presentation, it's actually pretty mundane: You can throw rings and

win a stuffed goblin, and acrobats twirl and flip through the air, and they've trained an owlbear to do a cute dance.

Between carnivals, the grounds are dark, empty, and prone to raids by fey spirits of darkness and fear.

Inside one of the tents is a door that leads into the dank tunnels of the infinisewer.

Carnival Funhouse: The Carnival Funhouse was originally a place in the mortal world, an actual funhouse on an abandoned boardwalk in Riverway. It still is, sort of. Once the Fey Queen took over, the place blended into Reverie, and now exists in both places simultaneously. The Funhouse is filled with booby traps for two main reasons: It weeds out people trying to get backstage to the Deep Carnival who are not sufficiently clever (usually "being clever" here means "clever enough to have a guide"), and because it's kind of funny to say someone was killed by boobies.

Crimson Hedges: The Crimson Hedges are a hedge maze of living hedges with blood-drinking thorns. They guard the entrance to Mithras Forest, the demesne of the Fey Queen.

The Crossroads Court: This is the gathering place for a number of outcasts who dislike the Fey Queen for one reason or another, whether that be because of a personal feud with her or one of her lieutenants, a general dissatisfaction with how she runs things, or opposition to all authority on principle.

Alianora is a unicorn who wants to bring joy and contentment to the world, and dislikes all the murders. Three friends stay here due to a collective feud with the Fey Queen: The Prince-in-Grey drains the color out of everything he comes into contact with, Kiernan is a manipulative and casually sadistic water fey, and Ashlin is a good-hearted satyr and the source of the conflict with the Queen, as he can't help but play the hero whenever he sees a lost child or a wailing maiden or whatever. The-World-Shakes-With-His-Steps is a walking hill with a vendetta against some of the Fey Queen's minions due to noise complaints, and Lethe is a lampad who lives in a cave inside of him - the two are really good roommates, so if he's in, so is she. Blossoming Sorrow is a rose monster who's more thorn than petal, devoted to her art which happens to be murder, and who killed someone who turned out to be important to the Fey Queen.

Fairy Feast: Several dryads, satyrs, pixies, and other fey are having a feast. The food is amazing, but insubstantial, causing only more ravenous hunger. The more you eat, the more hungry you become, and the harder it is to pull yourself away from the food on offer. The enchanting music of the satyrs only makes it more difficult to leave. Anyone who sits down to join the feast must make a DC 15 WIS save. If they fail, not only do they stay for hours, the enervating food inflicts a level of exhaustion on them, whereupon they must make another DC 15 WIS save to try and leave.

Hags' Ball: Three hags live in mounds nearby one another. One is a seamstress making beautiful gowns, one is a chef cooking up a huge feast, and the third is a musician composing for an enchanted string quartet that plays itself. They are preparing a grand ball. They don't necessarily intend any harm to the attendees, but once the ball begins, leaving requires succeeding on a DC 15 WIS save, and failing the WIS save entraps the creature for another several hours. Hags being what they are, it's only a matter of time before one of them is offended by a guest, who will subsequently disappear from the crowd, and a few minutes later the strings of the quartet are greased with new fat, some new leather jackets and handbags and such are given as gifts, and some new meat pies are added to the banquet.

Healing and Killing Springs: A spring of sparkling clear water and a spring overgrown with moss, fungus, and insects stand here, with a sign in Sylvan written nearby saying that these are the Healing and Killing Springs. The Killing Spring is, of course, the sparkling clear one - everything in that water is dead. The Healing Spring is the overgrown one, with all manner of life drawn in.

Drinking from the Killing Spring causes 10d12 necrotic damage with a DC 15 CON save for half. Drinking from the Healing Spring restores both HP and hit dice to maximum. Each spring can be drunk from only once every long rest - further drinks have no effect. Water taken from the springs becomes regular water.

Hunt For Youth: Several aging eladrin are hunting down an awakened fawn. They were created as bent and crooked old men and women and are in a never-ending hunt for youth. When they have no better leads, they hunt down cute things to drink their blood and hope for the best.

Pixie Kidnappers: Several pixies were offended by some mortals during the Fey Queen's rise to power a hundred years ago. They broke from the Fey Queen's army to kidnap the children of the offenders and stole away with them back to Reverie. The ransom was never paid, and the pixies have been playing hide and seek with the lost children for nearly a century. The children are regular humans who can remember where they came from and the circumstances of their arrival, but have no idea how long they've been gone. The pixies are aware of how much time has passed, but do not realize that a hundred years is a long time in human terms. All the children's lost years will catch up with them in an instant if they leave, turning them to dust.

Tea Party: Several awakened animals have gathered here for a tea party. There is no danger in joining them, they know the way around these parts of Reverie, and will gladly point the way to any specific encounter or exit to anyone who joins them for tea.

Gold District

The Gold District is where all the fancy folks in Lumitas live. The market is located here, as are the noble estates of the Galloway Orcs, including the ducal estate of Duke Galloway. House Evnesh maintain estates here, though the estates are little more than particularly grandiose entrance rooms for their underground palaces directly below the Gold District.

The Grave Society maintains estates here as well, though they blend in with the smaller estates of the various merchant princes and guild masters who make up the city's middle class. That middle class is eager to live in the Gold District, which they see as making them more like tiny aristocrats than particularly successful commoners - commoners live in Riverway and Oldtown, after all, not the Gold District.

The Deep Carnival being what it is, it's hard to say whether or not the leadership of the Carnival Occultus lives "in" the Gold District or not. Certainly if you enter the door to their estate in the Gold District you will be able to reach the Funhouse without ever going outside, but the same is true of many other doors throughout the city.

The Cathedral of the Blood Pentarchy is located in the Gold District, although Bishop Balzac does not usually live there. Instead, he prefers the Temple of the Blood Pentarchy in Riverway. The Temple was converted from the old Temple of the Radiant Choir, and the Bishop considers the building seized and reconsecrated from the hated Choir to be the real crown jewel of the Church's accomplishments in Lumitas.

Though the aristocratic estates are the most decadent of the Gold District, they make up well under half of its footprint, with most of it taken up by merchant estates, the market, and the infrastructure that supports the market - warehouses, taverns and inns, wide roads to bring wagonloads of goods up from Riverway where the riverdocks bleed into the docks on the sea. While most adventurers will be interested chiefly in the magic item shops and maybe the exotic mount stables, the market sells everything: Clothes both fancy and plain, fresh fish, fresh produce, flour by the wagonload, chickens, goats, and cows, furniture, barrels and crates, even ships. House Evnesh runs a slave market directly beneath the Gold District's regular market, as Lumitas laws prohibiting the practice only extend to ten feet below the ground (the size of the average cellar).

The wealthiest guilds have been able to secure offices in the Gold District. This includes the Barristers' Guild, the Bankers' Guild, the Spidersilk Guild, the Healers' Guild, the Furriers' Guild, the Dyers' Guild, and of course, the Merchants' Guild. The Adventurers' Guild used to operate out of here, but when the Dark Council banned it for its affiliation with their arch-nemeses, the Spring Fellowship, the building was taken over by some of the first Galloway Orcs and remains a Galloway estate to this day.

The Gold District also contains the docks, which are naturally just a block or two away from the market, which means it also contains lots of inns and warehouses to service the docks, and lots of row housing for the workers at those inns and warehouses. This is all officially a part of Gold District in the sense that the Gold District Guardhouse is responsible for patrolling it, which is the only way in which the neighborhoods are officially divided at all, but you'll often get people informally referring to these dock areas as part of Riverway, since they have a similar purpose and population.

Lumitas Underground

The sewers beneath Lumitas were dug by the mad genius Percy. They use the same magical principles as a bag of holding to be bigger on the inside than on the outside, and they loop through several other planes of existence in order to get around space limitations, which means it's possible to go in an exact circle and yet end up miles away from where you started. The sewer shifts its own geography around and occasionally expands itself into a new demiplane of its own accord. The sewer is technically finite, but between its immense size, labyrinthian construction, and lack of adherence to anything remotely resembling Euclidean geometry, it's nicknamed "the infinisewer."

The Carnival Occultus has plugged the Deep Carnival into the network so that they can get around town unnoticed and unimpeded, and the ratlings are naturally very adept with the tunnels, seeing as how they live in the place.

Any time the party tries to use the infinisewer to go anywhere, roll 2d12 on the following encounter table. If they roll a result they've had before, then they know the way and don't have to deal with any further encounters. If they're down here specifically to explore the infinisewer, or to find a destination in the Lumitas Underground, they move to the uncleared encounter nearest the encounter they rolled (i.e. if they rolled a 7 while exploring and 7 is cleared, try 6 or 8 instead). If they roll a new result, then not only do they have to deal with whatever it is they've encountered, they must also roll again to try and reach their destination. Turning around to back out is of no help. The infinisewer being what it is, successfully retracing your steps exactly may still take you to a different place than where you started, potentially a place deeper in the sewers. Some encounters, however, are marked as an exit leading to a specific neighborhood. The party can always exit into that neighborhood upon rolling that encounter.

The infinisewer is not warded against teleportation, and in fact it has a couple of teleportation circles built into it for ease of commuting (assuming you are the kind of powerful wizard who can use teleportation circles). However, it wanders between different planes without warning, which means it may be impossible to teleport back to Lumitas because this section of the sewer is built underneath Mount Celestia, and if you try to *Dimension Door* 500 ft. up in order to get safely above the surface, you may find yourself in a raging inferno on the Elemental Plane of Fire.

2d12 result	Encounter
2	Percy clone
3	Rictus Friends hideout [Riverway exit]
4	Mausoleum [Oldtown exit]
5	Lava flow [Elemental Plane of Fire exit]
6	Troll hermit

7	Otyugh Nest
8	Polymorph plague horror
9	Sewer wraith [Moil exit]
10	Evnesh market [Gold District exit]
11	Messina hideout [Gold District exit]
12	Frozen sewer [Elemental Plane of Water exit]
13	Rat swarm
14	Rictus Friends backdoor [Rictus Manor/Oldtown exit]
15	Polymorph overflow [Percy's Quarter exit]
16	Bridge over the abyss [Elemental Plane of Air exit]
17	Deep Carnival connection [Reverie exit]
18	Ratling patrol [Rattleburg exit]
19	Ratling repair crew
20	Rat Town
21	Myconid colony [Underground exit]
22	Forgotten magic cache
23	Kriis
24	Teleporter nexus

Bridge Over the Abyss: Percy needed a connection between two parts of the sewer that were very far away from one another, so he built a bridge through the Elemental Plane of Air. The sewage canal is bounded on either side by walkways as normal, but there's no ceiling or railing, just a plunge into an infinite blue sky below. The bridge stretches for several hundred feet and is occasionally menaced by perytons, griffins, or a twelve-armed golem from the Manufactotem that makes sport of killing travelers and taking their weapons to wield in its many hands.

Deep Carnival: The Carnival Occultus has plugged the Deep Carnival into the infinisewer here, resulting in a sewer door that opens up onto a lantern-lit carnival ground in a section of the fairy plane of Reverie covered in eternal night.

Evnesh Market: Lumitas law only applies ten feet below the surface. Cellars and graves are covered, but the deeper tunnels underground are not. House Evnesh has taken advantage of this to set up a slave market fifteen feet below the Gold District. Only Evnesh law applies here.

Forgotten Magic Cache: Percy stashed some magic items here during construction, booby-trapped them to Hell and back with a bunch of spell traps, and then forgot about them. If this is the first time the party has had this encounter, roll on the DMG treasure table for a Challenge 5-10 hoard, but ignore everything except the magic items results. If the party is getting this encounter for a second time because Percy's clone reset the encounter table, they find a new chest booby-trapped with new spells, but the chest is a mimic.

Pick 3 or 4 spells of between 3rd and 5th level for the traps. Disabling each of the spell traps requires a DC 20 Arcana or Thieves' Tools check, and if any of the checks are failed, all remaining traps go off. One spell cocktail I like is *Fireball* to soften a party up, *Confusion* to prevent them from coordinating, and *Summon Greater Demon* to pop a babau onto the map to keep the pressure up, but if your players have seen this combination before, change it up a little. Just make sure not to resort to something boring but effective, like dropping three *Cones of Cold* on them. Percy is a mad genius, he'd rather tinker around trying to find a killer combo than use an obvious and straightforwardly effective solution. The spell save DCs for the spells is always 18.

Frozen Sewer: This tunnel runs through the frozen regions of the Elemental Chaos where Air meets Water, and it is completely frozen over. To cross, the party must succeed on DC 20 Survival checks to find where the ice is strong enough to hold their weight. Gargantuan and huge creatures fail automatically, large creatures take disadvantage, small creatures have advantage, and tiny creatures succeed automatically. One party member can make the check and the rest can follow their path, but the leader must roll as though for the largest party member.

If a party member fails, they fall into the ice and take 2d6 cold damage, and must make a DC 15 Athletics check to get out, with advantage if another party member assists them (which is probably the case unless everyone has fallen in). However, if everyone is following a single leader, then everyone falls in as the first hole weakens the rest of the ice nearby.

If they fall in, the party will notice that there's a surprisingly strong current in this section of the sewer. The infinisewer has been in use for centuries, most of it under Percy's maintenance, but he didn't notice when the sewer wall crumbled below the level of the ice in this section, so now there are several open holes leading into the frozen waters, and the tunnels are built straight through a strong ocean current.

Kriis: The demon merchant Kriis can insert a door leading to their shop basically anywhere, and has decided to do so here. Kriis sells several very valuable magic items for a minimum of ten or twenty thousand gold pieces, with some of their prices reaching into six digits. Kriis will trade a party member's soul for one item, but only if their soul isn't already spoken for (Warlocks need not apply). If the party returns to this spot later, the door to Kriis' shop has disappeared. If they get this encounter after Percy's clone has reset the table, they find only the chalk outline of a door with a chalk picture of a sign hanging on the front, which reads "closed for renovations."

Lava Flow: The sewage here pours into a huge pit of lava. In order to continue, the party must find some way to cross to one of the outflow pipes surrounding the pit. If they can all fly, have climb speeds, or can teleport the 200+ ft. from one end of the pit to the other, this will be no problem. Any party member who can't do one of these things will have to make DC 20 Athletics checks to climb across the slick walls, with lava dealing 20d6 fire damage at the start of a creature's turn, or when they enter it for the first time on their turn, waiting down below.

Mausoleum: The infinisewer has connected itself to the catacombs under Oldtown. Follow them far enough and you'll get to the crypts beneath the Temple of the Blood Pentarchy under Riverway, but much nearer is an old locked mausoleum containing the bones of a dark paladin. Unfortunately, this section is quite close to some tunnels that pass through Moil, the plane of necrotic energy and darkness, which means a lot of the skeletons have gotten up to walk around. The mausoleum is locked up tight and will require several minutes and some heavy duty mining equipment to bust open, and the walls have a lead core to thwart *Stone Shape* (lead is metal, not stone) and similar. Teleportation magic still works, so long as you don't need to see your destination. And hacking your way out with a pickaxe is much more plausible from inside, where you'll be alone once you deal with the skeletons, than it is from outside, where someone will probably notice and call the guard.

Messina Hideout: Some of the Messina's street level rogues use this place as a safehouse. It's just below the Gold District, and usually has at least a few rogues lying about ready to kill to keep its location secret.

Myconid Colony: A mostly-pacifist, mostly-isolationist colony of myconids has taken up residence in some forgotten corner of the sewers where they connect with the underground tunnels that connect to the Aranea Telam, the ancient underground highways of the dark elven empire.

Otyugh Nest: Percy bred up a sizable population of otyughs down here. The idea was they'd help keep the sewers flowing by devouring any solid matter that wound up in the tunnels. It worked, with the only downside being that the sewers are completely overrun with otyughs. This is a nest where several of the beasts will viciously defend their eggs. Unfortunately, the only way to continue on the party's way is straight through the nest.

Percy Clone: Percy created several clones of himself to help construct the massive sewers beneath Lumitas. Once work was complete, he remerged with all of them, save one. Lost in the infinisewer, the last clone eventually became more comfortable here than on the surface. Now he considers the infinisewer to be his domain, and makes a point of scrambling its layout any time he feels someone is getting too familiar with it. If this encounter is rolled and the Percy clone is not defeated or persuaded to do otherwise, the whole encounter table is reset.

Polymorph Overflow: The sewage here glows. Several polymorph mutants and horrors are around, and anyone who falls in immediately takes one tier of Flesh Warp. The CON save to control the warp is 15 instead of 10. There's an exit nearby to the ruins of Percy's old tower.

Polymorph Plague Horror: Sometimes one of your old successes can help cover up a fresh failure. So it was that a lot of the Polymorph Plague horrors that escaped quarantine in Percy's Quarter got shoved down here into the sewers, where they mostly got eaten by otyughs or starved to death. Reservoirs of the plague down here (mainly otyughs and certain types of fungus) periodically reinfect people traversing the sewers, and some of the plague horrors have some mutation that renders them immune to aging, allowing them to survive indefinitely down here, provided they can stay alive.

Ratling Patrol: A couple of ratlings are patrolling near here. They are very eager to lead anyone they come across to a nearby ladder leading up to Rattleburg, and do not approve of anyone who insists on pushing on through the sewers instead.

Ratling Repair Crew: A tunnel has collapsed here, maybe as a result of those bulettes that have been digging around lately. Several ratlings are trying to fix it to open the sewers up again, but it's going to take weeks unless someone can provide some kind of magical assistance. The cave-in has only affected about 15 ft. of the tunnel, so creatures capable of teleporting to spaces they can't see will likely be able to get through. The cave-in is also not watertight, let alone airtight, so spells like *Gaseous Form* will also allow a creature to pass through. A burrow speed would also solve the problem, although bear in mind that burrow speeds do not leave behind usable tunnels by default.

Rat Swarm: A surging, swarming tide of rats, thousands in total, comes down the tunnel straight towards the party. There's no magic behind this. If you live in a major city, a rat swarm of this size gathers somewhere under your feet every now and again.

Rat Town: Congratulations, you've found them. Ratlings are suspicious of outsiders under the best of circumstances, and certainly won't allow strangers to pass right through their main population center. The town swarms with thousands of ratlings, but most of them are non-combatants. Even so, they can muster hundreds of rats to fight. Ratlings aren't very strong individually, and a party stacked deep with spells like *Fireball*, *Spirit Guardians*, and *Sickening Radiance* might be able to win anyway. The party might also be able to talk their way through. If they've already made friends with the ratlings, this encounter basically clears itself.

Rictus Friends Backdoor: A corridor here is paved differently from the rest of the sewers. Unlike the *Stone Shaped* walls of the rest of the sewer, this corridor was paved by laborers ordinary in every way except that they were zombies under the command of the Rictus Friends. They guard this corridor still, a swarm of zombies compelled to kill any who come near. At the other end of the corridor is a backdoor leading into the cellars of the Rictus Manor in Oldtown.

Rictus Friends Hideout: This is a lavishly decorated hideout in active use by the Rictus Friends, with access to the neighborhood of Riverway nearby. A red carpet has been thrown across the grimy brick floor, with a fancy mahogany table and chairs with silverware and candelabras and such put neatly away nearby. It is always guarded by at least a few ghoul servants, and may be in use by one or two of the Rictus Friends at the exact moment the party arrives, either plotting an abduction or with a bound captive on the table to be eaten alive.

Sewer Wraith: Some parts of the sewers go through the shadow plane of Moil, where necrotic energy is strong. People who die down here get reanimated as undead, sometimes powerful ones, basically automatically. Someone died down here a while ago, and is now a sewer wraith filled with hateful envy for anyone who isn't bound to a necrotically charged stretch of sewer for all eternity.

Teleporter Nexus: Percy created a bunch of teleporter gates to link different parts of the sewer system together so he'd be able to navigate it quickly for repairs and such. Because the infinisewer reaches across multiple planes, each teleporter gate was constructed next to a door leading to the Astral Sea. Bits and pieces of sewer float, disembodied, in the Astral Sea. A flying creature can easily get from one section to another, each section containing a door that leads to the teleportation circle for a different plane. Without the ability to cast 6th level spells, the party won't be able to travel anywhere in the infinisewer the way Percy could, but they can at least use this Teleporter Nexus to reach any of the planar connectors to Moil, Reverie, the Elemental Planes of Fire, Water, or Air, the material plane, or any other planes Percy might've hooked the sewer up to.

Troll Hermit: A troll has gotten trapped down here, and eating a combination of ratlings and otyughs has turned it into a bulky, many-tentacled, but shockingly sneaky and clever monster. It is extremely territorial, as both ratlings and otyughs do not much like outsiders.

Oldtown

As the name implies, Oldtown is the oldest part of the city, which means it's packed in ludicrously tight from a thousand years of compression, home to some of the city's most ancient landmarks, yet also considerably less grand and decadent compared to the Gold District, which was built to accommodate the rising merchant class after the city began to establish itself as a major trade power along the Weskven Coast.

Everyone powerful and important established new headquarters in what was, at the time (several hundred years ago), the more open space of Riverway and the Gold District, which means that Oldtown has the guild halls of those who couldn't make it into those other neighborhoods before there was no room left. Guild halls still in Oldtown are the Brewers' Guild, the Bakers' Guild, the Tanners' Guild, the Saddlers' Guild, the Armorers' Guild, the Locksmiths' Guild, and the Carpenters' Guild. These guilds mostly serve the locals in Lumitas, which means they were mostly left behind by guilds that were more directly dealing with the booming overseas trade.

Every other Lumitas guild once had a guild hall in Oldtown. Some of them have been converted to row housing, with thin walls thrown up between tiny apartments. Others are still used as sub-headquarters for their respective guilds to serve Oldtown specifically, like the Tailors' Guild which, despite its new(er) Riverway offices, still has lots of tailors in Oldtown, seeing as how the inhabitants do still need clothes. The old Barristers' Guild has been converted into the mansion used as hideout for the Rictus Friends. It's dilapidated on the outside, decadently gothic on the inside, and conveniently located to large numbers of poor people who can be disappeared without making too much of a fuss.

Percy's Quarter

Percy's Quarter is a mess. It was always a bit of a mess, even in the days when Percy was keeping things functional. Back then, people kind of assumed that Percy just completely abandoned every project as soon as he lost interest in it, leaving the people of Percy's Quarter to figure out how to live with it. Over time, the people who couldn't stand the instability left, and were replaced by people who considered the magical wonders Percy created to be worth the low but ever-present possibility that a hydra with healing venom might get loose and trap them in a constant state of regenerating agony as it tried to rip people to shreds to eat them only to find that the missing pieces kept growing back because of its own restorative powers, which would go on until Percy caught up with the thing and got it back under control.

The Dark Council came to power during Percy's Polymorph Plague, and he was so busy trying to keep the plague under control that he hardly noticed the mayoral government being overthrown and a new oligarchic council installed to replace them. In the aftermath, he quietly accepted the status quo, but only as a cover for his last mad project, the Manufactotem, a golem workshop that was, itself, a golem and made more golems, which he hoped to use to create an army to overthrow the Lumitas Council and restore democracy to the city. The Manufactotem partly worked - it seized control of Percy's Quarter and successfully repelled all efforts by the new Lumitas Council to retake it. Unfortunately, in order to contain the experiments gone awry, Percy's Quarter has some rather effective walls enveloping it, and the Manufactotem is as incapable of breaching those defenses to get out as the Lumitas Council is to get in. The Manufactotem, in any case, seems to be happy to play the long game, veeeeeeery slowly harvesting the materials of the entire Quarter to convert them into more and more golems.

Percy disappeared after the Manufactotem failed, and now the Quarter knows just how much effort he was putting into maintaining his experiments. Without him, the Elemental Engine has started to spin out of control, spitting elemental hazards out into a two city block radius, the Polymorph Plague periodically resurges from reservoirs in the sewers, and Percy's Tower is an absolute death trap that nobody emerges from alive.

The Quarter remains inhabited. The failing experiments tend to affect only parts of the neighborhood, the main exception being the Manufactotem, which might dismantle your house

or tear the buttons off your shirt, but is not interested in organic matter. The other main exception is the Polymorph Plague, which affects the entire city and sporadic chunks of multiple other planes, since it travels through Percy's interdimensional sewer system, so while the Quarter is technically affected, so is the rest of the city. As such, the Quarter is not a bad place to go to escape the Council's rule. On the other hand, this also means that the Grave Society and House Evnesh both hunt pretty freely here. Slavery and serial murder might technically be illegal (even for aristocrats victimizing commoners), but the lawlessness of Percy's Quarter cuts both ways.

Rattleburg

Rattleburg is the bad part of town. Oldtown is poor, but has a certain respectability to it. Many of the city's oldest landmarks are there. Rattleburg is a shantytown whose purpose was always to house the people who couldn't afford to live anywhere else. Mayor Sardorrak, who ran the city immediately before the Dark Council's takeover, made some efforts to improve the neighborhood, but the Lumitas Council discontinued them and now most of the bigger rooms in the nicer row houses he built have been subdivided back into sardine-packed size. The bones of the buildings are still sturdy, at least, and they remain the nicest places to live in Rattleburg - although another way of phrasing that is that the rest of the teetering shanty towers of the neighborhood are even worse.

Riverway

Riverway grew up along the shores of the river as it flowed out west to the ocean. It's full of piers, warehouses, and inns to serve the river barges sailing in, as well as row houses for the longshoremen, and then bakers and tailors and blacksmiths to service them. Six guilds have halls in Riverway, the ones who were wealthy enough during Lumitas' rise to prominence as a trade power to be able to construct larger, fancier buildings, but not wealthy enough to do so right next to the market in Gold District. Those guilds are the Innkeepers' Guild, the Tailors' Guild, the Blacksmiths' Guild, the Cobblers' Guild, the Masons' Guild, and the Butchers' Guild.

Riverway is also where the Church of the Radiant Choir established their temple, seeking to bring the light of the (at the time) new and growing religion to Lumitas. When the Dark Council took over, the Black Prince installed the Church of the Blood Pentarchy, arch-rivals of the Radiant Choir, in their place, and though a grand Pentarchy Cathedral has since been built in the Gold District, the current Bishop Balzac of the Church of the Blood Pentarchy prefers to keep his headquarters in the building seized from defeated enemies. He still goes to the Cathedral to hold services on Fridays (the day of Pentarchy worship), but later in the afternoon, after the morning services he holds at the Temple.

Mithras Forest

Locations of Mithras Forest

High elves in the east: The eastern fringe of Mithras Forest is primarily held by the high elves. A hundred years ago, the high elves were the most prominent of the elves of Elluevian Forest, until the Fey Queen came amongst them, spreading paranoia and madness with her supernatural powers of illusion. She pit elven factions against one another, picked one faction in particular to consolidate around, and led an extermination of the rest. The high elves were a significant component of the elven faction she had created, but a powerful core of elite high elven warriors and wizards escaped her retribution in Elluevian and sought revenge on her for the destruction of the people.

These high elves invaded Mithras Forest after the Fey Queen entered and took over the local wood elven population as she had Elluevian, striking at the heart of the Fey Queen's power, and also at the literal heart of the Fey Queen. They had far overstretched themselves to deal this crippling blow, however, and were forced to withdraw largely to the eastern fringe of Mithras Forest. Because the Fey Queen is a fey and therefore impossible to truly kill, the shattered shards of her heart remain scattered throughout the forest, and she will reawaken if all five are ever reunited. To prevent this, the high elves have secured the Shard of Desire in their arcane citadel within the boughs of the eastern forest, keeping the Shard in an anti-magic field. Here, the Shard is unable to affect the forest or the other Shards. So long as it remains held here, the Fey Queen's ability to influence the forest through her unconscious dreaming is relatively limited and undirected.

The high elves don't have total control over the eastern fringe. The Court of Clouds, a fey court dedicated to proving their strength against ferocious monsters, have an outpost here, though it is within the high elven perimeter. Part of the perimeter itself is held by the Court of Winter, another fey court, which holds secure the Shard of Sorrow. They're about as cheerful as that implies, but serving as host to the piece of the Fey Queen that most keenly feels regret, they, too, seek to prevent the Shards from being reunited. Nevertheless they refuse to cooperate with the high elves, seeing them (not entirely incorrectly) as untrustworthy and hubristic, convinced that they and only they can keep the Fey Queen contained. The Winter Court and the high elves are in a state of cold war (ha ha ha ha) with one another, with the ice citadel of the Winter Court too lethally cold to be penetrated by high elven magic, and the high elves too powerful for the Winter Court to confront in the field.

The Sea of Tears: The Sea of Tears is on the northern end of Mithras Forest, but is cut off from the forest's edge by the Court of Winter on the northeast and by the ocean on the northwest. Because the Sea of Tears remains under the control of the Fey Queen's allies (mostly), it is sometimes considered part of the forest heart. The "sea" itself is a saltwater lake caused by the weeping of a willow, which has now drowned large sections of the basin. A few areas still remain abovewater, like a mushroom forest taken over by the sadistic fey of the Court of Agony, a second fairy village where satyrs and nymphs continue the party briefly interrupted when the first fairy village was flooded, and the fortress of the stone-armored Grey Men, who seek to impose dour authority on everything.

Within the Sea of Tears is a flooded forest home to the Serpents' Library, where the Court of Serpents guard many secrets. Most notably, the Court of Serpents are the only ones left who know how to navigate the Crimson Hedge to approach the castle of the Fey Queen.

The southern fringe: The southern fringe of Mithras Forest is a war zone between just about every faction in the wood. The Crimson Hedge's southern wall is the northern boundary of the fringe, and her roses patrol the area, and while the fortress of the Red Knight is usually considered to be in the forest heart, it's close enough to the southern fringe that he makes regular excursions here.

High elves and dark elves use the southern fringe as the primary front of their war for control of the forest, the northern route being almost completely blocked off by the Sea of Tears now. The two elven factions are the dominant force in the fringe, but because neither is able to get a lasting advantage on the other, weaker factions are able to grow and sometimes even thrive in the cracks.

The Crossroads Court mostly originate from this area (kind of the other way around, actually - this area mostly originates from the Crossroads Court, the association between its fey inhabitants dragging landmarks closer together because that is how fairy geography works), and though they are scattered and lethargic without their leader (currently lost in the Crossroads, go figure), they still skirmish with the elves.

The green dragon Vyndragal makes his lair here as well. He does not do much besides jealously guard his own territory and occasionally slaughter an elven garrison to keep local forces off-balance. There are few places an adult dragon can go and not be the biggest target for adventurers in the area, and Vyndragal is invested in making sure that he remains a secondary concern for any would-be heroes in Mithras Forest by keeping the elf war going.

Dark elves in the west: In the western thickets of Mithras Forest there is a major underground fortress of the dark elves from the era of the dark elven empire of the Third Age (two full ages ago - it's very old). The modern dark elves have refurbished it for purposes of raiding Mithras Forest ever since the Fey Queen merged it with the fairy plane of Reverie and then got stabbed into a coma by the high elves, leaving Mithras permanently ensorcelled. The confusing paths and distortion of time and memory within the region mean the dark elves are able to raid with impunity.

The considerable inherent powers of the fey residents and the interference of the powerful high elven elites means that the dark elves station their own most elite hunters and raiders in the fortress beneath the western thickets, striking out at the surface world to capture elves and fey alike to be sold down the tunnels (fey aren't usually of much use as slaves, but the difficulty of capturing and holding them makes them valuable trophies to dark elven aristocrats).

The dark elves' Chirurgeon, a psychopathic doctor who conducts arcanomedical experiments upon captives, is entrusted with the Fey Queen's Shard of Terror, as its aura of dread and paranoia helps keep the Chirurgeon's captives from conspiring with one another to escape. The Chirurgeon has recently lost it to the fey Court of Agony, however, cruel fey who delight in suffering. Luckily for the Chirurgeon, with the Shard of Desire held in anti-magical stasis, the other Shards are much less proactive, and the Court of Agony haven't bothered taking the Shard of Terror far, giving the Chirurgeon time to try and recapture it.

Wood elves in the center: The wood elves remain mostly loyal to the Fey Queen (at this point, by definition - dark or high elves who remained loyal to the Fey Queen during the schism a hundred years ago are by now basically just wood elves), and mostly control the heart of the forest. Many fey (also predominantly loyal to the Fey Queen) also live in the heart of the forest.

The forest heart holds two shards of the Fey Queen's heart. The Shard of Wrath is kept in the Red Castle of the Red Knight, regenerating the Knight whenever he is slain to go about bringing aimless, restless vengeance upon the Fey Queen's enemies. The Shard of Joy keeps the main wood elven population centers bathed in an aura of self-sustaining cultist toxic positivity.

In the center of the center is the castle of the Fey Queen, surrounded by the Crimson Hedge. The Crimson Hedge is a maze of hedges stained red by the blood of the creatures they reach out to ensnare and destroy, the hedge walls themselves being fairly animate and the roses in particular being fully autonomous, mobile creatures that can and sometimes do venture away from the Hedge to find fresh blood.

Past the Hedge is the castle, where lies the sleeping Fey Queen, comatose since the shattering of her heart. The high elven strike team who shattered her heart is still here, cut off from their allies on the eastern fringe and fortifying and refortifying the castle against the wood elves and fey outside. After a hundred years, the castle is a nightmare to siege, and the fey and wood elves (the latter mostly well within the range of the Shard of Joy) as unfocused as they are, they aren't putting up any serious efforts at maintaining siege lines.

The Crossroads: Mithras Forest is simultaneously part of the mortal world and the fairy plane of Reverie. On the eastern fringe where the high elves maintain their perimeter, it is firmly mortal territory and regular laws of physics apply (subject to whatever modification happens as a result of ordinary arcane magic, but no more so than anywhere else). Most of Mithras Forest is in between, with rules of geographic adjacency and so on being mutable based on personal relationships and collective reality, but only slowly - a lot of people have to agree that two things should be closer together than they currently are, and have to remain in agreement for a long time, before those things will actually migrate towards one another. The Crossroads is the other side, firmly in the fairy world of Reverie.

In the Crossroads, locations do not have a consistent position relative to one another. Things associated with one another tend to be closer together, but a skilled intuitive navigator can bring things closer together or further apart by personally associating or disassociating them. There

are limits to this power in that, for example, it's hard to convince yourself that some place you are looking directly at isn't close enough to be looked at directly, and it's damn near impossible not to associate someone shooting arrows at you with being near enough to shoot arrows at you, on account of how the arrows tend to hold your attention. It's relatively easy to decide that your destination is just over the hill from where you are right now, though.

In fact, the biggest problem with navigating the Crossroads is that it's way too easy to rearrange destinations, which means stray thoughts and wandering fancies can rewrite the geography, and not necessarily in convenient ways. The princess of the forest, Celawyn, has been lost in the Crossroads for nearly a hundred years because of this exact problem.

Created at the moment the high elves shattered the Fey Queen's heart, Celawyn is an avatar of the parts of the Fey Queen who never gave up on the world, who wanted to write meaning and wonder into the world and never became disillusioned with the mortal world's gruesomely mechanical nature, never settled for bringing raw chaos when the existing mathematical structures of mortal reality proved unyielding to narrative structures. An echo of the Fey Queen, her own state is tied to the state of the Fey Queen's heart. When all five shards were scattered, she had a distant but uninterrupted blend of regular emotions, and though she is preoccupied with flower crowns and ballroom gowns on the surface, this facade conceals a keen intellect and force of will, which she used to build up the Crossroads Court, a faction dedicated to driving out the high elves and the dark elves, keeping the Fey Queen herself comatose, and carrying on her original mission to bring meaning and wonder to the mortal world, on whatever scale that proved possible.

Once the high elves got their hands on the Shard of Desire and locked it in their anti-magic chamber in their arcane citadel, Celawyn's ability to want things out of reach dwindled quickly. She was unfortunate enough to be in the Crossroads at the time, and once she lost her ability to care particularly strongly about long term goals, her ability to imagine the Crossroads into a particular configuration went with it. She wanders aimlessly now, at the mercy of other people's reimagining of Crossroads geography.

The Illusions of the Fey Queen

The Fey Queen is a *dark lord*. In Weskven, that is a term referring to a specific collection of thirteen extremely powerful villains who came together to form the Dark Council a hundred years ago and conquered essentially the entire world together (and there are about three other individuals sometimes considered to be new dark lords for achieving a similar level of power in the century since). In the context of this setting and therefore this document, dark lord has a meaning similar to "evil god." Even if you are using this for another setting where the term "dark lord" doesn't carry that weight, the Fey Queen herself still holds that power. She is the queen of enchantment, the master of illusion, the dark lord of chaos.

Fortunately for our intrepid heroes, she's also about as dead as a fey can get right now, with her heart shattered and one shard of it (the one most responsible for proactive behavior, at that) contained in an anti-magic chamber. Unfortunately, even a comatose and dreaming Fey Queen exerts considerable influence upon her surroundings, and Mithras Forest is full of illusions of the Fey Queen.

The Fey Queen's dreaming subconscious intentionally directs these illusions to manipulate people in the woods to serving her ends, and anywhere in Mithras Forest outside the furthest fringe perimeter of the high elves can be home to illusions. Because of how long the Fey Queen's power has been saturating Mithras, there's no limit to how many her illusions can be or how long they can last. Because she is a god-like master of illusion, her illusions are effectively impossible for mortals to see through by noticing out of place details or similar. There is no save DC against her illusions - automatic successes like truesight still work, and the players might work out what is and isn't an illusion based on their own logical deduction, but the Fey Queen's illusions are too perfect to ever be seen through by mistakes in their presentation (Doylistically, this is because calling for INT saves against illusion every five minutes would get very tedious and also give the players some very strong hints as to what is and isn't an illusion - including the fact that illusions are *everywhere* in Mithras Forest).

Illusions are still illusions, and even the Fey Queen's do have some limits. Firstly, they are fragile - hard contact with physical objects shatters them. They can't actually pick things up, open doors, fight in battles, or so on. The Fey Queen can try to cover for this by making illusionary objects or creatures for the illusions to pick up, open, fight against, etc. etc., but those will themselves be illusions that will shatter on hard contact. So, for example, if the Fey Queen has an illusion traveling with the party pretending to be an ally of some kind and they are attacked by a high elf patrol, the Fey Queen can add one or two illusionary high elves for the ally to fight, but if the party attack the illusion and hit, the illusion will shatter. If the illusionary ally has been dealing damage to the illusionary enemy only for that enemy to shatter instantly on contact with an attack from a real party member, the party might have some questions as to how that happened. Of course, in order to shatter the illusion, the party has to hit it, and if there's risk of that, the Fey Queen can have the illusionary enemy retreat, vanish inexplicably, or "die."

The second major limitation of the Fey Queen's illusions is less on her actual power and more on her will - with the Shard of Desire contained in a high elven anti-magic chamber, her will to make long term plans is badly inhibited. The Fey Queen's Shards of Wrath and Joy are still uninhibited, bathing Mithras Forest in their power and generating illusions (and other magical effects, like the Red Knight), so the Fey Queen still makes impulsive and comparatively short-sighted plays. She's a sufficiently adept liar to keep plates spinning for a while even without much long term planning, and because her long term desires were shut down by supernatural means and not because of a mundane personality deficit, she is aware that she has been crippled and avoids situations where long term planning would be necessary. Lack of desire has only made patience easier, and so she's happy to dismiss her illusions altogether until opportunities for short term advancement of her goals present themselves.

A third limitation of the Fey Queen's power is not so much a real limitation, in that regular illusions and enchantments can't really do this anyway, but just something worth noting as a power she does *not* have despite some implications of her other abilities: The Fey Queen cannot rewrite memories on a timescale relevant to the campaign (unless she is fully awake and restored and using the relevant powers from her stat block). The Fey Queen has dreamed memories of people, places, and things that never happened into the inhabitants of Mithras Forest, but that's because she's had a century to work on them. She can't do that to the party within the span of a few months or even a few years.

Her highest priority is to get the Shard of Desire out from under the high elves, and to cause inconvenience and grief to the high elves in general. Her illusions frame the high elves as tyrannical, something the high elves help along with their hubristic presumption that only they can keep the Fey Queen contained. Depending on the party's disposition, the Fey Queen might present an illusion to them who is allegedly unrelated to the Fey Queen but stokes antagonism towards the high elves for other reasons, or she might present an illusion to them that is openly an illusionary emissary of the Fey Queen, presenting herself as an innocent victim of elven machinations, a princess locked in a tower whose ability to yearn for better things has been taken from her by high elves who feared her power (something which is technically true - she's just leaving out the part that the high elves sacrificed gallons of elven blood to accomplish this because she had, at that point, a decade-long track record of yearning for anarchy and carnage).

Her second priority is to kill individual members of the Crossroads Court and replace them with illusions, but only if they're alone (she definitely won't do it right in front of the party, for example) so that no one will know they've been replaced. She can't paper over the miraculous reappearance of a seemingly slain fey (even though fey are absolutely capable of that kind of thing) because everyone in the Crossroads Court knows how her illusions work, and while they only very rarely have the ability to see through them by checking for small details, all of them know that if an ally is killed and then mysteriously reappears unharmed, that is definitely a Fey Queen illusion even though it's theoretically possible for fey to actually do that.

The Crossroads Court are also the closest thing to a real alternative to either maintaining the status quo (with perhaps the removal of the high or dark elves, whatever difference that makes) or else unleashing the full-powered Fey Queen upon the world again. Because they are an actual third option, they are a direct threat to the Fey Queen's efforts to present her illusions as a third option, and as such the Fey Queen wishes to take them over without anyone noticing. Once most or all of the Crossroads Court's prominent members are her illusions, she can use them to direct the party towards reuniting the shards of her shattered heart, probably by spinning some lie about how it can be used against her somehow (it can't be - the only thing you can do with the Fey Queen's reunited heart is threaten to shatter it again, and while she would be *super pissed* if you did that, the current state of the forest is that her heart is already broken and scattered, so it would only be restoring the status quo).

The Fey Queen doesn't like the dark elves either, but they're a comparatively low priority because the Shard they control (the Shard of Terror) is not even fully under their control anymore, but also because the dark elves fit so easily into her narrative anyway. They're her enemies, and they're blatantly evil psychopaths.

The Fey Queen has a lot of options for using her illusions to convince the party to do her dirty work, provided that the party doesn't realize they're being fooled by illusions. If she creates a high elf defector who wants to help them overthrow the tyrannical high elven commanders of the citadel and claims that the Shard of Desire is the source of their power (it isn't), and the party later on finds out this is basically all a lie, the Fey Queen can have the illusion "die" or "teleport away" or something, and the next illusion she throws at them won't be at any increased risk of being caught. If the party are getting hostile to both the high elves and dark elves, the Fey Queen can send an illusion of a wood elf (probably best to avoid sending an actual wood elf, because a hundred years of Shard of Joy induced cultism makes them kind of unreliable in the long term) to claim they're a third way faction whose home has been invaded by other elves (none of the elves are indigenous to the forest, but the party probably doesn't know that).

If the party are getting sick of all this elf/fairy enchantment intrigue bullshit, she can create an illusion of a gruff dwarf from Dammerung who attempts to create rapport as a fellow outsider. If the party have come to trust a particular NPC, the Fey Queen can create an illusion of that NPC in particular, and as long as the real version isn't around, she can probably pass them off as the real thing. The Fey Queen loves to present herself as an alternative, a third path when the party is sick of their other options (even if those options are just a bunch of other Fey Queen illusions).

These options fall away sharply if the party realizes that any of them are illusionary. Once the party catches on that some of the lying NPCs aren't just regular flesh-and-blood liars but illusions of a specific omnipresent liar, it probably won't take them too long to start developing methods of checking for illusions and employing them before listening to what anyone has to say about anything. If they know how illusions work (anyone trained in Arcana would!) they can test it with hard impact from solid objects, and while there are some tricks that can get around this (for example, reinforcing the illusion with a solid object - maybe the illusion is that there's a talking face on an otherwise real tree, so the illusion is reinforced by the real wood directly behind it), the party can just resolve to ignore anything that might plausibly be an illusion proofed against illusion tests. If they're very paranoid, the party can always demand anyone claiming to be an ally with valuable information follow them outside the forest to relay the details. The Fey Queen's illusions can't leave Mithras.

The Fey Queen also has a ubiquitous presence in Mithras Forest that gives her massive amounts of information to work with from the moment the party breach the high elven perimeter and get within her area of influence. She can see and hear everything they do unless they are using magic that prevents divinations, which almost nobody bothers with except for special occasions. This power is matched with a significant weakness, which is that the Fey Queen has almost no idea what's going on in the world outside, her last direct contact outside the forest

having been a hundred years ago, and now she gets only brief snippets of outside information from the rare few who get past the high elven perimeter.

If you're using Mithras Forest as part of its native Weskven setting, then the Fey Queen has no idea that the Lich King has broken the truce in Skyreach Kingdom (the Lich's March under attack from the skeletons is part of the very edge of the forest that's outside her influence). She has no idea about the new dark lords, like the Efreeti Sultan, who have emerged after the conquests of the original thirteen. Most notably, in the fairly likely event that the party got here after two or three other regions in the Weskven setting, she has no idea what impact their exploits have had on regional politics there.

For example, if the party started in Darkwood, then went to Lumitas, and only then came to Mithras, she would have no idea what became of the starmetal in Darkwood even if the Aldeel settlers are now pumping out a steady stream of superweapons destabilizing the entire continent, and no idea that the Lumitas council has been radically altered by the party's meddling there, sending shockwaves through the entire coastal trade network as Lumitas realigns themselves with other city states and powers.

If you're using Mithras Forest in another setting, the Fey Queen will be similarly ignorant of any changes in the greater world that happened less than one hundred years ago. She can pass off illusions of Mithras Forest natives as being sheltered or suffering the same information blockade the Fey Queen herself is (i.e. they don't get much news thanks to the high elven perimeter), but any illusion trying to claim to be an outsider can be caught in the lie because they have no idea what's been going on in the last hundred years, including very recent events.

The Fey Queen is close to physically helpless as long as the shards of her heart remain divided. She has a few loyal and fairly proactive fey, like the Red Knight and the roses, a few less proactive but still loyal minions, like the wood elves or the satyrs and nymphs of the fairy village, and she has a few fey who are nominally loyal but who have mostly forgotten her, like the Court of Serpents in the Sea of Tears. These minions notwithstanding, her military power pales in comparison to either the high elves or the dark elves and she probably cannot do more than inconvenience a level 10-14 party through direct confrontation with her troops. Her power is purely in her illusions and lies.

That might be enough.

Ranseur Mountains

The Dwarven Clans

There are traditionally five dwarven clans in the Ranseur Mountains: The Dul-Khazag, Mal-Khazag, Roz-Khazag, Run-Khazag, and Shin-Khazag. They are, technically, five fully distinct nations with none of them ruling over the other (though you wouldn't always know it to talk to the Mal-Khazag) and no official governing body between the five of them. They are united in the face of external threats, but even that union is in some cases tenuous, especially in the case of the Dul-Khazag, who live deep below the earth and have a more strained connection physically and therefore politically with the other four, and the Roz-Khazag, who at this point have lost so much of their territory to the Hive Queen that they are beginning to question whether holding the Ranseur Mountains at all is tenable (it is mostly Roz-Khazag dwarves who left for the new Aldeel colony in the Darkwood, for example).

All five of the dwarven clans are practitioners of the five dwarven crafts: Smithing, masonry, woodworking, brewing, and war. Each of them maintains a separate guild dedicated to each of these crafts, and every dwarf is born into one of those five guilds. The connection between the job done and the guild you're doing it for can sometimes be a reach (a lot of dwarves following the tradition of brewing grow carrots), but the guilds are the primary means of association across clans, and the fact that the five guilds are shared across the five clans, not divided up between them, is a large part of why the clans remain on such good terms with each other.

Leadership in the guilds is always determined by a vote of the masters, and traditionally it passes to the most senior master of the guild, although it is not unheard of for the most senior to be passed over if they are seen as particularly unsuitable, especially if they profess their own lack of desire to do so, or alternatively if some more junior master is seen as especially eminent, as is sometimes the case for heroic soldiers in the Guild of War. Each clan votes for their own set of five grandmasters, who then come together to vote from amongst their number a guild lord of the entire guild across all five guilds. Likewise, the grandmasters of the five guilds within a single clan will appoint from amongst their number a clan lord for their clan. It is possible and not even uncommon for a single dwarf to be both guild lord of their guild and clan lord of their clan.

Dul-Khazag: The Dul-Khazag, or "deep dwarves," live below ground level, not in mountains but underneath the earth. The only real undercity the Dul-Khazag have is Glimmerhold, but they also hold a powerful fortress at Sorrowsworn far below the Mal-Khazag undercity of Underhollow, and they are the primary inhabitants of the lower levels of Ironpeak undercity, which bleeds seamlessly into a Mal-Khazag undercity as you go up the levels.

The Dul-Khazag are fortified against the dark elves of the Matriarch, a foe that they have long been left to hold against alone due to the long and narrow tunnels connecting them to the surface. They are embittered towards the rest of the dwarf clans.

Mal-Khazag: The Mal-Khazag, or "mountain dwarves," live within walking distance of the surface, but most mountain dwarves don't see sunlight more than once a month. They are the dwarves' dwarves, keepers of the Great Forge in Grimreach, the forge of the First Giant, the

dwarves' most ancient and sacred site. Legend says the First Giant forged the dwarves, the goliaths, and the true giants in the fires of that forge.

The Mal-Khazag are the bitterest enemies of the Hive Queen, who seized their capital in Kingspeak one hundred years ago. They have since recentered their government in Grimreach, which agitates the other dwarves somewhat, as Grimreach is the heritage of all dwarves. Being an undercity, it was always primarily the domain of the Mal-Khazag, and certainly at the time of the fall of Kingspeak, the other dwarves were feeling conciliatory towards the mountain dwarves. That was a long time ago, but the dwarves as a whole have many more important things to worry about than arguments about the appropriateness of having a specific clan capital in Grimreach.

In addition to Grimreach, the Mal-Khazag also have undercities at Ironpeak, Copperpeak, Valor Mountain, and Underhollow, as well as smaller undertowns at Harrow Mountain, Snowspear, and Snowvale. In addition to Kingspeak, their formerly held undercities now overrun by the Hive Queen include Agnar's Sorrow, Coalsheart, and imminently Farpeak.

Roz-Khazag: The Roz-Khazag, or "hill dwarves," live in caves adjacent to the surface and spend a lot of time farming. They are militarized into militias and fight continuous skirmish battles with hive patrollers and sweepers as the Hive Queen probes for weaknesses. Their territory has been steadily contracting for a hundred years as the Hive Queen has steadily expanded her surface presence, and is now the near-uncontested ruler of most of the slopes of the Ransour Mountains, with the dwarves putting up a final line of defense from Sentinel Ridge to Southgate, centered on keeping the sacred shrines of Rune Ridge safe.

With nearly all their ancestral territory falling outside this shield, the Roz-Khazag have been pushed uncomfortably close to the mountain dwarves' walls. The hill dwarves live near and are friendly with the ever-hungry hill giants, and often trade their ample crops to the hill giants in exchange for their ample strength in construction projects and war. The association with the dim-witted hill giants has not helped the hill dwarves' reputation with the mountain dwarves.

The Roz-Khazag still hold the territories of the Ranchlands, the Barley Hills, Deep Hill (against all odds), and Prosper Hills, with the latter being their *de facto* capital. To the Hive Queen they have lost their *de jure* capital in the Garden Hills as well as Lowmoot, the Blue Hills, the Dark Hills, Snake Bone Canyon, the Red Valley, and countless surface settlements on mountains whose interiors are ruled by other clans, like Kingspeak, Coalsheart, and Giant's Hold.

Run-Khazag: The Run-Khazag, or "rune dwarves," live on the peaks and ridges of the mountains, and maintain the sacred forges of Rune Ridge, their effective capital. Keepers of the most sacred traditions of the dwarves and furthest from their encroaching foes, the rune dwarves dispatch runesmiths to try and aid the other dwarves across the many fronts of their struggle against the Dark Council.

A clan of frost giants lives near the Run-Khazag of Snowvale, using the ever-snowy peaks of this tallest of mountains as home and launching raids against the Tomte Hegemony. They also sometimes pillage the ruins of dwarven undercities overrun by the Hive Queen like Kingspeak or Agnar's Sorrow, which angers the mountain dwarves, since the frost giants are stealing things stolen from them. A cloud castle of the cloud giants also stops by semi-regularly as it floats across the continent, and the rune dwarves are on good terms with them.

While the rune dwarves have lost a few small settlements here and there, the bulk of their territory is far away from the Hive Queen's swarms. Even they are beginning to lose ground to her attack in a way, however, as the loss of Lightning Peak (a Mal-Khazag mountain) has driven the blue dragon Zagrallar to seize their shrines atop Snowspear Mountain.

Shin-Khazag: The Shin-Khazag, or "canyon dwarves," carve their homes into sheer cliff faces overlooking perilous heights. The tunnels go deep into the cliffsides, but being directly adjacent to the surface world means it's unusually common to have great windows (sometimes covered in stained glass) carved high up in the undercity, filling the streets with natural light. These windows are always located in hard-to-reach places of the mountain, however, because the canyon dwarves are those principally responsible for fending off the orcs of the Tomte Hegemony anytime some orc lord's second son raises an army to try and carve out a new fiefdom for himself.

The canyon dwarves are friends of the stone giants of Stoneshield Canyon and Giant's Hold, who have had to retreat from the Hive Queen's onslaught over and over again, first the ones from Giant's Hold retreating to Stoneshield, then all of them from Stoneshield Canyon to Boartusk Canyon, and now from Boartusk Canyon to Southgate and Sentinel Ridge.

The canyon dwarves still hold their mighty capital at Southgate, and still hold fortresses at the Ranchlands, Sentinel Ridge, Mount Varos, Ironpeak, Harrow Mountain, and overlooking Stonemeet, but they have lost their lands in Snake Bone Canyon, Stoneshield Canyon, Cliffugard, the Red Valley, and Giant's Hold.

The Hive Queen

The Hive Queen is a dark lord, one of the thirteen incredibly powerful villains of the Dark Council who took over nearly the entire world a hundred years ago. The title is sometimes also extended to similarly powerful villains who have emerged in the time since, like the Siren Queen, but the Hive Queen is an actual member of the Dark Council, and a founding member at that - one of the original six who conquered the Idyllburgs and turned them into the Goblin Fells. The Hive Queen went east from the Idyllburgs to the Ranseur Mountains with the Beast Lord, but the Beast Lord left her behind to continue on towards the arcane ruins of Glimmfall, leaving the Hive Queen to fight the dwarves on her own. Really, the Hive Queen by herself was plenty to deal with.

If you're extracting the Ranseur Mountains to use them in another setting, the Hive Queen may or may not have a backstory at all like that, and ultimately only two parts of it matter to the mountains: The Hive Queen arrived long ago to devour the dwarves and has been steadily grinding them down ever since, and that the Hive Queen is a terrifyingly powerful foe. The Hive Queen is a dark lord, a title which, in Weskven, has meaning similar to "evil god." While very few of them started so powerful, by the modern era they all have indefinite lifespans, are resilient to the point of being effectively impossible to kill, and lead armies capable of subjugating at least one sizable region of the Weskven continent. The words "dark lord" may or may not have that exact meaning in your own setting, but the Hive Queen still has that power.

The Hive Queen's power is less in her ability to personally decimate armies, and indeed her primary body isn't even especially terrifying for a party of 3-6 level 14 adventurers. Level 14 is *very strong*, even as adventurers go, but it's not unheard of. No, the Hive Queen's power is that she is a psionic hive mind. That particularly fearsome body she uses as the face of the swarm whenever she needs to make an appearance as part of the Dark Council is one of thousands of synapses, and her consciousness is distributed across all of them. Every single sensor in the swarm is the Hive Queen. The Hive Queen has a queen body she sends out to interact with other dark lords when necessary and also a spare back in her primary hive cluster to help lead the defense, and a third one that she sends around the front lines to intimidate enemies with her presence, and if any of them are ever destroyed she can just make a new one in the central cluster.

Defeating the Hive Queen is not a matter of reducing a specific body to 0 HP, but a matter of clearing a constantly regenerating swarm out from an entire hex map. Even then, it wouldn't be too hard for the Hive Queen to smuggle a few stray sensors through her back lines and into another region altogether to restart the hive somewhere else. This would still eliminate her as a threat for the foreseeable future - a weak hive with only a handful of synapses left needs to be very slow and cautious about where it finds its biomatter to make more or else it might get itself sacked and its remaining sensors cornered and finished off.

Even getting the Hive Queen *mostly* defeated in this way means killing a thousand or more synapse bodies with tens of thousands of hive monsters surrounding them, which raises the question: You and what army? 3-6 people trying to win a war of attrition with the bug swarm faction is obviously a bad idea, and luckily, there is an army of dwarves already engaged in total, existential war against the Hive Queen. Unluckily, they're losing, and at this point losing so badly that many of them have given up hope in winning and are resigned to delaying the inevitable and going out with honor when the time comes.

Sidebar: Ranseur Without Bugs

I anticipate that giant bug swarms are going to be kind of like psionics or gunpowder weapons: Some people are perfectly happy to fit them into fantasy settings and others are going to feel like they're inherently sci-fi and don't want them. If you like the idea of besieged dwarven undercities but don't like the idea of having them besieged by an arthropod hive mind, you can

flip the prominence of the Tomte invasion and the Hive Queen, having the Ranseur Mountains invaded by a powerful troll lord and their orc horde with the bugs as a sideshow or cut completely in favor of some other villain. There's no fully fleshed out orc army in this book, so you'll have to find one from another source, but it's not like "new orc stat blocks" is unexplored territory in 5e. If you're from the future and this series hasn't been canceled, maybe use the orcs from the Traveler's Guide to the Tomte Hegemony.

The Dark Council

The Dark Council stopped actively supporting one another's conquests a long time ago. In fact, one of them (the Lich King) has broken the old alliances completely and gone rogue. He's too far away to have much impact on the Ranseur Mountains, but the Hive Queen's neighbors are, at this point, distant and even opportunistic in their dealings with her.

The Troll King of the Tomte Hegemony to the east is sitting atop a pile of feudal border gore and has way too much to deal with keeping vassals in line to care if some of them make raids against the Hive Queen or the her dwarven nemeses, so the orcs east of the mountains take whatever sides they want. They are somewhat friendly to the dwarves, particularly the Roz-Khazag hill dwarves at Stonemeet, but that could turn on a dime, especially since they're already skirmishing with the Shin-Khazag canyon dwarves at Sentinel Ridge just a day's hike north of Stonemeet.

The Dark Elf Matriarch's forces come up from the Underdark below the mountains, mostly slave raiders from House Evnesh looking to capture some dwarves, although the militant House Viznir also has their eyes on the waning dwarven power and hope to conquer a chunk of the undercities, especially the territory of Dul-Khazag deep dwarves in the underdark. House Evnesh reliably sides with the Hive Queen because bugs cannot be enslaved (they're in a hive mind and individual bodies mean nothing to them), and House Viznir's loyalties lie with the Hive Queen as well, but only because right now she's in the lucrative position of controlling less territory in the Ranseur Mountains while having a larger army. She will probably win, but her enemy has large stretches of territory up for grabs, which means Viznir can seize some mines and maybe an undercity or two from a weakened foe distracted by a more powerful enemy, then present the seized territory to the Hive Queen as a *fait accompli*.

Neither the Troll King nor the Dark Elf Matriarch have a personal presence in the region nor does their history with the Hive Queen factor into their current situation at all, so if you're using the Ranseur Mountains for another setting, you can replace them with any kind of orcish/dark elven realm.

The Emirs of Elemental Earth

Before the coming of the Hive Queen, the dwarves were fairly heavily invested in the Elemental Plane of Earth. Dwarven mining colonies were (and are) spread throughout the main tunnels that pass from the Magma Peaks on one end to the Ooze Swamp on the other, with Emira Qaddira's famous City of Jewels in the center. These colonies were supported by portals from the Ranseur Mountains to the cities and palaces of various dao emirs who rule various sections of the Elemental Plane of Earth.

The outflow of dwarves to the Elemental Plane of Earth has been trickling upward but is stymied by an important problem: There's no food there. While it is possible to grow mushrooms in the undercities beneath the earth of the mortal world, that is because there are underground rivers and aquifers, to say nothing of the fact that a lot of dwarves farm regular surface crops that grow on the exterior of the hills they live in, or buy surface crops from those dwarves.

The Elemental Plane of Earth is not devoid of water and therefore of mortal food, and the conditions for growing mushrooms are even fairly good in the tunnels near the Ooze Swamp, but that is also the former domain of Fazira, the Emira of Pitch, whose enslaved workers drew pitch from the tarry swamps at the outskirts of the Ooze. Not only was Emira Fazira not a particularly good neighbor to have to begin with, she has since been overrun by the Hive Queen and trapped in a lamp, and now hive patrollers watch the tunnels most conducive to mushroom farming.

Making matters worse, the regions near the Ooze Swamp are also in somewhat close proximity to the heart of the Quiet Earth, a cult of elemental evil dedicated to destroying the mortal world by crushing it in an avalanche of earth. The Quiet Earth are normally relatively good neighbors in the Elemental Plane of Earth because they don't particularly mind earth elemental creatures like the dao and are sometimes even tolerant of genasi, but they're deeply suspicious of dwarves who, carved or not, breathe the hated air and eat organic food, the latter of which is such an indecipherable blend of elements as to be totally unidentifiable. Other mortal life is right out, including the mushrooms that dwarves and even genasi might want to grow there.

The other dao emirs have access to food for their mortal servants and slaves, brought in from the Feywild or grown with water imported from the Elemental Plane of Water or, if they're close enough to the Ooze Swamp, using their own mushroom caverns guarded from outside threats, but they also monopolize those resources.

The dao emirs are the cruelest and most brutal of all the genies, happily enslaving any mortal creature they think they can get away with, lacking even the sense of honor of the efreeti, let alone the comparative good will of the marids and djinni. Dwarven colonies in the tunnels have always been small, embattled, and usually near the fire giants' fortress in the Magma Peaks or the nearby stone giant citadel. The territory of the dao Emir Shariq lies directly between these two, and the pressure of the Ordning has forced him to play comparatively nice with the dwarves (although the fire giants are tyrants themselves, and happily participate in the buying and selling of non-dwarven sapient).

Before the coming of the Hive Queen, some dwarves considered a steady expansion into the Elemental Plane of Earth to overthrow the dao to be the defining moral campaign of their generation (bearing in mind that dwarven lifetimes span three hundred years and their generations are similarly long), but after a hundred years fighting for their lives in their own homes, they are much more open to negotiating with the dao for reinforcements against the Hive Queen, and even those opposed to making even an alliance of convenience with the dao have been forced to recognize that they lack the forces to have any hope of overthrowing them ever since the war with the Hive Queen began.

There are many isolated pockets and hidden tunnels in the Elemental Plane of Earth, but the following eight dao emirs (not including Fazira, the imprisoned Emira of Pitch) rule over the major tunnels connecting the Magma Peaks to the Ooze Swamp and run through the famous City of Jewels in the center.

Each of the emirs is engaged with the others in warfare both overt and covert, conflict both economic and military, with alliances trading off like dance partners in a waltz. None of them have any long term loyalty to any of the others, and if one coalition starts to grow too powerful, its weakest members will defect to the other side to maintain a balance of power. Everyone knows that the goal of every emir is to be a Sultan of Jewels to rival the Sultan of Brass across the Magma Peaks, and that such a sultan must (by definition) subjugate all of the other emirs to do so. The weaker emirs, then, seek to maintain the balance of power out of self-interest, knowing that if one alliance should be triumphant, its stronger members would then turn on its weaker members.

Azhara, the Salt Emira. Azhara's palace can seem like a winter wonderland at first glance, but any mortal creature unfortunate to stay there long will soon feel the effects of the salt in the air leeching moisture from their skin. The salt miners in the pits scattered across her emirate consume slaves quickly and she is one of the most aggressive in kidnapping more. Azhara has a connection to Kingspeak. The murderous nature of her domain, and the lack of any direct connections to remaining dwarven strongholds, has kept the Hive Queen at bay for now.

Baqqara, the Clockwork Emira. Bazzara's palace is a great clockwork contraption constantly whirring with the turn of tiny gears, and occasionally booming with the turn of much, much larger gears. Baqqara has a connection to Kingspeak and Copperpeak, and her emirate is sometimes invaded by the Hive Queen seeking to open up a flank far behind the current front line in the mortal world.

Kalid, the Fossil Emir. Kalid's palace is like a museum, with the stony fossils of many slain titanic creatures on display. Particularly massive fossils form the structure of the palace itself, with the space between ribs filled in with brickwork to form great halls and skulls with their eyesockets plugged with massive gems serving as chambers. Any fossil that isn't load bearing can be animated at a word from Kalid or one of his trusted genasi lieutenants. His emirate overlooks the titanic boneyards where the Elemental Plane of Earth meets the Shadowfell. Kalid has connections to Snake Bone Canyon and Harrow Mountain, but he is a low priority for the Hive

Queen, as she already controls Snake Bone Canyon and her frontline already connects to Harrow Mountain.

Nazhari, the Diamond Emira. Nazhari lives in a crystalline palace guarded by animate statues of unshatterable diamond. Refracting light spills through from the fairy plane of Reverie, which her diamond palace sits on the border of, a great diamond gatehouse leading into the Elemental Plane of Earth, with all her emirate on the Earth side of it. Nazhari has connections to Grimreach, Giant's Hold, and Kingspeak, and is sometimes attacked by the Hive Queen hoping to hop from her central hive cluster directly to the dwarven capital.

Qadima, Emira of Jewels. Qadima's emirate includes many mines for gold and gems, but the real key to her wealth is that she is at the conflux of many tunnels and thus her emirate serves as trade nexus for the entire Elemental Plane of Earth. Her capital is known as "the City of Jewels." Qadima has connections to Farpeak, Kingspeak, Valor Mountain, Grimreach, and Rune Ridge, and is frequently the target of attacks from the Hive Queen.

Razhan, the Emir of the Drill. Razhan's emirate is a giant train powered by magic with a great drill on the prow that tunnels through the plane. He is a pirate, not digging wealth out of the earth but stealing it from other dao. This makes him the only dao emir not to hold any slaves captive, and while it is not clear whether this is because of moral objection or because he has no use for them, he is certainly happy to brag about it to mortals who care about this sort of thing. Razhan has a secret portal to the Greenhorn in his giant drill train. Even the dwarves don't know about it, nor does the Hive Queen.

Shariq, the Iron Emir. Shariq lives in a fortress of pure iron. He has struck a deal with several fire giants to work his forges. He has a portal to Ironpeak in his fortress, which is of little use to the Hive Queen both because he is a particularly well-fortified dao and because Ironpeak is already on the front line, so if the Hive Queen marched a swarm through the tunnels to capture Shariq's emirate and then went through the portal to Ironpeak, she would actually be taking a detour.

Zolthar, the Obsidian Emir. Zolthar lives in the firewise direction of the Elemental Plane of Earth, near where the Magma Peaks begin. His obsidian palace is veined with glowing lava, and his enforcers are clad in armor of jet black glassy obsidian. Zolthar has a connection to Kingspeak, but because he has no connections to anywhere else, he is not a priority target.

Quests, Favor, and Time

In addition to being worth XP and doing some amount of damage to the Hive Queen, quests in the Ranseur Mountains give favor with different dwarven clans, which can be used to get the gloomy bastards to crawl out of their holes and fight back.

Specifically, one point of favor with one clan can convince them to move one army. An army can have any number of dwarves in it, but convincing two armies to merge for a single attack requires two points of favor. A lot of dwarven forces are split into separate armies occupying the same hex, and this is why: It takes multiple points of favor to convince the dwarves to clump those together into a single army, but once you've done so, it takes only a single point of favor to convince them to move the combined army around. You *can* convince a combined army to attack using the same favor you used to convince them to merge in the first place.

Different clans always remain separate, however. This does not mean that they fight separately. Many dwarven clans are perfectly used to fighting as a combined arms force with one another. However, convincing an army of two mixed clans to attack together *always* requires a point of favor with each clan.

Most quests give out a single point of favor with a relevant clan, or sometimes offer a single point of favor with multiple clans, because it is possible to help one and not the other (although usually it is also possible to help both or all three, though it may take significantly more effort to do so). The quest descriptions don't bother spelling out which clans get favor because this is usually obvious and intuitive, but do stop to point out when it is possible to get more than one point of favor from a single quest. If no amount of favor is specified, then the quest is worth one point of favor for every clan involved.

Quests in the Ranseur Mountains are usually in response to crises or attacks mounted by an enemy force, usually the Hive Queen. This means they trigger according to a specific timeline and are lost forever if not responded to within a certain, often aggressively narrow, time frame. It's possible that the party have proactively made the attack impossible, in which case they get the XP for it automatically, but not the favor, as the dwarves are not aware that something would've happened in the alternate timeline where the party didn't intervene. Hopefully the party got some favor for their proactive actions.

Speaking of proactive actions, the party can get favor for recapturing a traditional territory of a dwarf clan that has been overrun by another force (whether it's the Hive Queen, orcs, dark elves, or some other thing). They don't have to do this alone and indeed attempting to do so is usually suicide. You get favor for participating in the attack so long as it is successful. If it's unsuccessful, the dwarves probably appreciate your efforts nevertheless, but the demoralizing effects of having lost the battle leave them unwilling to listen to outsiders (even friendly ones) as to how to manage their remaining forces. These recaptures aren't worth XP (mainly because yes, you *do* get more favor for rerecapturing a territory that is rerecaptured from your enemies after you recapture it from them), but they can allow victories to roll forward, with recapturing a hex giving some extra favor to be spent on attacking the next hex.

It is up to your group to decide exactly when the campaign is over. You might decide to pursue things until the Hive Queen has been eradicated from every single hex on the map, but if all the major hive clusters have already been destroyed and it's just a matter of cleaning up secondary holdouts like Farpeak and Snake Bone Canyon, you might want to transition to an epilogue in

which the dwarves take care of it. You might even want to cap off the campaign immediately after destroying the primary hive cluster at Kingspeak, if things are threatening to drag.

It's also entirely possible that, due to the way the battles in the campaign go, defeating the Hive Queen is not really on the table. The party can still get a partial victory by fighting her to a stalemate, destroying enough of the swarms to prevent her from overrunning any further territory even if a counterattack on major hives like Agnar's Sorrow or Kingspeak is infeasible. The grinding war between the dwarves and the Hive Queen has been ongoing for a century and while the party can potentially tip the balance (level 14 is no joke), it's not easy and they may end up keeping the Hive Queen at bay without being in a position to capture much of her territory in return.

What's important is to keep in mind you have the option to call the campaign to a close even if one side or the other has not yet been wiped off the hex map. If you need a specific stopping point, once one side or the other completely controls the underways, it's almost certainly over, although it was probably over for a while before then.

The Ranseur Mountains

Agnar's Sorrow: Once called Agnar's Hold, the undercity adopted a new name after it fell to the Hive Queen. Agnar's Sorrow is the next undercity along the underways from Kingspeak, and after the Hive Queen captured Kingspeak, it became the front line against her. The Mal-Khazag and Shin-Khazag invested heavily in defending the city above and below ground, but despite pouring tens of thousands of dwarven lives into a battle that lasted years without waning in intensity, they were unable to hold the undercity. This battle, several decades back, also precipitated the breaking of dwarven power across much of the surface and the retreat from the western slopes to the current shield from Southgate to Sentinel Ridge. While the dwarves still hold much of the Ranseur Mountains, the general mood is that since losing Agnar's Sorrow, the writing is now on the wall.

Barley Hills: One of the only Roz-Khazag lands left untouched by the Hive Queen's devouring swarm, the Barley Hills is taking in a lot of refugees these days, as are most remaining Roz-Khazag lands. They're also secretly ruled by a doppelganger. The doppelganger has no connection to the Hive Queen and no desire to harm any dwarf besides the one he murdered in order to steal his identity. He just wanted to try out life as a dwarf, decided he'd better get started quick with the Hive Queen slaving from her mandible over them, and turned out to be quite good at it.

Blue Hills: So named because of the abundant iron ore found in them, the Blue Hills were once lands of the Roz-Khazag. Like most such lands, they have been overrun by the Hive Queen, and are now mostly notable for being located above the Dul-Khazag undercity of Glimmerhold.

Boartusk Canyon: Boartusk Canyon was a fairly significant Shin-Khazag fortification on the western slopes of the Ranseur Mountains, and the Roz-Khazag fleeing the fall of the Blue Hills and Lowmoot, as well as those in the Garden Hills on the other side of the Canyon, hoped it might hold even after the fall of Agnar's Sorrow. It was not to be, and Boartusk was overwhelmed within a few years of the fall of Agnar.

Cliffguard: Cliffguard was a major Shin-Khazag fortification, not one but several fortresses connected by underground passages. They guarded the flank of Agnar's Sorrow, but were never properly connected to the underway there. Though some connections do exist, they are narrow byways, not a proper underway a hundred feet wide at the narrow parts. Instead, they mainly served to keep the swarms from controlling the surface. Cliffguard was overrun shortly before the fall of Agnar's Sorrow, and the Hive Queen gaining unobstructed access to the surface to burrow in new routes of attack is one of the reasons why the mighty fortress at Agnar finally fell.

Coalsheart Mountain: Named for the massive amounts of coal found inside, Coalsheart fed the forges of the Ranseur Mountains before the Hive Queen came. Coalsheart held out for over a year against the bugs swarming across the slopes, but ultimately it became the first of the mountains connected to the underways to fall.

Copperpeak: As the name suggests, this mountain is famous for its stores of copper ore. It is connected to the primary underway of the Ranseur Mountains, well within the frontlines, and has a portal to the dao emirate of Baqqara, the Clockwork Emira, on the Elemental Plane of Earth.

Dark Hills: So named because of the veins of coal found in them, the Dark Hills were lands of the Roz-Khazag before the Hive Queen came. These hills were some of the first to be overrun by the Hive Queen's forces, spread out, exposed, and too far from any underways to be easily reinforced or resupplied.

Deep Hill: Deep Hill is a Roz-Khazag village that's held out against the Hive Queen's attacks remarkably well due to the presence of a Mana King obelisk that allows them to predict exactly when and where an attack is coming. The rest of the region is so thoroughly overrun that the whole area is now known as "Deep Hill," the name of one village. With the fall of nearby Lightning Peak, Deep Hill is totally isolated from the rest of the dwarves. Luckily, the Hive Queen doesn't maintain a continuous line of fortification on her front line or anything, so it's still possible to dodge her patrols to get from Deep Hill to relatively close dwarven held positions like Sentinel Ridge and Snowspear Mountain, but the trip across land patrolled by the Hive Queen is perilous. Still, the dwarves of Deep Hill refuse to give up their village.

Farpeak: Farpeak was cut off from the rest of the Ranseur Mountains after the fall of Coalsheart, but held out a stubborn resistance for a hundred years, resupplied by the cloud giants friendly to the Run-Khazag. They're on their last legs now, and there is talk of finally evacuating the mountain in the wake of the Hive Queen's renewed assaults.

Garden Hills: The former capital of the Roz-Khazag, the Garden Hills were the most densely populated and densely cultivated land in all the Ranseur Mountains, nestled in the southern foothills near Southgate. After the fall of Agnar's Sorrow, however, the Hive Queen turned her attention towards encircling the Ranseur Mountains on the surface. Though the Shin-Khazag and Roz-Khazag initially tried to hold a new frontline at Boartusk Canyon, the Hive Queen overran these positions after a few years. Living in the shadow of Southgate ultimately also proved too little to protect the hill dwarves of the Garden Hills from the expanding reach of the swarm. The dwarves redrew a final line of defense on the surface from Southgate to Sentinel Ridge, focusing on protecting the sacred sites of Rune Ridge, leaving the Garden Hills just out of the shield. The hill dwarves were overrun, and fled within the safety of the new frontline, re-establishing their capital in the increasingly inaptly named Prosper Hills.

Giant's Hold: Once a stronghold of the stone and hill giants and a regular stop for the cloud giants in their floating castle, Giant's Hold was the first mountain to fall to the Hive Queen's initial assault. It had long since withered as a hive cluster in favor of mountains connected to the underways like Coalsheart and Kingspeak, and a force of dark elves and dao minions seeking a base of operations for slave raids has recently recaptured it.

Glimmerhold: Glimmerhold is the only real undercity the Dul-Khazag have, built deep below the Blue Hills above. The Blue Hills used to be Roz-Khazag territory, but have been overrun by the Hive Queen for so long that many maps identify the region as "Glimmerhold" even if they are mapping only the surface. Glimmerhold is the only Dul-Khazag city connected to the underways, and is their frontline against the dark elves who come along the Underdark tunnels from the north.

The Greenhorn: A mountain so-named because it is the lowest peak of all the Ranseur Mountains, and thus its peak turns green in spring before any of the others. The name also indicates how relatively easy it is to hike. It used to be a Roz-Khazag tradition to hike it as an adulthood ritual, especially for the inhabitants of the nearby Garden Hills, or those who lived on the slopes of the Greenhorn itself. It was never extremely densely populated, as the mountainsides were considerably less arable than the nearby Garden Hills, but now it has been totally depopulated as the Hive Queen's patrols regularly sweep through it and the dwarves have given up on holding it since the fall of Boartusk Canyon pushed their frontline east to Southgate.

Grimreach: Home of the Forge of the First Giant, the largest undercity remaining and *de facto* capital of the Mal-Khazag dwarves since the fall of Kingspeak, and the *de jure* capital of all the Ranseur Mountains, Grimreach is the final stronghold of the dwarves. The dwarves have made many painful retreats from ancestral homes and bountiful lands in the past hundred years, but there is no retreat from Grimreach. There is scarcely a dwarf alive who would abandon the Forge of the First Giant rather than fight to the death for it. For now, Grimreach remains behind the frontlines with the Hive Queen, although distressingly close to them - Underhollow is the only thing standing between Grimreach and Boartusk Canyon, where the Hive Queen's swarms

are uncontested, and Southgate the only thing between Grimreach and the similarly infested Garden Hills.

Harrow Mountain: Harrow Mountain never had much in the way of mineral resources, and thus was never densely populated despite its position near the heart of the Ranseur Mountains. Now it is maintained as a fortress, manned primarily to defend the flank of Ironpeak. The Roz-Khazag still maintain villages on the surface, doggedly defending it with support from the Shin-Khazag and Mal-Khazag below. If Harrow Mountain's surface were to be overrun, it would surely precipitate the fall of Ironpeak as surely as Cliffguard's fall led to Agnar's Sorrow.

Ironpeak: The exact center of the primary underway through the Ranseur Mountains, Ironpeak is inhabited by Shin-Khazag near the surface, Dul-Khazag deep below, and the Mal-Khazag in a great undercity in the middle. It used to have Run-Khazag settlements on the peaks above, but those have since been overrun by the Hive Queen. The Shin-Khazag are able to prevent the Hive Queen from maintaining a permanent presence on surface of Ironpeak, but are unable to stop the swarm from sending patrols and strike groups across it, making any life above the surface untenable. Even the animals have mostly been devoured by now. Since the fall of Agnar's Sorrow, Ironpeak is the front line against the Hive Queen, militarized and fortified to hold back the swarm. Ironpeak has a connection to the dao emirate of Shariq, and the Mal-Khazag call upon the fire giants who live there, as well as the ones in the nearby fortress in the Magma Peaks where the Elemental Planes of Earth and Fire meet, to help in the defense of Ironpeak.

Kingspeak: The former capital of Mal-Khazag, the Hive Queen's first assault on the Ranseur Mountains culminated after she seized this undercity. It is now her primary hive cluster. Formerly the commercial heart of the dwarven realm, it has portals across the Elemental Plane of Earth to the dao emirates of Azhara, Baqqara, Nazhari, Qadima, and Zolthar, as well as to the former emirate of Fazira, once the Emira of Pitch, now imprisoned in a lamp while her former emirate is overrun by the swarm. Kingspeak was the largest and wealthiest of the dwarven undercities before the Hive Queen depopulated it.

Lightning Peak: Named for the blue dragon Zagrallar who has lived there for centuries, the Mal-Khazag maintained an undercity (perhaps more of an undertown) and lived in uneasy peace with the dragon, too far belowground for the sky tyrant to bother with. After the fall of Agnar's Sorrow, the Hive Queen began pushing into Lightning Peak to consolidate her power, and Zagrallar even fought alongside the Mal-Khazag to keep her at bay. They ultimately failed, however, and the Hive Queen has overrun the mountain, driving the dwarves to Ironpeak Mountain and Zagrallar to Snowspear Mountain.

Lowmoot: Lowmoot was a basin in which the Roz-Khazag would meet, a convenient place where it was easy to see where everyone's tents were so you didn't have to trudge around the hills looking for exactly which valley the meeting was supposed to take place in. The nearby wilderness was beset by grey renders, which prevented the dwarves from seriously settling the area. The Hive Queen drove the dwarves out quickly after her arrival (it was already on the

fringe of their land), but only recently has she set about exterminating the grey renders as well, pushing the renders east towards the mountains.

Mount Varos: A relatively sparsely populated mountain not connected to the underways, Mount Varos is technically part of the current frontline against the Hive Queen, but it's a relatively unimportant part of it. It is expected to be the next chunk of the Ranser Mountains the Hive Queen bites off, much like the Garden Hills or the Red Valley. Mount Varos is a proper mountain, and thus more difficult to assail than these less vertical locations, and it also benefits from proximity to the powerful frost giants of Snowvale, but it ultimately lacks both the inherent population and the strategic significance to other, more important locations to be held against the swarms. The dwarves living there are advised to leave, but dwarves are stubborn.

Prosper Hills: *De facto* capital of the Roz-Khazag since the fall of the Garden Hills, the Prosper Hills are having their prosperity stretched thin as they (along with other remaining Roz-Khazag villages) struggle to absorb the accumulated refugees of all the other hill dwarf lands, now all lost to the Hive Queen.

Ranchlands: The best grazing territory in the Ranser Mountains, the Ranchlands are home to the cattle- and goatherding sort of Roz-Khazag, nestled between two ridges each of which is home to a Shin-Khazag fortress. The Ranchlands are not far from Southgate, and with the fuzzy nature of the frontlines on the surface war, fought with skirmishes and raids rather than fortified tunnels as below, the Ranchlands are potentially the target of a Hive Queen assault across the surface of Southgate to punch into the last surface territories held by the dwarves.

Red Valley: Red Valley is so named for the trees that grow there, whose leaves are red from spring 'till autumn. Traditionally a breadbasket of the Roz-Khazag, the Hive Queen has steadily pushed them south past Sentinel Ridge and has now overrun the valley completely.

Rune Ridge: The Rune Ridge is the capital, such that it is, of the Run-Khazag, the home of the five shrines of the runesmiths, dedicated to the earth from which ore is pulled, the fire that melts the blade, the ice water that freezes it, the skill of the dwarf who crafts it, and the finished metal of the blade. Next to the Forge of the First Giant, these are the most sacred sites of dwarfdom, and the dwarves' efforts to protect the surface of the Ranser Mountains from the Hive Queen are largely centered on defending this ridge and its shrines.

Serpentspine Ridge: Serpentspine Ridge is a ridge that winds like a snake northeast off the Ranser Mountains towards Glimmfell. There were a few stray Shin-Khazag, Run-Khazag, and Roz-Khazag settlements throughout, but it was not densely populated despite its proximity to Kingspeak. It did not last long against the Hive Queen after the fall of nearby Coalsheart Mountain.

Snake Bone Canyon: "Snake" because this canyon is formed from the "tongue" of Serpentspine Ridge, where the winding ridge splits in two at the northeastern end, and "bone" because it's full

of old fossils. Snake Bone Canyon was mainly inhabited by gnomish archaeologists from Glimmfell to the northeast before the Hive Queen moved in and consumed everything.

Snowspear: Snowspear Mountain is the new home of Zagrallar the blue dragon formerly of Lightning Peak. This is a problem for the Run-Khazag who already live on the peak. While Zagrallar maintained an uneasy peace with the Mal-Khazag who lived in the heart of Lightning Peak, the Run-Khazag live right next to the lightning-breathing monster's new lair.

Snowvale: Snowvale is a mountain in the heart of the Ranseurs, disconnected from the underways and notable mainly for its very tall peak, perpetually covered in snow, and the frost giants who live there. The mountain is home to a small undertown of Mal-Khazag as well as to many Run-Khazag settlements above, and the Run-Khazag are allies of the frost giants and have been able to convince them to help defend many nearby mountains from hive attacks, especially the otherwise near-helpless Mount Varos, but the frost giants' tradition of raiding has frequently caused squabbles between the Run-Khazag and other dwarven clans, especially the Mal-Khazag and Shin-Khazag.

Sorrowsworn: A Dul-Khazag fortress far below the Mal-Khazag undercity of Underhollow, Dul-Khazag is reachable from above only by a lift that descends next to a waterfall fed by an underground river that flows through a flooded section of Underhollow. Sorrowsworn holds the southern flank of Dul-Khazag territory from the dark elves, guarding the tunnels to Ironpeak and Glimmerhold to the north.

Southgate: The southern end of the Ranseur Mountains, where the mighty underway meets the surface, capital of the Shin-Khazag. A sizable undercity has grown up around the underway, and once this was where those departing for the Idyllburgs and Lumitas would travel. Trade wasn't totally cut off when the Idyllburgs became the Goblin Fells, especially not with Lumitas which, strange new rulers installed by the Dark Council or not, was still a prosperous trade center. But after the fall of Agnar's Sorrow, and soon thereafter the fall of Boartusk Canyon, it was only a matter of time before the nearby Garden Hills were overrun. The dwarves pour great effort into stopping the patrols of the Hive Queen here at Southgate, for not far past Southgate, around the southern end of the mountains, is Rune Ridge, home to some of the most sacred sites of the dwarves and smack dab on the surface. This has turned the road from Southgate to the Goblin Fells into the frontlines of the war, and while travel along that road is still possible (there's no trench networks or anything), it's extremely dangerous.

Stonemeet: Stonemeet is a Roz-Khazag settlement living in the shadow of a Shin-Khazag fortress and not far from the edge of the Tomte Hegemony to the southeast. The Tomte Hegemony is the land of the orcs and trolls, and traditionally the great nemesis of the dwarves of the Ranseur Mountains, especially the Shin-Khazag. Stonemeet is becoming a meeting place for dwarves and orcs, however, especially since many of the town's residents are now displaced hill dwarves from the Garden Hills or other places on the western slopes of the mountains now overrun by the Hive Queen. It's hard to get too worked up about the orcs when your home has already been destroyed by a whole other threat.

Stoneshield Canyon: This canyon has long been the dwelling of stone giants and their friends in the Shin-Khazag. The stone giants from Giant's Hold came here after the mountain was lost to the Hive Queen, but their misfortune did not end there, as Stoneshield was also overrun after the fall of Agnar's Sorrow.

Underhollow: Underhollow is a major Mal-Khazag undercity, which suffers from proximity to a winding underground river that causes regular floods. Due to the current circumstances in the Ranseur Mountains, some parts of the undercity are left perpetually flooded, and waterfalls descend into the abyss to the Dul-Khazag fortress of Sorrowsworn deep below. Underhollow's history of flooding is largely due to an early assault from the Hive Queen, at the very beginning of the war, before she overran the Blue Hills or assaulted Coalsheart. The attack was repelled and the damage mostly repaired, but the dwarves never discovered the true purpose of the attack: Opening up a portal to the dao emirate of Fazira, the Emira of Pitch, on the border with the Ooze Swamps where the Elemental Plane of Earth meets the Elemental Plane of Water. Fazira's emirate also connected to Kingspeak, and when the Hive Queen overran Fazira's territory years later, she gained access to a backdoor into Underhollow that no one knew about. Underhollow is on the doorstep of Grimreach, the current capital of the Ranseur Mountains and the most sacred site in all of dwarfdom. The Hive Queen is sitting on a rather killer ace, but she will only have one chance to play it before the dwarves discover the portal and fortify it.

Valor Mountain: Buried deep within the Ranseur Mountains, far from the frontlines on Sentinel Ridge, Southgate, or Ironpeak, Valor Mountain is mainly notable as being one of the last dwarven undercities where things are mostly normal. Dwarven forges craft weapons and armor down below, and you can walk on the surface without fear of being devoured by hive patrollers.

Ranseur Armies

Dwarven Armies

When the campaign begins, the Ranseur dwarves have a total of twenty-two legions in the following positions. Each legion has a +1 leadership bonus from a dwarven officer leading them.

-The Dul-Khazag have one legion in Glimmerhold, one legion in Sorrowsworn, and one legion in Ironpeak.

-The Mal-Khazag have three legions in Ironpeak, one in Underhollow, one in Harrow Mountain, one in Grimreach, and one in Farpeak. The Farpeak army is, hopefully, evacuated to Ironpeak as a result of the Rescue at Farpeak quest. The Mal-Khazag have fire giant allies that give any one of their legions a +1 bonus from monsters and champions, currently stationed with one of the Ironpeak legions.

-The Roz-Khazag have a legion in the Ranchlands, a legion in Stonemeet, and a legion in Deep Hill. The Deep Hill legion's obelisk gives them a +4 leadership bonus (as though from a leader with a +20 or better bonus to their relevant check) in combat. Both Deep Hill and Stonemeet's legions also benefit from hill giant allies, giving them a +1 bonus from monsters and champions.

-The Run-Khazag have a single legion in Rune Ridge. Their frost giant allies from Snowvale give this legion a +1 bonus from monsters and champions. The Run-Khazag also have cloud giant allies, who not only give a +1 bonus from monsters and champions to whatever legion they are attached to, their flying castle also instantly gives their hex ten points' worth of fortifications wherever they land.

-The Shin-Khazag have two legions in Southgate, two legions in Sentinel Ridge, a legion in Harrow Mountain, a legion in Mount Varos, a legion in the Ranchlands, and a legion in Ironpeak. The Mount Varos legion has stone giant allies giving them a +1 bonus from monsters and champions.

Listed by location rather than by clan:

-Ironpeak has three Mal-Khazag legions, one Shin-Khazag legion, and one Dul-Khazag legion.

-Harrow Mountain has one Mal-Khazag legion and one Shin-Khazag legion.

-The Ranchlands have a Roz-Khazag legion and a Shin-Khazag legion.

-Sentinel Ridge has two Shin-Khazag legions.

-Southgate has two Shin-Khazag legions.

-Deep Hill has a Roz-Khazag legion.

-Farpeak has one Mal-Khazag legion.

-Glimmerhold has one Dul-Khazag legion.

-Grimreach has one Mal-Khazag legion.

-Mount Varos has one Shin-Khazag legion.

-Rune Ridge has one Run-Khazag legion.

-Sorrowsworn has one Dul-Khazag legion.

-Stonemeet has one Roz-Khazag legion.

-Underhollow has one Mal-Khazag legion.

Hive Swarms

When the campaign begins, the Hive Queen has forty-eight swarms in the following positions. Swarms are equivalent to legions, "swarm" just sounds more hive-y. Each swarm gets a +1 leadership bonus as long as they are connected to the synapse network.

The Hive swarms begin heavily invested in finally toppling Farpeak. Once the mountain falls, that huge army can be moved elsewhere, to assault places like Sentinel Ridge or the Ranchlands, forming the core force of the Hive Queen's invasions used to overcome powerful dwarven fortifications.

At the end of a battle, if a hive swarm was victorious, they can recycle half of all slain legions (on both sides) into new hive swarms immediately.

- There are twelve swarms in Coalsheart Mountain for the assault on Farpeak.
- There are ten swarms in the primary hive cluster at Kingspeak.
- There are five swarms in Agnar's Sorrow.
- There are four swarms in the Garden Hills.
- There are three swarms in the Dark Hills, pinning down Farpeak.
- There are three swarms in Snake Bone Canyon, pinning down Farpeak.
- There are two swarms in Boartusk Canyon.
- There are two swarms in Cliffguard.
- There are two swarms at Lightning Peak.
- There are two swarms at the Red Valley.
- There are two swarms in Stoneshield Canyon.
- There is one swarm in Serpentspine, keeping Deep Hill pinned.

Ranseur Fortifications

Being a mountain range full of undercities, the Ranseur Mountains are absurdly well-fortified. A large part of why the conflict has stalemated so long is that both sides are much stronger on defense than they are on offense.. Hexes are at the following level of fortification, with all hexes unlisted (including hexes which have no name at all) having 0 fortification.

Hexes fortified to level 8 and above are always fortified with below ground structures, undercities and cliff fortresses and so forth. An attacker may, if they like, choose to ignore the underground and fight purely for the surface. The defender can still use their fortifications as level 7 fortifications. Underground fortifications not connected to an underway are cut off from supply if the enemy successfully captures the surface.

6: Deep Hill, Stonemeet

7: Barley Hills, Garden Hills, Prosper Hills, Red Valley, Rune Ridge, Snake Bone Canyon

8: Boartusk Canyon, Lightning Peak, Snowspear

9: Cliffguard, Ranchlands, Sentinel Ridge, Stoneshield Canyon

10: Coalsheart Mountain, Copperpeak, Farpeak, Glimmerhold, Sorrowsworn, Underhollow, Valor Mountain

11: Grimreach, Kingspeak, Southgate

12: Agnar's Sorrow, Ironpeak

Armies and Fortifications of Elemental Earth

The factions of Elemental Earth are mostly one-hex factions, with the big exception being the Ordning and the Hive Queen, who controls one hex of the Elemental Plane of Earth but also many more in the mortal world. The following are the legions and level of fortification of each hex in the Elemental Plane of Earth.

- Azgara commands three legions and has level 8 fortifications.
- Baqara commands one legion and has level 11 fortifications.
- Kalid commands two legions and has level 7 fortifications.
- Nazhari commands two legions and has level 12 fortifications.
- The Ordning commands two legions at the Stone Giant Citadel and three legions at the Fire Giant Fortress, both of which have level 11 fortifications.
- Qadima commands five legions and has level 10 fortifications.
- The Quiet Earth commands four legions and has level 7 fortifications.
- Shariq commands one legion and has level 8 fortifications. His legion has a +1 monsters and champions bonus from his fire giant allies.
- Zolthar commands two legions and has level 8 fortifications.

Supplies

The Ransur dwarves get three supply from Barley Hills and Prosper Hills. They get two supply each from Stonemeet, Deep Hill, the Ranchlands, Grimreach, Southgate, Underhollow, and Glimmerhold. They get one supply each from Copperpeak, Valor Mountain, Mount Varos, and Harrow Mountain. Ironpeak has been so thoroughly converted into fortifications that it is now totally dependent upon the underways for supplies. Snowvale, Snowspear, and Sentinel Ridge are too inhospitable to provide supplies and do not have undercities with mushroom farms large enough to support legions. This means they start with 22 supply, plus an extra 2 in Deep Hill that's cut off from the rest of their force.

The Ransur dwarves could get three supply from Garden Hills if they controlled it, could get two supply each from the Blue Hills, the Dark Hills, Lowmoot, and Kingspeak if they controlled it, and could get one supply each from Coalsheart Mountain and Farpeak (which they technically control at the start of the campaign but will most likely lose imminently). Giant's Hold, Serpentspine, Agnar's Sorrow, Snake Bone Canyon, Stoneshield Canyon, Cliffguard, Lightning Peak, and Red Valley do not provide supplies if captured. This means the dwarves could have as much as 13 additional supply if they recaptured all parts of the Ransur Mountains that grow enough food to support armies.

The Hive Queen gets twenty supply from the primary hive cluster at Kingspeak, ten supply each from the major hive clusters at Agnar's Sorrow and Coalsheart Mountain, and two supply each from the minor hives at the Dark Hills, Blue Hills, Giant's Hold, Cliffguard, Stoneshield Canyon, and Snake Bone Canyon. The Hive Queen's supply is determined entirely by the growths of hive moss, a purple substance that blankets all surfaces for miles surrounding the hive and which converts sunlight and water into biomatter for flesh rippers to harvest. Given enough time, she can turn almost any location into a primary hive cluster, but within the time frame of the campaign, she cannot benefit from capturing any supply center other than the ones she already has.

The emirs of Elemental Earth have special arrangements for keeping their servants supplied. Each one-hex emirate serves as a supply base capable of supplying exactly the amount of legions they start with, and their hexes cannot supply other legions in the same way, because their supplies are secured via a combination of trade and magic that someone conquering the hex won't automatically inherit. The Hive Queen cannot get any supply out of hexes of Elemental Earth because there's no sunlight.

The campaign doesn't last long enough to cover winter when the two armies would raise new legions from their supplies, but the armies may still lose legions if their supply limit is decreased or if they are cut off.

Timeline

The following timeline assumes that the game starts on April 1st. This doesn't particularly matter, although it is timed to reflect a conflict ongoing since sometime in March (spring has been the preferred time for invasions since time immemorial) which has overrun Lightning Peak and put the pressure on Farpeak to finally capitulate as the PCs arrive.

The following quests are always available, describing an ongoing state of affairs the party can get involved in.

The Dao Tunnels
The Doppelganger Dwarf
Stonemeet

Swarm on the Surface

In the month of April, the Swarm repeatedly pummels the Ranseur Mountains with attacks on the surface, driving the renders of Lowmoot towards Mount Varos, launching a renewed assault on stubborn Farpeak, and attacking at the Ranchlands and soon after in the first general hive invasion targeting surface areas like Sentinel Ridge, the Ranchlands again, and seeking to break into areas like the Barley Hills, Prosper Hills, Stonemeet, and Rune Ridge.

April 5th: The Renders of Lowmoot
April 8th: The Farpeak Rescue
April 16th: Attack on the Ranchlands, The Obelisk of DeePhill
April 19th: First Hive Invasion
April 21st: The Fire Giant Vanguard

House Viznir

After the frenetic first three weeks of April, the buildup to the attack of House Viznir is comparatively much slower, with often enough time for one or even two long rests between

each quest spawning. The party has time to look at some of the initial quests and explore things like the Dao Tunnels, with the early Dao Market quest hopefully nudging them in that direction. Things pick up speed towards the end as the dark elves seek to exploit the second hive invasion, launched through the tunnels of the Elemental Plane of Earth to try and get around the dwarves' formidable defenses at Ironpeak. For their part, the dark elves are mainly interested in the underdark territories of the deep dwarves: Sorrowsworn, Glimmerhold, and the lower levels of Ironpeak.

April 29th: The Dao Market

May 7th: The Deep Runes

May 10th: Swarm in the Depths

May 18th: The Dark Elf Raids

May 29th: Lightning Peak Wyrms

June 13th: The Underway

June 28th: Second Hive Invasion

July 2nd: The Dark Elf Assault

July 3rd: The Frost Giant Raid

July 7th: Viznir Invasion

The Tomte Lords

There is a brief period of time to recover and attend to other quests before word of the dark elf attack gets around and the orcs of Tomte likewise seek to exploit the pressure on the dwarves to steal a bit of land, attacking more or less the same surface territories as the Hive Queen did in her first assault. Unlike the Hive Queen, however, the orcs are coming from the east and can hit Stonemeet directly, avoiding the well-fortified Sentinel Ridge.

July 15th: The Blood Company

July 25th: The Fire Giant of Cliffguard

August 1st: Orc Outposts

August 9th: Swarm at the Gates of Harrow Mountain

August 12th: Tomte Invasion

August 13th: Tomte in the Shrine

The Hive Queen

There is one final calm before one final storm as the Hive Queen amasses her forces for a final, sustained assault against the dwarves' most powerful remaining stronghold, in an effort to tear off at least one fortress before her forces are spent for the year.

August 29th: Swarm Under Ironpeak

August 30th: Third Hive Invasion

The Scramble

Long ago, the Scramble was the site of an invasion of giants from the Elemental Chaos seeking revenge against the elves for some ancient war. The giants were defeated and scattered, but the conflict had lasted years and left the boundary between the mortal world and the Elemental Chaos very weak. Several of the surviving elves became the founding members of the Order of Elemental Balance, dedicated to preserving the balance between the four elements in the Scramble to prevent them from raging out of control and perhaps spiraling outward to consume the world. Over the generations, many non-elves joined the Order, until by the time of the rise of the Dark Council, it was a very cosmopolitan organization with no firm allegiance to any specific realm.

They were, however, still staunch allies of the Spring Fellowship, which made them enemies of the Dark Council, which went very poorly for them when the Troll and Lich Kings showed up while burning their way north from the Goblin Fells towards Skyreach Kingdom. The subsequent war was long and devastating and by the time it was over, the Order had devoted their energies to defense and away from preserving the balance for long enough that the land had gone completely berserk. Neither the Lich King nor the Troll King bothered to stabilize it, but instead marched north towards Skyreach, leaving the Scramble to grow steadily more and more hostile for the next hundred years.

The Coast Road: As the name suggests, the Coast Road runs near the coast, and the Scramble being what it is, that means it's overrun by the forces of elemental water. Their stronghold is the castle of the ruined town of Lisport. The castle sits at the edge of a cliff that plunges down into the sea below, its foundations crossing directly over a cove. Its cellar, therefore, has a large port in it which, during the castle's regular operation, would hold boats up to twenty yards long, which water adepts would raise and lower into the sea a hundred yards below through supernatural control over water. Now this water lift has gone completely out of control, and there is a perpetual column of water rising up from the ocean into the bottom floors of Lisport Castle.

The Drowned make their stronghold here. The places where the flooded lower levels of the castle meet the breathable upper levels allow aquatic merrows and merfolk and so forth to communicate easily with their air-breathing members seeking merger with water elementals in the new submarine world.

Travelers know to give Lisport a wide berth, and instead seek shelter at the last functional inn throughout all of the Scramble, the Wicked Eel. Located a good half a mile from the coast, the Coast Road once swung wide of the Wicked Eel, which required a significant detour to reach. When the forces of elemental water settled into the waves and the shores, all inns too close to their reach were washed away, and the Wicked Eel became the safest stop along the road. The tracks of the Coast Way have subsequently been reworn to curve further inland, and now the Wicked Eel is right along its route. The Eel is run by the Messina crime family of Lumitas, and they sell information to the bandits who prey on the Coast Road.

Ordinary bandits fare poorly along the Coast Road, their camps sooner or later being discovered by wandering elementals, whereupon they are torn apart. Two more exceptional bandit clans (of sorts) haunt the Road, however. The Bears of Tomte are a mercenary company who've come to the Scramble seeking revenge upon the Red Banner, a rival mercenary company who killed the Bears' former leader when the two were hired onto opposite sides of a war. The Bears have taken to pillaging caravan traffic while seeking a way to besiege the Banner's new citadel floating in the Sky Isles above.

The Vultures don't call themselves that. They just refer to themselves as the Whispering Wind, a remnant of the branch of the Order of Elemental Balance dedicated to the harmony of air. They've since rejected balance and embraced a world of wind and lightning, but the Vultures in particular are a band of harpies, aarakocra, and ordinarily land-bound creatures riding on giant vultures, who use the Sky Isles hovering over the Coast Road as a base from which to raid the caravans below. The people below view the Vultures as a specific bandit faction, but the Vultures themselves view being a "Vulture" as an activity undertaken, not an identity separate from the Whispering Wind. A Whisper might spend a few months on the outer Isles as a Vulture, and then return to the Challiers Spire, and that wouldn't be unusual or even particularly worthy of comment.

An ancient water shrine of the Soothing Spring, the branch of the fallen Order of Elemental Balance dedicated to elemental water, stood undisturbed in a hidden cove along the Coast Road for nearly a century. Hidden by fog, they were never overrun by the forces of the Lich and Troll Kings on their way north, and they were able to keep their shrine in balance despite the chaos of the Scramble outside. Until recently, when an oni phased in from betwixt and between and laid waste to the water adepts. Now the fog shroud has failed and the shrine is open once more, inhabited by the oni and some stray wildlife.

The Burning March: Along the northern end of the Scramble is the Burning March, where elemental fire has taken root. The climate has been supernaturally rewritten, turning what should be fertile green fields into a desert of red sand.

The Coast Road passes through the Burning March, and along that road, where the red sands give way to the green trees of the Darkwood, lies the town of Etterlaas, the last town in the Scramble (assuming you don't count the Wicked Eel, which is three buildings and a ditch). The Lich King and Troll King left a small besieging force behind to pin Etterlaas down before heading north towards Skyreach, and the town was ultimately able to repel the besiegers, who retreated to join up with the Troll King in the north (the Lich King's forces, being mindless undead, did not flee and were destroyed to the last skeleton). Since then, Etterlaas has been low-key besieged almost continuously by the force of elemental chaos in the Scramble.

Etterlaas is theoretically a safe place to stay, but because the elemental cults are constantly trying to infiltrate them and destroy them from within, they are totally paranoid about any outsiders and won't let someone in until they have proof that they've struck significant blows

against all four elemental cults in the Scramble (someone who attacks the Burning Hatred, Whispering Wind, and the Drowned and says they haven't got around to attacking the Quiet Earth yet might just be one of the Quiet Earth).

The Lich and Troll Kings might have been allies a hundred years ago, but it was the Lich King who made his capital in Skyreach, while the Troll King ventured on to Tomte. The Troll King's orc and goblin minions who remained behind in Skyreach lived in peace for nearly a hundred years, but now that has come to an end. The Lich King has slaughtered every living thing in Skyreach, sending refugees scattering in all directions.

A band of orcs driven from Skyreach have overrun the Ilges Monastery, once a stronghold of the Light Keepers, the branch of the Order of Elemental Balance dedicated to the light of fire. By the time the orcs got to it, Ilges had been blazing out of control for a century and an outpost of the Burning Hate for decades, but they were able to overrun the defenses and seize the monastery for themselves. Unfortunately for them, the hate burns strong in the monastery, and they have since merged with elemental fire. Teetering on the edge of berserk, the orcs have focused their rage on the Burning Hate, seeking to destroy them, but the betrayal of the Lich King made them xenophobic enough even before the effects of the unstable fires of Ilges left them perpetually irrational.

Valforth, a young red dragon, has recently made his lair in the Burning March, reinhabiting the ruins of the town of Sargues, which has long since been burnt to its foundations. Valforth makes his lair in a barrow at the edge of town, having cleaned out the corpses and sarcophagi, going through them for what loot they held. It's a pitiable start to a hoard, but Valforth hopes to seize control of the Burning Hate, and from there take control of the entire Scramble, and begin extracting proper tribute.

The Burning Camp has no fixed position and isn't always even located in the Burning March. The nomadic cultists of the Burning Hate will sometimes move their entire camp into the Shifting Hills or along the Coast Road to strike at their rivals in the Quiet Earth or the Drowned (they'd do the same for the Whispering Wind in the Sky Isles, but hardly any of them can fly). They're not hard to find, though. Just follow the trail of scorched earth left by dozens of fire elementals.

The Shifting Hills: Most of the interior of the Scramble is taken up by the Shifting Hills, hills empowered by elemental earth which move and reshape themselves. Their exact boundaries change over time. Sometimes the Shifting Hills never come closer than twenty miles to the Coast Road, and sometimes they're so close that the Road passes through their outskirts. Sometimes the Burning March is pushed back to a skinny strip of land two hundred miles long but only twenty wide hugging the northern border, and sometimes the hills retreat and the March expands fivefold. Because it's the land itself that's moving, this means that the landmarks below are sometimes carried with it, having no consistent position.

Frinach is criss-crossed underneath by tunnels which, even in the days of the Order of Elemental Balance, moved and changed their layout. Now the town itself lies in ruins, long-since

abandoned, as the tunnels have begun devouring any non-earth creature who walks above. The Quiet Earth have turned it into a minor stronghold of theirs, but for the most part it is a creature unto itself. It creates cavernous openings in the hills nearby, or in the cellars of ruined houses, or other places that seem like they might have a dungeon entrance in them, but once inside, the entrance seals up and there is no way out. Frinach's tunnels usually wait for its ensnared spelunkers to asphyxiate, dehydrate, or starve, but if they've got the magic or digging equipment to be proactive about escaping, it will cave in on them. If none of that works (and the spelunkers don't flee entirely), the gargoyles, mephits, and elementals of the Quiet Earth will finish wayward explorers off.

Uthar Hall was once an outpost of the dwarves, who were always close allies of the Harmonious Earth, the branch of the Order of Elemental Balance responsible for earth. It was never reinhabited when the Lich and Troll Kings' forces overran it, and now it is a ruin inhabited by bulettes, owlbeats, wyverns, and similar. The Quiet Earth come here to catch new bulette mounts sometimes, but otherwise leave the place alone.

A smattering of homesteads deep in the Scramble continue to operate unscathed. This is, unsurprisingly, because they are an outpost of the Quiet Earth, who are able to make sure the homesteads and their fields and ranches stay contiguous as they shift about the hills, rather than being pulled apart and ruining the crop. They pretend to be ordinary farmers who just lucked into finding a patch of land that hangs mostly together, in order to fool adventurers into helping them fend off raids from the Whispering Wind. Once the Whisper vanguard is defeated, however, they'll gladly finish a weakened party off.

The ruined town of Macrush does not shift, though the terrain shifts all around it. It is held in place by the will of its ghostly ruler, Madelen Helds. She died in the war against the Lich and Troll Kings long ago, but refused to be defeated even in death. The Lich King probably could've said something about that, but at this point the front in the Scramble had already broken, the Order of Elemental Balance was routing, and neither of the dark lords were much interested in making a personal appearance to conquer one town in a territory too damaged and unstable to be worth occupying anyway. The besieging orcs moved on and were replaced by besieging elementals, and still Lady Helds and her ghostly militia hold the decaying town against them, and any other invaders (which, this long after the war they died fighting, means any living creature).

Many of the individual hills of the Shifting Hills shift as a whole, only rarely splitting apart or combining together, which means one hill in particular still contains a catacomb. Goblin scouts for refugees fleeing the Lich King's omnicide in Skyreach came to the Scramble seeking a new home, and at that point the Shifting Hills had shifted quite close to the northern border. Thus, the goblins found the catacomb, were able to clear out a handful of the Quiet Earth holding the place, and used it as an outpost from whence they could continue scouting.

The next day after breakfast, they discovered they'd been carried deep into the Shifting Hills overnight, cutting them off from the rest of the goblin refugees and deep in the territory of the

Quiet Earth, which hated them for being non-earth elementals to begin with, and doubly so since the catacomb they were using had originally been a Quiet Earth outpost. Now the goblins are besieged in their fortress, hoping it will eventually take them close enough to the edge of the Hills that they can make their escape, but the catacomb seems to know what's gone on inside it, and is more sympathetic to the Quiet Earth than to the goblins.

Like all the landmarks of the Shifting Hills, Arnborg Citadel moves from one place to another. This shifting is not wholly consistent, however. Arnborg is always deep in the Hills, never pushed to their outskirts. This citadel, once the stronghold of the Harmonious Earth and the most well-fortified position in the Scramble, was stormed by the forces of the Lich and Troll Kings, the Harmonious Earth shattered. The Quiet Earth claims to be a successor, but in truth they came over two decades later to pick up the pieces and have no connection to the Harmonious Earth other than inhabiting their fallen fortress.

The Sky Isles: The power of elemental air has torn several islands from the ground and cast them into the sky. The Whispering Wind works to ensure the ones they make their bases upon remain afloat, but the ones they do not pay so much attention to sometimes come crashing down to the ground below, usually landing in the Shifting Hills.

Benne was once a town on the eastern outskirts of the Scramble. It was amongst the ground torn from the earth by the Whispering Wind to escape the destruction of the rest of the Order of Elemental Balance when the Lich and Troll Kings at last overran their defenses. Originally, the Whispering Wind were hailed as having saved the town from destruction at the hands of the Dark Council, but as time went on and the Wind withdrew more and more into monomaniacal obsession with air and lightning, Benne and its landbound people were steadily abandoned. Having insufficient farmland on the floating island to feed themselves and unable to leave, the town's population crashed until only a handful of survivors remained, who developed a culture of brutal austerity to ration what puny resources the small island had.

Then the Red Banner mercenary company showed up on wyverns, having decided they were going to retire to this nearly impregnable flying island, perfectly capable of ferrying themselves up and down from the land. The inhabitants of Benne didn't much trust the Banner, but they easily hauled up large quantities of food, and those kinds of resources smooth over all kinds of otherwise intractable disputes. The Banner now rules Benne and has plans to defeat the Whispering Wind and claim the rest of the Sky Isles for their own, and then perhaps the entire Scramble.

These mercenaries are not very good rulers. They don't know how to operate with anything but martial law, which means they tend to completely neglect a territory until that neglect leads to unrest, at which point they impose authoritarian law and order, which has a steep cost on manpower to keep streets constantly patrolled for troublemakers. Ruling with no legitimacy is not long term sustainable, but so long as they're only ruling over Benne, they get by because there's only like fifty locals to rule, so even a dozen mercenaries is enough to keep them in line with pure brute force and intimidation. This 20% mobilization rate cannot possibly scale up, but

it works for now, and that means Benne can serve as a refuge for any enemies of the Whispering Wind provided they don't have any plans to take over the Scramble for themselves and they're able to reach the place.

A necromancer acolyte of the Lich King has taken over Ravendaal, a lightly guarded monastery of the Whispering Wind that orbits around the edge of the Scramble. She's only here to observe the situation on the Lich King's southern flank, taking advantage of the island's wide orbit to be able to spy on every part of the Scramble at some point during the year. She has plenty of zombified flying mounts to get to and from the surface if she has to (along with, of course, lots of skeletal and ghoulish minions to hold the monastery against potential counterattacks from the Whispering Wind), but for the most part she prefers to remain in Ravendaal and not get involved.

The Whispering Wind naturally hold a grudge about the loss of their monastery (even a small one) and intend to recapture it, but it's a sufficiently defensible position that they'd have to mass their forces to do so, which leaves them reluctant to commit so many troops to a siege (which would pin those troops for quite some time) or assault (which could kill a lot of those troops outright) when they have many other enemies in the Scramble, especially the Red Banner, whose airborne troops could potentially launch an opportunistic attack while their troops are distracted or weakened.

There is one fairly sizable island floating above the Scramble which the Whispering Wind never set foot on. Medem is inhabited by a spirit naga who lives in a cavern only accessible from the underside of the island - there is no surface access. The spirit naga uses *Dimension Door* to get to and from the surface of Medem, and kills anyone who disturbs her isolation there, including a Red Banner scouting party who were hoping to use Medem as a staging ground for an assault on Challiers.

Challiers is the central island of the Sky Isles, a large island floating directly above the center of the Scramble. It gently spins about but does not orbit the way the other islands do, for it is the core that the other islands orbit around. Built atop Challiers is the Challiers Spire, where the Whispering Wind is headquartered, full of landings and stables for griffons and giant vultures and other flying mounts that allow the landbound members of the cult to take to the sky.

The Whispering Wind was originally the air-based branch of the Order of Elemental Balance. They tore the Sky Isles from the ground as a last ditch effort to escape the Lich King and Troll King, and it worked. Though the Lich King did attempt an assault with some zombified fliers, when this failed, the forces of darkness decided to march on to Skyreach and seize a new supply base there rather than try to feed the Troll King's orcs and goblins on the ruined terrain of the Scramble. Cut off from the other three branches of the Order, the Whispering Wind eventually became paranoid and monomaniacal in their devotion to elemental air. The other cults developed in reaction to the Whispering Wind, through a combination of opportunistic charlatans seeking to exploit the opportunity to start their own cult and elemental natives like gargoyles and azers starting cults to counter the expanding influence of the Whispering Wind.